

William James Thompson, BA (hons)

**J.G.Bennett's Interpretation of  
the Teachings of G.I.Gurdjieff**

a study of transmission in the fourth way

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD  
University of Lancaster  
February 1995

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the spiritual teachings of G.I.Gurdjieff from the point of view of his 'heterodox' pupil J.G.Bennett. It concentrates on the difficulties of defining criteria of valid lineage that stem from the teaching's 'ahistorical origins'. The problem of transmission is examined in the light of Gurdjieff's representation of his teaching as a manifestation of the "fourth way" – i.e., an esoteric stream which surfaces and disappears in accordance with a higher purpose. Bennett is identified as someone who took the "fourth way" aspect of the teaching seriously; and his position is juxtaposed to that of the 'Gurdjieffian orthodoxy' who *appear* to have been more concerned with continuity of form. Bennett's understanding of informing higher purpose is explored in terms of his understandings of: sacred history; the cosmic purpose and obligation of humanity; and Christianity. These ideas are shown to be valid interpretations of Gurdjieff's teachings. Gurdjieff's concept of connection to the "esoteric centre" is explored; and Bennett's assertion that Gurdjieff represented his own authority in these terms is shown to have canonical justification. The lineal status of Gurdjieff's pupil P.D.Ouspensky is also taken into account. Through consideration of Gurdjieff's psychological and cosmological schemes and allegories I derive a coherent model of the levels of development on the 'Gurdjieffian path' and argue the validity of Bennett's emphasis on grace as a necessary complement to effort. The model is used as a means to measure the stages and requirements of Bennett's development. It is argued that Bennett's 'post-Gurdjieff' search can be understood as a valid and necessary response to the situation of the 'teaching without the master'. In particular, it is argued that Bennett's experience of the new religious movement Subud helped him to pass a developmental stage on the Gurdjieffian path such that he eventually emerged as a 'master in his own right'.

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The mainstream Gurdjieffian lineage is notoriously inaccessible to the outside investigator. In this connection I wish to acknowledge the assistance of James Moore – a senior English Gurdjieffian – who has supplied me with some useful information and offered me an 'orthodox' perspective on the status of J.G.Bennett.



# Introduction

Unravelling the wool which Gurdjieff had effectively pulled over our eyes and reknitting it all into new depths of understanding is one of the real gifts that Bennett brought to his masters work. (Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, p.152)

An individualist and a maverick, [Bennett] believed that a teaching will become devoid of life unless new insights are constantly found to renew its relevance. (Alick Bartholomew, obituary article, *The Times*, 16.12.74)

As is indicated by its title, this thesis is concerned with the spiritual teachings of J.G.Bennett and their relationship to the transmission of his own teacher G.I.Gurdjieff. It must be noted at the outset that Bennett's work was separate from the main body of Gurdjieff's followers who see him as heterodox and of dubious lineage. An investigation of the extent to which Bennett's teachings can be seen as authentically continuous with Gurdjieff will form the main argumentative strand. However, the issue of what constitutes authentic lineage in the 'Gurdjieff tradition' can itself be seen as highly problematic due to the obscurity of its origins and because of its explicitly non-institutional character. The development of an articulate position regarding criteria of 'authentic Gurdjieffian continuity' can be seen as implicit in Bennett's search during the years after his teachers death. Hence, an analysis of Bennett's biography and ideas in terms of Gurdjieffian prototypes will serve not only to evaluate the authenticity of his position, but also as a vehicle to explore the more fundamental question of what constitutes authentic continuity in this 'non-institutional' tradition.

The fundamental problem of evaluating authentic continuity in the 'Gurdjieff tradition' and Bennett's special significance in relation to this problem will be more fully explored in Chapter One. I now survey the sources on which I have drawn.

Finally, I give a brief preview of the structure in terms of the main content and purpose of each chapter.

## Sources

This thesis is mainly text-based and draws almost entirely on the two corpora of primary material – that of Gurdjieff (and his pupils) and that of Bennett. (There is very little secondary material – I refer to the approaches of two commentators in Chapter One.) However, I have also conducted interviews with representatives of different perspectives and engaged in some ‘participant observation’ in a contemporary group following Bennett’s teachings (see Acknowledgements, p.viii). The latter of these helped me to gain some insight into the context of some of Bennett’s ideas, but does not constitute an independent thread in my exposition.

I will now give an overview of the main texts in each corpus.

Gurdjieff’s writings consist of three series which were designed to be read in order and through which he hoped to make his teaching available to the world (see page 478). These are:

1. the complex and notoriously difficult to read *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson* (3 Volumes; sometimes known as *All and Everything*);
2. the ‘quasi-autobiographical’ *Meetings With Remarkable Men*; and
3. *Life Is Real Only Then: When “I Am”*.

Additionally, there is the booklet *Herald of Coming Good*. This was the only of Gurdjieff's writings to be published during his lifetime and purports to reveal Gurdjieff's intentions in writing the other books. P.D.Ouspensky's account *In Search of the Miraculous* (subtitled: *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*) should be – and is generally – seen as having an important place in the Gurdjieff corpus because its authenticity as a record of Gurdjieff's teachings was endorsed by Gurdjieff himself (see page 178). (Ouspensky's other books are only relevant to the present study in so far as that they provide evidence of *his* transmission of Gurdjieff's ideas and of his attitude to Gurdjieff – see Chapter Six, 'Ouspensky'.)

I have used the following two abbreviations throughout: *Beelzebub* = Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*; and *ISOM* = Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*.

I discuss the Gurdjieff literature from different perspectives as appropriate. – See: Chapter Three 'Sources' (page 177) for a discussion of the usefulness of the different books as sources of information about Gurdjieff's psychological and cosmological ideas; Chapter Four 'Gurdjieff's idea of the esoteric centre' (page 295) for a discussion of the representations of the authority behind the teaching which are given in the different books; and Chapter Six 'Dissemination and purpose' (page 478) for a discussion of the place of Gurdjieff's three series of writings in his overall plan.

In addition to the main primary sources there exists a large body of recollections and commentaries by followers. I have made particular use of C.S.Nott's *Teachings of Gurdjieff* and *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff* and Thomas and Olga de Hartmann's *Our Life With Mr Gurdjieff* (all of which follow broadly autobiographical formats).

Bennett's *oeuvre* is large (see bibliography). In order to gain an overview of the field it will be useful to divide his books into five groups. However, these should not be seen as hard and fast categories.

### **Works directly concerning Gurdjieff and his teachings.**

There are three main books in this category:

- *Gurdjieff Today* (transcript of a public lecture given in 1973);
- *Gurdjieff: a very great enigma* (compiled from a series of three lectures given in 1963);
- *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (1973).

The first of these will prove especially useful as evidence of the extent to which Bennett contextualized his own practical activity as connected to Gurdjieff's work (see Chapter Two). The second and third provide evidence of Bennett's understanding of the provenance and underlying authority of Gurdjieff's work. In this latter context mention should also be made of Bennett's *The Masters of Wisdom* (posthumously published, 1977) in which he sets out ideas concerning an ancient esoteric tradition of which he considered Gurdjieff's teachings to be a manifestation.

Perspectives on Gurdjieff and Bennett's relationship to him are also to be found in books of all of the categories.

### **Autobiographical and biographical.**

The primary source of information concerning Bennett's spiritual search, his experiences, contacts and responsibilities is his own *Witness* (first published in 1961; updated version published in 1974). Further useful information is to be found in his published diaries. *Idiots In Paris: diaries of J.G.Bennett and Elizabeth Bennett, 1949* provides additional insight into Bennett's relationship with Gurdjieff during the final

year of his life. *Journeys in Islamic Countries* (2 Vols) contains important clues regarding the nature of Bennett's sense of responsibility for the continuity of the Gurdjieff teaching during the early to mid-nineteen fifties. Other of Bennett's books, although not primarily autobiographical, contain important clues to his inner development, contacts and involvements. In this connection I would draw particularly attention to *Gurdjieff: a very great enigma* (see above) and the posthumously published *Transformation*.

In Bennett's case there is not a large body of published pupil recollections. Of those that do exist I have made particular use of two books:

The chapters concerning Bennett in Cecil Lewis's *All My Yesterdays* provide a sympathetic and balanced insight into the character of Bennett's transmission during the period between his official break with Ouspensky in 1945 and his return to Gurdjieff in 1948 (see Chapter Six, Part 1).

Anthony Bright-Paul's *Stairway to Subud* contains important data and perspectives on Bennett's transmission during the years between Gurdjieff's death and Subud (see Chapter Six, Part 2).

Also of interest are A.G.E. Blake's paper 'A History of the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and Sciences Ltd. and the Influences Upon It', and the chapter on Bennett ('Sarmoun and Psychotron') in Robert S. de Ropp's *The Warrior's Way*. (de Ropp, who was never himself a pupil of Bennett, represents his relationship to him as something like 'junior peer'. Some 'exchange of pupils' took place before and after Bennett's death.)

There is a considerable overlap between the next two categories, 'Spiritual Teachings' and 'Ideas'. However, there is a distinction in that material in the first

category is primarily addressed to people already involved with, or at least aspiring to be involved with, the teaching *in a practical way* whereas that in the second category is also addressed to a wider audience.

### **Spiritual Teaching**

With the exception of *A Spiritual Psychology* (from a lecture series in 1962) little of the material which is firmly in this category was published during Bennett's lifetime. However, there is a considerable body of posthumously published material (much of it transcribed from talks given during the period 1971-1974). I have made particular use of *Transformation* and *The Sevenfold Work* (see Chapter Five, 'Bennett's Emphasis on Balance Between Effort and Grace.')

### **Ideas**

A high proportion of the books published during Bennett's lifetime are in this category. Most notable are the four volumes of Bennett's *The Dramatic Universe: The Foundations of Natural Philosophy* (1956), *The Foundations of Moral Philosophy* (1961), *Man and His Nature* (1966) and *History* (1966). I also include here his first two books *The Crisis In Human Affairs* (1948) and *What Are We Living For?* (1949), the latter of which is more explicit in advocating the Gurdjieff teaching as an approach to human problems. It is necessary to point out that my exposition barely scratches the surface of the wealth of material in these books. I only refer to Bennett's ideas in so far as they have direct bearing on issues of overarching purpose, continuity, transmission and lineage.

## **Other Spiritual Teachings**

Lastly there are the books that Bennett wrote about the other spiritual teachings with which he was involved. *Concerning Subud* (1958) is of particular significance to this study because it contains evidence concerning Bennett's belief, of that time, about a 'continuity' between the Gurdjieff teaching and Subud. *Christian Mysticism and Subud* (from a lecture series in 1960) is important because it provides clues that help explain his 'disappointment' with Subud. Similarly *Long Pilgrimage*, written following visits to the Shivapuri Baba in 1961 and 1962, provides important information about Bennett's stage of development in the immediately 'post-Subud' era.

## **Structure and Argument**

I now give a brief synopsis of each chapter, identifying the main argumentative strands that are pursued.

In the first chapter I set out the problem of evaluating claims to 'lineage' from Gurdjieff who said that his teaching was a manifestation of a larger tradition which is outwardly discontinuous. In consequence of this situation I define two main poles: Gurdjieff's senior pupils who have a straightforwardly historical claim to lineage; and independent spiritual teachers with no historical association with Gurdjieff, but who indicate special affinity with his work through 'vertical' connection to the 'meta-tradition'. Having identified Bennett as being of special interest due to his articulate synthesis of both the historical and 'vertical' lineal aspects, I then introduce some of the main doctrinal features of his position.

In Chapter Two I (further) elucidate the historical and ‘vertical’ dimensions of Bennett’s authority as a spiritual teacher, during the final years of his life, focusing on his International Academy for Continuous Education. In particular I examine the relationship between this teaching operation and the ‘Gurdjieff tradition’ in terms of (i) method, (ii) motivation and (iii) underlying authority.

Part 1 of Chapter Three steps back from Bennett in order to establish Gurdjieff’s view of the human situation and his basic psychological and cosmological schemes. (This serves as a foundation for later discussions. However, the reader who is reasonably well acquainted with Gurdjieff’s basic analysis of the human condition and his psycho-physiological schemes may wish merely to scan these sections.)

In Part 2 of Chapter Three I assess the extents to which Bennett’s eschatology, Christology, ‘angelology’ and perspective on sacred history (as introduced in chapters one and two) can be understood as compatible with Gurdjieff’s ideas.

Chapter Four examines the idea of the “esoteric centre” – a key notion with regard to questions of authority, transmission and lineage – in Gurdjieff’s books. I seek to determine the extents to which this term can be understood as designating (a) a level of being and/or (b) an actual place. In particular the chapter aims to establish how much support the Gurdjieff literature provides for Bennett’s view of Gurdjieff as connected to a Central Asian Sufi lineage.

In Chapter Five I seek, through comparative examination of all of Gurdjieff’s schemes and allegories relating to the possibilities of human development, to establish a clear and comprehensive ‘model’ of the stages and transitions of the ‘Gurdjieffian path’. – The model will provide ‘developmental criteria’ by means of which, in the



next chapter, to understand Bennett's contacts with Gurdjieff and the later phases of his search and teaching. – This chapter also seeks to establish the importance of help and grace on the 'Gurdjieffian path' (as complementary to, the more explicitly emphasized, effort and struggle), and ends with a discussion of Bennett's ideas on balanced spiritual development.

Chapter Six, which is divided into three parts, traces the history of Bennett's contacts with the Gurdjieff teaching, his involvements with other teachings and the stages of his own development and emergence as a teacher.

Part 1 examines Bennett's fairly brief contacts with Gurdjieff in 1922 and 1923 and his more sustained and intensive contacts between August 1948 and October 1949. I seek to argue that although Bennett had less contact with Gurdjieff than some of Gurdjieff's other pupils he, nevertheless, gained the status of a major follower. In order to evaluate the significance of the twenty five years during which Bennett had no contact with Gurdjieff I examine the lineal situation of Gurdjieff's schismatic pupil P.D.Ouspensky with whom Bennett worked intensively between 1931 and 1940.

In Part 2 I discuss Bennett's situation as a "work leader" during the years following Gurdjieff's death. I describe Bennett's contact with Subud and argue that, while Subud was not 'the next stage in the work initiated by Gurdjieff' (as Bennett at first thought it to be), his temporary adoption of it can be understood as an intelligent and productive response to a state of 'spiritual impasse'.

Part 3 brings the biographical strand up to the final period of Bennett's life which was discussed in depth in Chapter Two. In particular, I consider the significance (from the point of view of 'Gurdjieffian lineage') of Bennett's interaction with Idries Shah. Finally, I give brief consideration to the significance of the claims

of Gary Chicoine whom some of Bennett's pupils adopted as their teacher a few years after his death.

## CHAPTER ONE

# Gurdjieff, Bennett and the Fourth Way

### *Abstract.*

Firstly, I introduce Gurdjieff as a spiritual teacher without known antecedents, presenting himself as a manifestation of the fourth way – i.e., as within a stream of transmission that is outwardly discontinuous. Then I address the inherently problematic nature of this position with regard to the question of authenticity. Having briefly outlined the methodological responses to this of two previous commentators, I propose a phenomenological focus on the lineage/authenticity issue in relation to Gurdjieff's 'successors'. I then set out: (i) an historical outline of Gurdjieff's main pupils and lineal branches; and (ii) sketches of five subsequent and entirely independent teachers whose authenticity claims draw on the fourth way idea and, specifically on Gurdjieff's name. The inherently problematic and contentious nature of these latter is explored. The 'heterodoxy' of J.G.Bennett is then presented as exemplifying characteristics of both the orthodox/lineal and the non-lineal positions. The untenability of his position in the terms of the orthodoxy is emphasized. Bennett's own authority claim is explored in the light of his relationship to Gurdjieff and it is concluded that his 'claim to succession' is based on an idea of deep continuity (which is, nevertheless, rooted in actual lineal contact.) Finally, I introduce Bennett's spiritual concepts which serve to elucidate this idea of deep continuity in relation to that of the fourth way and raise questions with regard to the status of the account which emerges.

## ***Introduction.***

This thesis is about the problems surrounding questions of authenticity and lineage in the esoteric tradition stemming from G.I.Gurdjieff.<sup>1</sup> It approaches the subject by focusing on the career of Gurdjieff's pupil J.G.Bennett. For many years following Gurdjieff's death Bennett engaged in a vicissitudinous search. After twenty one years and near the end of his life he emerged as a spiritual teacher in his own right. His connection to Gurdjieff was a major component of this authority claim. But the majority of Gurdjieff's other followers have regarded him as heterodox and not authentically lineal. The relationship between Bennett's final position and Gurdjieff is undeniably problematical. However, it is my view that an investigation of the structure of Bennett's claim to spiritual authority will shed light on the nature of the 'Gurdjieff tradition' as a whole. In particular, it will help to elucidate the relevant parameters for determining authenticity of lineage, transmission and continuity.

This chapter has a threefold purpose and is, correspondingly, divided into three major sections. The first section establishes the fundamental problem concerning authentic continuity in the 'Gurdjieff tradition' and proposes a methodological response to this. The second section provides an historical background introducing Gurdjieff's senior pupils and the central players in the 'post-Gurdjieff' era. This is necessary because Bennett's position has to be understood in juxtaposition to these others. Most importantly, it will serve to highlight the unique significance of Bennett as a focus for investigation of the spiritual tradition associated with Gurdjieff. In the third section I provide an introductory account of Bennett's ideas concerning the context of his status and work as a spiritual teacher. Specifically, this will

demonstrate that Bennett saw himself as connected to Gurdjieff within a larger tradition.

## Fourth Way Transmission

### *Gurdjieff: a “fourth way teacher”.*

It is known that G.I.Gurdjieff taught a way of spiritual self-transformation. However, the origin of his teaching is, from an historical point of view at least, highly enigmatic. The earliest date at which Gurdjieff is known to have presented his teaching is 1914 (in Moscow and St.Petersburg).<sup>2</sup> By the time of his death (October 29th 1949) he had a substantial nucleus of serious followers in France, England and the U.S.A. Subsequently his teaching has grown into a world-wide, although never externally ‘popular’, movement numbering many tens of thousands of adherents.<sup>3</sup> A tradition now exists, whatever the antecedents.

Gurdjieff contextualized his teaching activity within a larger scale action which he termed the “fourth way”. One of the major characteristics of this *fourth way* – which distinguishes it from other ways of spiritual development – is its absolute lack of any constant institutional form.<sup>4</sup> Gurdjieff says that its manifestations are always in relation to the particular needs of time, place and circumstances; he states that

The fourth way is never without some work of a definite significance, is never without some undertaking around which and in connection with which it can alone exist....Schools of the fourth way exist for the needs of the work which is being carried out in connection with the proposed undertaking. They never exist by themselves as schools for the purpose of education and instruction.<sup>5</sup>

“Schools” can only be established by people who have a genuine connection to a higher source of inspiration and authority which Gurdjieff terms the “esoteric centre”.<sup>6</sup> As such they bring into human life influences which are sharply distinct

from the collective state by virtue of being conscious and intentional rather than unconscious and mechanical.<sup>7</sup> An important corollary of this is that, even if, as is the case with Gurdjieff's own activity, a particular manifestation (school) of the fourth way *is* outwardly visible to the world, its connection to the esoteric centre or 'higher school' and the actual nature of its work cannot be assumed to be perceptible to the outsider. For the outside investigator this inherently problematical nature is further compounded: Just as schools of the fourth way arise according to need, so when the task has been completed or the constellation of circumstances changes they disappear – or, at least, the active element in them withdraws. Gurdjieff states that, historically, genuine fourth way activities often leave vestigial activities which, while continuing aspects of the external form of the particular school, possess neither connection to the esoteric centre nor any real possibility of spiritual transformation at an individual level.<sup>8</sup> Most significantly for the investigator, Gurdjieff also states that all publicly available knowledge concerning such esoteric matters derives from such vestigial schools and is therefore partial and distorted.<sup>9</sup>

### ***How can authentic lineage be determined?***

The problem apparently facing us may be phrased as follows: How are we to judge whether a particular manifestation is authentic or inauthentic? – I.e., if people represent themselves, either explicitly or implicitly, as being authentically connected to the esoteric centre, how can we judge whether or not the claim is true?

When presenting the idea of connection to the esoteric centre Gurdjieff did not literally say 'I have such authentic connection', but it is undoubtedly the case that he was presenting his activities as a fourth way school with himself as the authentically connected teacher. Additionally, his published writings and 'confidences' to pupils

provide many tantalizing and probably unverifiable hints concerning connection to a higher teaching emanating from Central Asia.<sup>10</sup> It seems that an attempt to answer the above question in relation to Gurdjieff himself cannot be fruitful because, by definition, even if genuine connection exists, it is invisible.

### ***Methodological responses.***

The only notable external commentators on Gurdjieff, Whitall Perry and James Webb, have both attempted to pierce through the enigma that surrounds him by seeking to account for his undeniable success in acquiring a following in terms which do not credit him with any high spiritual connection.<sup>11</sup> Perry specifically attacks the view that only those who are inside the Gurdjieff teaching are in a position to assess its genuineness. (In fact, as I will show, in internal terms it is only those who have made considerable advancement on the path who would be in a position to do this.<sup>12</sup>) Perry states that “to claim that there is an indefinable something...which only an “inner circle” of adepts can grasp is to subjectivize all possible approaches to understanding.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Perry views Gurdjieff’s failure to supply credentials in terms of connection to an identifiable lineage as inherently incriminating – i.e., he did not state the origin of his teaching because it was in some way unwholesome.<sup>14</sup> However, I would argue that in taking this attitude Perry ‘runs rough shod’ over the doctrines: specifically, he altogether fails to deal with the idea of the fourth way the centrality of which must be taken into account in relation to any investigation of Gurdjieff in relation to *tradition*. It might seem that, in the undeniable absence of any conclusive evidence concerning the origin of Gurdjieff’s teaching, the would be investigator is caught between two evils: on the one hand there is the danger of



succumbing to the ‘subjectivization of understanding’ while on the other there is that of establishing a ‘false firm ground’ from which to criticize.

The present study will adopt a middle way which avoids either of these two extremes. A broadly phenomenological approach<sup>15</sup> will involve the examination of all knowable aspects of the situation, including the mythic, in order to elucidate its *degree of internal coherence as a phenomenon*. Consequently, I ‘bracket’ the, arguably unanswerable, question of the *origin* of Gurdjieff’s teaching and take his declared position as primary. The fact is that Gurdjieff did have a following who believed in his efficacy as a teacher and the value of his teaching and, presumably in some sense, in the genuineness of his connection to the esoteric centre.<sup>16</sup>

It is my view that the questions of authenticity and lineage can be most fruitfully explored in relation to the *post-Gurdjieff era* – i.e., as applied to his senior pupils who became responsible for the continuance of the teaching after his death in 1949.

### ***The lineage problem reformulated.***

In this light the basic question can be reformulated: What happens to a fourth way teaching when its primary initiator dies? More precisely: What criteria did Gurdjieff define that can enable us to distinguish dimensions of authenticity and non-authenticity in his ‘successors’? And, what specific indications did Gurdjieff give with regard to the continuation of the teaching after his death?

Here we are on relatively firm ground. It remains the case that there may be things which were transmitted in the intimacy of the teacher-pupil relationship of which we can have no inkling. Nevertheless, there is a considerable body of

knowledge available to us in the form of pupils' recollections and Gurdjieff's own intentionally published works. These sources serve to provide perspectives on the intended direction of Gurdjieff's fourth way school (although these perspectives are not, as we shall see, always uncontradictory.) Moreover, Gurdjieff's elaborate spiritual developmental psychology has the potential to function as a tool for discriminating the necessary inner qualifications for leadership.

### **Gurdjieffians and Post-Gurdjieffians**

In this section I set up a picture of the main lines of transmission and claims to spiritual descent associated with Gurdjieff and establish the significance of J.G.Bennett as a focus of research.

#### ***Gurdjieff's pupils.***

P.D.Ouspensky (1878-1947), Gurdjieff's most famous pupil, first met Gurdjieff in 1915 and finally separated from him (after six years of growing uncertainty and intermittent contact) in 1924. – By this time Gurdjieff and Ouspensky were respectively established in France and in England. – Henceforward until his death he represented himself as a teacher in his own right teaching what he took to be the pure version of Gurdjieff's "System" (this is Ouspensky's term for his understanding of the form of Gurdjieff's teaching from the period 1915-17. However, Ouspensky believed that there was some essential ingredient missing from the "System", but he denied that Gurdjieff himself had it.<sup>17</sup>) However, prior to the schism, several of his early

English pupils had become pupils of Gurdjieff. Among these were A.R.Orage (1873-1934), Maurice Nicoll (d.1953) and J.G.Bennett (1897-1974)<sup>18</sup>.

When, in 1924, Ouspensky issued an ultimatum that people must choose between Gurdjieff and himself two of the above – Nicoll and Bennett<sup>19</sup> – decided to remain with Ouspensky. In 1931 Ouspensky authorized Nicoll to establish his own groups and teach the “System” in his own right.<sup>20</sup> Around the same time Bennett – who was temporarily estranged from Ouspensky – established a small group of his own the semi-autonomous existence of which was subsequently permitted by Ouspensky.<sup>21</sup> However, whilst Ouspensky was in the U.S.A. during the Second World War, Bennett's activities greatly expanded in the vacuum created by his teacher's absence. In 1945 Ouspensky ‘excommunicated’ Bennett in a manner which was somewhat reminiscent of the way in which he had conducted his departure from Gurdjieff in so far as that he ruled that there was to be absolutely no communication between the two camps.<sup>22</sup> From this time Bennett's work at Coombe Springs<sup>23</sup> expanded and intensified.

Orage was among those who remained with Gurdjieff to become, for seven years (1924-31), his ‘right hand man in the U.S.A.’<sup>24</sup> – in this role he functioned as a conduit through which Gurdjieff received many pupils. Among the earliest American pupils was Jane Heap (d.1964)<sup>25</sup> who brought to Gurdjieff several of the women who subsequently constituted the group known as ‘the rope’ (1936).<sup>26</sup> From 1935 until 1948 Heap ran an English group constituted from the few English people who still had direct contact with Gurdjieff (e.g., C.S.Nott and F.S.Pinder).<sup>27</sup>

A further important player was Ouspensky's wife, Sophie Grigorievna Ouspensky (d.1963; known as “Madame Ouspensky”). She travelled to Western Europe with Gurdjieff and remained in France until 1931.<sup>28</sup> On arrival in England she

joined her husband's work as an equal and, it can be argued, complemented his 'systematic' attitude with her own greater aptitude for certain practical aspects of Gurdjieff's teaching.<sup>29</sup>

However, probably the most significant of Gurdjieff's pupils was Madame Jeanne de Salzmann (d.1990). Although initially junior to those of Gurdjieff's earliest pupils who had travelled with him from Russia, most notably Thomas (d.1956) and Olga (d.1979) de Hartmann<sup>30,31</sup> her pre-eminence as a transmitter of his sacred dances ("the movements"<sup>32</sup>) and the fact that she was the only of Gurdjieff's early pupils to return to him after the deliberately engendered estrangements of the early 1930s<sup>33 34</sup> combined to place her in the unquestionable position of most senior pupil during the final phases of his career (late 1930s to 1949). It was from her Sèvres group<sup>35</sup> that Gurdjieff received his first French pupils (1936); and it was exclusively with French pupils that he worked during the years of the Second World War.

The end of the war and the consequent re-establishment of European and trans-Atlantic communications brought about an end of the exclusively French phase. However, circumstantially speaking, it was the death of Ouspensky in 1947 that must be seen as having had the most far reaching implications for the longer term dissemination of the teaching. Following Ouspensky's death his pupils can be understood as having divided into three main camps. Firstly, there were those who assembled around Ouspensky's senior pupil Francis Roles<sup>36</sup> whose initial intent was to remain as true to Ouspensky as possible, maintaining the 'purity of the System.' This posture categorically excluded any possibility of communication with Gurdjieff.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, there were those – e.g., Kenneth Walker (d.1966) – who followed Madame Ouspensky's advice to go to Gurdjieff in Paris.<sup>38</sup> Thirdly, mention must be made of Rodney Collin (d.1956) and those who gravitated towards him. Collin had apparently

experienced some kind of powerful initiation, resulting from events surrounding Ouspensky's death, which transcended the "System".<sup>39</sup> He came to a view of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky as coequal pillars of a tradition, but apparently he saw no need for direct personal contact with Gurdjieff.<sup>40</sup>

The now independent Bennett was also an enthusiastic receiver of Madame Ouspensky's advice and many tens of his pupils experienced direct contact with Gurdjieff as a result.<sup>41</sup> However, Maurice Nicoll continued the work which he had begun in 1931 without seeking any renewed contact with Gurdjieff.<sup>42</sup> Gurdjieff himself travelled to the U.S.A. in February 1949 and one result of this visit was the reintegration of people who had worked in groups started by Orage (some of whom had worked with Ouspensky during the war years<sup>43</sup>). From this time Madame Ouspensky's own position, which the reader will have perceived to have been somewhat ambiguous, seems to have become straightforwardly one of 'senior pupil of Gurdjieff'.<sup>44</sup>

### ***The post-Gurdjieff era.***

By the time of Gurdjieff's death on October 29th 1949 all of those pursuing spiritual ideas originating from him – with the exceptions of those following Roles, Nicoll and Collin – were integrated in one somewhat amorphous movement focused on Paris. Gurdjieff had named Bennett as his representative in England, René Zuber as his representative in France and the English Lord Pentland (a former Ouspensky pupil) as his representative in the U.S.A.<sup>45 46</sup> However, it is generally accepted that, whatever special roles in the transmission of his teaching he may or may not have primed particular individuals to fulfil<sup>47</sup>, at the time of his death he passed overall responsibility for the various groups to Madame de Salzmänn.<sup>48</sup>

Madame de Salzmann set about uniting all of the different groups within the newly established Gurdjieff Foundation based in France.<sup>49</sup> – Her close senior allies in this venture were Thomas and Olga de Hartmann and Madame Ouspensky. – Affiliated organizations were subsequently founded in other countries. These included: the Gurdjieff Foundation of America (the leading figures of which were Madame Ouspensky, the de Hartmanns and Lord Pentland)<sup>50</sup> and, subsequently, the Gurdjieff Foundation of Canada (founded and led by Olga de Hartmann after her husband's death).<sup>51</sup> In England Gurdjieff's followers, who were, initially, largely ex-Ouspenskians, looked to Paris for authority; and in late 1950 Madame de Salzmann sent Madame H.H.Lannes (1899-1980) – one of Gurdjieff's senior French pupils – to take charge of the Work in England.<sup>52</sup> Nicoll, despite his failure to return to Gurdjieff, has been seen as a solidly orthodox figure<sup>53</sup> and his pupils, numbering several hundred, were integrated into the Gurdjieffian mainstream after his death.<sup>54</sup>

Roles maintained the 'orthodox Ouspensian' distance and kept his pupils on a very short rein with regard to outside influences.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, his faithfulness to Ouspensky included holding the belief that the "System" was incomplete. After briefly experimenting with Subud he involved himself with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (early 1960s) with, it has been suggested, the intention of appropriating the TM method.<sup>56</sup> He subsequently broke with the Maharishi to follow another Hindu teacher, Sivananda, and found the London School of Meditation.<sup>57</sup> In terms of Gurdjieffian lineage Roles at this point ceases to be of direct interest: historically some of the ideas taught by his organization derive from Gurdjieff, but he had no direct contact with Gurdjieff and any connection through Ouspensky is highly doubtful<sup>58</sup>; moreover, although he seems to have thought that the teachings of the Rishis either completed or were more complete than Ouspensky's "system", there is

no *substantial* claim that the teachings of the Maharishi or Sivananda are in any way connected with the source of Gurdjieff's teaching.<sup>59</sup>

The situation of Collin can be seen as having become similarly peripheral in relation to Gurdjieffian lineage: as pointed out above, he had no direct contact with Gurdjieff; and, despite a strong emphasis on the idea of fourth way schools as a context for activity, he progressively moved away from the "System" placing reliance on prayer (he became a Roman Catholic) and the mediumistic faculties of an associate<sup>60</sup>. Moreover, Collin's emigration to Mexico (1952) largely removed his influence from the English scene<sup>61,62</sup>

However, the situation of Bennett and his pupils is more problematic. From the time of Gurdjieff's death Bennett had maintained his former activities at Coombe Springs on a semi-autonomous basis,<sup>63</sup> believing, he says, in the necessity for unity amongst those following Gurdjieff's ideas, but also believing that he had a creative role of his own. During the early 1950s these two aspects became progressively more difficult to reconcile until, in 1955 he felt it necessary to secede from the Gurdjieff Foundation in order to be free to take full responsibility for his own contribution. In 1957 he embraced Subud (which he saw at the time as somehow completing the Gurdjieff teaching). In the eyes of the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy this action was an irredeemable betrayal such that, even when Bennett abandoned Subud in 1960 and returned to the Gurdjieff methods, he felt that there could be no question of his realigning his activities with theirs.<sup>64</sup>

### ***The 'non-linear pretenders'.***

The above sketch serves to provisionally contextualize Bennett within the lines of lineage stemming from Gurdjieff. However, before proceeding to an introductory

exploration of the uniqueness of Bennett's situation and perspective, it is first necessary to take into account the existence of a further category of spiritual teachers. What these people have in common is that: (a) they neither knew Gurdjieff personally nor did they emerge from a known branch of the lineage stemming from him; but (b) they make strong reference to Gurdjieff's name and/or to the established pattern of 'myths' relating to the source of his teaching as part of their own claim to spiritual authority. *To the extent to which these people draw on Gurdjieff and his teaching*<sup>65</sup> I shall refer to them as 'non-lineal pretenders'. Brief descriptions of five exemplars of this syndrome follow:

**Robert Burton.** Burton is the originator of the "Gurdjieff Ouspensky Centres" (mainly U.S.A.). However, he has no known lineal connection with either Gurdjieff or Ouspensky. But, as the name of his organization implies, its teaching is based on that of Gurdjieff as transmitted through Ouspensky.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Burton's central claim to personal authority in terms of higher being is expressed in Gurdjieff's terminology (he claims to be "Man No.6"<sup>67</sup>.)<sup>68</sup>

**E.J.Gold.** Gold, also an American, draws on Gurdjieff's terminology and alludes to Gurdjieff at every point of his own teaching. For instance, the title of one of his books, *Secret Talks With Mr G.*, is clearly designed to *suggest* that the contents come directly from Gurdjieff; similarly, the title of his organization, the 'Institute for the Harmonious Development of the Human Being' is a clear allusion to Gurdjieff's 'Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man' of the 1920s. Additionally, his book *Confessions of a Sufi* contains the strong implication that he, somehow, psychically inherited Gurdjieff's authority.



**Oscar Ichazo.** Ichazo is Bolivian by birth, but his teaching, the ‘Arica Training’, first became well known in North America. Ichazo's teaching makes central use of Gurdjieff's enneagram and also utilizes other of Gurdjieff's psycho-cosmological schemes. Additionally, Ichazo suggests (or, at least, allows to be suggested on his behalf) that he was taught by the same Central Asian Sufic source that taught Gurdjieff.<sup>69</sup>

**Idries Shah.** Unlike the preceding three examples Shah has no obvious interest in the *specifics* of Gurdjieff's teaching. However, he did place himself firmly within the context of the *source* of Gurdjieff's teaching. (And in this light he is of particular relevance to the career of Bennett who believed his claims – see Chapter Six, Part III.) The strong implication is that he (Shah) is a, or the, senior emissary of the esoteric source to which Gurdjieff alludes in his books<sup>70</sup> and which Shah represents as the inner circle of Naq'shbandi Sufism – and that his mission supersedes that of Gurdjieff.<sup>71</sup>

**Gary B.Chicoine.** The claims of Chicoine will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis with regard to the situation of Bennett's followers after his death in 1974. Setting aside Chicoine's transparently impossible claim to have met and been a friend of Gurdjieff,<sup>72</sup> he, like Shah before him, presented himself as an advanced exponent of Naqshbandi Sufism and the Sarmoun brotherhood. (However, the Sarmoun brotherhood was, for him, the higher authority not just of Sufism but also of “...a line of Hindu Rishis, and the Tibetan Kargyupta Sect, which are all one in a certain location in the Trans-Himalayas, or near there.”)<sup>73</sup> Reminiscent again of Shah, he stated that the

“entire Gurdjieff path as a way in itself is truly defunct” and heralded himself as the new teacher from the original source.<sup>74</sup>

Two main ways of claiming non-lineal connection to Gurdjieff can be identified from the above examples. Firstly, there is the claim, expressed in Gurdjieff's terminology, to have attained a high level of being which qualifies the claimant to teach comparable things (this is exemplified most strongly in the case of Burton). And secondly, there is the claim to be connected to the same source which sent Gurdjieff (exemplified most clearly by Shah). Additionally, connection to some kind of discarnate spiritual hierarchy can be identified as an important third factor in three of the above cases – Burton, Ichazo and Chicoine.<sup>75</sup> This factor, while it does not relate specifically to Gurdjieff, must nevertheless be taken into account as both a faculty associated with a ‘higher level of being’ type claim and as, potentially, an aspect or corollary of the ‘connection to the same source’ – i.e., esoteric centre – claim.

The existence of such people – with their non-lineal claims – threatens to undermine the relatively straightforward situation attained by focusing on Gurdjieff's successors. Clearly, the existence of ‘*authentic* non-lineal pretenders’ is, in principle, allowed for in Gurdjieff's doctrine of the fourth way and his concept of connection to the (externally invisible) esoteric centre.<sup>76</sup> If we are seriously interested in the idea of the fourth way then we cannot simply ignore these people as being extraneous to the question of ‘succession’ (whatever this is understood to mean<sup>77</sup>). On the contrary, it is necessary to be open to the *possibility* that the orthodox lineal followers of Gurdjieff are less connected to the life-giving esoteric centre than, for instance, Shah. – I.e., that in terms of Gurdjieff's description of the appearance and subsequent disappearance of

fourth way operations, his own ‘orthodox successors’ may be merely perpetuating external forms (which are, as Chicoine put it, “defunct”).

In relation to the ‘non-lineal pretenders’ we are almost back to the original, insoluble, ‘fourth way origin problem’ which is encountered in relation to Gurdjieff himself: but not quite. It is not the case that these people are making entirely independent claims (to be connected to a hidden tradition) which can be interpreted as parallel to Gurdjieff’s assertions. The reason for comparison with Gurdjieff and his followers lies precisely in the fact that they *do* refer to him and that such reference seems integral to their own authority claims. It is, in principle, valid to compare their teachings and orientations with those of Gurdjieff and his orthodox followers; moreover, it will be specifically necessary to do so in the cases of Shah and Chicoine who impinged directly on the careers of Bennett and his followers. However, with regard to such comparisons, it is important to make a clear distinction between the inner content of Gurdjieff’s teaching and its specific external form. A search for the first can be expected to reveal ideas which are universal (at least to the fourth way), whereas that which can be identified as in the second category can be thought of as pertaining to the specific ‘fourth way circumstance’.

### ***The special significance of J.G.Bennett.***

The groups within the Gurdjieff Foundation (‘orthodox lineal descendants’) and the positions associated with the ‘non-lineal pretenders’ can be thought of as exemplifying two, opposing, paradigmatic ways in which the issue of fourth way lineage can be understood. The former derive their authority from a chain of direct transmission from Gurdjieff and place emphasis on maintaining the purity of his teaching.<sup>78</sup> The latter position involves the basing of authority claims on direct

connection to the same source and places emphasis on a wider action of which Gurdjieff is believed to have been a part. The case of J.G.Bennett constitutes a particularly interesting focus for exploring the relative values of these two paradigms because his latter-day position embodied aspects of both of them. Specifically, his actions and writings demonstrate an articulate position on the ‘deep content’ *versus* ‘external form’ question.

Bennett may be thought of as an ‘orthodox lineal descendant’ of Gurdjieff in so far as it can be said that: (i) he was a personal – and arguably senior – pupil of Gurdjieff; (ii) he followed the teaching continuously from 1924 to 1956 as a student and (especially after 1945) as an indefatigable teacher; and (iii) a case can be made that throughout his ‘para-Gurdjieffian search’ (see below) the Gurdjieff teaching remained the *fundamental* influence and that this was strongly exemplified during the final years of his life in his International Academy for Continuous Education<sup>79</sup>. (The status of these assertions will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six. The main counter-arguments are introduced in the next subsection.)

Conversely, the ‘heterodoxy’ of his post-1957 position can be seen as resonating strongly with the ‘non-lineal pretender’-type paradigm. The idea of connection to a discarnate spiritual hierarchy played an important role during the final period of his life (the time of the conception, establishment and operation of his International Academy for Continuous Education). He spoke of being inwardly guided and instructed by “the higher powers” with whom his relationship became progressively more direct.<sup>80</sup> This theme is closely connected to both the level of being which he had attained and a search for connection to the terrestrial esoteric centre with which he believed Gurdjieff to have been connected. Although Bennett made no specific claim to have achieved a particular level of being within Gurdjieff’s

frame of reference, he provided sufficient autobiographical data from which to argue that he had achieved the requisite high level to qualify as a master in his own right.<sup>81</sup> – One aspect of this elevated level of being is direct contact with the esoteric centre (however this is conceived). – Bennett understood the higher powers as being a discarnate “hidden directorate” guiding (in the name of still higher levels) the evolution of life on earth. For him the *terrestrial* esoteric centre is a focus for the activity of the hidden directorate through the work of highly developed human initiates. Despite the implication that Bennett might be expected to have known the whereabouts of the esoteric “Power House”, he made no publicly known claim to do so. Nevertheless, his penultimate book *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (1973) argues towards the conclusion that Gurdjieff’s mission was connected to an esoteric centre in Central Asia; and his final book *The Masters of Wisdom* (posthumous, 1977) sets out his cosmo-historical arguments for the existence of the Hidden Directorate<sup>82</sup> and for a special focus of their work in Central Asia through a trans-Islamic ‘higher Sufism’. From the early 1950s Bennett had been driven by an imperative to contact the source of Gurdjieff’s teaching<sup>83</sup>; and the hope that he could pick up the strands of contact through known Sufi orders (Naqshbandi and Mevlevi) was undoubtedly a major reason for his two journeys to Asia Minor and the Middle East (1953 and 1955). During the early to mid-sixties the strength of his conviction that Gurdjieff had been connected with an esoteric ‘Power House’ in Central Asia was demonstrated by his willingness to give credence to Idries Shah’s claim to be its new emissary.

Clearly it is not the case that Bennett moved from an ‘orthodox’ to a ‘non-lineal pretender’ position: his own search did not finish at the feet of Idries Shah and his own final situation was more *specifically* linked to Gurdjieff and his teaching than is

the case with the ‘non-lineal pretenders’. – Neither, I would argue, was he simply betwixt and between the two positions for want of anywhere else to be. – His position was a synthesis of both elements: he had specific contact with Gurdjieff (whom he continued to revere as his main teacher); and he had direct contact with the source and higher context (which in Gurdjieff's own terms transcended his personal contribution). It is my contention that in achieving this position Bennett became a real exemplar of the higher aspect of Gurdjieff's teaching.

***The orthodoxy's view of Bennett.***

However, any claim by, or on behalf of, Bennett to be a (or the) genuine ‘successor’ to Gurdjieff is, from the point of view of the orthodox lineage, untenable. They would seek to sideline any such argument on the dual bases that his actual contact with Gurdjieff was relatively sparse – especially as compared to that of Madame de Salzmann<sup>84</sup> – and that his subsequent commitment proved weak. (At their most charitable the Foundation characterize Bennett as an eclectic seeker who combined Gurdjieff's teachings with other elements and should be assessed on this basis.<sup>85</sup>) This critique appears well founded: it is a matter of fact that Bennett spent less than a month at the Gurdjieff's Institute in 1923 and, following his renewal of contact in 1948, enjoyed only fourteen months of frequent contact before Gurdjieff's death; and his, seemingly radical, defection to Subud only seven years later, and his subsequent eclecticism, can be seen as having altogether destroyed his, already tenuous, claim to lineage. Although the present frame of reference indicates that Bennett cannot be so summarily dismissed from contention, it is nevertheless the case that such criticisms will have to be accommodated by any argument which seeks to represent Bennett as an exemplar of a ‘Gurdjieffian paradigm’.

### ***Bennett's own understanding of his relationship to Gurdjieff.***

The above may be thought of as an ‘antithesis’ to Bennett's position. In order to clarify the ‘thesis’, I will now outline the main ways in which Bennett's self ascribed position was specifically linked to Gurdjieff<sup>86</sup>:

- i. He implied strongly that he was one of a very small number of people who were capable of penetrating to the central core of Gurdjieff's message.<sup>87</sup> – Moreover, his clear distinction between those possessing this capacity and those with (merely) the ability to transmit Gurdjieff's teaching serves to imply that the leadership of the Foundation did not necessarily include any of the former category.
- ii. He saw himself as working within a field of activity which had been established by Gurdjieff.<sup>88</sup> (I will return to this idea in a later section.)
- iii. He believed that his own work was a continuation – in an updated form – of Gurdjieff's work, and that it was the fulfilment of a personal obligation to Gurdjieff.<sup>89</sup>

All of the above points must be understood in the light of the emphasis which he placed on the idea of the fourth way as a context for his activity: crucially, he spoke of his Academy as a “school of the fourth way”.<sup>90</sup> There can be no doubt that Bennett represents his own fourth way activity as being fundamentally connected to that of Gurdjieff (rather than referring to Gurdjieff as a parallel exemplar). Furthermore, a *specific* connection to Gurdjieff is shown by the fact that all of the above points can be seen as indicating great respect for, and gratitude to, him. Such emotions find particular focus in the idea of obligation (third point) which, in terms of Bennett's

representation, definitely implies *some kind* of ‘mandate of succession’. It is fundamental to Bennett's position as it developed after 1949 that he believed that Gurdjieff had placed upon him a particular and individual obligation to further the fulfilment of his work.<sup>91</sup>

### ***Deep continuity.***

In contrast on the one hand to the ‘orthodox lineal descendants’, and on the other to the ‘non-lineal pretenders’, Bennett's position can be characterized as a ‘deep continuity claim’: he had specific lineal connection to Gurdjieff and his work *and* had attained some degree of connection to the underlying authority (“esoteric centre”).

The assertion of such a claim would not impress the ‘orthodox lineal descendants’.<sup>92</sup> They can easily say that Bennett may have wished to support his own authority claim by reference to his connection to Gurdjieff, and he may have *believed* that he was genuinely fulfilling Gurdjieff's will, but that the basic evidence of his relationship to the teaching suggests otherwise. How, then, is the ‘thesis’ to be reconciled with the ‘antithesis’?

The argument that I will propound in response to this question can, for convenience, be summarized in four sections:

- (i) With regard to the orthodoxy's criticism that Bennett's actual contact with Gurdjieff was relatively sparse it can be argued that it is the quality rather than the quantity of the contact which is important. Bennett's month with Gurdjieff in 1923 culminated with a profound inner experience which revealed to him the sublime possibilities which the teaching held for him. When he returned to Gurdjieff in August 1948 his considerable preparation and high level of



commitment resulted in rapid acceptance as a senior pupil. Furthermore, I will argue that Gurdjieff *did* give Bennett serious indications that he had the capacity, and therefore an obligation, to play a special role in the future development of the teaching.

- (ii) Bennett's subsequent search can, itself, be understood as Gurdjieffian: Gurdjieff was the context, anchor and spiritual metric of the search. (It is to be noted that it was for only three years – 1957 to 1960 – that he did not actively practise Gurdjieff's methods.) I will argue that his journey – through Subud, his various contacts with Sufism, his encounters with the Shivapuri Baba and his embracing of Roman Catholicism – can be understood in terms of the developmental stages and necessities of Gurdjieff's spiritual psychology.
- (iii) Bennett fully appreciated that (a) Gurdjieff's teaching existed only by virtue of its fourth way context and (b) without an understanding of the definite work for which the school existed it would decay into habitual forms. Consequently, it was his duty, as a 'work leader', to become connected to the wider context. His search eventually brought him to such a point that he had his own direct connection to the underlying authority of Gurdjieff's teaching.
- (iv) The Gurdjieff teaching is most obviously characterizable as a 'way of effort'. However, as an important sub-theme underlying the arguments of (i), (ii) and (iii), I will argue that: (a) the spiritual dimensions of grace and openness to higher sources of help constitute a coequal and counterbalancing, although lesser emphasized, aspect; and (b) that Bennett's increasing appreciation of the significance of these dimensions was a fundamental aspect of his search.

## **The Great Work**

I have stated that Bennett's position on the 'deep content' versus 'external form' problem was an articulate one. The final task of this chapter is twofold. First it will serve to familiarize the reader with the main conceptions that Bennett used to express his understanding of the fourth way as a field of action to which he was connected. It will then show how this framework functions to elucidate the idea of deep continuity between himself and Gurdjieff

Central to Bennett's perspective was the idea of the "Great Work". – Gurdjieff himself did not use this *term*. However, it is fundamental to the argument to be developed in the following chapters, that it is, and that Bennett saw it as being, a quintessentially Gurdjieffian idea.<sup>93</sup> – Here, I will give an introductory outline of the idea of the "Great Work" showing its centrality in relation to his understandings of: the significance of Christ; the role of the "Higher Powers"; the direction and *telos* of earthly evolution in general and of human evolution in particular; the purpose of the terrestrial esoteric centre (or centres); and the nature of the fourth way. This will bring into focus his understanding of *his own relationship to the fourth way* and hence *his relationship to Gurdjieff*.

### ***Ultimate and terrestrial scales of the Great Work.***

The term "Great Work" as used by Bennett can be understood as referring to two scales of reality, one embracing and subsuming the other. The first, and larger, is the whole of creation. On this scale the Great Work is the total spiritualization, salvation and self-realization of existence through the agency of the Divine Power of Love (–or "Unitive Energy" <sup>94</sup>). Bennett understood this as synonymous with the universal

reality of Christ.<sup>95</sup> Although this spiritualizing and redemptive action has an all-embracing nature such that all levels of existence participate, within this total scheme the planetary level of existence (as the bearer of *life*) and *human* level of existence (as the bearer of *consciousness*) play a crucial and pivotal role<sup>96</sup>: this is the smaller scale Great Work which I shall term the terrestrial, or ‘local’, Great Work.

### ***Christ: Incarnation and Parousia.***

Bennett saw the focus of connection between the local Great Work and the total Great Work as being the Incarnation. This event, although of a fundamentally ‘timeless’ nature, is also historical and anticipates the future evolution of humanity.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, Bennett placed emphasis on an understanding of the Second Coming of Christ in terms of the *Parousia*: he held that “We are now in the midst of the *Parousia*...” which is “...taking the form of the envelopment or overshadowing of mankind by the Unitive Energy...”<sup>98</sup> – i.e., at the present time humanity has a greater potential to connect to and live within Divine Love (“Unitive Energy”<sup>99</sup>) than has previously been the case. It is only by incarnating Divine Love that humanity can fulfil its preordained role within the broader spiritualization process of the total Great Work (and, on the local scale, within biospheric evolution.) This may be understood as stating the ultimate plan – i.e., the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven.

### ***The human situation.***

The foregoing account seems to converge with the conventionally religious Christian belief that the Kingdom of Heaven can be ‘attained’ by anyone who accepts the Love of Christ. And Bennett would have accepted the truth of this in an *ultimate* sense. However, he supplemented this view with a sophisticated practical spiritual

psychology which holds that *man as he is simply cannot do this*. It is not short-circuiting the presentation to state that the idea that the ordinary human is “asleep” (–i.e., acting mechanically rather than consciously) and hence cannot truly *do* anything was fundamental to the teachings of both Gurdjieff and Bennett.<sup>100</sup> According to this school of spiritual psychology people have to accomplish certain degrees of inner work before they have anything within them that could submit to a higher source. This, in a very general way, expresses the task that faces *both* the individual human being and the evolution of humanity as a whole. In terms of Bennett's psychocosmological terminology, human beings have to become receptacles of the “Conscious Energy” (–i.e., become fully conscious) and then the “Creative Energy” (–i.e., become centres of *will*, or “ableness to do”) before they can be effective and continuous channels for the transcendent “Unitive Energy” of Divine Love.<sup>101 102</sup> This brings us to the *specifically local* character of the terrestrial Great Work.

### ***Terrestrial evolution: life, man and the “Demiurgic Intelligences”.***

Bennett understood the spiritual evolution of humanity in relation to the “spiritualization of the biosphere”.<sup>103</sup> It is not only the human, but the whole earth which is engaged in spiritual evolution within the total Great Work. This process of ‘terrestrial self-realization’ requires a biospheric concentration and ordering of that which Bennett terms the “Sensitive” and “Conscious” energies in a way which he describes as analogous to the formation of the human mind and soul.<sup>104</sup> All life-forms play a role in this.<sup>105</sup> Bennett saw this entire evolutionary process as being overseen and guided by higher beings which he called the Demiurgic Intelligences. These Demiurgic Intelligences<sup>106</sup> mediate between the higher realm of the “Unitive Energy” where the plan of terrestrial evolution is created and the biosphere itself: the

Demiurgic beings operate primarily at the level of the “Creative Energy”. However, the extent of their being reaches up to the level of the Unitive Energy – such that they can perceive the plan – and down to the Conscious<sup>107</sup> Energy in order that they can interact with the evolving biosphere.<sup>108</sup>

In Bennett's view, humanity has emerged as a part of this guided evolutionary process, but must nevertheless be seen as a ‘special creation’. By analogy, if his depiction of the evolution of the earth is seen as equivalent to that of the human itself, then the place of humanity would be equivalent to the evolution of the human brain (if this is understood as the organ of consciousness and direction). The human being is seen as *in* life, but, at least in terms of its destiny, not entirely *of* life.<sup>109</sup> In accordance with the higher plan the Demiurgic Intelligences have created the human beings as entities with the potential to, in part, assume a role equivalent to their own as directive intelligences in submission to the higher plan.

There are, however, two crucial differences between the realized human being and the Demiurgic Intelligence. Firstly, in relation to the earth's evolution, the spiritually evolved human being incarnates qualities which have previously been external – i.e., demiurgic – such that it can become a creative source in its own right.<sup>110</sup> Secondly, with regard to their individual evolution, human beings have the potential to reach higher levels of spiritual realization than that exemplified by the Demiurgic Intelligences.<sup>111</sup>

Nevertheless, Bennett tells us that, with regard to its past – and to a large extent its present – collective states, humanity can be seen as very much under the guidance of the Demiurgic Intelligences which are nurturing it towards its destiny.<sup>112</sup> (However, it should be noted that Bennett does not represent the Demiurgic Intelligences as specifically interested in, or compassionate towards, humanity: we

are, from the demiurgic point of view, instruments for the fulfilment of their task – should the ‘human experiment’ be found wanting it would be superseded by something else.<sup>113</sup>) The context of this nurturing is the progressive preparation to embody the conscious and creative energies.<sup>114</sup> The time scale of their operations embraces that of the “Great Cycle” (approximately 25,000 years)<sup>115</sup> and works more specifically at the levels of the “Epoch” (2,500 years)<sup>116</sup> and “Civilizations”. From the point of view of the evolution of humanity in relation to the biosphere, Civilizations act as psycho-spiritual instruments for the generation and concentration of the higher energies (“Conscious” and “Creative”).<sup>117</sup>

### ***The terrestrial “esoteric centre”.***

Such social ordering has been inspired and assisted with the aid of special potent terrestrial concentrations of these higher energies as embodied through a hidden tradition and the small numbers of highly evolved human beings that constitute it. Bennett classifies such beings as “saints” because they have transcended selfhood and speaks of them, collectively, as “belonging to the future soul of Humanity called the **Communion of Saints**.”<sup>118</sup> In *The Dramatic Universe* Volume IV Bennett calls this collectivity the “Hidden Directorate”<sup>119</sup> and in *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* he uses the term “inner circle”<sup>120</sup>: the reader will recognize the idea of the terrestrial esoteric centre. It is Bennett's view that such centres have in the remote past existed at several locations in the world at which certain specific developmental lines were pursued under the guidance of the demiurgic intelligences.<sup>121</sup> Within historical times, Bennett associates the activities in Central Asia of the Khwajagan (“Masters of Wisdom”) – whom he represents as exemplifying a kind of ‘higher’ or ‘trans-Islamic’ Sufism<sup>122</sup> – with the Sarmoun Brotherhood.<sup>123</sup> It is Bennett's view that the ‘rumours of

the Sarmoun Brotherhood' – which he suggests originated in Babylonian times and subsequently migrated to Central Asia<sup>124</sup> – constitute traces of a genuine terrestrial esoteric centre. And it is the Sarmoun Brotherhood which Gurdjieff indicates to be the esoteric authority behind his own activities. The interconnected arguments of Bennett's last two books – *The Masters of Wisdom* and *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* – tend towards the conclusions that Gurdjieff *did* have such a connection<sup>125</sup> and, hence, that a terrestrial centre has existed in recent times in Central Asia.<sup>126</sup>

Expanding on the above, Bennett's picture of the terrestrial esoteric centre can be understood as having the following major features:

- (i) It exists in a geographical sense – if it is not actually a 'monastery' (or *tekke*) then it is at least a concentration of advanced beings within a particular general location. (His favoured location encompasses northern Afghanistan and southern Turkestan. – I.e., a region roughly coincident with the ancient Kingdom of Bactria.)
- (ii) Such a centre is 'staffed' by people of advanced spiritual development. Their spiritual status may be said to anticipate that possible for humanity as a whole in so far as that they embody and channel the "Conscious", "Creative" and even the "Unifying" higher cosmic energies. Bennett calls such people *psychoteleios* – a word which signifies that they have direct connection to the will emanating from higher levels.<sup>127</sup>
- (iii) This direct connection of the *psychoteleios* means that they work in close cooperative harmony with the demiurgic intelligences with whom they share submission to the higher plan (Great Work).<sup>128</sup> (In this connection it is important to note that Bennett's idea of a terrestrial esoteric centre or centres does not mean that *psychoteleios* people are only to be found in such a place. Moreover, mutual

connection to the *higher levels and purposes – i.e., to the non-manifest aspect of the esoteric centre* – would ensure harmony between such beings wherever they arise.<sup>129</sup>

(iv) The terrestrial task of the psychoteleios is to help in the fulfilment of the Great Work through the local Great Work and in specific relation to the needs of different times and places. As indicated above, they play a largely unseen role in the inception of civilizations (the purposes of which are to channel energies and guide collective evolution in specific ways). For instance, Bennett suggests that our present civilization – which he sees as having commenced with the Renaissance – was inspired from an esoteric sub-centre which he thinks existed at Bursa (in south west Turkey) during the fifteenth century.<sup>130</sup> However, Bennett emphasizes that their influence is not all of this sublime inaugural nature: he states that at times of adverse conditions they act to help maintain the collective tolerability of life and to *preserve knowledge* so that it will be available later.<sup>131</sup>

(v) Lastly, the idea that the esoteric centre sends out *emissaries* to accomplish specific tasks is fundamental to Bennett's ideas about Gurdjieff.<sup>132</sup>

### ***Bennett's understanding of the Fourth Way.***

Points (iii), (iv) and (v) indicate a picture of what Bennett understood by the term “fourth way”. For him it seems that the fourth way is, in its largest sense, a hidden tradition which is synonymous with the conscious cooperation between the psychoteleios and the higher powers (–i.e., the demiurgic intelligence and that which stands above them) towards the fulfilment of the local Great Work. This can be simplified to the statement:

*The fourth way is conscious human participation in the local Great Work.*



This is a definition of the fourth way in its largest aspect. The actual work of the fourth way changes in accordance with the unfoldment of the plan – on a scale of millennia – and specific needs arising within civilizations and smaller sub-groups. Schools *of* the fourth way are established in relation to such needs by people of the psychoteleios order (who may be ‘emissaries’ sent out from a geographical esoteric centre). From Bennett's writings it is possible to discern three interconnected scales of significance for fourth way schools:

- (i) In direct relation to the local Great Work one aspect of the task of a fourth way school can be understood as to act as a focus for the generation, storage and transformation of higher energies.<sup>133</sup>
- (ii) Bennett calls those who participate in and are taught in fourth way schools *psychokinetic*. This term signifies that, unlike the mass of society who are *psychostatic*, they are on a path of objective inner development and change. Such objectivity stems from their connection – through their teacher – to the higher, psychoteleios, source.<sup>134</sup> It can be said that the degree of personal connectedness of a person to the fourth way is in direct proportion to their ability to *serve consciously*; and this, in turn, is in direct proportion to their degree of inner development.<sup>135</sup>
- (iii) In relation to external society Bennett's representation of the role of fourth way schools may, for convenience, be thought of as analogous to that of sex cells in organic life<sup>136</sup>: although they are very small compared to the organism and may pass unnoticed on that scale, they embody the power of regeneration whereby a new organism – i.e., civilization – can be initiated.<sup>137</sup>

### ***Bennett as exemplar of the fourth way.***

The foregoing description of Bennett's understanding of the significance of fourth way schools in relation to the local Great Work brings us back to Bennett's actual situation. As described previously, Bennett represented his International Academy for Continuous Education as a fourth way school of which he was the teacher.<sup>138</sup> All of the above three points provide a general description of the context within which he saw himself as working. I will now show how these ideas were exemplified in his school.

Bennett was consistently forthright when it came to contextualizing his teaching enterprise in relation to the fourth way. In 1973 he said:

This period is the greatest opportunity that has existed for many thousands of years for the Work [fourth way activity]. Not for thousands of years has there been such a need for people who are able to work. The reason for this is that the transition from one system to another can only come about through the third force. It cannot come from...[either]...the governed or the power possessors.<sup>139</sup>

He was referring to his belief that we are on the threshold of a new epoch in the collective evolution of humanity (–i.e., as required by the higher plan).<sup>140</sup> He thought that the successful emergence of this new epoch required a transition to a radically new social order on a global scale. It is for this reason that he saw an exceptional need for people with the capacity to *work*<sup>141</sup>; and it is within this specific context that he saw his school as existing.

In Bennett's view the “Hidden Directorate” (psychoteleios order) and the “Higher Powers” share a transcendent perspective on this transition, but they cannot act directly on the psychostatic majority. The psychokinetic order who are capable of participating in the Great Work are necessary to conduct the transformative influence

into society as a whole. Bennett states that it was in response to the promptings of the Higher Powers that he established his school<sup>142</sup>; and its most fundamental educative aim was to train others to be similarly responsive.<sup>143</sup> – This is in line with the definition of the fourth way, established above, as conscious participation in the (local) Great Work. – He referred to such direct and consistent connection to the higher plan as being the most esoteric aspect of psychokinetic work<sup>144</sup> (by definition, this capacity would bring a person to the threshold of the psychoteleios order<sup>145</sup>).

While it is only the highest echelon of the psychokinetic order which possesses this *consistent* connection to the higher plan, the other participants in a school have definite contributions to make.<sup>146</sup> The fourth way school plays a mediating role in the overall scheme: it draws sustenance from higher levels, but this is not merely for its own ends – it must also have *some kind* of connection by means of which to influence the wider culture. It was Bennett's intention that, through their training, his students should become exemplars of a new kind of social relationship which would supersede individualism: this was *group consciousness*.<sup>147</sup> At a practical level he hoped that his students would either carry this mode of being into their activities in the wider world, or become participants in a 'new age community' which would provide an example to the world.<sup>148 149</sup>

Openness and submission to the higher powers is the deepest and most advanced aspect of psychokinetic work; and transmitting new practical modes into the world is its most external aspect. In between these is the fourth way work of *transforming psycho-spiritual energies*. Bennett states that it is only when people become deeply engaged in their own inner transformative work that they begin to make a contribution at this level.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, it was his stated hope that some of his students would

reach this point such that they could contribute, in this non-visible way, to the stabilization and progress of the collective situation.<sup>151</sup>

***“Deep continuity” and the fourth way.***

I have emphasized the importance which Bennett attached to the idea that those with responsibility for the continuance of Gurdjieff's work must remain connected to its higher purpose (fourth way context); and I have highlighted this factor as central to the evolution of his “deep continuity claim”. It is now possible to sketch out a provisional picture of the three-way relationship which Bennett seems to indicate as existing between: (i) himself and his own work; (ii) Gurdjieff and *his* work; and (iii) the Great Work, the fourth way and the hidden directorate.

It is clear that Bennett understood both his own work and that of Gurdjieff as subsumed within the fourth way. Bennett's representation of this ‘meta-tradition’ has been paraphrased as *conscious human participation in the Great Work*. Specific fourth way schools ultimately derive their authority from higher levels of existence where the plan of the local Great Work originates. With regard to terrestrial authority, Bennett's position seems to be that the teacher of a particular school may be, but is not necessarily, an ‘emissary’ from the esoteric centre. And, in his view, this terrestrial esoteric centre – or hidden directorate – is probably, but not necessarily or exclusively, geographically located.

Turning now to Gurdjieff, Bennett appears to have been in no doubt concerning the authenticity of his position as the founder of a school. As we have seen, he inclines strongly to the view that Gurdjieff's school was authorized by a geographically located psychoteleios ‘centre’.<sup>152</sup> However, even if this is not *literally* the case,<sup>153</sup> Bennett's belief that Gurdjieff himself belonged to the psychoteleios

order<sup>154</sup> would, in its own terms, leave no doubt concerning his connection to the higher plan and his consequent mandate to initiate a field of fourth way action. He saw Gurdjieff as having had a deep perception of the human condition and of the specific and compounded spiritual difficulties that would face people in the latter part of the twentieth century.<sup>155</sup> In response to these perceptions *Gurdjieff inaugurated a field of fourth way action*. This field, while unique in terms of the people whom he prepared, the ideas which he presented and the exercises which he established, was nevertheless in harmony with a larger scale operation that was taking place.<sup>156</sup> In this view Gurdjieff's fourth way school is to be seen as an important contribution – or 'sub-field' – within the over all fourth way action of its time.

Further elaborating this model, Bennett can be understood as saying that his own development took place *within* Gurdjieff's 'sub-field of fourth way action': Gurdjieff had created the 'environment' within which his inner efforts could be fruitful and within which he could establish his own contribution.<sup>157</sup> As suggested previously, the dynamic and agenda of his search can be seen as *fundamentally Gurdjieffian* even though the search itself led him, at times, away from Gurdjieffian forms and resulted in irreconcilable estrangement from the orthodox lineage. This is the view that he himself indicates.<sup>158</sup> From the beginning of the 'post-Gurdjieff era' it was his belief that Gurdjieff was not to be seen as an isolated phenomenon, but that his teachings should be understood in connection to a larger scale of action.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, he interpreted Gurdjieff as having charged him with an obligation to act on (and deepen) his understanding of the true nature of the work.

This model of growth within the 'Gurdjieff fourth way field' can serve to reconcile the two authority dimensions (Bennett as successor of Gurdjieff and Bennett as servant of the higher powers). His autobiographical accounts can be understood as

saying that his faithfulness to his own understanding of Gurdjieff's teaching and its requirements eventually brought him into contact with the higher authority of Gurdjieff's teaching such that he became a source in his own right. This, if accepted, is *lineage not by temporal succession but through right understanding*. However, this is definitely not to say that Bennett's actual contact with Gurdjieff was unnecessary or irrelevant. Clearly this is not the case. Bennett could not have established himself within Gurdjieff's 'field' if he had not been directly taught by him. Moreover, even when he gained independent connection to the higher authority, his aims were still framed in terms of his understanding of Gurdjieff's purposes and his own sense of direct obligation. That is to say, his own work was sited within, or at least considerably overlapping, the Gurdjieff 'fourth way sub-field' and this emphasizes the significance of his specific connection to him. Nevertheless, this situation can be understood as having existed by virtue of the dimension of *deep continuity* which had been simultaneously the main guiding principle and the fulfilment of his search over a twenty year period.

***Conclusion: implications and questions.***

The three-way relationship, or 'deep continuity model', which Bennett indicates can be paraphrased in the proposition:

*Gurdjieff inaugurated a field of fourth way action within the Great Work and Bennett established himself and grew within this field to the point where he attained his own direct connection to the higher authority.*

Taken at face value this proposition could be seen as answering the question of lineage and continuity in the fourth way. However, there are three crucial ways in

which it is necessary to question such a conclusion. The first of these concerns the status of the evidence from which the deep continuity model is constructed; the second relates to the explanatory power of the model with regard to the vicissitudes of Bennett's search; and the third has to do with implications of the model, both for Gurdjieff's other pupils and reflecting on Bennett himself.

The question of the status of the evidence involves two dimensions – one theoretical (i.e., to do with Bennett's *ideas*) and the other personal (i.e., to do with Bennett himself). With regard to the first of these it will (in subsequent chapters) be necessary to examine in some detail the extent to which Bennett's ideas, that I have presented as underpinning his understanding of the fourth way, can be understood as consistent with Gurdjieff's doctrines.<sup>160</sup> Most crucially, it will be necessary to establish whether or not Bennett's ideas of the *Great Work* and of the potential role of humanity are consistent with Gurdjieff's theological and cosmographic<sup>161</sup> presentations.<sup>162</sup> Specifically it will be necessary to ask: (a) whether support can be found (in Gurdjieff's teaching) for Bennett's assertion of the central and unique significance of Christ; and (b) to what extent Gurdjieff's teaching supports Bennett's representation of higher spiritual authority in both its celestial (higher powers) and terrestrial (psychoteleios, hidden directorate) aspects. It will also be necessary to establish whether or not Gurdjieff's teaching offers justification for Bennett's identification of help and grace as important dimensions of the individual path.

Over and above the theoretical structure of Bennett's position (but related to the last point) stands his personal claim to have attained the level of spiritual development necessary to function as the leader of a fourth way school. The question arises, had he, *in terms consistent with Gurdjieff's teaching*, reached the level that is indicated by his authority claim? Bennett himself provided much autobiographical data

concerning his spiritual development both before and after Gurdjieff's death. And Gurdjieff left a considerable body of ideas relating to 'spiritual developmental psychology'. This latter was neither provided in a 'pre-packaged' form nor was it intended for systematization<sup>163</sup>; nevertheless, I will demonstrate that, by cross-referencing the different schemes and allegories which he gave, a fairly detailed and coherent map can be constructed indicating the characteristics, requirements and obligations of the different levels and transitions.<sup>164</sup> By applying this map to Bennett's autobiographical account it will be possible to contextualize and evaluate his experiences in Gurdjieffian terms.

Turning now to questions relating to the explanatory power of the model with regard to Bennett's search, it is possible to demonstrate a strong parallelism between Bennett's journey through the different phases of his post-Gurdjieff search and the stages of his inner development.<sup>165</sup> Hence, the latter – as explicated within the framework of Gurdjieffian spiritual psychology – can be expected to shed light on the course of the former. (The idea that help and grace are under emphasized complements to effort and discipline will prove to be of crucial importance here.) His different departures would be partially validated to the extent that they can be explained in these terms.

However, it will also be necessary to ask how far the Subud phase, and the other inputs, can be explained in terms of the deep continuity model in its 'collective' aspect of *progress and development of the 'fourth way sub-field'*. Can the developmental deep continuity model be seen as adequate explanation and justification of the radical change of orientation that was involved in embracing Subud? Bennett's narration of this episode is (as recorded *before* his break with Subud) undoubtedly compatible with the deep continuity frame of reference, but was



the three year Subud experiment in any way ‘Gurdjieffian’ even in these broad terms? – This question is especially poignant in view of the fact that he later considered the *extent* of his involvement with Subud to have been a misjudgement. – In addition to doctrinal comparisons, an answer to these questions will be approached through evaluation of Bennett's personal interpretation of Gurdjieff's purposes and intentions for the future unfoldment of his teaching.<sup>166</sup> Emphasis will also be placed on autobiographical evidence (concerning the early to mid-nineteen fifties) relating to the heavy weight of responsibility that he felt as a work leader.<sup>167</sup>

Turning now to the implications of the model, it will be necessary to ask whether this idea of ‘lineage between teacher and pupil through deep continuity in relation to transcendent spiritual authority’ necessarily excludes conventional and externally verifiable lineage. There is no doubt that Bennett's position is supported by Gurdjieff's fundamental assertion that the fourth way is *discontinuous* – i.e., that it does not have an historically continuous institutional form. But it might well be that this principle is only meant to refer to a larger historical scale and is not applicable to the time scale of the development of a particular school (or ‘sub-field’). An assertion that each succeeding ‘generation’ within a particular ‘sub-field of fourth way activity’ has to regenerate connection to the higher purpose and authority does not necessarily preclude a degree of institutional continuity. Moreover, it must be taken into account that Gurdjieff is generally believed to have had definite aims for the continuation of his work<sup>168</sup>; and, whatever tasks he might have transmitted to particular individuals, some kind of *institutional continuity* seems to have been envisaged. In the light of these considerations the question arises: why did Bennett find it necessary to search outside the ‘Gurdjieff sub-field’ in order to fulfil deep continuity? More specifically, (why) was it necessary for Bennett to be separate from the Foundation?<sup>169</sup> – What

perspective (intellectual and spiritual) led him to believe that the possibilities which Gurdjieff had invested in his senior pupils were inadequate to fulfil the necessities of the situation? – And, is there anything to suggest that such a situation (of crisis following the teacher's death) is generalizable to other, although they be hypothetical, 'fourth way situations' or was it unique to the post-Gurdjieff situation?

The questions and perspectives which have been raised above will be explored in detail in subsequent chapters. However, the next chapter examines in more detail the purposes and explicit antecedents of Bennett's fourth way school (the International Academy for Continuous Education). Specifically, it further examines the relationship between 'Bennett as a pupil of Gurdjieff' and 'Bennett as a spiritual master in his own right under the guidance of the higher powers'.

## Notes and References to Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>G.I.Gurdjieff (1877?-1949), whose father was Greek and mother Armenian, spent his childhood in Kars, Armenia which was then under Russian control (Gurdjieff, *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.41). His search for real knowledge concerning “the precise significance, in general, of the life process on earth...and, in particular, of the aim of human life..” commenced at an early age (Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p13); and he attributes this in part to certain formative influences – notably his father, his first tutor and his paternal grandmother (see the early chapters of Gurdjieff's *Meetings With Remarkable Men*; and *Beelzebub*, pp.27-8) – who taught him never to be content with ‘stock answers’ or ordinary and routine ways of doing things: in short, *not to become mechanical*. The battle against man's inherent tendency towards automatic, and hence unconscious, behaviour was central to his own mature teaching (see, e.g., Ouspensky, *ibid.*, pp.219-21). He travelled widely during the period of his search for esoteric teachings and experimentation, most notably in Central Asia, where it is possible that he contacted one or more secret brotherhoods (e.g., the Sarmoun brotherhood: see *ibid.*, Chapter 7). It is also speculated that such a brotherhood charged Gurdjieff with a mission to bring teachings to the West. (“I am small compared with those that sent me.” – A.R.Orage quoting Gurdjieff in C.S.Nott's *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.31)

His biography does not become certain until c.1914-15 when he commenced teaching his psychological and cosmological ideas to groups in Moscow and St. Petersburg. P.D.Ouspensky (1878-1947) became a pupil of Gurdjieff in 1915 (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, Chapter 1). Ouspensky came to London in 1921 (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.384) and it was through him that interest in Gurdjieff's teaching was initially aroused in England (see James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, pp.219-31) – although following Ouspensky's separation from Gurdjieff in 1924 most of these people, accepting Ouspensky as their teacher, were forbidden to have anything to do with Gurdjieff (Bennett, *Witness*, p.126). Following the Russian revolution Gurdjieff's escape to the West took him to:—

— Tiflis, Georgia (1919-20) where the “Gurdjieff movements” and sacred dancing first became a predominant aspect of his teaching (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.380).

— Istanbul (1920-1; Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.382-3).

— Germany and briefly England (1921-2) whilst searching for suitable premises in which to house his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.384).

Gurdjieff and his retinue arrived in Paris in 1922 and took possession of the Prieure des Basses Loges near Fontainebleau in November of that year (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.385). The training according to Gurdjieff's methods and under his close supervision was sustained at a high level of intensity throughout 1923 and the first half of 1924 (see: Webb, *ibid.*, pp.236-64; C.S.Nott, *The Teachings of Gurdjieff*, pp. 43-60; and Bennett, *Witness*, pp. 103 and 105-12), with the exception of Winter 1923-4 when Gurdjieff visited the U.S.A. with his senior pupils to give demonstrations of the sacred dances and lectures (C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.6 *et sequa*). It was at this time that

A.R.Orage (1873-1934), who had come to Gurdjieff through Ouspensky (C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, pp. 27-8), came to the fore as a pupil and exponent. Orage led Gurdjieff groups in the U.S.A. until 1931, establishing a basis of interest (Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, pp.163-4 and p.235) which was later capitalized by Ouspensky and his wife – Sophia Grigorievna Ouspensky (known as “Madame Ouspensky”; 1874-1963) – from 1941 (C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.159 *et sequa* and pp.189-96).

As a result of Gurdjieff's near fatal motor accident (5.7.24) most of the pupils were sent away (C.S.Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, pp.83-4) and Gurdjieff turned his attention to literature as a means to propagate his message (Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.41). His writing period lasted until c.1933 and resulted in the 1,238 page *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (published 1950), *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (1963), *Life Is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'* (1975, but never published in full) and *Herald Of Coming Good* (Paris, 1933; subsequently repudiated). The Prieuré underwent a brief renaissance in 1928 and 1929 (Bennett, *ibid.*, p.174), but the intense collective tempo of the earlier period was never re-established (Webb, *ibid.*, p.391); the Prieuré was sold in 1933 (Webb, *ibid.*, p.430). Gurdjieff made several visits to the U.S.A. – which he appears to have regarded as an important source of pupils and of funds – between the mid-1920s and 1939 (Webb, *ibid.*, pp.364-71, 412-3 and 419-25); his final visit was in January 1949 (Bennett, *Witness*, pp.249-55). During the late 1930s and the years of the Second World War Gurdjieff devoted himself to the tuition of small groups of promising pupils (Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.232). By 1948 with communications re-established in Europe and with the U.S.A. Gurdjieff's flat in Paris became a gathering point for many disparate groups of followers all of whom craved contact with the originator of the teaching. Following Ouspensky's death the flow to Paris was joined by many of his pupils who had been left ‘without a master’ (C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, pp.238-40; Bennett, *Witness*, pp.244-5).

<sup>2</sup>It is possible that Sir Paul Dukes's “Prince Ozay”, by whom he was taught in St.Petersburg in 1913 was Gurdjieff. (Paul Dukes, *The Unending Quest*, Chapter Seven. See James Moore, *Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth*, p.74.) In England Dukes was subsequently a friend of P.D.Ouspensky “with whom I used to sit up long nights discussing mysticism, in particular the system of G.I.Gurdjieff, undoubtedly one of the great living teachers...” (Dukes, *ibid.*, p.177).

<sup>3</sup>Kathleen Speeth, ‘Gurdjieff’ in Tart ed., *Transpersonal Psychologies*, p.283.

<sup>4</sup>See *ISOM*, pp.45-50 for a basic definition of the “fourth way” in relation to the ‘other three ways’ – the ways of the “fakir”, “monk” and “yogi”. For the purposes of the present chapter and for the thesis as a whole the term “fourth way” will be primarily used to designate the context of lineage and transmission within which Gurdjieff, and subsequently others, have located their spiritual endeavours.

<sup>5</sup>*ISOM*, p.312.

<sup>6</sup>*ISOM*, pp.201-2.

<sup>7</sup>*ISOM*, p.204. – See Chapter Three for an account of Gurdjieff's fundamental distinction between conscious and mechanical influences.

<sup>8</sup>See Chapter Six where I argue that this was effectively the situation of Ouspensky and his followers: Ouspensky severed his connection to Gurdjieff – and, hence, to the esoteric centre – and attempted to teach that which he took to be Gurdjieff's teaching (“the System”) under his own authority.

<sup>9</sup>*ISOM*, p.313. – Gurdjieff lists occultism, Rosicrucianism, and alchemy as examples of such vestigial teachings. He tells us that the distorted information which issues from these sources is useful to the spiritual seeker at an elementary level. (*ISOM*, p.313.)

<sup>10</sup>Gurdjieff's quasi-autobiographical *Meetings With Remarkable Men* is the most obvious source of such hints. However, it can be argued that such hints are also deeply embedded in the structure of his *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. I explore, and attempt to assess the status of, Gurdjieff's literary *indications* concerning his ‘connection to the esoteric centre’ in Chapter Four.

<sup>11</sup>Perry's argument amounts to the assertion that Gurdjieff either gained his power from a ‘degenerate school’ (e.g., Mongolian Shamanism or Shamanistically orientated Yesevi Sufism) or that he had a renegade relationship with a genuine tradition the teaching of which he himself has perverted. Either way, Perry represents Gurdjieff as a man of unusual psychic development, but not of spiritual advancement. (See *Gurdjieff In the Light of Tradition*, esp. pp.63-4) Webb's account converges to the view that Gurdjieff's elaborate psychological and cosmological scheme was an eclectic construction from known sources (e.g., the cabbala and material generally available in the Western “occult revival” of the nineteenth century – See *The Harmonious Circle*, pp.499-542) and that its remedial aims were, in reality, of a more modest nature than the scheme itself suggests. (See *ibid.*, pp.543-573.)

<sup>12</sup>The structure of Gurdjieff's spiritual developmental psychology is the subject of Chapter Five.

<sup>13</sup>Perry, *Gurdjieff In the Light of Tradition*, p.8.

<sup>14</sup>*ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>15</sup>In speaking of a broadly phenomenological approach I am drawing on the tradition of phenomenology of religion as delineated by Ninian Smart in, e.g., *The Phenomenon of Religion*. This perspective places primary emphasis on the understandings and intentions of the participants in a religious situation (*ibid.*, pp.42-3). As such, I would argue that it is especially appropriate to a situation of *esoteric spirituality* where, in terms of Smart's six dimensions of religion (*ibid.*, p.43), it is the *experiential* and the *doctrinal* dimensions that are primary. In so far as, in the esoteric situation, the understandings and intentions of the participants can be known the *empathic* phenomenological approach is of particular value to the outsider wishing to gain insight into the nature of the tradition. The approach involves a degree of suspension of judgement in order to allow the phenomenon (‘the Gurdjieff tradition’) to speak for itself. Only in this way can its internal tensions and overall coherence (or lack of it) be understood.

<sup>16</sup>The actual emphasis that people placed on this dimension (Gurdjieff's supposed connection to the esoteric centre) and the way in which it is interpreted will prove to

be important determining factors with regard to the development of the teaching after Gurdjieff's death.

<sup>17</sup>These matters are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>18</sup> (With regard to Bennett's biography the reader is referred to my chronology – see Appendix 1.) Bennett had already met Gurdjieff in Istanbul in 1921 (*Witness*, pp. 54-61; he is not precise about the date of the meeting). Prior to his meeting with Gurdjieff he also, independently, met Ouspensky (*ibid.*, pp. 52-3) and another Gurdjieff pupil, Thomas de Hartmann (*ibid.*, p.54), without hearing of the name Gurdjieff. In *Witness* he presents these as three separate strands suggesting an inevitability about his future involvement. Bennett was at this time head of a section of military intelligence in Istanbul (see *Witness*, Chapter 2 'The Intelligence Service', pp.12-26). Subsequent to writing his account in *Witness* (1962) Bennett revealed that he had first heard the name Gurdjieff through military intelligence in connection with suspicions about possible former activities as a Tsarist agent in India (see *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.90). At Bennett's first meeting with Gurdjieff, the latter affirmed some of his theoretical conclusions about 'higher dimensions' and the way in which these determine the possibilities of man and also told him

“You have the possibility of changing, but I must warn you that it will not be easy. You are still full of the idea that you can do what you like. In spite of all your study of free will and determinism, you have not yet understood that so long as you remain in this place, you can do nothing at all.....”  
(*Witness*, p.60)

In fact Bennett did not, at this time, see participation in Gurdjieff's teaching as a serious possibility for him (*ibid.*, p.60-1). Bennett records that he attended Ouspensky's meetings in London during June of 1921 after which he returned to Istanbul (*ibid.*, pp.86-8). His serious participation in Gurdjieff's teachings began in June of 1922 when he commenced regular attendance at Ouspensky's meetings (*ibid.*, p.94). Bennett attended Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at Fontainebleau briefly in February of 1923 (*ibid.*, p.103) and for a month during August of 1923 (*ibid.*, p.105). Bennett did not meet Gurdjieff again until August 1948 (*ibid.*, p.236). However, it is arguable that Gurdjieff's ideas – all be they transmitted through Ouspensky – continued to be the major influence on his life.

<sup>19</sup>See Chapter Six.

<sup>20</sup>James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.399.

<sup>21</sup>Bennett, *Witness*, p.153, p.163 and p.167.

<sup>22</sup>Bennett, *Witness*, pp.206-7.

<sup>23</sup>Coombe Springs, a large house with grounds in Kingston, was the base for Bennett's teaching activities from 1945 and for his Institute for the Comparative Study of History Philosophy and the Sciences from its inauguration in 1946. Coombe Springs was given to Idries Shah in 1966.

<sup>24</sup>See James Moore, *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, p.329 and p.321.

<sup>25</sup>See James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, pp.283-5.

<sup>26</sup>See James Moore, *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, pp.332-3.

<sup>27</sup>See C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.103 and Moore, *ibid.*, p.332 and p.335.

<sup>28</sup>See Moore, *ibid.*, pp.151-3 and p.331.

<sup>29</sup>Madame Ouspensky was noted for her challenging and confrontational way of dealing with her pupils (see, e.g., Bennett in *Witness*, pp.158-9 and p.165; and Robert S. de Ropp in *The Warrior's Way*).

<sup>30</sup>The composer Thomas de Hartmann is particularly noted for his musical collaboration with Gurdjieff.

Aside from the Ouspenskys and the de Hartmanns, the most notable of Gurdjieff's early pupils who travelled with him from Russia was Dr Leonid Stjoernval (d.1938). Dr Stjoernval was Gurdjieff's right hand man throughout the 1920s. Moore describes him as "...that decent Petrine rock on whom no church was destined to be builded" – Madame de Salzmänn became Gurdjieff's 'Saint Peter' (Moore, *ibid.*, p.268).

<sup>31</sup>Madame de Salzmänn and her husband Alexander (d.1934) joined Gurdjieff in 1919 in Tiflis (Moore, *ibid.*, p.326).

<sup>32</sup>See Chapter Two.

<sup>33</sup>I refer to these engineered estrangements in Chapter Six.

<sup>34</sup>With the exception of Madame Ouspensky and Madame de Salzmänn herself, Thomas (d.1956) and Olga (d.1979) de Hartmann were the only of Gurdjieff's first generation senior pupils to outlive him. However, although they joined him in 1916 and at no stage forsook the teaching, they did not see him after 1930.

<sup>35</sup>This was founded with her husband Alexander de Salzmänn in 1932. They had also established a Frankfurt group in 1928. (See Webb, *ibid.*, p.433.)

<sup>36</sup>Roles took over Ouspensky's 'Society for the Study of Normal Man' which he subsequently renamed the 'Society for the Study of Normal Psychology' (Joyce Collin-Smith, *Call No Man Master*, p.47.)

<sup>37</sup>Bennett, *Witness*, p.233.

<sup>38</sup>See Bennett, *ibid.*, pp.232-3 and p.245; and C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.239.

<sup>39</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *ibid.*, pp.44-7. It can be noted that in his transcendence of the "System" Collin may be seen as a more authentic successor to Ouspensky than the highly conservative Roles: At a meeting on February 24th 1947 Ouspensky had replied to Kenneth Walker's question "Do you mean, Mr. Ouspensky, that you have abandoned the System?" with the iconoclastic "There is no System." And seven months later (a fortnight before his death) he told his senior pupils that "they must not be afraid to take second step." They must reconstruct everything for themselves "—from the very beginning." (Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.449 and p.458.)

<sup>40</sup>Rodney Collin, *The Herald of Harmony*, pp.16-19.

<sup>41</sup>Bennett, *Witness*, pp.232-3 and 243-4.

<sup>42</sup>James Moore, *ibid.*, p.293.

<sup>43</sup>C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.159.

<sup>44</sup>The solidity and seniority of Madame Ouspensky's position is made clear from the nature of her relationship with Madame de Salzmänn and the de Hartmanns. (See Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, *Our Life With Mr Gurdjieff* (definitive edition), p.270; Webb, *ibid.*, p.476; and Bennett, *Witness*, p.284 and p.326.

<sup>45</sup>Bennett, *Witness*, p.254.

<sup>46</sup>It should be made clear that, in the first instance at least, these three appointments were as literary executors with regard to the publication of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. However, it must also be noted that Lord Pentland subsequently became the recognized leader of the Work in the U.S.A. and René Zuber emerged as a 'second in command' to Madame de Salzmänn. The untenability of Bennett's position as a mainstream Work leader will be discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>47</sup>See Chapter Six.

<sup>48</sup>See, e.g., Moore, *ibid.*, p.336.

<sup>49</sup>Bennett, *Witness*, pp.74-5.

<sup>50</sup>Other senior figures involved with the American Foundation included Willem Nyland and Paul and Naomi Anderson all of whom had been pupils of Orage and of Gurdjieff (Paul Anderson had been resident at the Priuré during the late 1920s). Both of these parties subsequently broke away from the Foundation to establish their own groups (Nyland: 'The Institute for Religious Development'; and the Andersons: 'The American Institute for Continuing Education'). (See Kathleen Riordan Speeth's *The Gurdjieff Work*, pp.103-4.)

<sup>51</sup>Thomas C. Daly, 'Foreword' to *Our Life With Mr. Gurdjieff* (definitive edition), p.viii.

<sup>52</sup>Moore, 'Gurdjieff Groups in Britain' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, 2, p.3.

<sup>53</sup>Nicoll's *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* (five volumes) seems to hold a position in the Gurdjieff canon which is third after Gurdjieff's own works and Ouspensky's account of Gurdjieff's teachings from the period 1915 to 1917 *ISOM*.

<sup>54</sup>James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.477.

<sup>55</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *ibid.*, p.49.

<sup>56</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *ibid.*, pp.142-3. Roles had previously (1957) had a brief flirtation with Subud before deciding that it was dangerous. He had involved only twenty of his most trusted – i.e., orthodoxly Ouspenskian – pupils in the experiment; however, many of these people subsequently left him to remain in Subud. (*ibid.*, p.92.)

<sup>57</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *ibid.*, pp.147-8.



<sup>58</sup>I.e., because Ouspensky's own position as a transmitter of Gurdjieff's teaching was not valid – see Chapter Six.

<sup>59</sup>According to Joyce Collin-Smith, Roles “...felt that TM bore all the signs of springing from the same source as the Fourth Way.” However, he apparently received no encouragement in this belief from the Maharishi who “...was not interested in their ‘system’ which he thought was a hotchpotch of bits and pieces of old teachings and quite valueless.” (*ibid.*, p.142.)

<sup>60</sup>Mema Dickins acted as a ‘channel’ for various past masters of the fourth way including Ouspensky (see Joyce Collin-Smith's *Call No Man Master*, e.g., pp.72-3).

<sup>61</sup>However, his major writings (particularly *The Theory of Eternal Life* and *The Theory of Celestial Influence*) have attracted considerable interest.

<sup>62</sup>There is evidence that pupils of Collin subsequently established Gurdjieff-orientated groups in Central and South America and in the U.S.A. (see James Moore's ‘The Enneagram: A Developmental Study’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.5, 3, p.2; and Kathleen Riordan Speeth, *The Gurdjieff Work*, p.104).

<sup>63</sup>Bennett was himself in the senior English group of those who had been personal pupils of Gurdjieff; but he was responsible for his own groups of pupils (at different levels) and for the communal work activity at Coombe Springs; however, members of Bennett's groups participated in movements classes in common with other Gurdjieffians.

<sup>64</sup>These issues are discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>65</sup>That is to say, I am not setting out to evaluate these people as spiritual teachers, but only to consider the nature of their relationship to the ‘Gurdjieff tradition’.

<sup>66</sup>Their main teaching text is *The Fourth Way*, a record of Ouspensky's question and answer sessions.

<sup>67</sup>See Chapter Five for a full discussion of this term.

<sup>68</sup>James Moore, ‘Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, 2, pp.2-3.

<sup>69</sup>See, e.g., John C.Lilly and Joseph E.Hart ‘The Arica Training’ in Tart ed. *Transpersonal Psychologies*, p.331; and Kathleen Riordan Speeth *The Gurdjieff Work*, p.104.

<sup>70</sup>See Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of Gurdjieff's idea of the “esoteric centre” and his allusions to its character, location and his contacts with it.

<sup>71</sup>See especially *The Teachers of Gurdjieff* by Rafael Lefort (almost certainly a pseudonym, quite possibly for Shah himself, and an anagram of a/the real effort). See also Omar Burke, ‘Destination Mecca’ in *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1961, esp. p.487.

<sup>72</sup>Chicoine wrote: “Mr. Gurdjieff was a very dear friend of mine. We met many times in secret just after the Second World War.” (Quoted from the first letter of ‘Rishi Dada Narayana’ to Bennett's Institute, dated 24.8.77.) However, Chicoine is known not to have been born until 21st May 1942 (‘Results of Investigation’ – private

investigation commissioned by the 'anti-Chicoine' faction in the Institute (September 1980) – p.6).

<sup>73</sup>See Chicoine's first letter to the Institute (as above). By late 1982 Chicoine was actually referring to himself (among other titles) as “Chief Sarmauni [sic]” (see ‘Making Contact’, an Institute news letter of that period).

<sup>74</sup>“I am the Real Man, the Gurdjieff...” (see first letter to the Institute).

<sup>75</sup>In addition to his claim to be Man No.6, Burton “professed intimacy with Angels” (Moore, ‘Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain’, p.3). Ichazo has received “...instructions from the highest entities such as Metatron, the prince of the archangels...” (The context of this quotation implies that Ichazo has reached the penultimate level of being possible for the human. Moreover, it is stated that individuals and groups engaging in the Arica Training can contact intermediate levels of the angelic hierarchy. – The context is Cabalistic. – See Lilly and Harts' ‘The Arica Training’, in Tart ed. *Transpersonal Psychologies*, p.341.) Despite Chicoine's ‘Sarmoun claim’ – “I have been in a Sarmawn [sic] Powerhouse in Central Asia.” (‘General Message for the Institute from Dadaji’, 4.3.1981) – his main authority claim was based on inward connection to a Hindu discarnate spiritual hierarchy headed by the Adiguru (highest teacher) Dattatreya. (See A.Hodgson, *Crisis In the Search for Truth*, pp.33-4 and pp.93-4.) Chicoine's claim progressed from one of being a humble servant of the hierarchy to that of being the principal contemporary incarnation – “Nirmanachitta” – of Dattatreya himself.

*Gurdjieff's* concepts of, on the one hand angelic/archangelic beings and, on the other, “genuine saints” and “sacred messenger sent from above” and the relationship of these two sets of ideas to that of the “esoteric centre” will be explored in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>76</sup>I will show in Chapter Five that one of the characteristics of the attainment of “Man No.6” (which Burton claims to have) is direct connection to the ‘esoteric centre’ (whatever this is taken to be).

<sup>77</sup>The term “succession” is at this stage problematic. The question of whether a ‘succession’ that derives from contact with the ‘meta-tradition’ takes precedence over one based on straightforward lineal contact is central to the present thesis.

<sup>78</sup>Moore, ‘Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain’, p.3. – Moore speaks of the ‘orthodoxy's’ task in terms of “cherishing specifically Gurdjieffian modes yet remaining open to perennial intimations”. However, while he places specific emphasis on dimensions of the former he makes no reference to examples of the latter. His position seems to be that only by maintaining the purity of the *form* of the teaching can its inner spirit continue to manifest. Although this takes account of both aspects, within the frame of reference I am establishing it must be seen as emphasizing the form of the teaching over its deeper authority and wider context.

<sup>79</sup>For the Foundation, Michel de Salzman writes that “Bennett...had a particular itinerary, being a follower of many teachers in succession and making a mixture of teachings that is difficult to sort out.” But he concedes that at the end of his life Bennett returned “more frankly to what he considered to be the "Gurdjieff way."”

(‘Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature’ in *Parabola*, Vol.5, 3, 1980.) In Chapter Two of the present thesis I give detailed reasons in support of the view that the teaching that was given at Bennett's International Academy for Continuous Education was essentially Gurdjieffian.

<sup>80</sup>*Witness*, pp.375-6. Bennett’s relationship to “the higher powers” is described in more detail in Chapter Two; and their status, in Gurdjieffian terms, is evaluated in Chapter Three.

<sup>81</sup>I establish criteria for judgement in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six I argue that by the end of his life Bennett was, or was on the verge of, Gurdjieff’s “Man No.6”.

<sup>82</sup>See also his earlier *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV: History (1966).

<sup>83</sup>Actually this interest dates back to the 1930s when the need to gain contact with the ‘source of the System’ was part of the agenda of Bennett's teacher, Ouspensky. However, there is a definite distinction between the two situations because Ouspensky believed that Gurdjieff’s contact with the source was incomplete whereas the post-1949 Bennett saw Gurdjieff’s followers as having lost contact with the source when he died.

<sup>84</sup>It seems that, up until her death in 1990, Madame de Salzman's position as, while not exactly *successor* to Gurdjieff, at least the unique and respected chief executor of his spiritual will, was held by the Foundation which she led to be unassailable. The grounds of this attributed unassailability are well summed up by the following quotations from James Moore:

Mme de Salzman's command of Sacred Dance, of music, of Russian — these alone would have elevated her to an unchallengeable position. But beyond Such considerations, Jeanne ‘Begins-to-Understand’ was now, in Gurdjieff's eyes, living proof of the transmissibility of his Work: her inner search, sustained through many vicissitudes since 1919, had brought its law-conformable result, expressible in the words — ‘She is someone!’ (*Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, p.268.)

Jeanne de Salzman — her worth triumphantly reconfirmed in the crucible of the Occupation — had emerged as the chief guarantor of his posterity... (*ibid.*, p.286.)

In the afternoon [two day prior to his death] he delivered his final instructions to Jeanne de Salzman....These are his last recorded words. (*ibid.*, pp.315-6.)

<sup>85</sup>See Moore, ‘Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, 2, (May to September), p.3; and Michel de Salzman ‘Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature’ in *Parabola*, Vol.5, 3, 1980, pp.94.

<sup>86</sup>These ideas are given detailed elaboration in Chapter Two.

<sup>87</sup>*Witness*, p.379.

<sup>88</sup>Bennett stated:

...it was largely through having the benefit of his most extraordinary search and sacrifice that I and others have had possibilities.

...he was a pioneer of extraordinary courage...he tried things that people had not tried before...

Thanks to his having been willing to expose himself to extreme dangers and a kind of suffering that is not easy to understand, things were opened for us.

(*The Way to be Free*, p.31.)

<sup>89</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, p.36; *Witness*, pp.372-3; and *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.3 and p.7. I will demonstrate the extent to which this was the case in Chapter Two.

<sup>90</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, pp.45-6; and *Witness*, p. 372.

<sup>91</sup>Bennett recorded (c.1973) that a week before he died Gurdjieff said to him ““Only you. Only you can repay for all my labours.”” Of his response to this he wrote:

I did not and do not take this as an intimation that I was to be his successor: indeed, the very thought did not occur to me. But I was very clear that he was putting me under an immense obligation....I was bound to ‘repay’ by transmitting all that I had received...

(*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.7)

Nevertheless, this denial (of institutional ‘appointment as *the* successor’) should not distract attention from the implication of a *mandate to continue the work as a successor*. There can be little doubt that Bennett understood this latter perspective as intimately related to the idea of fulfilment of obligation. (See, e.g., *Gurdjieff Today*, p.30 and *Witness*, p.379.)

I discuss Bennett's position in relation to Gurdjieff's intentions for the continuation of his teaching and his perception of his obligations in the immediately post-Gurdjieff era in Chapter Six.

<sup>92</sup>Nor, it is interesting to note, necessarily the non-lineal pretenders. – Pertinently, Chicoine expressed the view that Bennett had been a strong and sincere seeker (especially as compared to many of his followers), but that he had failed to establish full connection to the psychoteleios order. (See, e.g., the Alexandria Foundation pamphlet ‘The Cosmic Vision of J.G.Bennett’, p.18.)

<sup>93</sup>Comparisons will be made between the dimensions of Bennett's Great work idea and Gurdjieff's cosmological, cosmogonical, eschatological and soteriological schemes in Chapter Three.

<sup>94</sup>Bennett writes: “The vertical unitive energy is manifested as Cosmic Love. This is a holy power which enters Existence from Above...” (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, p.,232. – See also *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.100.)

<sup>95</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, pp.338-40. See also *The Masters of Wisdom*, p.77.

<sup>96</sup>*Sacred Images*, p.7. The idea of life as the ‘reconciling principle in creation’ is “is one of the central themes of” *The Dramatic Universe* (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.277). See also *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, pp.166-7 where man, as bearer of selfhood, life and the planetary level of existence in general are connected as the reconciling principle in creation.

<sup>97</sup>Bennett understood Christ as manifesting from what he called the “hyparchic future”. For the present purpose this may be understood as meaning a future that is *predestined*, but not *predetermined*. Thus, when Jesus stated that the Kingdom was at hand Bennett understands him to mean that it awaits those who can anticipate the planned collective evolution of humanity. Moreover, the distinction between *predestined* and *predetermined* is an important one. In Bennett's philosophy the idea of “hazard” is fundamental: although there is a higher predestined plan, there is no predetermined or ensured outcome at the level of existence. This is most crucially the case at the ‘pivotal level’ of human existence: human free will (or its potential) has been given in order that the human should fulfil the Divine Plan and return to the Source as an independent agent. (See Chapter Three for an explanation of Gurdjieffian cosmogony and eschatology.)

<sup>98</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.423.

<sup>99</sup>See, e.g., *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.383 for an alignment of Divine Love, Christ and the “Unitive Energy”.

<sup>100</sup>See the discussion of Gurdjieff’s psychology in Part 1 of Chapter Three.

<sup>101</sup>Bennett developed a system of twelve energies with which to describe the whole of reality from the Divine to the inchoate. These are divided into three groups of four: the material (or hyponomic – inorganic matter); the vital (or autonomic – organic life); and the cosmic (or hypernomic). Human experience is at the border between the vital energies and the cosmic energies. ‘Man as he is’ functions predominantly at the level of the “sensitive energy” (the highest vital energy), but tends to be come under the influence of the lower “automatic energy”; however, it is possible for him to experience the “conscious” and “creative” energies.

<sup>102</sup>It should be noted that the explanation in terms of energies is only one of the ways in which the situation is described. For instance, Bennett speaks of the world of *fact* or *function* (which exists in *time*) and the world of *value* or *being* (which is in the dimension which he calls *eternity*). The ‘salvation of the universe’ requires the reconciliation of these two poles through the action of *will* (which takes place in the time-like dimension which Bennett calls *hyparxis*). This creates the world of *realization* or *harmony* and it is in the context of this task that the human being has a pivotal role to play. In psychocosmological terms individual human development is understood to involve the evolution of higher bodies and connection to higher centres (see Chapters 3 and 5).

<sup>103</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.324.

<sup>104</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.275.

<sup>105</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.276 and *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.96.

<sup>106</sup>Bennett's term “demiurgic intelligence” indicates some equivalence to Plato's *demiurge* which mediated between the absolute, unchanging world of forms and the contingent, transitory world of matter. (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, p.313.)

<sup>107</sup>*Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, p.314.

<sup>108</sup>See Chapter Three (section, ‘Angels, Demiurgic Intelligences and Higher Powers’).

<sup>109</sup>*The Dramatic Universe (Short Guide and Glossary)*, p.20.

<sup>110</sup>See *Witness*, p.368 where, of the period immediately prior to the inspiration to found a school (—i.e., the late nineteen sixties), Bennett writes: “...I began to see that the ‘Higher Powers’ [demiurgic intelligences] cannot work except through man....Synergy [the ideal of the new epoch] is not cooperation with the Demiurgic Essence, but becoming oneself a demiurgic intelligence.

<sup>111</sup>For comparison of the relative statuses of the demiurgic intelligences and human beings see *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.292.

<sup>112</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, IV and *The Masters of Wisdom*.

<sup>113</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe (A Short Guide and Glossary)*, p.27 and *Needs of a New Age Community*, p.10.

<sup>114</sup>Bennett tells us that the “moment” within which the Demiurgic Intelligences work – and hence within which they perceive the development of humanity – is on a scale of thousands and even tens of thousands of years. This must be seen in the context of the fact that they are deemed to have gradually guided the evolution of life as a whole over a periods of tens of millions of years. (See, e.g., *The Masters of Wisdom*, p.41.)

<sup>115</sup>This period is approximately equal to that of the “Platonic Year” and the precession of the equinoxes (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.171). The Great Cycles are defined as “Stages of Human Evolution” (*ibid.*, p.74). Our present Great Cycle is associated with the evolutionary need to surmount the aberration of egoism associated with the human experience of the Creative Energy. This is Bennett's interpretation of the idea of original sin; and, from *an historical point of view*, it is the significance of the Incarnation at the mid-point of the present cycle. (*ibid.*, p.422.)

<sup>116</sup>The “Epoch” is a sub-stage within the Great Cycle, during which all of humanity are guided within a particular “Master Idea” (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.74). Bennett's “Megalanthropic Epoch” commenced around 550 B.C. He associates this with the idea – which arose on a global scale – that spiritual salvation is possible for everyone and not just for the god-king/high priest as had previously been the case during the “Hemitheandric Epoch”. According to Bennett the master idea of the new epoch, which began around the middle of the nineteenth century, is “Synergy” meaning that humanity is now challenged to attain a greater level of cooperation both within itself and in relation to the higher powers.

<sup>117</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, pp.281-2 and cf. pp.171-4.

<sup>118</sup>See *Needs of a New Age Community* (posthumously compiled), pp.17-21 (quotation from p.21).

<sup>119</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.438 (glossary entry).

<sup>120</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.51.

<sup>121</sup>*Masters of Wisdom*, pp.45-51 and *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, pp.259-302.

<sup>122</sup>See, e.g., *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.29.

<sup>123</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, pp.24-50.

<sup>124</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.67.

<sup>125</sup>See especially, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, pp.80-108.

<sup>126</sup>The question of whether or not Gurdjieff can be said to have indicated such connections is discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>127</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, pp.233-274 for expositions of the three main orders of human society – *psychoteleios*, *psychokinetic* and *psychostatic* – and their respective roles and interrelationships.

<sup>128</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.324.

<sup>129</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.263.

<sup>130</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.372.

<sup>131</sup>Bennett's primary example of this is the role of the Kwajagan in Central Asia at the time of the Mongol invasion. (See *The Masters of Wisdom*, pp.138-64.)

<sup>132</sup>Bennett did not shrink from acknowledging the difficulties inherent in attempting to determine Gurdjieff's situation. For instance he points out that Gurdjieff's statements about the fourth way and connection to the esoteric centre stem from the 1915-17 period (recorded by Ouspensky in *ISOM*) and that these ideas did not become a feature of his teaching as transmitted through his own books. (*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.78.) However, he also emphasizes that these latter sources *do* contain references, both explicit and encoded, to visits to brotherhoods existing in Central Asia. (And, I would argue, the structure of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* is designed to indicate that Gurdjieff held a mandate from the esoteric centre.) Moreover, Gurdjieff gave many hints to his pupils as to his own continued relationship to a place and to a teacher and indications that his own work was not to be seen as an isolated phenomenon, but as connected to something much larger. Bennett seems to tend towards the conclusion that Gurdjieff was connected to the higher purpose by virtue of his own degree of inner development and hence was aware of and in harmony with the a broader scale of action, but that he also had specific contact with a terrestrial esoteric centre which had bestowed its blessing on his activity. He writes: "...I think it can safely be said that there is evidence that Gurdjieff did believe that there is, in a fairly strong sense an 'Inner Circle'." (*ibid.*, p.78.)

<sup>133</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, p.46.

<sup>134</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, pp.242-62; see also the posthumously compiled *Needs of a New Age Community*, pp.27-35.

<sup>135</sup>However, this should not be taken as indicating that service can only begin when a certain level of advancement is achieved: Bennett is clear that service is an integral aspect of the work from the very beginning. (See *The Sevenfold Work*, pp.73-81.)

<sup>136</sup>I am borrowing this analogy from Rodney Collin whose views on the role of fourth way schools in the inception of new civilizations were strikingly similar to those of Bennett. Collin compared civilizations to organisms and the individual human beings composing them to cells. He wrote that:

...a certain invisible category of men, with *conscious spirits*, by virtue of which they are connected to other dimensions of the universe,... can influence and uplift tens of thousand and even millions of ordinary men. If we study the scale of history, we see that such men are to ordinary men as a sperm cell is to a tissue cell...

(*The Theory of Celestial Influence*, pp.230-1.)

<sup>137</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.325. Also see *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. III, p.282 and cf. p.258, p.260 and p.252.

<sup>138</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, pp.45-7.

<sup>139</sup>*Needs of a New Age Community*, p.48.

<sup>140</sup>According to Bennett the “megalanthropic epoch” is at present being superseded by the “synergic epoch”. (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, pp.385-93.)

<sup>141</sup>*Witness*, pp.iv-v.

<sup>142</sup>*Witness*, p.372.

<sup>143</sup>*Witness*, p.v.

<sup>144</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, p.47.

<sup>145</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe* Vol.III, pp.258-9.

<sup>146</sup>Bennett represents the psychokinetic order as having a fourfold functional structure. (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.242.)

<sup>147</sup>Learning to function at the level of group consciousness – and also *group will* – was an important aspect of the training in Bennett's school which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>148</sup>He saw the foundation of such a community as the next stage in the development of his school – this never took place. (See *Witness*, pp.381-3.)

<sup>149</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, p.45.

<sup>150</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, p.46.

<sup>151</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, p.46.

<sup>152</sup>See Chapters 3 and 4 of *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (pp.51-108)

<sup>153</sup>I discuss the relationship between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ versions of the “esoteric centre” as represented in the Gurdjieff literature in Chapter Four.

<sup>154</sup>In 1973 Bennett wrote: “I had reached the conclusion that Gurdjieff was more than a Teacher and less than a Prophet.” (*Witness*, p.379.) Reference to Bennett's discussion of the four sub-divisions of the psychoteleios order (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, pp.266-73) will serve to elucidate his meaning. By placing Gurdjieff below a “Prophet” and above a “Teacher” Bennett is undoubtedly saying that he was psychoteleios and probably indicating that he was a “Saint”.

<sup>155</sup>See, e.g., *Gurdjieff Today*, pp.16-7.

<sup>156</sup>See *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.78.



<sup>157</sup>*The Way to be Free*, p.31.

<sup>158</sup>I shall demonstrate this and examine its validity in my treatment of the biographical material.

<sup>159</sup>See Elizabeth Bennett's 'Foreword' in *The Masters of Wisdom*, p.12.

<sup>160</sup>*Consistency* will be determined on the basis of the extent to which Bennett's ideas can be understood as illuminating Gurdjieff's doctrines rather than on a basis of point by point comparison.

<sup>161</sup>Gurdjieff's doctrine of the human situation is closely bound up with his comprehensive cosmographic teachings.

<sup>162</sup>The main sources will be Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub* and *ISOM* (Ouspensky's record of the early period of Gurdjieff's teaching).

<sup>163</sup>Gurdjieff emphasized that his teaching could have no significance if taken by the intellect alone: it could only make sense as a whole in relation to an intensive and global *work on oneself*. (See, e.g., *Views From the Real World*, p.194, 17.7.1922 and 2.3.1923.

<sup>164</sup>See Chapter Five.

<sup>165</sup>See Chapter Six.

<sup>166</sup>The main way in which Bennett's understanding of Gurdjieff's intentions for the future development of his teaching appears to have differed from that of the Foundation seems to have been that he thought it was meant to make a publicly recognizable large scale impact. This interpretation was in line with Gurdjieff's indications in his *Herald of Coming Good* (1933) and was also supported by his understanding of the 'Ashiata Shiemash chapters' in Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub* as being prophetic. Whether or not Gurdjieff intended, or could have intended, his (fourth way) teaching to be taken up on a large scale is a highly problematic matter. This is especially so because, as I identify in Chapter Three, the canonical evidence as to whether or not Gurdjieff held that the majority of humanity could be liberated from 'mechanicalness' is ambiguous.

<sup>167</sup>Evidence can be drawn from both *Witness* and *Journeys In Islamic Countries* (Diaries from 1953) to support the view that Bennett believed that in the years following Gurdjieff's death the momentum of the work had decreased and that, as a work leader responsible for a few hundred students, it was his responsibility to find means to revivify the work.

<sup>168</sup>The minimum common ground is the belief that Gurdjieff wished to ensure that his ideas survived and were disseminated through the publication of his books *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* and *Meetings With Remarkable Men*. However, beyond this one immediately runs into disagreement with regard to exactly how widely he envisaged that his ideas should be known and applied – i.e., were they potentially for everyone, or only for an élite? (I address this interpretative tension in Chapter Six.)

<sup>169</sup>However, it must be noted that Bennett did not seek total separation from the Foundation. With regard to the separation of his work at Coombe Springs from that of the Foundation in October 1955 he states that he hoped it would only be temporary (Witness, p.316). Even when he commenced the Subud period (1956-7) he consulted with Madame Ouspensky and Madame de Salzmann – prior to the involvement of his own pupils – (Witness, pp.322-3 and 326) and hoped to take the other Gurdjieffians with him (*ibid.*, p.328); however, this did not occur and the separation of the ways became total (see, e.g., A. Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.189). – I examine the dynamics of Bennett's relationship with the Foundation in Chapter Six.

## CHAPTER TWO

# The International Academy for Continuous Education

### *Abstract.*

In this chapter I focus on Bennett's emergence as a spiritual teacher 'in his own right' and the consequent founding of the International Academy for Continuous Education. I seek to explicate the relationship between Bennett's claims: (a) to have been acting in submission to the will of the "Higher Powers"; and (b) to have been continuing the work of Gurdjieff. Firstly, I demonstrate: (i) that Gurdjieff was the fundamental and predominant influence on the Academy's teaching; and (ii) that he represented its purpose as being *deeply* Gurdjieffian. I then argue: that Bennett's position in relation to Gurdjieff has integrity in terms of, and *only* in terms of, a "deep continuity" model; that such deep, or vertical, lineage is predicated by *inner realization*; and that Bennett's 'submission to the Higher Powers' is, in these terms, an important aspect of his 'claim to lineage'. I point out that, in relation to the lineage through inner realization criterion, Bennett's status can only be evaluated by biographical reference to a 'Gurdjieffian developmental spiritual psychology'. Lastly, I draw together the main strands of Bennett's position and briefly set out the questions which arise from them.

## **Introduction.**

On 15th October 1971 J.G.Bennett commenced a unique educational experiment. This was the International Academy for Continuous Education (“the Academy”), which was constituted as a branch of his Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was situated at Sherborne House in Gloucestershire and existed for five years.<sup>2</sup> The main activity of the Academy was its annual ten month course (October to August). Each ten month session had ninety to a hundred students.<sup>3</sup> These intensive, residential courses were designed and presided over by Bennett<sup>4</sup>: His explicit aim was to help each of the students to establish themselves – each according to his capacity and needs – on a path of inner development and growth, beyond the standard limitations to adult maturity set by nature and conventional education.<sup>5</sup>

This was an ambitious project. In seeking to have such a profound influence on the lives of several hundred people Bennett was taking upon himself a very large responsibility. We are entitled to ask: What antecedent causes impelled him to such a task and, specifically, on what *authority* was he acting?

In the light of chapter one, it is possible to distinguish three main dimensions of authority that might apply here. These are:

- (i) externally lineal continuity from Gurdjieff;
- (ii) deep continuity with Gurdjieff in the context of a fourth way field of action; and
- (iii) direct authorization from the “higher powers”.

In this chapter I examine the weight given to each of these categories as they were exemplified in the practical context of the Academy. However, it must be borne in mind that these categories are not mutually exclusive. Deep continuity does not necessarily preclude external lineage. Unlike the ‘non-lineal pretenders’ (for whom the ‘Gurdjieffian’ aspect of the authority claim is based *entirely* on the invocation of some notion of deep continuity), Bennett’s claim is rooted – albeit problematically – in actual historical contact and continuity of practice. Moreover, in Bennett’s own terms, direct authorization from the higher powers is to be seen as integral with the idea of a field of fourth way action in to far as both aspects are connected to the idea of the Great Work.<sup>6</sup>

## **Background**

Bennett records that during the Summer of 1970 he arrived at something of a crisis with regard to deciding on the most appropriate and productive use of his talents and energy.<sup>7</sup> A major factor in this was his growing awareness of what seemed to be a large latent following for his spiritual ideas, predominantly in the U.S.A.<sup>8</sup> In the update to his autobiography *Witness*, written in the Summer of 1973,<sup>9</sup> he writes:

The choice had to be made. I went to St.Wandrille<sup>10</sup> in September to meditate in quiet and solitude on the situation and to ask for guidance in prayer.....The unexpected happened. I received the clearest possible indication from the voice that has always spoken to me in my breast at moments of crisis. I heard it say: “You are to found a school.” This happened during matins, when I was chanting Psalm 94, *Si vocem ejus audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra*, “If you will hear my voice harden not your hearts,” and my attention was rather on my lack of gratitude for what I had received in the past than on what I might be doing in the future.<sup>11</sup>

Obviously there is more than one way in which the cause of such an inner voice might be understood.<sup>12</sup> However, the context which Bennett describes is an explicitly spiritual one. His emphasis on the line from Psalm 94 suggests a belief that the message had a source beyond the bounds of his individual being. Bennett does not tell us exactly what he conceived this source to be; but in the process of describing the stages by which the inspiration became – in little more than a year – a reality he alludes strongly to guidance from higher powers. At the outset his attitude concerning the manifold difficulties involved was that:

..if [the establishment of a school] was what the Higher Powers intended they would provide the means.<sup>13</sup>

And, retrospectively, with regard to the astonishing ease with which the project came into being once the decision had been made<sup>14</sup>:

The Higher Powers had played their part with a vengeance.<sup>15</sup>

The metaphysical questions of what Bennett conceived these “Higher Powers” to be and how he understood his relationship to them are not ones into which we can delve at this stage of the investigation.<sup>16</sup> At the present point it is only necessary to note that Bennett *did* believe himself to be in receipt of guidance from some kind or kinds of transcendental entities for whose purpose he was a vehicle.

Returning to Bennett's initial experience at St.Wandrille, he continues:

I spent all that day in prayer and meditation and remembered that Gurdjieff had told me, in 1923, that one day I would follow in his footsteps and take up the work he had started at Fontainebleau. I also lived again through those hours on the Saturday morning before he died [29th October 1949]<sup>17</sup> when he had said to me: “You. Only you, can repay for all my labours.”<sup>18</sup>

Here we have evidence of a more terrestrial form of allegiance. It is surely significant, that in the same paragraph as relating the original impetus, he links the

idea of founding a school to Gurdjieff. Bennett is indicating a sense of *obligation* to Gurdjieff – a duty to fulfil and a debt to repay.<sup>19</sup> By so doing he is effectually linking his destiny to that of Gurdjieff and unavoidably suggesting that his own endeavour had, in some sense at least, a ‘Gurdjieffian authority’. In his book *Gurdjieff: Making A New World*, largely written during the first two years of the Academy, Bennett is more explicit about the nature of this link:

I never doubted that he [Gurdjieff] wished to help me to fulfil my own life's work, and that we were linked together in a common aim, which was to present to humanity a more acceptable account of ‘Man, the World and God’ than present-day psychology, science and religion could offer.<sup>20</sup>

The “obligation to Gurdjieff” theme is undoubtedly a major one in relation to Bennett's founding of the Academy. But, while Bennett is definite in his intention that we should appreciate a deep continuity between his work and that of Gurdjieff, he is no less certain that the Academy was *his own responsibility*.

The account in *Witness* continues:

I had consistently refused for twenty-one years [–i.e., since Gurdjieff's death] to put myself forward as a leader or teacher. At Coombe Springs<sup>21</sup> I had been the mouthpiece of Gurdjieff or Subud<sup>22</sup> or the Shivapuri Baba<sup>23</sup>. I had bolstered up my own authority by quoting theirs. I had known that this was not due simply to cowardice but rather to the awareness that my time had not yet come.

Now the moment had arrived. My next task was to be.....the founder of a school.<sup>24</sup>

This passage has a strong resonance with Bennett's account of the visit that the Turkish Sufi Teacher Hasan Shushud<sup>25</sup> made to him in London two years earlier:

...he made his intention very clear; he had come to arouse me to the recognition of my own destiny and restore my confidence in my ability to fulfill [sic] it. He insisted that I was a ‘master’ and had gone beyond all those whom I regarded as my teachers.<sup>26</sup>

This, in turn, resonates with an “audition” of the unfoldment of his destiny which Bennett experienced in the spring of 1921<sup>27</sup> and describes in *Witness*. (As it will be necessary to make several references to this vision in the following chapters, I will give it in full here.)

I was to be given seven years to prepare [to 1931, age 33-4], and then my life would begin. *I was to perform some great task*, but not until I was sixty [1957] was I to know what that task was to be. Then as the last faint echo, something told me that I would not know my true destiny until I was seventy years old [1967].<sup>28</sup>

The fact that Bennett titles the final chapter of *Witness* (describing the visit of Hasan Shushud and the creation of the Academy) ‘Life Begins At Seventy’ is an explicit reference back to this vision even though he makes no other mention of it. 1967, when Bennett was to know his “true destiny” was one year before Hasan Shushud came to “arouse me to the recognition of my true destiny.”

The above ‘resonances’ indicate that the theme of personal spiritual destiny is closely bound up with that of the higher powers. The “voice in [his] breast that had always spoken to [him] at moments of crisis” is equated with the intentions of the higher powers; and (presumably) it is this inner voice that provided the preview of his destiny in 1921. This serves to demonstrate the importance of the role of the higher powers as a component in his over all authority claim. It is strongly implied that the higher powers had guided his life towards its culmination<sup>29</sup> when he would be capable of functioning as their conscious servant. Hasan Shushud is not represented as Bennett’s spiritual master, but as a *catalyst* triggering a transmutation which, among other things, revealed the work for which his life had been a preparation. I will have more to say about the quantum leap of inner development which Bennett says that he experienced during the period following Shushud’s visit and its relevance to his



‘emergence as a master’<sup>30</sup> in the last part of Chapter Six; but this is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

For present purposes, it is sufficient to focus on two points:

- (i) Bennett saw himself as a *spiritual teacher in his own right* with the authority to set up a school; and
- (ii) he saw this as the fulfilment of a life-long pattern of destiny, for which his earlier experiences had been preparation.

It will be noticed that the ‘destiny theme’ also occurs in relation to Bennett’s connection to Gurdjieff. He “never doubted” that his “life’s work” was intimately connected to Gurdjieff; and we can reasonably assume that this life’s work, which he felt linked him so closely to Gurdjieff, would have been equated in his mind with the “great task” of the 1921 vision.<sup>31</sup> The question arises, what exactly is the relationship between (i) ‘Bennett’s emergence as spiritual master in his own right’ (with its connotations of fulfilment of destiny and submission to the higher powers) and (ii) Bennett as a ‘disciple of Gurdjieff’? In the light of the deep continuity model it is plausible to suggest that these two dimensions of Bennett’s authority claim are related through the shared context of the higher powers – i.e., both Gurdjieff and Bennett were in direct inner contact with the higher intelligences (whatever these are understood to be) which are directing the terrestrial Great Work. This has the important corollary that *genuine* lineage in the fourth way is predicated on inner realization or initiation. However, the premature assertion of such a view would short circuit investigation of Bennett’s relationship to, and the extent of his reliance on, Gurdjieff and his teaching. Moreover, the deep continuity model, as applied to the Gurdjieff-Bennett situation, expresses not only identity of higher authority *but also*

continuity of fourth way form and purpose. Furthermore, it is the case that, however strongly we might wish to go along with the idea of Bennett emerging as a fully fledged spiritual teacher in his own right, taken together his statements present us with a degree of ambiguity – the spectre of ‘Gurdjieffian authority’ remains; and there is a need for detailed elucidation of the relationship between Bennett and Gurdjieff and his teachings.

## The Teaching at Sherborne

### *Introduction.*

In this section I evaluate how far the teachings, methodology and techniques which Bennett applied at his Academy can be said to have been specifically ‘Gurdjieffian’. Comparison of the different elements of the Academy’s programme with Gurdjieff’s methods and ideas will serve to indicate that he was its fundamental antecedent influence.

However, it is important to note at the outset that this approach will not, on its own, prove anything concerning *the degree of authenticity* of Bennett’s transmission of Gurdjieff’s teachings. Questions pertaining to the accuracy and validity of Bennett’s use of Gurdjieff’s ideas will be dealt with in later chapters; although some preliminary reference to the controversial character of his understanding of Gurdjieffian “work on oneself” will be made at the end of the section (see page 95)

I will show that Gurdjieff can be said to have been the pre-eminent informing influence at four morphological levels of the Academy’s activity: (1) underlying anthropology (doctrine of the human condition); (2) general methodological approach (to human development); (3) specific methods employed; and (4) psychological, cosmological and theological teachings. – In comparing the Academy with that which is known of Gurdjieff’s teaching situations it will be necessary, in some instances, to refer to the greater degree of structure which characterized the former’s approach as compared to the ‘charismatic spontaneity’ of the latter.

The main source of information for this inquiry will be the *Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*.<sup>32</sup> Reference will also be made to transcripts of the many talks which Bennett gave to his students.<sup>33</sup>

Near the beginning of the *Prospectus* is a section titled 'Background'. This represents the Academy as the fruit of the Institute's twenty five years of researches into human possibilities and the most efficient methods of developing them. The *Prospectus* states that,

The *starting point* of the Institute's researches was Gurdjieff's System for the Harmonious Development of Man.<sup>34</sup>  
(My italics)

It goes on to list the wide range of psychological and spiritual sources from which the Institute had attempted to extract wisdom:

...the Institute has very thoroughly tested a wide range of techniques derived from modern psychology, behavioural science, eastern Christianity, Hindu Yoga, Buddhism and Sufism.<sup>35</sup>

From this one might expect to find an eclectic programme in which the influence of Gurdjieff is not always explicit.

However, examination of the actual methods and teachings listed in the *Prospectus* will show that Gurdjieff's influence was both more central and more obvious than the above quotations would suggest. While not *all* of the teachings and methods of the Academy can be shown to have a direct connection with Gurdjieff,<sup>36</sup> many important components are *unique* to his teaching;<sup>37</sup> moreover, the programme as a whole can be shown to bear a clearly recognizable Gurdjieffian imprint.<sup>38</sup> The disparity between the *Prospectus*'s representation of the Academy's antecedents and the (anticipated) findings of this section is not in itself of primary concern. Nevertheless, it will be useful to make a brief detour to discuss its possible causes.

Bennett's detractors might suggest that the disparity arises because he had ambitions to set himself up as a spiritual master, but that all that he really had to fall back on was a somewhat tenuous grasp of the Gurdjieff material.<sup>39</sup> However, the representation given in the *Prospectus* does not support a view that Bennett was seeking to *advertise* himself as a spiritual master. The *only* mention of Bennett under 'Background' refers to his authorship of *The Dramatic Universe* and *A Spiritual Psychology*; a later section, which identifies him as the Academy's "principal", speaks of his prolific authorship on spiritual subjects and the history of his connections with spiritual teachers (including Gurdjieff). In writing the *Prospectus* Bennett and his associates can be interpreted as having deliberately played down any elements which may have been attractive to people susceptible to cultic involvements. Rather, the emphasis seems to be on the Academy's claim to have possessed a spiritual technology which was, in its own realm, 'scientifically-based'.<sup>40</sup> These perspectives, themselves, suggest a reason for the disparity. As I will show later (see page 124), Bennett believed that:

Gurdjieff's efforts were the historical foundation of the line of work in which he was engaged – a foundation without which it could not have existed at all; but

- (i) time, experience and experimentation had served to refine the methods which Gurdjieff initiated; and
- (ii) that this should have happened is fully in accord with Gurdjieff's own *modus operandi*.

It can be argued that Bennett saw the pursuance of this *line of work* as being more important than any individual contributor (including Gurdjieff and himself). The *Prospectus*, with its emphasis on actual practices rather than on claims to spiritual authority,<sup>41</sup> can be seen as reflecting this. The proposition that Gurdjieff had

pioneered methods of spiritual training which could (and should) subsequently be developed by his successors is fully in accord with the idea of deep continuity in the context of *a specific field of fourth way action* which was set out in chapter one. However, the specific idea that the Academy had honed Gurdjieffian methods is also of immediate relevance. At several points in the following subsections it will be necessary to refer to the fact that Bennett's Academy course had a much more structured character than any of the phases of Gurdjieff's teaching career (see especially page 81). It is suggested that this difference may, in part at least, be understood as a function of the belief in the 'refinement of spiritual technology'.<sup>42</sup>

I now turn to a discussion of the individual methods and teachings of the Academy in order to evaluate the extents to which they relate to Gurdjieff.

### ***Inner Exercises.***

In the *Prospectus*, under "Special Techniques", we find:

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: 'meditation' in various forms is commonly practised in many schools, but there is little understanding of the training exercises that are required to make true meditation possible and effective. The basic course includes a graduated series of more than forty exercises that have been tested and proved over the years. *These exercises are in some ways the most original and significant feature of the course.*<sup>43</sup>

(My italics)

It is significant that the *Prospectus* of the Claymont School for Continuous Education – the Academy's direct successor organization, in the U.S.A.<sup>44</sup> –, which reproduces this section with very similar wording, inserts "These exercises...are mainly drawn from the Gurdjieff method".<sup>45</sup> In practice these "spiritual exercises" taught at the Academy were divided into two main sections, the "Morning Exercise" (see the

*Prospectus*, p.5) and the evening meditation, which had a completely different character.<sup>46</sup> It is, as far as I can ascertain, the case that the techniques taught as “Morning Exercises” were, as the evidence of the Claymont *Prospectus* suggests, mainly the spiritual exercises taught by Gurdjieff. It is probable that the evening meditations were not directly connected to the specific teaching of Gurdjieff.<sup>47</sup>

### ***The Decision Exercise.***

Another of the “Special Techniques” is given as:

DECISION: necessary to all realization. Reaction to external influences which create the impression of “doing” is observed and defined by inner exercises so that the illusion of doing is destroyed and the real capacity “to do” acquired. “To do” means to act consciously from one's own intentions.<sup>48</sup>

This ‘special technique’ has a two-fold implication: (i) it makes general reference to the fundamental, practical starting point of Gurdjieff's teaching – the assertion that “*man cannot do*” and that he is helpless to change this until he recognises it<sup>49</sup>; and (ii) it undoubtedly refers to a practice known as the “decision exercise”.<sup>50</sup> In *Witness* Bennett is unequivocal about the unique value of this technique to the Academy course, and expresses his direct debt to Gurdjieff:

..one sure method the value of which became more vividly evident with each passing month was the ‘decision exercise.’ This is my own adaptation of a technique I had learned almost casually from Gurdjieff and to which he refers almost casually in...*Life is Real Only Then When ‘I Am’*.<sup>51 52</sup>

### ***Gurdjieff Movements.***

Also under “Special Techniques” we find:

MOVEMENTS<sup>53</sup>: Specially designed exercises based on the remarkable techniques introduced by G.Gurdjieff are practised for one and a half to three hours daily.<sup>54</sup>

This reference to the exclusively Gurdjieffian practice speaks for itself, as does the substantial proportion of the daily routine devoted to it. It is also worth noting that two of the people who assisted Bennett as teachers of the Gurdjieff movements – Anna Durco and Pierre Elliot – had themselves been personal pupils of Gurdjieff.<sup>55</sup>

***Self Observation and practical work.***

It is somewhat difficult, at first sight, to see what the following entry is doing heading the “Special Techniques” section:

ENERGY: essential to all and everything<sup>56</sup> — is a crucial part of the study programme. Sense energy, emotional energy, mental energy are identified experienced and explored in an effort to be able to control one's own energies on all levels.<sup>57</sup>

It seems much too general. However, it can be seen as referring to a crucial and pervasive feature of Gurdjieff's teaching: The need for a balancing of the body's perceptual systems<sup>58</sup> as the prerequisite for both the appearance of a stable selfhood and the successful transmutation of substances required for inner development.<sup>59</sup> This harmonization of the sensori-motor, the emotional and the cognitive aspects of experience is an essential feature of the early stages of the Gurdjieffian path. Its accomplishment requires considerable skill in self observation, which in turn *requires that opportunities be given from the outside*<sup>60</sup>. Reference to the main methods which Gurdjieff employed for this purpose will provide a means of showing that the above passage has more than a merely theoretical correspondence with his teachings. It will also allow us to indicate implicit connections to the Gurdjieff teaching in other of the “Special Techniques” listed in the *Prospectus*.

Gurdjieff employed five specific methods:- (i) the movements; (ii) the inner exercises<sup>61</sup>; (iii) the “stop exercise”<sup>62</sup>; (iv) practical tasks together with ‘calculated



interpersonal friction' to provide opportunities for self observation and material for self study<sup>63</sup>; and (v) the so called "toasts to the idiots" (I discuss this below under the subheading 'Counselling' – see page 84). We have already covered the "movements" and the "inner exercises". There is no mention of the stop exercise in the *Prospectus*, *although there is definite evidence that it was employed*.<sup>64</sup> Neither is there any mention of practical tasks as a specific technique. However, the *Prospectus* emphasizes that

The course is designed so that all human activities serve as material for self development. The whole work of the house, cooking, serving, cleaning building and maintenance, gardening and farming are carried out by the students.<sup>65</sup>

This statement is completely in accord with the ethos of Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at Fontainebleau. (The reader will recall Bennett's explicit reference to Gurdjieff's Institute in terms of a prototype.) However, it is certainly the case that the course at Sherborne was far more structured than the activities at Fontainebleau ever were. The simple fact of a constant number of students over a definite, predetermined period contrasts strongly with the much more transient population of Gurdjieff's Institute. During its peak period (1923-24), Gurdjieff's Institute is said to have relied more on his abundant energy, incisive grasp of situations and sheer charisma than on any structure<sup>66</sup> – although structure was by no means absent, it was always subordinate to Gurdjieff's spontaneous input. Bennett is said to have given of himself generously and indefatigably right up to the end of his life<sup>67</sup>; and he is reputed to have had clear and compassionate insights into the needs of his students.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Bennett did rely much more on structured activity to provide the opportunities for self observation and study.<sup>69</sup> Whereas Gurdjieff would, without ceremony, move his pupils between situations involving tasks and

interpersonal situations that were supposed to provide opportunities for self study and development, the Academy *Prospectus* says:

The course is divided into three groups of 28 to 30 members. Each group works and studies together, and takes its turn every third day to control and operate the establishment. Groups are reorganized every three months to prevent fixation.

....The interpersonal problems which arise in such group activities are the main material for the study of Group Dynamics.

Opportunities for developing leadership, planning and coordinating are combined with observations that are recorded and analysed.<sup>70</sup>

Thus we can see that the ‘Gurdjieffian feature’ of practical work, *together with* interpersonal encounter, as a means to self study was undoubtedly present.<sup>71</sup> *It seems highly likely that the ‘practical work in groups’ aspect is, at core, following an exclusively Gurdjieffian paradigm.* However, a non-Gurdjieffian input to the situation is indicated by the term “Group Dynamics”, which suggests the Western humanistic psychology of the late fifties and sixties.<sup>72</sup> – “Role playing and other encounter group exercises” is listed as a “special course”.<sup>73</sup> – The use of humanistic group psychology theories can be seen as an attempt at a formalized version of what Gurdjieff is reputed to have accomplished by his immediate grasp of situations in terms of the psychological states of the participants.<sup>74</sup>

A further way in which opportunities for self observation were provided in a structured way is given as:

WEEKLY THEME: such topics as our relationship with material objects, the nature of attention, communication and commitment are presented each Monday for self observation during the week. On Friday night the entire course shares personal experiences and observations.<sup>75</sup>

Like the ‘recording and discussion of interpersonal problems’, this structured way of working has no known corollary with Gurdjieff's teaching at Fontainebleau.

However, the focus of work with these themes is, ultimately, on the quintessentially Gurdjieffian tasks of *self remembering* and *self observation*. The themes are given as inner tasks to be carried out simultaneously with the practical work.<sup>76</sup> This again is ‘main stream Gurdjieff’: the effort to divide one's attention such that “remembering oneself” is simultaneous with full awareness of the practical work is said to be highly beneficial, facilitating the production of ‘higher energies.’<sup>77</sup> Moreover, although Gurdjieff did not organize ‘group themes’, he certainly gave individuals *specific* inner tasks on which to work whilst engaged in the practical endeavours.

Herein lies what might seem to be a significant difference between Bennett's Sherborne and Gurdjieff's Fontainebleau: Whereas students at the former – whatever their disposition towards Bennett – had committed themselves to a structured course with an emphasis on group participation, people attending the latter were drawn there because of Gurdjieff. There were the general activities in which all participated, but those who were willing, and allowed, to stay became personal pupils of Gurdjieff and received advice and exercises specifically suited to their individual natures.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Counselling***

However, it would be entirely wrong to suggest that the Academy students did not receive individual advice, as we find:

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING: All course members are shown appropriate techniques for overcoming their weaknesses and developing their special capacities.<sup>79</sup>

Three points need to be made in relation to this:

- (i) The much greater emphasis on structure that pertained at the Academy, and the sheer size of the course, leads us to suppose a correspondingly lesser emphasis on the one to one teacher-pupil relationship.
- (ii) As regards the individual advice that was given, we are not in a position to know its content and, therefore, cannot evaluate the extent to which it was ‘Gurdjieffian’.<sup>80</sup>
- (iii) Even if the content of this “individual counselling” did have a predominantly Gurdjieffian structure, the *responsibility* for the specific insights and advice has to rest with the person giving it – more than is the case, e.g., with the teaching of the “movements”. Gurdjieff’s personal tuition is, by definition, an unreproducible dimension of his teaching.<sup>81</sup>

It is necessary to conclude that we cannot, in any substantial way, evaluate the extent to which the “individual counselling” aspect of the Academy's teaching can be said to have rested on Gurdjieffian antecedents. However, it is to be noted that Bennett's pupils and co-workers believed him to have been exceptionally sensitive to individuals’ efforts to gain understanding;<sup>82</sup> and this has itself been directly attributed to the influence of Gurdjieff.<sup>83</sup>

### **‘Idiotism’**

In relation to the question of individual counselling at the Academy, one further piece of evidence needs to be presented. It is known that *on special occasions* Bennett employed Gurdjieff's “toasts to the Idiots”.<sup>84</sup> This ritual, first introduced by Gurdjieff in 1922<sup>85</sup>, is an application of what he called the “science of idiotism” – a twenty one level typology of levels of being from those of ordinary men up to the Divine.<sup>86</sup> Gurdjieff said that the system derived from Sufi teaching<sup>87</sup>, but with regard to

teachings known in the West it is apparently unique to his system. The ritual of “toasts to the Idiots” involves the naming of the people present in each of the categories prior to ‘drinking their health’ with an alcoholic beverage.<sup>88</sup> Self knowledge was to be gained from contemplation of the category to which one was allocated – any change of category being especially significant. Bennett's use of this system is indicative of ‘counselling within a Gurdjieffian frame of reference’. However, it is not possible to judge the degree of precision with which Bennett endeavoured to apply this system. In the present context, the *main significance* to be drawn from his adoption of this exclusively Gurdjieffian ritual is the *very fact of its exclusively Gurdjieffian character*.<sup>89</sup>

### ***The ‘Aesthetic Element.’***

The last item under “Special Techniques” is

THE AESTHETIC ELEMENT: comprises painting, modelling, pottery, mosaic and music. The same section includes gardening, horticulture and the care of livestock. Modern man has lost touch with nature and particularly with the soil. Cultivating the soil without machinery is beneficial as aesthetic experience and is also a means of acquiring unaccustomed skills.<sup>90</sup>

In one respect this is an extension of what is said about all aspects of daily life at the Academy providing opportunities for inner development, which, as we have seen is thoroughly in accord with the way Gurdjieff organized his Institute. Moreover, Gurdjieff placed great value on the acquisition of new practical skills<sup>91</sup> both as a spur to wakefulness and as a method of ensuring the participation of the “thinking brain” – i.e., for the purpose of “harmonious development”. Beyond this “the aesthetic element” has no *exclusive* link to Gurdjieffian ideas, although there is nothing

antithetical about what is said and there are specific points of contact that can be fruitfully argued.<sup>92</sup>

### ***Psycho-cosmology.***

Page eight of the *Prospectus* lists seventeen “special courses” which were planned for the Academy's second year (1972-73). Nine of the titles can be seen as referring to activities discussed above<sup>93</sup>. Of the remaining eight, seven appear to refer to more ‘theoretical’ courses. These are:

- “Communication and language: including in depth study of Turkish language.” (J.G.Bennett)
- “Cosmology: Ways of looking at the world.” (J.G.Bennett)
- “Gurdjieff and the Masters of Wisdom.” (J.G.Bennett)
- “Human types: based on triadic logic and including depth study of Astrology.” (G.H.Edwards)
- “Hazards and the failure of human purpose: including depth-study of historical episodes.” (J.M.Holland)
- “Authentic Science and Pseudoscience. The hermeneutic approach and scientific thinking.” (H.Bortoft)
- “Creative thinking in Science, Art, Spirituality.” (J.G.Bennett)

The course titled “Psychology: including practical techniques of self study” (taught by Bennett) is clearly theoretical *and* practical (and, presumably, related to individual counselling).

The task of this subsection is to evaluate the degree to which Gurdjieff's ideas influenced the intellectual work of the Academy students. A first appraisal of the above list might not encourage the view that this was great. – The only description of

a theoretical course which actually *mentions* Gurdjieff is of interest, not because it signifies the teaching of Gurdjieffian ideas, but because it is the only place in the *Prospectus* where Bennett gives any clue to his position on the kind of lineage with which he was involved.<sup>94</sup> – It is not altogether obvious to what extent the ideas being taught might have reflected specifically Gurdjieffian structures of thinking. (The fourth and fifth items in the above list *can* be seen having direct connection to Gurdjieffian ideas.<sup>95</sup>) However, I will show that Bennett’s course “Cosmology..” signified a much larger proportion of the course than any of the other titles and that this study was strongly Gurdjieffian in *ethos* as well as including a large amount of specifically Gurdjieffian material.

In addition to the obvious question of how much the *content* of the more theoretical side of the Academy’s work owed to Gurdjieff, there are also criteria of *context* to take into account. This requires some background explanation. Gurdjieff told his pupils (c.1916) that “..the study of oneself must go side by side with the study of the universe”<sup>96</sup> for the practical reason that

This parallel study of the world and man shows the student the fundamental unity of everything and helps him to find analogies on different levels.<sup>97</sup>

In practice this means strong parallelisms between the psychological and the cosmological schemes.<sup>98</sup> Later, in his writing (1925-33), he expressed the reason for studying cosmology in terms of an ethical imperative, giving as the third of the five “being-obligolnian strivings” (strivings that are the duty of (real) human beings)<sup>99</sup>:

...the conscious striving to know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance.<sup>100</sup>

This itself requires some explanation. It needs to be seen in the context of Gurdjieff's repeated use of the term "Objective Reason" and other closely related constructions.<sup>101</sup> Gurdjieff says that "objective-Reason" is "the representative-of-the-Very-Essence-of-Divinity" which *should* be present in human beings.<sup>102</sup> One aspect of man's spiritual task is the "perfecting of Objective-Reason" upwards through levels corresponding to successively higher strata of creation – i.e., towards purer manifestations of "Divine Reason".<sup>103</sup> Thus the above 'striving' is to be seen in terms of an approach to the Divine: the injunction is, in a strong sense, a *religious* one.<sup>104</sup>

Hence, the question of the degree to which the ideas taught at the Academy were Gurdjieffian must be asked in terms of criteria of:

*content* – i.e., to what extent were the cosmological, psychological and anthropological ideas based on Gurdjieff's teachings? and

*context* – i.e., how far can it be said that the Academy was following a 'Gurdjieffian paradigm' in giving cosmological material for study in parallel to psychological themes and/or as an inherent necessity of correct spiritual development?

For the sake of clarity I shall deal with these two criteria separately.

### **Content.**

The *Prospectus* does not reveal anything specific concerning the theoretical contents of either Bennett's "Psychology" course or his "Cosmology" course. Fortunately, we have the additional evidence of many written transcripts<sup>105</sup> and more than fifty unedited tape recordings (see addendum to bibliography). The book *Deeper Man* was compiled posthumously by two of Bennett's associates in an attempt to present a comprehensive picture of his psychological and cosmological teachings as presented



in talks to his students at Sherborne.<sup>106</sup> As such it can serve us as a survey of the content of the theoretical material which Bennett presented. Indeed we find a balance and juxtaposition between psychological and cosmological materials which is similar to that which is found in the records of Gurdjieff's lectures.

It is by no means the case that the ideas in *Deeper Man* are exclusively Gurdjieffian in origin.<sup>107</sup> However, several of Gurdjieff's main cosmological and psychological schemes are strongly represented<sup>108</sup> *as are his fundamental laws of creation* – the “law of three” and the “law of seven”<sup>109</sup> – that pervade the entire book. (The index shows an entry under “Gurdjieff” for almost half of the 245 pages.)

Evidence of a specific theoretical focus on Gurdjieff as a source of spiritual thought is to be found in the lecture compilation *Talks On Beelzebub's Tales* and the cassette tape series ‘Commentaries On *Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson*’.<sup>110</sup> These and other sources<sup>111</sup> show that *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* played a prominent role at the in both the studies of spiritual psychology and cosmology. In fact it is the case that a complete study of this long and complex presentation of Gurdjieff's ideas was a feature of each ten month course.<sup>112</sup>

It can be reasonably concluded that the teaching of Gurdjieff's ideas did play a *substantial* role at Bennett's Academy.

### **Context.**

It has already been noted that Bennett's teaching at the Academy – as, e.g., recorded in the subject matter of *Deeper Man* – contains a juxtaposition of psychological and cosmological ideas comparable to that found in Gurdjieff's lectures.<sup>113</sup> It is reasonable to infer this reflects an intentional following of the Gurdjieffian methodology of studying human (and in particular one's own) structure in parallel

with cosmological studies. In this connection it is relevant to refer to the fact that Bennett taught his students about the Enneagram.<sup>114</sup> This, at least as Bennett taught it, uniquely Gurdjieffian symbol,<sup>115</sup> is significant here as an important means to demonstrate analogies of structure and transformation at different levels.<sup>116</sup>

Turning now to the ethico-religious imperative to “know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance,” Bennett, in the introduction to his *Gurdjieff Today*, emphasises the importance of this dimension of the training at Sherborne. He tells us that they were seeking to:

...follow Gurdjieff's advice to ‘learn ever more and more about the Laws of World Maintenance and World Creation’.<sup>117</sup>

But how significant was this dimension in practice? *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* was, as we have seen above, a substantial element in the curriculum. Gurdjieff's book contains several complex chapters devoted to the description of “the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance”<sup>118</sup>; it is significant that five of the cassette tape series ‘Commentaries On *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*’ are devoted to high level matters of cosmogony and cosmology, whereas only two refer to *Beelzebub's* other main concern, that of the practical immediacies of the human condition and what can be done about it. The fourteen cassettes collectively titled ‘God and the Creation/The Dramatic Universe’<sup>119</sup> constitute further evidence of an emphasis on teaching about ‘cosmic laws’ and ‘higher levels’ (although the input here is not exclusively Gurdjieff based). These studies seem to go beyond the requirement of a parallel to psychological self study. Given the Academy's emphasis on practical work and the Institute's stated aim of providing *practical means* rather than merely another ‘ism’,<sup>120</sup> it seems that these ‘high level’ studies must have had a further purpose and were not merely for the fulfilment of intellectual curiosity.

It can be shown that Bennett made clear to his students that this ‘intellectual dimension’ was an integral part of their path. In the context of his teaching of a ‘proper attitude towards an active search for knowledge’ (see above) Bennett cited Gurdjieff’s third ‘striving proper to man.’<sup>121</sup> He says that the effort to know and understand more

...does not bring...a change in our being, in what we are. Instead it brings about a different relation between ourselves and the world so that different things are possible. In the beginning it is a matter of acquiring the necessary knowledge in order to get ourselves started....Ultimately, it includes the process by which we get beyond the distinction of self and the world and come to the point of seeing how reality is.<sup>122</sup>

This statement is comparable with Gurdjieff’s doctrine concerning the progressive enlightenment of “objective-Reason” towards “Divine Reason” – the ‘cognitive’ corollary of raising one’s level of being. Bennett’s statement is referring to a *religious* activity in so far as it speaks of a movement towards more encompassing levels of unity, but it lacks the dimensions of ethical imperative and sacred duty. However, these aspects *are* to be found on a later page where, continuing to pursue the issue of the need for ‘right active search’, he cited Gurdjieff’s frequent use of the word “transubstantiate” to refer to the proper assimilation of knowledge. Bennett pointed out to his students that this word is “used technically to refer to the change of elements in the body of Christ.” In so doing he seems to have been drawing their attention to a theomorphic context for the studying of the cosmological ideas, a context in which the activity would have the character of a spiritual duty as, e.g., in the reading of the *Koran* in Islam.<sup>123</sup>

### ***Conclusions: Was the academy Gurdjieffian?***

To summarize the above findings concerning the extent to which Bennett's Academy can be said to have been 'Gurdjieffian':

1. The simplest case to identify is the Academy's use of the "Gurdjieff movements". This method, which was originally taught by Gurdjieff and is otherwise unknown, was a central and substantial feature of the Academy's daily routine.
2. It is fairly clearly the case that the majority of the Academy's spiritual exercises in the "Morning Exercise" category derive, with little or no adaptation, from Gurdjieff's teaching. These exercises were considered to be of fundamental significance to the training. Bennett gives particular emphasis to the value of the "Decision Exercise" the inspiration for which, he says, came from Gurdjieff.
3. The Academy's emphasis on *practical work* with others as a vehicle for self remembering, self observation and self study is clearly following the paradigm set by Gurdjieff at his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. Use was also made of the "Stop Exercise", another distinctive and possibly unique feature of Gurdjieff's teaching. (Much of what the Academy *Prospectus* lists under "The Aesthetic Element" can also be included here.) It is necessary to qualify the above by saying that the Academy relied much more on structure, such that the methods of "Weekly Theme" and encounter group type workshops were utilized where Gurdjieff himself relied on the direct teacher-pupil relationship.

4. With regard to the Academy's emphasis on the understanding and control of physical and psychological energies it can be said that, whatever 'non-Gurdjieffian' ideas may have been involved (e.g., Sufic), the terminology used in the *Prospectus* points explicitly to Gurdjieff's teaching. The relevant ideas are practically embodied in items one, two and three above.

5. Three main points arise in relation to the more theoretical studies at the Academy: (i) the curriculum included a substantial amount of Gurdjieff material and, specifically, reading of the long and complex *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* was undertaken by the course participants; (ii) the education appears to have followed Gurdjieff's method of the parallel teaching of cosmological and psychological ideas; and (iii) students were encouraged to understand and practise Gurdjieff's ideal of 'cosmological and cosmogonical study as a religious duty.' (However, it must be noted that not *all* of the theoretical courses reflected this commitment to specifically Gurdjieffian modes of knowledge.)

6. We have noted particular difficulties in identifying Gurdjieffian influence in the dimension of one-to-one teacher pupil relationship ('Individual Counselling' in the *Prospectus*). The more structured character of the Academy is relevant in this regard. However, Bennett's use of Gurdjieff's "toasts to the Idiots" has been shown to be relevant here; and this also serves to emphasize how explicitly Bennett was willing to demonstrate his connection to Gurdjieff.

It can be concluded that Gurdjieff was the predominant antecedent influence on the training that took place at Sherborne. This influence can be discerned at four levels of activity:

- the fundamental starting point (people *cannot do* and *cannot remember themselves*);
- the general methodology which was employed (e.g., self observation in groups, cosmological studies as an ethico-religious obligation );
- the specific methods which were employed (e.g., movements and inner exercises); and
- doctrine (especially the ideas in *Beelzebub*).

Moreover, the students must have become rapidly and increasingly certain that the training they were undergoing was the beginning of a path deriving directly from Gurdjieff. Bennett's use of the “toasts to the Idiots” ritual (e.g., on Gurdjieff's birthday) must be taken as an explicit gesture indicating a definite continuity with Gurdjieff.

As anticipated in the introduction, the above conclusion is at variance in emphasis with the statement in the Institute's *Prospectus* that the praxis of the Academy was the fruit of years of eclectic development which had Gurdjieff's system as its starting point. There is certainly no question of casting doubt on the Institute's claim to have expended time and energy on the exploration of ‘non-Gurdjieffian’ sources. – Indeed, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, an understanding of the other teachings which Bennett himself explored is of central significance to an understanding of what he brought to the Academy project and how this relates to the Gurdjieff teaching. – However, our survey of the Academy's training programme has strongly indicated that the Gurdjieff teaching had a far more central and practical significance to the existence of the Academy than an uninformed reading of the *Prospectus* would suggest. Elizabeth Bennett – Bennett's wife, collaborator and herself a close personal pupil of Gurdjieff<sup>124</sup> – has written:

The teaching at these courses was based on the system of G.I.Gurdjieff, who my husband regarded as his teacher, with amplifications and additions of his own, derived from the personal work and experience of a long life searching for the means of transforming and developing the inner self of man.<sup>125</sup>

The balance of this statement seems to be in better accord with the findings, placing emphasis on the practical centrality of Gurdjieff's ideas to the teaching at the Academy.

### ***'Receptive lines of Work'***

At this point the finding that Gurdjieff was the predominant antecedent influence on the teaching at Bennett's Academy requires some qualification. It must be noted that it does not, of itself, prove that his use of these practices was *authentically* 'Gurdjieffian': it could be the case that Bennett's understanding of the Gurdjieff teaching was incorrect.<sup>126</sup> Elizabeth Bennett refers to her husband having *amplified* certain aspects of Gurdjieff's teaching; and in this connection it is necessary to draw provisional attention to his emphasis on *help, submission* and *grace* as dimensions of the developmental path which are coequal with and complementary to *effort* and *discipline*.<sup>127</sup> Bennett spoke to his pupils at Sherborne of *seven lines of work*, of which three are "active", three "receptive" and one "neutral", which must be in mutual balance if the overall endeavour is to be effective.<sup>128</sup> He considered that this perspective was in line with Gurdjieff's teachings.<sup>129</sup> However, it is the active lines – emphasizing effort and discipline – which are generally seen as characterizing the 'Gurdjieffian path' and which the Foundation held to be pre-eminent throughout Bennett's lifetime.<sup>130</sup> (Bennett's valuation of the 'receptive lines' has an obvious connection to the idea of submission to the higher powers. I further highlight the ways in which his ('heterodox') position – in emphasizing the receptive lines of work

as being inherent in the Gurdjieffian path – are closely related to the other main strands of his position at the end of the present chapter.)

### *Summary.*

To summarize the discussion so far, we have identified three main antecedent strands all of which have a powerful bearing on Bennett's founding of the International Academy for Continuous Education:

- i. Bennett experienced an inner call to “found a school”. He understood this call as originating from “Higher Powers” to whose authority he was willingly obedient and for whose purpose he felt himself to be a vehicle.
- ii. He saw his personal history as the unfoldment of a destiny that was leading up to this event. He was led to believe that he was now a Master – a person qualified to transmit spiritual teachings *on his own authority*.
- iii. He saw the task with which his own destiny charged him as being intimately linked to that of G.I.Gurdjieff whom he considered to be the major formative influence on his life. This belief found particular realization in the Academy project which he saw both in terms of a *continuation* of work started by Gurdjieff and as the fulfilment of an *obligation* arising from his personal debt to Gurdjieff.

In attempting to elucidate the relationship between ‘Bennett as Master’ and Bennett as ‘pupil of Gurdjieff’ (strands (ii) and (iii) above) we have established that Gurdjieff's ideas and methods were of central importance to the existence of the Academy. Whatever else the Academy may have been<sup>131</sup> there is a sense in which it was ‘strongly Gurdjieffian’ in orientation. From the evidence of the activities at the Academy we can certainly agree with Bennett that he owed a great debt to



Gurdjieff.<sup>132</sup> There also seems to be a tenable case for sustaining that the work at Sherborne had, in practical ways at least, continuity with Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man of the nineteen twenties. However, it is necessary to reiterate that, while the above survey has revealed much about the *extent* to which the Academy drew on Gurdjieff's ideas, it does not necessarily tell us anything about how much of the *essence* and totality of Gurdjieff's teaching was embodied in the Academy – i.e., we are not yet in a position to answer questions concerning the *authenticity of Bennett's Academy as a manifestation of the Gurdjieff teaching*. Whilst bearing in mind this limitation, it *can* be said that the similarity of form is in itself supportive of Bennett's claim that he was working within a field of activity ('fourth way field') which was continuous with the work of Gurdjieff. That his understanding of Gurdjieff – whether right or wrong – had paramount practical significance for his work is established beyond any doubt.

## The Purpose of Sherborne

### *Introduction.*

The reader will recall from chapter one that Gurdjieff stated that an authentic “school of the fourth way” does not arise *primarily* to teach individuals but to perform a higher task in relation to the time, place and circumstances in which it exists. Accordingly, in this section the discussion turns from questions of *what?* and *how?* to those of *why?* I.e., why did Bennett seek to found a fourth way school? The main focus of the investigation remains the relationship between Bennett as a teacher in his own right and as a continuer of Gurdjieff’s work. As has been described, Bennett saw the unfoldment of his life as preparation for a task. He represents this unfoldment and its fulfilment as being intimately connected to Gurdjieff. However, he also represents the fulfilment as directly related to his perception of the intentions of the *higher powers* (strand (i) above). It was the “higher powers” that wanted him to found a school. And the assertion of their existence is an important feature of the context in which he perceived his task. Elaborating on strands introduced in the final subsections of chapter one, the present section sets out the main elements of this context. These are: his belief that humanity (and western civilization in particular) is passing through a crisis which is related to a transition between epochs; the overarching ideas of the Parousia and the Great Work; the conviction that a relationship of direct guidance is possible between human beings and the higher powers; the idea that it is both necessary and possible to train a core of “psychokinetic” people to be capable of entering into this relationship; a commitment

to exemplify “group consciousness”. By reference to Bennett’s published books and lectures the present section demonstrates that he represented these aims and perspectives as being broadly coincident, and ultimately continuous, with those of Gurdjieff.<sup>133</sup>

As with the previous section, Gurdjieff’s ideas will only be discussed in so far as this is necessary to *describe* Bennett’s position – discussion of *validity* is beyond the scope of the present chapter.<sup>134</sup> However, two specific points of disparity – or rather *omission* – will, perforce, be highlighted. Firstly, while aligning his own understanding of the Great Work with the ultimate cosmological context of Gurdjieff’s teaching, he makes no attempt to claim Gurdjieff’s imprimatur for the Parousia idea.<sup>135</sup> Secondly, though he makes a strong claim for Gurdjieff’s agreement concerning the nature (and the uniqueness) of the crisis facing humanity, he makes no attempt to enlist his support for the ‘evolution through epochs’ scheme.<sup>136</sup>

### ***A School of the Fourth Way.***

Returning to Bennett’s account of his call to found a school (in *Witness*), he records that the answer to his urgent question “‘Why a school?’”<sup>137</sup> came to him as:

“Because people must be prepared for the troubles ahead.”<sup>138</sup>

The fact that he gives this answer in quotation marks – i.e., in the same form as the message “You are to found a school” – is indicative of a belief that it originated from the same source – i.e., the “Higher Powers”. He continues:

Then there entered my awareness the significance of the ‘Fourth Way.’ There was a task for me to do and I had to prepare people who could help me in it. The school to be founded was a school of the Fourth Way.<sup>139</sup>

It will be useful to review the characteristics which Gurdjieff uses to define fourth way schools. Such schools possess knowledge and understanding, and can provide training, of an order which is not available in the ordinary culture (i.e., they are *esoteric* schools). Schools arise in relation to a particular purpose. Such a school remains the source of a 'live' teaching for so long as the specific task which brought about its founding remains relevant. Finally, although schools of this type transmit esoteric knowledge, the forms which they take are not predictable – often being associated with their specific task and the specialism of the teacher – and they are frequently totally 'invisible' to the outside world.

Two additional features are relevant to the present discussion. These schools form around a person who is *awake*; and the first task of such a person is to prepare assistants – i.e., to bring some pupils up to a sufficient level of inner development such that they can *be of use to the work*.<sup>140</sup> Gurdjieff emphasised one characteristic of the activity of a Fourth Way School as being the collection and concentration of knowledge in a particular place at a particular time<sup>141</sup> (analogous to the collection of nectar by bees<sup>142</sup>).

In relation to Bennett it is necessary to make two main observations:

1. He locates his endeavour in terms of a "Fourth Way" structure and context – and this is a Gurdjieffian idea.
2. Setting aside the question of his qualifications as the founder of a "Fourth Way School", his use of the term is authentic in so far as: (a) the school was founded to fulfil a *specific task*; (b) 'helpers' were to be found and trained; and (c) the training was founded on the Institute's 'collection and concentration of knowledge'.

### ***Making a New World...***

What, then, was this “Fourth Way task” with which Bennett considered himself to have been charged? In the ‘Preface to the American Edition’ of *Witness* (1974)<sup>143</sup> he defines his task clearly in terms of an immediate urgency and of a wider eschatological context. He writes:

..the old world is disintegrating and before the end of this century will have disappeared. An immense destructive power is at work and it can be combated only on the invisible planes of understanding and love. There is also unmistakably a creative counter-action that does not originate in the human mind...[these influences] find a home wherever they are willingly admitted and responded to. At the present time the counteraction is growing more powerful and millions of men and women, especially those born after the last great war [–i.e., aged 29 or less in 1974], are aware of it. All who are touched—even half consciously—by the realization that a Great Work is in progress, feel drawn to take part in it.<sup>144</sup>

This statement contains three main elements:

- i An assertion that an old world order (i.e., the megalanthropic epoch<sup>145</sup>) is breaking down.
- ii The possibility of people participating in a redemptive process by opening themselves to spiritual influences.
- iii The idea of “a Great Work in progress”.

A discussion of the four pages of the ‘Preface’ (*Witness*, pp.iii-vi) will provide a more detailed picture of what he had in mind.

Bennett describes the breakdown of the present world order in tangible social and economic terms, identifying the cause in terms of excesses of two meta-ideological culprits: “expansion” and “complexation” [sic]. He juxtaposes the runaway expansion of scientific and technical knowledge with what he sees as a fundamental inability to deal with the inevitably worsening problems of “population

explosion and the failure of food supplies”.<sup>146</sup> (Elsewhere, he specifically identifies environmental and ecological problems as major aspects of the problem.<sup>147</sup>) In his view

By 1985 new factors will have entered the life of people throughout the world. Among these will be the actual taste of privation among those who have never been deprived and the hoarding of resources by those who control them.<sup>148</sup>

Another aspect of the situation is the increasingly dinosaurian<sup>149</sup> character of political institutions with power centralized in “small despotic groups.” He says that “Only the immense inertia and built-in resistance to change will keep things going for another thirty or forty years.”<sup>150</sup> In the mean time, he writes, the seeds of a new kind of order – the new world – must be nurtured by those who can perceive the need and “make the conscious stable decision to dedicate themselves to the future.”<sup>151</sup> Prototypes for the new mode of living have to be demonstrated. This requires that the principles of “concentration” and “simplification” be elevated to compensate for the excesses of “expansion” and “complexation”. In practice, he envisaged that the new social order would “..consist largely of self supporting experimental settlements learning to help one another to survive.”<sup>152</sup>

### ***Training of Fourth Way Candidates.***

Evidence that Bennett transmitted the above concerns to the Academy students is to be found in the Sherborne Theme Talks book *Needs of a New Age Community* and in the ‘Future Communities’ series of cassette tapes. From one point of view, the Academy was a preliminary experiment in communal living which aimed to produce qualified candidates – i.e., “helpers” – for further stages. Bennett was under no

illusion about the difficulty of bringing about a collective change of heart so radical that

Arrogance..[would]..give place to humility, selfishness to service and belief in expansion for its own sake...be replaced by the quality that simplicity alone can give.<sup>153</sup>

In his view,

The sole hope is in cooperation with the Higher Powers that are acting in their own way and in their own time.<sup>154</sup>

It is the “Higher Powers” who hold the seed pattern of the new epoch; but it is by a human vanguard of this new epoch, consciously cooperating with the higher plan, that the new order can be established. From this point of view it can be said that the training at the Academy was designed with the aim of helping people to become useful servants of the higher purpose. The “helpers” had to be taught to be receptive to the unfolding necessities, and to this end their faculties – “bodily, mental and spiritual”<sup>155</sup> – had to be balanced and tuned. While these inner transformations have an obvious individual aspect, the context of their pursuit imbues them with a strong collective dimension. This feature of the endeavour was expressed by Bennett in a private letter cited by Elizabeth Bennett in the ‘Epilogue’ to *Witness*:

The aim of self-transformation, when shared by a large group of people, could create a bond capable of compensating for the disruptive effect of our self love and egoism. The same theme runs through the Ashiata Shiemash chapters of Beelzebub's Tales. A society...devoted to the aim of preparing for the New Epoch can provide us all with a focus for our endeavours in the next five or ten years. We must now go about creating an ‘Ideal Human Society.’<sup>156</sup>

### ***Ashiata Shiemash.***

In the above passage Bennett is strongly implying a connection between his own “fourth way task” of assisting in the preparation for “the New Epoch” and the task in

which, he believes, Gurdjieff was engaged. The narrative of the Ashiata Shiemash chapters of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (Vol.1, pp.347-410) concerns the establishment, in a remote historical period, of a new social order in which people are taught to awaken their innate conscience and to fulfil their sacred duties as “three brained beings.” – As in Bennett's vision of the germination of the New Epoch, Ashiata Shiemash's teaching started with a small nucleus of initiates, but spread at a rapidly increasing rate as its superiority over the habitual mode of existence was recognised.<sup>157</sup> – In his book *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (1973), Bennett writes that

Gurdjieff certainly spoke of Ashiata Shiemash in three different ways. [1] He was an historical character who had really lived in Asia thousands of years ago. [2] *He is also the image of the prophet of the New Epoch who is still to come*, and [3] he was also Gurdjieff himself. He said more than once: “I am Ashiata Shiemash”.  
(My italics)<sup>158</sup>

Bennett himself asserts that *all three interpretations are valid* (as is a fourth in which the chapters are to be taken as allegorical). I am not suggesting that Bennett believed himself to be “the prophet of the New Epoch”; but his mentioning of Ashiata Shiemash in connection with his own ‘new age endeavours’, *taken with his belief in the validity of the second and third interpretations of his significance*, cannot but lead us to see an underlying belief that his own purpose was continuous with Gurdjieff's.<sup>159</sup>

### ***The Great Work, the Parousia and the Higher Powers.***

Returning to the ‘Preface to the American Edition’: Bennett goes so far as to state his beliefs concerning the wider eschatological contexts of the “Great Work” and the source of the redemptive force that offers to resolve humanity's present crisis. He writes



In the last volume of *The Dramatic Universe* published in 1965<sup>160</sup>, I gave my reasons for believing that we are in the early stages of the Parousia, the second coming of Christ which heralds the end of the present world....I am no less convinced now than I was ten years ago and indeed discern growing evidence that the great event is in progress.<sup>161</sup>

This statement can be put in context by reference to *The Dramatic Universe* Vol.4.

We are now in the midst of the **Parousia** or Second Coming of Christ promised by the Redeemer to his followers. This is taking the form of the envelopment or overshadowing of mankind by the Unitive Energy...<sup>162</sup>

For the present purpose the “Unitive Energy” may be defined as “...Cosmic Love...a holy power that enters Existence from Above...”<sup>163</sup> It is clear that Bennett is not talking about a second Incarnation: his understanding of the Parousia seems to involve *the realization of possibilities that were opened by the first Incarnation*.<sup>164</sup> It seems reasonable to state that the “Great Work” is synonymous with the Redemption of mankind through the Love of Christ. Hence it can be said that Bennett’s Christianity is central to his work. However, he also speaks of the “Higher Powers”. These constitute an intermediate level between that of the source of “Cosmic Love” and ourselves. – It is the Higher Powers who hold the ‘blue print’ of the “New Epoch”. – He writes of the “spiritual forces that are higher and more intelligent than [ourselves]” – i.e., the Higher Powers:

In a very real sense, these spiritual forces are the manifestation of Christ in the world.<sup>165</sup>

Hence, in terms of the evolution of humanity, two levels of the (local) Great Work can be discerned. These might be better expressed as ‘dimensions’: According to Bennett humanity has evolved gradually through a sequence of epochs; and the Higher Powers are especially active during the periods of crisis and new revelation which herald the transition from one epoch to the next.<sup>166</sup> This ‘gradual evolution

with radical discontinuities' is 'horizontal' with respect to "Cosmic Love" which, being all pervasive, projects down into the world at *all* times. However, it seems that at the periods of transition – or at least *at this one* – there is a need for people who can consciously submit themselves to this Divine Beneficence in direct service to the intermediary Higher Powers.

In the light of the above material concerning Bennett's use of Christianity to describe the eschatological context of his task, it is now necessary to review the major strands which coalesced in the existence of the Academy. We now have:

- Bennett as a spiritual master in his own right.
- Bennett as a pupil of Gurdjieff, expressing senses of continuity with and obligation to his teacher.
- To these we must now add the overarching spiritual context of Bennett as a Christian.
- We now see that 'Bennett as the servant of the Higher Powers' has – in his own view at least – a Christian context.
- Acknowledging that there are elements in Bennett's conception of the "Great Work" which have no corollary in main stream Christian teachings, it is appropriate to include it as a strand in its own right.

It is clear that 'Bennett as a spiritual master' is – to some extent – predicated by his ability to be receptive to the intentions of the Higher Powers and his openness to the redemptive Love of Christ.<sup>167</sup> The idea of Bennett as a master is closely connected to the idea of Bennett as a 'servant of the Great Work' and hence to the idea of the Great Work itself. This is important to our understanding of why and *under what authority* Bennett set up the Academy. However, the main question we

are trying to answer concerns the relationship between ‘Bennett as a spiritual master in his own right’ and ‘Bennett as a pupil of Gurdjieff...’ Certainly Bennett's Great Work idea and its central Christian symbol must have a strong bearing on this question; but we are not at present in a position to pursue the complex comparisons involved in determining the relationship between these ideas and the Gurdjieff teaching. The question that needs to be asked at this point is: How much and in what ways did Bennett refer to or allude to Gurdjieff in the context of his stated purpose to assist in the establishment of the new Epoch?

### ***The Relevance of Gurdjieff.***

It has already been mentioned that Bennett's invocation of the idea of the Fourth Way to describe the context of his activity inevitably points in the direction of Gurdjieff. We have also seen that Bennett's reference to Gurdjieff's Ashiata Shiemash chapters, taken with his opinion about their significance, suggests that Bennett believed his new age endeavours to be within a field of activity continuous with that of his teacher (or even, to some extent, created by him). Both of these pieces of evidence are somewhat circumstantial in character: they give a general impression, but they fail to make a clear point.

In the ‘Preface to the American Edition’ Bennett makes only one reference to Gurdjieff. In the context of preparing servants of the new epoch he says:

Fifty years of search had convinced me that Gurdjieff's method brought up to date and completed from other sources was the best available technique for giving just the training that the world needs.<sup>168</sup>

We know that this is true to the extent that we have already proved that the training at Sherborne was predominantly ‘Gurdjieffian’. If we take this statement and its context

together with his assertion about being linked to Gurdjieff by “..a common aim...to present to humanity a more acceptable account of ‘Man, the World and God’...” (see page 71), there is a clear implication of a Gurdjieff→Bennett connection in the ‘unfoldment of a fourth way operation’.

The fact that Bennett titled his main book about Gurdjieff – written during the early years of the Academy – *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*<sup>169</sup>, is a further indication of his belief in a continuity. This was given considerable amplification by the public talk ‘Gurdjieff Today’ at Caxton Hall, London on November 22nd 1973. Throughout his discussion of the contemporary significance of Gurdjieff and his work Bennett repeatedly used the words “New World”. In response to the explicit audience question:

Gurdjieff's ideas have received little public support. Do you think that this will change? *Do you see him as a prophet of the New Age?*  
(My italics)

Bennett’s reply began,

He was certainly a precursor who saw far more clearly than most people of his time that there was something terribly wrong with the way people were living and behaving all over the world. As I read the situation twenty-five years after Gurdjieff died, the time has come to put much more effectually into practice what he taught than has been the case hitherto. That is one reason why I am speaking to you as I am now.<sup>170</sup>

He then went on to talk about the Academy emphasising four points:<sup>171</sup>

- (i) the historical link to Gurdjieff’s Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man;
- (ii) the importance of training “the powers of perception” of people with the necessary capacity and dedication;
- (iii) the development of “*group consciousness*” in these people; and

(iv) the urgency of the situation.

This reply does not meet the “prophet” part of the question quite head-on, but, importantly, it does show a public willingness that his endeavours and their perspective should be seen as continuous with those of Gurdjieff. In reply to a subsequent question Bennett was more forthcoming on the “prophet” issue. He said,

The end of the old world and the start of the new was the subject of the very last talk I had with him just a week almost to the hour before he died. I was with him for two hours that Saturday morning, 22nd October, 1949, and he was speaking about the conflict between the old world and the new.....He said, “This [emergent super-power conflict] looks unavoidable but it will not happen. This is not the real conflict which is between the old world and the new. It is not between one form of materialism and another form of materialism. This real conflict between the old and new”, he said, “is a serious one. The outcome is not guaranteed...” He clearly identified himself with the New World when he said: “Either I will make the old world ‘tchic’ or it will make me ‘tchic’.” Now another great war will not happen. *When Beelzebub is published a new force will come into the world.*”  
(My italics)<sup>172</sup>

In this statement Bennett unequivocally links Gurdjieff and his work to his own New Epoch context and endeavours. Gurdjieff is presented as an important antecedent – indeed, the foundation – of the contemporary activity: the “Making of a New World,” the inauguration of the New Epoch. So how *close* a connection is Bennett claiming between Gurdjieff’s perspective on these matters and his own?

As regards the ‘crisis in human affairs’ aspect, we have quoted, above, Bennett’s belief that Gurdjieff was one of the first people to recognise the danger “..of the way people were living and behaving all over the world.” It is undoubtedly true that Gurdjieff held that ‘progress’ is an illusion and that in actuality the state of contemporary humanity is degenerating rather than improving.<sup>173</sup> The ‘extra-terrestrial’ dimension of the situation is dealt with as follows:

Gurdjieff assures us that the Higher Powers are deeply concerned that we should live otherwise, but that they are dependent on human understanding for this to come about.....we are needed for a purpose that is greater than ourselves...<sup>174</sup>

This statement gives no indication about the degree of compatibility between Gurdjieff's conception of the "Higher Powers" and Bennett's own.<sup>175</sup> Nevertheless, it is important because it serves as a claim to Gurdjieff's agreement on two major features of his position:

- i that the unfoldment of human history has a context that transcends human intelligence; and
- ii that the "Higher Powers" require human cooperation to accomplish their work.

### ***Obligation.***

Bennett believed that Gurdjieff was uniquely important among the many voices proclaiming the new age and its possibilities because of the emphasis he placed on mankind's obligation to serve "...a purpose that is greater than ourselves..." Bennett said that throughout Gurdjieff's life

...and in every picture he drew in his own books of the way in which life should be lived he always emphasised the obligation we have to serve the **Future**: to 'prepare a better future for mankind'. We must learn to make present sacrifices for the future.<sup>176</sup>

This idea of service and sacrifice to the future<sup>177</sup> is precisely the message which Bennett gives, in his own right, in the 'Preface to the American Edition' of *Witness*.

In the 'Gurdjieff Today' lecture Bennett presented Gurdjieff's doctrine, concerning the need for people to recognize the obligations of their existence, as the basis on which the new order could be built. One formulation of Gurdjieff's 'doctrine of obligation' is to be found in his five ethico-religious imperatives, the "being-

obligolnian-strivings” (see note 99, page 159). In *Gurdjieff Today* and in *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* Bennett draws particular attention to the theory of “Reciprocal Maintenance”.<sup>178</sup> He sees this as the vital cosmological frame of reference which Gurdjieff has bequeathed to the world such that people should be able to perceive their obligations to the cosmic order. This order is presented as a hierarchy of cosmoses stretching from the Absolute down to inorganic matter and finally chaos.<sup>179</sup> The Divine impulse – originating in the Absolute – involves through descending levels, becoming increasingly conditioned and inert.<sup>180</sup> However, there is also an evolutionary backflow, which is the ultimate purpose of creation<sup>181</sup>, and within which it is the proper destiny of “three-brained beings” – i.e., humans – to play a special role.<sup>182</sup> It is only through the fulfilment of this role that individual spiritual growth and liberation is possible.<sup>183</sup> The doctrine of “Reciprocal Maintenance” specifically states that successive levels are linked – in both involutory and evolutionary sequence – by ‘transformations of energy’.<sup>184</sup> The contemplation of this doctrine is designed to convince people of the necessity to live to their proper potential and thereby to fulfil their appointed role in creation.<sup>185</sup> It also allows them to see that harmony must be maintained such that there will be undesirable consequences when obligations remain unfulfilled.<sup>186</sup> (The above is merely a preliminary sketch of Gurdjieff’s cosmological scheme: see Chapter Three.)

Bennett’s (total) Great Work was defined in Chapter One as the total spiritualization, salvation and self-realization of existence through the agency of the Divine Power of Love. The first part of this definition seems equivalent to Gurdjieff’s “Reciprocal Maintenance”; and it might be possible to equate the idea of ‘obligation to be of service to the evolutionary cosmological process’ with the idea of serving the “Great Work” in Bennett’s ‘Preface to the American Edition’ (see also the

subsection ‘Transformation of Energies’). However, he does not make any statement that can be construed as attributing to Gurdjieff either the specific idea of the Parousia or the idea of the redemption of creation through the power of Divine Love.<sup>187</sup> However, this ‘omission’ is partially understandable on the basis that the lecture was ostensibly about Gurdjieff and the significance of his role in the unfoldment of the “Great Work”, and not about the metaphors by which the ultimate meaning of the “Great Work” can be understood. – The nature of the relationship between Bennett’s Christianity and the Gurdjieff teaching will be explored in later chapters on the basis of doctrinal and biographical evidence. – Nevertheless, for the present purpose of elucidating the extent to which Bennett publicly framed his intentions in relation to Gurdjieff as an antecedent, it is simply to be noted that his Parousia idea is not mentioned.

### ***“Group Consciousness”.***

Between pages twenty two and twenty three of *Gurdjieff Today* Bennett proposes that Gurdjieff’s idea of *obligation* can lead to the re-establishment of “the sense of the unity of mankind.” He refers to this sense as “the very core of human existence” which has been eroded by the over-expanded, and hence impersonal, social institutions of our time; (cf. his diagnosis in the ‘Preface to the American Edition’). He connects Gurdjieff’s emphasis on the idea of *obligation* with that of “the sense of the unity of humanity” via the ideas of *transformation* and “*group consciousness*”: Realization of the inherent reality of *obligation* inevitably gives rise to efforts towards *self-transformation* (because of the need to attain a state in which the ‘involutionary’ and ‘evolutionary’ duties *can* be fulfilled). It is only through this sharing of a real purpose that people can be brought together. That which emerges from the sharing of



the transformative endeavour Bennett calls “group consciousness.” This is presented as a vital factor in bringing about the New Epoch in which “the sense of the unity of mankind” will be restored. In Bennett's view Gurdjieff

...saw how to develop a kind of group awareness and to overcome the defects of our human nature. He left these techniques behind him when he died. His contribution was not only to tell what the New World will be like, but also not a little about how it can be brought about.<sup>188</sup>

This statement indicates that Bennett believed the development of “group consciousness” to be a primary aim of Gurdjieff's teaching. It is to be noted that this is precisely the context of activity indicated in the ‘Preface to the American Edition’ and which is especially emphasised by the private letter cited by Elizabeth Bennett in the ‘Epilogue’ to *Witness* (see page 103). Although the term “group consciousness” is not used in the ‘Preface’ it is possible to show that what he was attempting at the Academy fully concurs with this idea as he attributes it to Gurdjieff. The following points can be applied to Bennett's Academy:

- (i) People underwent training in the methods of self-transformation; these methods were predominantly Gurdjieffian in origin.
- (ii) The training included study of Gurdjieff's cosmological schemes such that students would gain a cognitive sense of *obligation*.
- (iii) This training of the individual took place in groups.
- (iv) The organization into groups was not an incidental feature, but itself constituted a central focus of the training – e.g., cooperative practical work and “Group Dynamics” workshops. (However, we have also noted that the group work at the Academy was highly formalized as compared with Gurdjieff's teaching at his Institute.)

- (v) In one respect the Academy was an ‘experimental prototype’ for the new mode of social organization envisaged by Bennett – i.e., relatively small and “largely self-supporting settlements learning to help one another to survive.”<sup>189</sup>
- (vi) During the final year of his life (1973-4) Bennett conceived and set in motion the Claymont School for Continuous Education in the U.S.A. This was designed to provide the same kind of training as the Academy, but also to exemplify the ‘largely self sufficient new age community’.<sup>190</sup>
- (vii) A major aim of the Academy's training was to provide candidates and *future leaders* for further stages of experimentation in community living.<sup>191</sup>

From these points it can be clearly seen that the context in which he seeks to present Gurdjieff's teaching is wholly compatible with his own immediate aims.

### ***Transformation of Energies.***

The establishment of “group consciousness” is not the only outcome of self-transformation. The explicit aim of self-transformation is to realize one's potential to fulfil the specifically human *obligations* to the involutory and the evolutionary flows of creation. A clear implication of Gurdjieff's doctrine of Reciprocal Maintenance is that people who succeed in training their faculties and who thereby become *awake* play a vital role in the world simply by virtue of their capacity for the appropriate and efficient transformation of cosmic energies. At the end of *Gurdjieff Today* Bennett states that the ‘group consciousness aspect’ is only the “exoteric or outer plane” of activity of “Fourth Way Schools”:

The deeper, mesoteric work is concerned with energies. Psychic and spiritual energies must be released, concentrated, stored up and put to work in the right way.<sup>192</sup>

He indicates the importance of this level of work by citing Gurdjieff as saying that two hundred conscious people could stop war<sup>193</sup> and, himself, asserting that “If this number will be available by 1990, the disaster that threatens mankind will be averted.”<sup>194</sup> He continues:

At Sherborne, we have made a start and already a few people are on the way. In 1977, I hope to have a special course for those who have prepared themselves. If all goes well we shall contribute our quota of energy transformers.<sup>195</sup>

This is Bennett's only public reference to an aim of his training enterprise *more esoteric* than that of demonstrating less selfish modes of social organization.<sup>196</sup> It cannot be without significance that his declaration of this higher aspect of the work should have been made with such close connection to the ideas and relevance of Gurdjieff. The link between the idea of training “energy transformers” and the doctrine of reciprocal maintenance is straightforward. That this should be so serves to emphasise a correspondence between Bennett's message concerning the exigencies of the “Great Work” and Gurdjieff's cosmic-scale depiction of the situation of humanity.

### ***Summary.***

To summarize the evidence concerning the nature of Bennett's presentation of Gurdjieff in relation to his own ‘New Epoch commitment’: First we have Bennett's use of Gurdjieff's “Fourth Way” idea to contextualize his activity. This is definitely indicative of *a broad kind* of continuity with Gurdjieff. More specifically, there is his emphasis on Gurdjieff's ‘Ashiata Shiemash’ both as an exemplar and as a prophecy. This constitutes a much more definite implication of continuity of purpose. Then we have Bennett's statements representing his establishment of the Academy as the

fulfilment of an *obligation* to Gurdjieff<sup>197</sup> – there must surely be a continuity of purpose for this idea to make sense.

Bennett's repeated use of the formula "...making a new world" suggests that he believed Gurdjieff's long term aims to be coterminous with his own. Considerable weight is lent to this idea by Bennett's account of his final conversation with Gurdjieff where he spoke of the "...conflict...between the old world and the new", unequivocally aligning himself with the birth difficulties of the latter, especially in stating that "When *Beelzebub* is published...a new force will come into the world." The fact that Bennett juxtaposes this account with an exposition of *his own thoughts* concerning the breakdown of the old world order (as in the 'Preface to the American Edition' of *Witness*<sup>198</sup>) is tantamount to a public declaration of continuity. Bennett presents Gurdjieff as being in *basic* agreement on the points that humanity's behaviour is leading towards dire consequences and that deliverance depends on its ability and willingness to cooperate with the "Higher Powers". Again, his direct connection of these matters to an account of his own work at Sherborne can only be taken as a deliberate emphasis of continuity.

I have also cited Bennett's view that Gurdjieff left methods that could help to bring about the "new world". In the light of the fact that considerable continuity of *method* has already been established,<sup>199</sup> this serves to further highlight convergences of purpose.

The major emphasis in Bennett's discussion of the contemporary relevance of Gurdjieff is on the doctrine of Reciprocal Maintenance.<sup>200</sup> He presents this teaching as highly valuable, because not only does it show man his position in the universal scheme of creation, but it makes clear to him the *obligations* and *duties* inherent in this position. The need – especially at the present time – is that people realize that

existence is not ‘a free lunch,’ that there is a necessity to serve a purpose beyond themselves. Bennett attributes to Gurdjieff the idea that there are two<sup>201</sup> desirable stages which can stem from this realization. The first desirable stage is that of the “*group consciousness*” – in contrast to the divisive egoism and anomic conditions of the modern world – which arises from sharing the *real aim* of self-transformation. This certainly concurs with Bennett's own stated aim of training people to demonstrate new modes of community living. The second, and higher, desirable stage is reached when individuals attain a state of inner balance such that they ‘become as they should be’ in relation to the involutory and evolutionary streams: they are then able to perform the “mesoteric” work of processing “psychic and spiritual energies”. *Bennett explicitly aligns his training programme with this – in his view, Gurdjieffian – aim.* Hence it can be concluded that, via his presentation of Gurdjieff's ‘doctrine of reciprocal maintenance’, Bennett affirms the aims of his Academy to be strongly in accord with Gurdjieff's intentions.

Bennett's own position is characterized by the idea of *service*. This is expressed in the ideas of *service to the future* and *service to the Higher Powers*. Common to both of these ideas is that of service to an *unfolding plan*. This is the “Great Work”. The idea of service is also highlighted in Bennett's treatment of Gurdjieff. We have cited Bennett's assertions that: (i) It was a perennial concern of Gurdjieff that humanity should recognize “...the obligation...to serve the **future**: to ‘prepare a better future for mankind’” in order that it should be willing to make the necessary sacrifices; and (ii) Gurdjieff held that the ‘Higher Powers’ await human cooperation in “...a purpose that is greater than ourselves...”. Taking these two points together, there is a definite implication of ‘service to an unfolding plan’, and hence the Great Work.

We have noted that there may be a valid parallelism between the ‘Gurdjieffian’ idea of consciously serving the involutory-evolutionary cosmic plan and Bennett’s idea of participating in the Great Work (see especially page 111). Bennett is seeking to indicate a close correspondence between Gurdjieff’s context of service to a higher purpose and his own. That he should present the doctrine of reciprocal maintenance as being of such fundamental importance must surely indicate that he accepted the fundamental cosmogonical and theological premises underpinning it. However, he does not explore these fundamental matters in relation to the issues of a new epoch and mankind’s participation in an unfolding plan.<sup>202</sup> In particular, we have noted that, in relation to Gurdjieff’s role, he makes no reference to the *Parousia* idea or to any Christian context whatsoever.<sup>203</sup> It is necessary to highlight two further areas in which specific structural compatibilities – between the metaphysical background of Bennett’s own ‘new epoch thinking’ and his representation of Gurdjieff’s position – are unspecified:

- (i) He does not claim any parallel in the Gurdjieff material to his own idea of an evolutionary sequence of epochs through which humanity passes.<sup>204</sup>
- (ii) Bennett makes explicit reference to the “Higher Powers” in his representation of Gurdjieff’s beliefs; and they appear to be ‘the same’ Higher Powers in so far as they are *non-coercive*, awaiting human *cooperation* to allow the fulfilment of their plan. However, he gives no specific ‘angelological’<sup>205</sup> information which could allow us to determine whether the ‘Higher Powers of Gurdjieff’ are the same as those of Bennett.

## ***Conclusion.***

It can be seen that Bennett represented Gurdjieff as having been fundamentally motivated by a belief that the present period is one in which humanity has the possibility of taking an important evolutionary step. By representing Gurdjieff in this way Bennett shows him to have been aligned with his own (epochal) conviction that we are in a period of crisis, transition, opportunity and danger. In particular, Gurdjieff is represented as having anticipated the need for people who could respond to the escalating ‘crisis of transition’ by: (i) exemplifying “group consciousness”; and (ii) developing the capacity to transform higher energies and put them to work for the benefit of mankind. These are precisely the aims that Bennett gives as being fundamental to his work at Sherborne. The idea of *service to a plan* which is beyond the limitations of ordinary human understanding, in both the senses of service to the future and service to higher powers, emerges as the fundamental common factor uniting Bennett's own stated objectives and his depiction of Gurdjieff's significance. Moreover, Gurdjieff is credited with having supplied the means by which individual people might be brought to a state in which they can be of service.

Although Bennett's ‘epochal evolutionary context’ is absent from his discussion of Gurdjieff, as are his Christological and angelological ideas, the idea of a “Great Work” – if not *the* “Great Work” – seems, nevertheless, to be conveyed. This is achieved via his emphasis on the “doctrine of reciprocal maintenance” in which all levels of creation are seen to be vital to the evolution of the whole which sustains the ‘return-flow’ to the absolute source. In his *The Dramatic Universe* (Vol. III; 1966: Man and His Nature), Bennett had stated that:

Man's part in the Reflux of Spirit has been called the **Great Work** or Magnum Opus. It is Dharma or the Universal Church.<sup>206</sup>

There is no doubt that his term “Reflux of the Spirit” refers to that which, in the context of Gurdjieff’s teaching, he calls “Reciprocal Maintenance”.<sup>207</sup> And his textual emboldenment of “Great Work” serves to state unequivocally that the term is to be taken as conveying his own special matrix of meaning. Moreover, it seems reasonable to state that his own understanding of the “Universal Church” is embodied in his Christological beliefs concerning humanity’s possibility of fulfilling its role in the cosmic scheme and thereby entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, taking account of the above statement from *The Dramatic Universe*, it becomes clear that Bennett is making a definite connection between his “Great Work” idea (as expressed in the ‘Preface to the American Edition’ of *Witness*) and Gurdjieff, his teachings and their ultimate context.



## **J.G.Bennett and the ‘Gurdjieff Tradition’**

### ***Introduction.***

We saw in the section on Bennett’s teaching at Sherborne that the training programme of the Academy was predominantly based on Gurdjieff’s teachings. The above section, exploring issues of purpose and overarching context, has revealed that Bennett presented his own and Gurdjieff’s intentions and orientations in such a way that they appear continuous. Setting aside, for the moment, the question of whether Bennett’s interpretation of Gurdjieff was correct, we can confidently induce the proposition:

Bennett presented himself as operating within a frame of reference that was also Gurdjieff’s and he built his work at Sherborne on foundations of spiritual technology that had been laid by Gurdjieff.

Following from this proposition and in answer to our question concerning the relationship between ‘Bennett as pupil of Gurdjieff’ and ‘Bennett as a spiritual teacher in his own right,’ the inevitable deduction to be made is that he was implying succession from Gurdjieff. (The extremely high prominence of Gurdjieff in relation to the issue of antecedent causes of the Academy seems to preclude merely saying that he was simply a *large factor* in Bennett’s emergence as an independent spiritual teacher.) Clearly this is not a straightforward lineal succession, neither is it an *exclusive* succession (in the sense of it only being possible for one person to succeed the teacher). Rather, the evidence set out in the previous two sections indicates a succession in terms of the deep continuity model; this is a form of succession the

authenticity of which is predicated at least as much on inner realization and initiation as it is on exterior contact.

In this section I return to the deep continuity idea in the light of the demonstrated continuity at the level of method and the professed continuity at the level of purpose. I then show that the anti-Bennett position of the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy seems to rest mainly on emphasizing the brevity of his actual contact with Gurdjieff and his apparent lack of stamina during the first post-Gurdjieffian decade. I highlight the facts that (i) they do not bring forward any perspectives that would *in principle* undermine the validity of his position – i.e., of emphasizing fourth way context over maintenance of form; and (ii) that, beyond speaking of seniority and duration of contact with Gurdjieff, they do not offer any *criteria of authentic lineage*. I suggest that the ‘brevity of contact’ criticism can be countered by reference to *quality* of contact. Further, I suggest that there is, in the different strands of Gurdjieff’s teaching, a coherent ‘developmental spiritual psychology’. I propose that, in the context of Bennett’s account of his inner life, the elucidation of this scheme would provide a means to determine the extent to which his ‘post-Gurdjieffian explorations’ can be seen as necessary in terms of Gurdjieff’s teaching.

### ***Deep Continuity Revisited.***

The closest that Bennett ever came to making a clear public statement concerning his own position with regard to any lineage stemming from Gurdjieff, was the following from the last pages of *Witness* (1973):

Today, twenty four years after his death, there are thirty or forty people in different parts of the world who are capable of transmitting the teaching, but there are very few who can look beyond the man to his message. The time to go deeper and bring out the core of the message is now coming and we must prepare to

make sacrifices of our own limited viewpoints to allow the greater image to emerge. This will take a number of years and there is no time to lose; for events are catching up on us.<sup>208</sup>

There can be no reasonable doubt that he was, in this statement, placing himself among the “...very few who can look beyond the man to his message.” When he speaks of “the teaching”, he is presumably referring to Gurdjieff’s methods of inner development which are taught in groups around the world.<sup>209</sup> He seems to be suggesting that the majority of those engaged in this activity are overly identified with the image of Gurdjieff the man. In speaking of going “deeper” to bring out the core of the message” he suggests a context which is more universal and which is imperceptible to people caught at the level of a ‘cult of Gurdjieff’. Neither can there be any doubt that in affirming that, in Gurdjieff’s teaching, there is a “core” message to be revealed, he has in mind the requirements of what *he* refers to as “the Great Work.”

Building on the picture of the way in which Bennett understood his relationship to Gurdjieff which was proposed in Chapter One, the following can now be stated. Gurdjieff and his teaching activity are to be understood as having been *events* in the (local) Great Work; and the same situation pertains to Bennett himself after he had ‘emerged as a teacher in his own right.’<sup>210</sup> The status of both men is, then, predicated on their ability – by virtue of personal development – to harmonize their wills with the intentions of the higher powers and thereby to serve the Great Work. However, although the context of the Great Work is far wider than the person of Gurdjieff, it is through him that the initial message has been revealed. Hence, while we can say that the Great Work was, what we might term, the ‘meta-tradition’ within which Gurdjieff and Bennett operated, there is also a more specific tradition which, *to the limits of our*

*knowledge*, begins with Gurdjieff and the particular task and line of activity which he initiated. This concept of two levels of tradition can be understood as perfectly compatible with the idea of the “fourth way” as taught by Gurdjieff if it is allowed that the context from which fourth way tasks, and hence fourth way schools, arise is synonymous with the Great Work.

I would argue that Bennett never suggests that he is superior to Gurdjieff, or even that he is *quite* his equal. He said that:

If I look back, I have to say that without Gurdjieff I would be very small indeed and it was largely through having the benefit of his most extraordinary search and sacrifice that I and others have had possibilities.

Not everything came from him, but the possibility of making use of what I found, I owe very much to him. This isn't to say that he didn't make mistakes, or that he found the best way of helping people in this day and age. But he was a pioneer of extraordinary courage...he tried things that people had not tried before and under different conditions of life than we have here.

Thanks to his having been willing to expose himself to extreme dangers and a kind of suffering that is not easy to understand, *things were opened for us*. But it is totally foolish to think of him as infallible. Even the perfected man is not free from mistakes. The further one goes, the more the pitfalls...<sup>211</sup>

(My italics)<sup>212</sup>

There are two main points being made here. (i) Gurdjieff opened a pathway, giving possibilities to those who followed him. But (ii) however important he is as the creative initiator of a particular line of action on the terrestrial level, he is not in himself the beginning and the end of it.<sup>213</sup> The Gurdjieff line of action was started so that others should be able to enter into its field and contribute to it. In speaking of Gurdjieff's fallibility and suggesting that his methods and techniques were not a ‘finished product’ Bennett is in no way trying to diminish him. Reference to the previous quotation indicates that he wished to encourage the latter-day Gurdjieff followers to refocus their attention, away from their limiting image of ‘the Gurdjieff

method', and onto the wider spiritualizing action which was Gurdjieff's context and in which he played a vital part. There is no pejorative criticism of Gurdjieff for whom Bennett clearly felt tremendous gratitude and respect: If there is a criticism it is of those who remain attached to the *form* of Gurdjieff's teaching and lack the courage and initiative to penetrate to its *content*. This content is to do with the fourth way, or Great Work, task for which the teaching was commenced. It is in this sense of being connected to the *content* underlying Gurdjieff's teaching rather than merely to its *form* that we can see the implication in Bennett's position that he was one of the *true successors* of Gurdjieff. (However, we must remember that he never *actually* made this claim.)

If we can speak of a *lineage* down which spiritual authority passes, then this must surely be connected to what we have referred to above as the 'meta-tradition,' that which sustains and gives purpose to the external manifestation. However, for the lineage to be definitely recognizable as such there would also need to be some manifestation of continuity at the level of specific, terrestrial tradition. Even allowing that Bennett's putative claim to authentic lineage at the level of 'meta-tradition' is well founded, the situation with regard to the known tradition is, at least, ambiguous.

On the *previous page* to that on which he wrote of the need to penetrate to the deep core of the Gurdjieff teaching, Bennett, speaking of a commission to bring about the publication of Gurdjieff's 'Third Series' of writings<sup>214</sup> which he was undertaking on behalf of Gurdjieff's family, said:

This was a very delicate matter as I was not in the 'orthodox' group of Gurdjieff's followers who had set themselves to preserve his teaching 'without change or addition.' On the contrary, I had

searched for myself, found new ideas, new methods and had served new masters.<sup>215</sup>

The fact that he puts the word “orthodox” in scare quotes signals to us that he considered the question of orthodoxy versus heterodoxy among Gurdjieff's followers to be far from straightforward. He is raising the issue of in what balance being a true or worthy successor of Gurdjieff can be said to depend on maintaining the *external form* of the teaching or seeking to reveal its *deep content* (or “core”, of which he writes on the following page.) He himself had chosen to search and had “found new ideas, new methods and had served new masters”.<sup>216</sup>

### ***Bennett in the light of the orthodoxy's critique.***

He goes on to say,

Some of Gurdjieff's followers were particularly shocked by my suggestion that Pak Subuh might be the ‘one who is to come’ that Gurdjieff had spoken of in 1949.<sup>217</sup>

We shall be making an in depth study of the issues surrounding this event in Chapter Six. For the moment it is only necessary to say that although Bennett had seceded, he hoped only as a temporary necessity, from the Gurdjieff Foundation in October 1955<sup>218</sup> the coming of Pak Subuh to Coombe Springs brought about a truly irrevocable parting of the ways. Bennett's description of the reaction of other Gurdjieffians is, apparently, no exaggeration. James Moore, who is a senior member of the present day London Gurdjieff Society, has spoken to me of the deep offence which was felt by the sober and serious Gurdjieffian mainstream at the “circus” which Bennett allowed to proceed at Coombe Springs and particularly at the trivial tabloid press publicity, drawing unwanted attention to Gurdjieff's name, that ensued.<sup>219220</sup>

In his article ‘Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain’, Moore, attempting to set up criteria by which authentic lineage can be judged, has written:

The esoteric stream is subterranean, only providing surface irrigation in places and moments of special need: it does not chatter. To the degree that the esoteric current remains in contact with its source on a higher level, it sustains a self-sufficient internal dynamism; it is weakened not strengthened by the rash admixture of tributary influences.<sup>221</sup>

The “esoteric stream” of which Moore writes is the continuity of specific “religious traditions”, in this case the ‘Gurdjieff tradition.’ His first sentence is in accord with the idea that the fourth way appears according to need. But we should notice that when Gurdjieff spoke of the fourth way he apparently meant something much larger than his own *specific* teaching which was a *manifestation of the fourth way*.

Moore's words “it does not chatter” can be taken as exemplifying a basic consensus among mainstream Gurdjieffian groups – in the words of Kathleen Riordan Speeth:

People who are practicing [sic] Gurdjieff's techniques are relatively invisible as they go about their daily round of activities. And they have very little missionary inclination; groups that proselytize are very likely to be imitators.<sup>222</sup>

However, from Bennett's viewpoint, it may be that there is, in Moore's assertion, some conflation between the fundamental invisibility to ordinary consciousness of the subterranean esoteric stream itself and the infrequent and selective character of its manifestations as “surface irrigation.” The relatively high profile of some phases of Bennett's work – especially Coombe Springs in the mid-fifties and the Academy at Sherborne of the early seventies – runs counter to the ethos of sober discretion that characterizes the Gurdjieffian mainstream. But it could be argued that these actions

were manifestations, according to necessity, of the subterranean esoteric stream which would be seen as equivalent to a local action of the Great Work.

The second part of the above quotation from Moore's article can also be taken as an implicit criticism of Bennett's position after having absorbed 'alien' influences. Later on in the article he explicitly directs his critique at Bennett:

Bennett...broke from the Gurdjieffian mainstream in 1955 to pursue eclectic affiliations...

...the fervent eclecticism of J.G.Bennett created artificial liaisons and special situations...<sup>223</sup>

Elsewhere, he has said that:

...the breathtaking catholicity of his...eclecticism [does not] suggest a particular or persevering commitment to Gurdjieff's teaching.<sup>224</sup>

This view of Bennett is certainly not exclusive to James Moore. Michel de Salzmann (b.1923), the son of Madame de Salzmann, a life-long Gurdjieffian who grew up in contact with Gurdjieff and who is described by the editor of *Parabola* as "one of those guiding the transmission of his teaching",<sup>225</sup> writes:

Bennett...had a particular itinerary, being a follower of many teachers in succession and making a mixture of teachings that is difficult to sort out. At the end of his life, he established a center of his own, returning more frankly to what he considered to be the "Gurdjieff way."<sup>226</sup>

However, de Salzmann's statement has an additional feature: the idea that Bennett returned, at the end of his life, "more frankly to what he considered to be the "Gurdjieff way." There is something of the 'lost (and deluded) sheep returning – or attempting to return<sup>227</sup> – to the fold' syndrome about this, which may be what he meant. It is interesting to us in so far as we have seen that, although the Academy's *Prospectus* emphasized a multi-sourced synthesis of techniques, in practice the training was predominantly Gurdjieffian. However, as I shall suggest below, it might



be the case that Bennett's extra-Gurdjieffian allegiances have a more *positive* relationship to the final phase than a 'lost sheep' interpretation would suggest. Certainly, we can agree that Bennett career ran a complex course taking in Subud, the Hindu teachings of the Shivapuri Baba, Roman Catholicism and Sufism<sup>228</sup>; and to "sort out" the resultant complexity will be the task of later chapters.

The main question is: Do Bennett's extra-Gurdjieffian experiments constitute "artificial liaisons" and a "rash admixture of tributary influences" to the stream of the Gurdjieff teaching which can only serve to weaken it? It might be that they do not. Moore says, above: "To the degree that the esoteric stream remains in contact with its source on a higher level, it sustains a self sufficient internal dynamism"; but if the stream loses contact with "its source on a higher level" then, presumably, it will dry up and the external manifestations of the tradition will be left as empty husks. This is much as Gurdjieff said would happen to manifestations of the fourth way which had outlived the specific fourth way task for which they arose (see Chapter One).

Beyond speaking of an authentic lineage through people who were personally taught by Gurdjieff and of the unassailability of Madame de Salzmans position,<sup>229</sup> Moore does not tell us what is required to maintain a connection to the higher level source. As far as we, as outsiders, are concerned, in using this biographical criterion he is only telling us of the external aspect of the tradition: this 'authentic lineage' of people *may* be connected to the higher source, but he gives us no assurance of this beyond the fact that they were taught by Gurdjieff. It is possible that Bennett's explorations relate to the Gurdjieff teaching in a much more significant way than Moore would suggest. We have indicated above that Moore's idea of a 'subterranean esoteric stream' which is the life of the Gurdjieff tradition could be taken as

equivalent to the notion of the Gurdjieff teaching as an action within the field of the Great Work. – The “core” of the Gurdjieff teaching, of which Bennett speaks, is the ‘subterranean stream’ *when in touch with its higher level source*. – Our exploration of Bennett's purpose and the way in which he presents this as relating to Gurdjieff's purpose, together with his clear indication that he considered himself to be one of very few people who can penetrate to the core of the teaching, implies a claim that *he* was in touch with the teaching's “source on a higher level” (to use Moore's phrase). The argument from the ‘Bennett side’ would, then, be that his apparently heterodox, extra-Gurdjieffian activities were in fact creative actions to *sustain the connection to the higher source* and thereby maintain the essential purpose and direction of the teaching. It can be argued that in attempting to sustain a *wholly* “self-sufficient internal dynamism” the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy have actually missed the necessity of maintaining a living connection with the higher source. As Riordan puts it:

...the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy [–i.e., the Foundation]...has been criticized by some as rigid and even as lacking in the ineffable ingredient that is present around a living master...<sup>230</sup>

Conversely, it *could be* the case that Bennett's search for the necessary initiations and for connection to the true purpose of the Gurdjieff teaching after 1949 served to strengthen, rather than weaken, his connection – and hence that of his followers – to the higher level source.

### ***“Substance of Work”***

In fact Bennett held a definite view concerning what Riordan terms “the ineffable ingredient that is present around a living master...” In 1963 he said that:

...those who are spiritually strong can help those who are spiritually weak—not by their outward actions alone but by lending

them a supply of the ‘substance of work.’ It is somewhat analogous to the ‘Queen Substance’ that the Queen Bee produces and that makes possible all the activity of the worker bees. This very important notion was first explained to me by Gurdjieff in July 1923<sup>231</sup>...Gurdjieff had the power to produce the ‘substance of work’ and those of us who knew him were able to draw upon it.<sup>232</sup>

During the final years of his life he made repeated references to this idea in his writings and recorded talks. In these later pronouncements he substituted the Islamic term *baraka*<sup>233</sup> which he defines as “effectual grace”<sup>234</sup> This is not the place for a full exploration of Bennett’s understanding of *baraka* and its relevance to the ‘Gurdjieff tradition’; however, it is relevant to describe the main features of the idea in order to highlight its centrality to Bennett’s overall position. Bennett, on several occasions, reiterated the assertion that Gurdjieff functioned as a source for this helping energy. Additionally, Bennett states that: Gurdjieff had a full understanding of this matter; that this idea had informed Gurdjieff’s own search; <sup>235</sup> and that, in Gurdjieff’s own terminology, *baraka* corresponds to “*hanbledzoin*” (in *Beelzebub*) and “higher emotional energy” (in *ISOM*).<sup>236</sup> Referring explicitly to Sufic forms, he says that

The sheikh gives [the pupil] the appropriate *zikr* [inner exercise] at the time of his initiation, at the same time communicating the *baraka* or energy that enables the *zikr* to be fruitful.<sup>237</sup>

that

The true way transmits a spiritual power, *baraka*, or *hanbledzoin* which enables the seeker to do what is quite beyond his unaided strength.<sup>238</sup>

And, with regard to Gurdjieff, that

This transmission of higher energy that can be assimilated to the energy of the pupil is a vital part of the process, and in this sense it can certainly be said that Gurdjieff, at all times, was a teacher.<sup>239</sup>

Hence it can be seen that the *baraka* idea provides a powerful context for the distinction between a living transmission and mere continuity of form. In this view knowledge of the methods is not enough: those who teach the methods must themselves have sufficient spiritual status (or at least be connected to someone who does) such that the effectual grace can be transmitted.<sup>240</sup> It can be noted that Bennett's understanding in terms of *baraka* is closely related to his emphasis on "receptive lines of work". In fact the term *baraka* is virtually synonymous with the "fifth line of work"; but for the purpose of the present analysis it may also be seen as a distinct element because it gives a context for the continuity and the authenticity of tradition.

Bennett also ascribes to the *baraka* idea a universal significance beyond the continuity of a single traditional strand. In 1963 he emphasized the fundamental status of the *baraka* idea by saying

If you can understand this, you will have come near to the very essence of the meaning of man's life on earth.<sup>241</sup>

And adding that

...there are other and more powerful reserves of this substance than any one man can produce.<sup>242</sup>

Subsequently, he elucidated the issue by distinguishing three 'types' of *baraka*:

There is universal *baraqah*. There is the *baraqah* of a particular tradition and there is personal *baraqah*. There are certain people who themselves acquire the power of blessing by their own merits. There are also people who, by playing a particular role in certain ritual conditions, are able to transmit blessings...The third thing is universal *baraqah*, which pervades the world, and to which people become sensitive when their own inner enemy has been silenced.<sup>243</sup>

Thus the *baraka* idea can be seen as central to Bennett's position and, as a supernatural action at work in the world, intimately related to the notions of the Great Work and the activity of the Higher Powers. It will prove to be of great importance

because it is a common denominator for the two main aspects which I will identify as having impelled Bennett's post-Gurdjieff search: the quest for connection to the higher context of Gurdjieff's work and that to find the necessary initiations. Moreover, the *baraka* idea can itself serve as a focus for addressing the underlying problem of 'the Gurdjieff tradition' which, in these terms, becomes: Which kind of *baraka* did Gurdjieff possess; to what extents was he an 'independent' or a channel for a 'traditional' (e.g., Sufic) *baraka*; and how was this related to universal *baraka*?

Returning now to the question of Bennett's position in relation to the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy, putting forward the general idea that his 'extra-Gurdjieffian' activities served to maintain contact with the living source of the teaching invokes a line of argument in which an emphasis on 'essential *content*' might succeed in circumventing the problems presented by 'external *form*'. However, such a view seems difficult to sustain: the arguments available to the 'external form' side of the issue seem too potent. As I have already outlined in Chapter One, Bennett's opponents have two main weapons in their armoury. Firstly, they claim that, as far as his responsibilities as a transmitter of Gurdjieff's teaching are concerned his embracing of Subud and his relationship with Idries Shah represent loss of control, loss of contact and simply 'going off the rails.'

Secondly, Bennett's detractors claim that his contacts with Gurdjieff was too brief for him to be taken seriously as an inheritor of the teaching. Moore has written:

One cannot know how much J.G.Bennett received from Gurdjieff; but the prolixity of his authorship<sup>244</sup> contrasts wryly with the brevity of his actual contact.<sup>245</sup>

It is true that compared to the situation of Gurdjieff's senior French pupils, who became the central nucleus of the Foundation, Bennett's contact with Gurdjieff was, in

purely temporal terms, slight. Bennett, having met Gurdjieff in Istanbul (1921), spent an intensive month at Gurdjieff's Institute near Fontainebleau during August 1923. After this, he did not see Gurdjieff again until August 1948 from which time he was in close contact with him, receiving personal teaching, until his death at the end of October 1949.<sup>246</sup> However, it can be argued that this 'twenty five year absence' is neither as exceptional nor as damning as it might appear, for two main reasons:

1. It is well documented that Gurdjieff tended not to allow his pupils to stay with him indefinitely. It can be argued that this was, at least in part,<sup>247</sup> to counteract the tendency to become over reliant on him as a 'guru figure': he needed his best pupils to become free exemplars of his teaching.<sup>248</sup> His pattern of sending people away, and if necessary alienating them, can be seen in this light – i.e., as a stage of the teaching process.<sup>249</sup> Bennett suggests that his own twenty-five year absence from Gurdjieff can be understood in this context.<sup>250</sup> However, this is probably an overstatement of the true state of affairs. While there is no reason to doubt his feeling that Gurdjieff had put up some kind of barrier such that he could not return,<sup>251</sup> it is probably closer to the truth to say that his circumstances became subsumed within the far reaching effects of *Ouspensky's* alienation from Gurdjieff. – Bennett, in common with the majority of Gurdjieff's English pupils,<sup>252</sup> fell under Ouspensky's influence at the time of his schism from Gurdjieff. (Ouspensky's role is, in itself, a special factor in consideration of the development of Gurdjieffian lineage in general and of Bennett's position in particular. See Chapter Six.) – Nevertheless, there remains a

general consideration that an hiatus in the teacher-pupil relation is not necessarily, in itself, either extraordinary or damning.

2. As Moore concedes, we have no *certain* way of knowing how much Bennett received from Gurdjieff. Moreover, it can be argued that the quality and extent of what he received need not be directly proportional to the duration of the contact. Aside from any metaphysical argument that communication of ‘high level truths’ takes place outside profane time, there are the issues of *preparation*. Bennett records that when, on his return to Gurdjieff, he expressed regret at a ‘wasted’ twenty five-years, Gurdjieff told him:

“No, it was necessary. Without this you would not be able to receive what I now can give you. You could not stay with me. Now you will be able to stay.”<sup>253</sup>

This indicates that Bennett had ‘done his ground work’ effectively such that his fourteen months with Gurdjieff (August 1948 to October 1949) could be a period of rapid progress. Furthermore, this preparation is not to be construed as solely *self* related: at this stage Bennett already had a following of his own<sup>254</sup> and a *commitment to serving the Gurdjieff teaching*<sup>255</sup>.

Hence, it can be seen that the “brevity of his actual contact” by no means necessarily disqualifies Bennett from being taken seriously as an ‘inheritor of the Gurdjieff teaching.’ Gurdjieff’s statement, together with many others which Bennett relates in *Witness*, appears to give assurance of this. However, it must be noted in advance<sup>256</sup> that C.S.Nott – the only Englishman to remain in more or less continual contact with Gurdjieff (1924-1949, with the exception of the Second World War

years)<sup>257</sup> – makes a specific point of presenting a very different picture of the status of Bennett in the eyes of Gurdjieff.<sup>258</sup>

The charge that the relative briefness of Bennett's contact with Gurdjieff undermines any claim to lineage is weaker than that concerning his subsequent diverse affiliations. Nevertheless, taken in conjunction with this latter charge it would help point towards the conclusion that the connection of Bennett's activities to Gurdjieff and his teaching is, in reality, quite tenuous. In seeking to argue against the 'brevity of actual contact' contention I have, in point one, referred to some issues of 'form'. However, point 2, which is the more *potentially* convincing, relies mainly on an issue of 'essential content' – i.e., Bennett connection to the teaching through his state of *inner preparedness*. Hence, the two issues, of Bennett's connection to the Gurdjieff teaching *prior to* 1949 and his connection to the teaching *after* 1949, can only be resolved in his favour if convincing connections between the stages of Bennett's development and the structure of the Gurdjieff's teaching can be shown.

At this point it is helpful to reiterate the basic problem concerning the 'Gurdjieff tradition' which was set out at the beginning of Chapter One. The question of 'lineage within the Gurdjieff tradition' is a highly problematic one. Even the concept of a tradition is, in this case, fraught with difficulty. This is because the origins of what is called 'the Gurdjieff teaching' are shrouded in mystery. Gurdjieff deliberately made it so. He inveterately avoided the issue of categorical facts concerning the connection of his teaching to either known traditions or esoteric brotherhoods. Although his books *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* and *Meetings With Remarkable Men* provide many intriguing 'clues' concerning secret brotherhoods in Central Asia, ultimately there is no way even to determine whether he *was* in contact with some form of hierarchy or whether he was working alone.<sup>259</sup> As far as we are



concerned the ‘tradition’ – in a known historical sense – starts with *him* and exhibits no *external* roots. It *is* presented in the context of “the fourth way,” but this is by definition a ‘tradition’ without external continuity. Moreover, pursuit of the fourth way idea gives rise to the question: Why should the ‘Gurdjieff tradition’, as a particular manifestation of the ‘meta-tradition’, continue to exist at all? A major consequence of the lack of known historical roots is that *there is no precedent for the authentic transmission of lineage*.

However, it would be untrue to say that Gurdjieff left his pupils with *no* indication as to how the teaching was to continue; and there can be little doubt that Moore is correct in asserting that Gurdjieff charged Madame de Salzman with the task of being overall leader. However, as we shall see in Chapter Six, Gurdjieff’s intentions were ambiguous and can be differently construed depending on which evidence is taken. It is said that among Gurdjieff’s dying words he uttered something along the lines of “I’m leaving you all in a fine mess!” James Webb records:

When I asked Henri Tracol [a senior French Pupil] if this story were authentic, he smiled and spread his hands.

“He did *not* say that,” he answered and paused before continuing: “—but it was true!”<sup>260</sup>

That this could be so serves to suggest that there was no clearly defined structure within which inheritance of authority and continuity of the teaching could easily take place. This lack of precedent or clearly defined structure is precisely the problem that we have to deal with in order to assess the nature of Bennett’s position in relation to the teaching. However, in doing this it is not only Bennett’s position that is in question, although it is the focus for questioning. Considering the situation of Bennett will also enable us to examine the question of in what ways *lineage* and a *tradition*

can be said to exist for the Gurdjieff teaching in which the origins are so obscure and the intentions and orientations of the master so difficult to interpret.

### **Conclusion: The Structure of Bennett's Position**

In this chapter I have explored the situation that followed from Bennett's belief that he had become a 'master in his own right'. The primary aim has been to explicate the relationship between (i) the idea of Bennett as a master in his own right and (ii) Bennett as a follower of Gurdjieff and a continuer of his work. Explorations of the extent to which his Academy was, or claimed to be, based on Gurdjieff's ideas have demonstrated that:

- Gurdjieff was the starting point and the predominant source in terms of *methods*.
- Bennett publicly framed the *purpose* of his Academy in terms of a continuity with the purposes of Gurdjieff.

At the *doctrinal* level Bennett highlighted Gurdjieff's teaching that (i) the proper destiny of human beings is to play a special and individuated role in the evolutionary backflow of creation and (ii) that the fulfilment of this role is the true aim of work on oneself. He represented this as the central pillar of Gurdjieff's teaching; and he invoked it in relation to his own fundamental orientation in terms of human participation in the Great Work in both its historical and its vertical aspects.

As has been shown, Bennett did not see his continuity from Gurdjieff as being of a straightforwardly *lineal* nature. Bennett seems to have seen Gurdjieff's work as having been a terrestrially important act in a much larger action: in this view, the

‘Gurdjieff tradition’ is part of a ‘meta-Tradition’ which is itself an integral part of the Great Work on local and cosmic scales. His own position was predicated on his connection to this meta-Tradition (the Fourth Way as a whole). It was his contact with Gurdjieff (lineal connection) which had made this possible – and given him his primary orientation – but his authority claim was ultimately one of *deep* (vertical) continuity through inner realization. (He represented this as being utterly in harmony with, rather than in any way contrary to, his feeling of gratitude and obligation to Gurdjieff.) His assertion of having been in an ever deepening relationship of submission to the intentions of the Higher Powers is a major dimension of this claim to authority through inner realization.

Indeed it is the case that *were* Bennett’s ‘claim to succession’ straightforwardly lineal he would be on very shaky ground. As the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy point out, the problem of Bennett’s relatively brief contact with Gurdjieff is compounded by his subsequent lack of fidelity to the teaching. In so far as Bennett does claim ‘lineage’ from Gurdjieff – and there *is* a virtually explicit claim to a kind of succession – it would be difficult to justify in straightforwardly lineal terms. Clearly, for the theory of Bennett’s succession from Gurdjieff in terms of deep continuity to be sustained it must accommodate his post-Gurdjieff explorations. In a later chapter<sup>261</sup> I will argue that these explorations were a valid response to the situation after Gurdjieff’s death. I will put forward that: (i) in the absence of the master it was necessary to find other means to vivify the work; (ii) this was so at the levels of personal development and the overall sense of direction (fourth way *raison d’être*) of the work; (iii) it was Bennett’s responsibility to seek for the ‘missing elements’ for his own inner development and in order to maintain the current of transmission to his pupils; and (iv) all of this is makes sense in terms of Gurdjieff’s teachings. However, in order to

chart Bennett's 'progress towards an authority based on inner realization' it will be necessary, first, to elaborate a 'Gurdjieffian developmental spiritual psychology'<sup>262</sup> capable of providing criteria for: discriminating the levels of inner development; understanding the needs of each level and the requirements for transition between them; and, most crucially, determining the *degree of connectedness to tradition* of each level and hence its degree of authority to transmit the teaching.

At this point it will be useful to review the main elements which have been highlighted, in this and the previous chapter, as characterizing Bennett's position. Eight points are identified and these can be grouped into four pairs:

**Perspective on Gurdjieff.**

1. Gurdjieff is not to be seen as an isolated phenomenon.
2. The necessity to "look beyond the man to his message."

**Terrestrial esoteric tradition.**

3. The fourth way (manifesting according to necessity; no constant institution).
4. The idea of the esoteric centre. 'Higher' Sufism (the Khwajagan) and the "Sarmoun Brotherhood".

**Overarching theological and cosmological context.**

5. The Great Work and the *Parousia*.
6. The purposes of the Higher Powers.

**Emphasis on help, grace and submission.**

7. Teaching that the practice of "receptive lines of work" is a vitally necessary complement to the way of effort.

## 8. Identification of the significance of *baraka*.

There are many interrelationships between the above eight main characteristics of Bennett's position. Furthermore, any one of the eight elements could be taken as a central focus from which to explore the others. For instance, as has already been briefly discussed, Bennett's presentation of the *baraka* idea has relevance to understanding of Gurdjieff's activity, continuity of tradition, the ultimate purpose of existence and spiritual practice. Such an approach would lead to a greater understanding of the internal dynamics of Bennett's position. However, what is now required is to test the authenticity of these ideas against Gurdjieff's teachings. For this reason it is Bennett's perspective on Gurdjieff that must be the starting point. The main questions are: What is Gurdjieff telling us about the source and context of his authority? And, to what extent do the other elements (3-8) enter into this?

Turning now to more specific issues, the most obviously crucial area to investigate is the relationship between the assertion that 'Gurdjieff was not an isolated phenomenon' and Gurdjieff's own indications concerning the "esoteric centre" and the "inner circles of humanity".<sup>263</sup> In particular it will be necessary to:

- (i) attempt to decide whether he meant the terms to signify some form of terrestrial organization or whether he simply used them as ways to describe a level of spiritual realization which has inherent authority;
- (ii) investigate the content and the status of Gurdjieff's 'autobiographical' indications concerning his own connection to esoteric brotherhoods; and
- (iii) assess the validity of Bennett's assertion that "Gurdjieff was, more than anything else, a Sufi"<sup>264</sup>and, specifically, in some way connected to the Khwajagan-Naq'shbandi lineage.

These issues are addressed in Chapter Four.

Similarly, Bennett's assertion of the need to "look beyond the man to his message" gives rise to questions about the validity of Bennett's interpretation of Gurdjieff's teaching. To what extent *was* Gurdjieff working in the overarching cosmological and theological context indicated by Bennett? It will be necessary to ask the following specific questions:

- (i) How far does Gurdjieff's picture of the involution and evolution of Creation ("reciprocal maintenance") concur with Bennett's ideas concerning the Great Work?
- (ii) How much agreement is there between Gurdjieff's and Bennett's presentations of terrestrial and human evolution and sacred history?
- (iii) To what extent can the Christian Revelation be said to have a central position in Gurdjieff's teaching? – Can any support for the *Parousia* idea be found in his doctrines?
- (iv) Do Gurdjieff's "Angels" and "Archangels"<sup>265</sup> correspond, in terms of ontological status and teleological function, to Bennett's Higher Powers?
- (v) And, what is the relationship between these ideas and the doctrine of "higher centres"<sup>266</sup> – i.e., to what extent are the 'higher powers' (a) beings, or (b) spiritual energies latent in the human?
- (vi) Is there any extent to which *Gurdjieff's* authority claim can be said to be predicated on his 'connection to the higher powers'?

Issues (i) to (v) are addressed in Chapter Three. The question of Gurdjieff's own 'relationship to the higher powers' – issue (vi) – must be seen as closely related to an understanding of the meaning of the esoteric centre: for this reason it is dealt with in Chapter Four. (The nature of the 'higher powers' – issue (v) – will have a bearing on

our understanding of Gurdjieffian spiritual psychology as will be developed in Chapter Five.)

For Bennett the key to understanding Gurdjieff and fulfilling his teaching (elements 1 and 2) is – in the final analysis – *actual work on oneself* (element 7). This is, of course, also the case for the ‘orthodox Gurdjieffians’. However, they would see Bennett’s position as being *insufficiently* rooted in work on oneself, and they would disagree as to what constitutes (a) a correct understanding of Gurdjieff and (b) the right approach to work on oneself. In this light it is important to determine the authenticity, in terms of Gurdjieff’s teachings, of Bennett’s emphasis on receptive lines of work (submission, help and grace) as complementary to the more ‘obviously Gurdjieffian’ way of effort. This question will be addressed directly in Chapter Five as an integral part of the delineation of Gurdjieffian spiritual psychology; however, foundations will have been laid in Chapters 3 and 4.

## Notes and References to Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>Bennett founded the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences (I.C.S.H.P.S.) in 1946. The Institute's journal *Systematics* (quarterly, 1963-74) states that,

The objects for which the Institute is established are: —

- (a) To promote research and other scientific work in connection with the factors that influence development and retrogression in man and their operation in individuals and communities; to investigate the origin and elaboration of scientific hypotheses and secular and religious philosophies and their bearing on general theories of man and his place in the universe; and to study comparative methodology in history, philosophy and natural science.
- (b) To promote and prosecute theoretical and experimental researches in the physical and biological sciences particularly in the field of psychokinetics.
- (c) To provide facilities for post-graduate courses related to the objects of The Institute by means of research fellowships and bursaries to be held at The Institute or at any recognised University or place of learning.
- (d) To organise courses of lectures and practical demonstrations by members of the staff of The Institute or by extra-mural authorities.
- (e) To prepare, edit, print, publish, issue, acquire and circulate books, papers, periodicals, gazettes, circulars and other literary undertakings and to establish, form and maintain museums, collections, libraries and collections of literature, statistics, scientific data and other information and to translate, compile, collect, publish, lend and sell, and endeavour to secure, or contribute to, the translation, compilation, collection and publication, by Parliament, Government Departments and other bodies or persons, of any such literature, statistics and information, and to disseminate the same by the means of the reading of papers, delivery of lectures, giving of advice, the appointment of advisory officers or otherwise...
- (f) To retain or employ skilled professional or technical advisers or workers in connection with the objects of The Institute and to pay therefore such fees or remuneration as many [sic] be thought expedient.
- (h) To establish, promote, cooperate with, become a member of, act as, or to appoint, trustees, agents or delegates for, control, manage, superintend, afford financial assistance to or otherwise assist to research work of any associations and institutions and other bodies, incorporated or not incorporated, whose objects include scientific research or are otherwise similar to the objects of The Institute.



(extracted from — “Memorandum of Association”, quoted in  
*Systematics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1963)

The Institute continued to exist until c.1981 when the faction who had gained control – predominantly under the leadership of A.G.E.Blake and A.M.Hodgson – renamed their corporate research endeavour “The Alexandria Foundation” with their new spiritual teacher G.B.Chicoine as Director of Research. (See: ‘Alexandria Foundation’ (pamphlet), published by The Alexandria Foundation, 1986; and A.G.E.Blake's ‘A History of the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences Ltd and the Influences Upon It’ (Continuous Education Working Paper No. 2), especially pp.12-14 and 32-33.)

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., A.G.E.Blake in J.G.Bennett's *Deeper Man*, ‘Introduction’, p.11.

<sup>3</sup>See *Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.5.

<sup>4</sup>See Bennett's own account in *Witness*, pp.372-8 and the ‘Epilogue’ to *Witness* written by Elizabeth Bennett. Bennett died on 13th December 1974, two months into the fourth course. Bennett had planned that there would be a total of five ‘basic courses’ followed by an ‘advanced course’ (1976-7) (*ibid.*, p.378). He writes:

In 1976-7, I intend to invite those who have shown themselves capable of transmitting what they have learned and are ready to make a step forward.

The remainder of the fourth course and the entire fifth course were run by Bennett's associates in the Institute and the ‘advanced course’ never took place (see A.G.E.Blake in Bennett's *Deeper Man* ‘Introduction’, p.11.)

<sup>5</sup>See *Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.2.

<sup>6</sup>The extents to which (a) Bennett’s conception of the higher powers can be understood as Gurdjieffian and (b) Gurdjieff’s own spiritual authority may be understood as predicated on this basis will be discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>7</sup>*Witness*, pp.371-2.

<sup>8</sup>*Witness.*, p.372.

<sup>9</sup>Bennett's autobiography *Witness* was first published in 1961. The updated version was published first in the U.S.A. in 1974 – the boldness of the ‘Preface To the American Edition’ suggests a kind of ‘advertisement’ for the Academy – and in Britain the following year. The time of writing, or at least of completion, can be identified by the words “The second course is now coming to an end...”

<sup>10</sup>Bennett had been going on retreats to St. Wandrille – A Roman Catholic monastery of the Benedictine order in Normandy – since 1959 (*ibid.*, p.343). It was partly as a result of his experiences there that he was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1961 (*ibid.*, p.353).

<sup>11</sup>*Witness*, p.372

<sup>12</sup>There is no reason to doubt that Bennett's audition originated outside the realm of ordinary cognition. However, it *is* possible to understand such an inspiration without reference to “higher powers”, e.g., (in a Jungian sense) as a manifestation of the

creative power of the unconscious to indicate to us the steps we must take. Bennett's own understanding of such matters incorporated both psychological and metaphysical dimensions and will deserve full discussion when the necessary ideas have been introduced.

<sup>13</sup>*Witness*, p.373

<sup>14</sup>With reference to the ease with which money, premises and committed students were obtained for the project Bennett writes:

Never in my life had anything comparable happened to me.  
Hitherto, the possible had been made difficult. This time, the  
impossible had been made easy.  
(*Witness*, p.375)

<sup>15</sup>*Witness*, p.375

<sup>16</sup>Bennett's understanding of the role of the "demiurgic intelligence" in terrestrial and human evolution has been introduced in Chapter One. I return to this subject in Chapter Three.

<sup>17</sup>Bennett records (*Witness*, p.270) his final meeting with Gurdjieff on the morning of Saturday 22nd October 1949, but makes no reference to the words "You. Only you, can repay for all my labours." However, his own posthumously published diary of the period includes the following entry for September 4th 1949:

...I added, "I cannot thank you for what you have done for me.  
That I can never repay."  
A long time passed during which various people came and spoke to  
him. Then he turned to me and said slowly, "What you say about  
never repay — this stupidity. *Only* you can repay. What do you  
think is money? I can buy all your England. *Only you*" (with great  
emphasis) "can repay me with work...  
(J.G.Bennett in *Idiots In Paris: Diaries of J.G.Bennett and  
Elizabeth Bennett, 1949*, p.58)

<sup>18</sup>*Witness*, p.372

<sup>19</sup>An understanding of the significance of Bennett's emphasis on these dimensions of *duty* and the *repayment of debt* requires some background information about Gurdjieff's doctrine. Central to Gurdjieff's teaching are the ideas that man as he finds himself has no constancy of being and hence cannot *do* – everything happens to him, mechanically, as though in a dream – hence he cannot be said to be a morally responsible being in any real sense. Man cannot do anything until he becomes truly conscious. The moral corollary of this necessary coming to consciousness of ones self is the awakening of *conscience* which Gurdjieff defines, in religious terms, as being "particles of the emanation of the Sorrow of our Common Father Creator" (*Beelzebub*, Vol.1, p.376). Only when conscience is awakened can man know and fulfil his true purpose in creation. This Gurdjieff describes in terms of a *cosmic duty*. One aspect of this "being-duty" which is particularly emphasised is that of 'repayment for the debt of one's existence' (*ibid.*, pp.77-8 and 386). In the praxis of the Gurdjieff teaching this idea of payment finds expression in the idea of the continuous and ever increasing efforts that are required of a person. Gurdjieff says:

“...Every effort a man makes increases the demands made upon him. So long as a man has not made any serious efforts the demands made upon him are very small, but his effort immediately increase the demands made upon him. And the greater the efforts that are made, the greater the new demands.”  
(Gurdjieff in P.D.Ouspensky, *ISOM*, p.229)

This idea of continuous payment is given specific application to the matter of *lineage* by the statement that:

“The pupil cannot go on without the teacher, and the teacher cannot go on without the pupil or pupils. And this is not a general consideration but an indispensable and quite concrete rule on which is based the law of man's ascending. As has been said before, no one can ascend onto a higher step until he places another man in his own place. What a man has received he must immediately give back; only then can he receive more.”  
(Gurdjieff in *ibid.*, p.203)

This statement provides a *general* context within which Bennett's perspective on his Academy as the fulfilment of a debt to his teacher Gurdjieff can be understood.

<sup>20</sup>J.G.Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making A New World*, p.3

<sup>21</sup>Coombe Springs, a house with grounds (Kingston, South London) became the wartime headquarters of the British Coal Utilization Research Association, of which Bennett was then research director, in May of 1941 (*Witness*, p.181). Coombe Springs was used as a fortnightly meeting place for the Ouspensky-Gurdjieff type group Bennett was at that time leading until the end of the war. In 1946 Coombe Springs was bought by Bennett under the auspices of his newly founded Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences (*ibid.*, pp.210-1). Coombe Springs was the main centre for the Institute's activity until it was given to Idries Shah, who claimed higher priority for his work, in 1966 (*ibid.*, pp.355-63).

<sup>22</sup>Coombe Springs was a thriving centre of the Gurdjieff teaching until May 1957 when the Gurdjieffian activities were temporarily eclipsed as a result of Bennett's interest in Subud (see *ibid.*, pp.320-34). Subud is a new religious movement originating in Indonesia and founded by Muhammad Subuh in the 1930s. It became an international movement from 1957. Bennett and Coombe Springs were significantly instrumental to its rapid spread in the late 1950s. Subud differs radically from the Gurdjieff teaching in so far as it emphasises *submission* – in an experience known as the *latihan* – whereas Gurdjieff's teaching is, to start with at least, a way of *effort* (see Chapter Three). Bennett broke with Subud and resumed the teaching and practice of the Gurdjieff methods in the autumn of 1960 (*Witness*, p.350).

<sup>23</sup>Soon after his withdrawal from Subud Bennett made two visits to the Shivapuri Baba, a Hindu sage living near Katmandu and reputed to be over 130 years old. Bennett was profoundly impressed with the Shivapuri Baba's teachings; in his turn the Shivapuri Baba asked Bennett to write an account of his teachings for Westerners (*ibid.*, p.352). (See J.G.Bennett, *The Long Pilgrimage: the life and teachings of the Shivapuri Baba*, first published in 1965.)

<sup>24</sup>*Witness*, p.372

<sup>25</sup>Bennett writes:

My first meeting with Hasan Shushud was in 1962 when I visited Turkey....At our first meeting, he gave me a copy of his book *Khwajagan Hanedani* which was the story of the Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia coupled with an account of the way of Absolute Liberation — Itlak Yolu — of which he was and is the leading exponent. I had not paid much attention as I was still under the influence of my visit to the Shivapuri Baba.  
(*Witness*, p.366)

The ‘Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia’ were a lineage of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries from whom the Naq'shbandi and the Yesevi Sufi brotherhoods originate (see Bennett's *Gurdjieff: Making A New World*, Chapter 2 – especially p.33 and p.44; see also Bennett's *The Masters of Wisdom*, Chapters 6-10).

<sup>26</sup>*Witness*, p.366.

<sup>27</sup>Bennett experienced this vision at sunset in a cemetery at Scutari, near Istanbul, overlooking the Bosphorus. He gives several items of information which are clearly intended to be taken as triggers for this altered state of consciousness. He describes an intense aesthetic experience brought about by the combined effect of the natural scenery and the Islamic architecture. His mental preoccupation was with the mysteries of life, death and human fate (*Witness*, p.78). However, we should also consider the information about his longer term state of ‘existential malaise’ that can be found in the earlier pages of the autobiography. (E.g., *ibid.*, pp.16, 34-5 and 70-1.)

<sup>28</sup>*Witness*, p.78.

<sup>29</sup>During the 1950s and 1960s, a sense of ‘guided destiny’ was, according to his autobiography, a prominent factor in the development of Bennett’s life. This, together with the biographical aspect of the other strands, is explored in detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>30</sup>Bennett ascribes particular significance too Hasan Shushud's teaching of the technique known as *zikh-i-daim*, or perpetual prayer of the heart, which combines breath control with inner repetition of a prayer.

<sup>31</sup>Bennett’s momentous encounter with Gurdjieff at the Prieuré (Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man), a little over two years after his destiny audition, would undoubtedly have served both to encourage a belief that he had the potential to perform a high spiritual task and to situate this within a Gurdjieffian context. (See *Witness*, pp.115-122.) This encounter is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>32</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education* for the Second Basic Course (1972-1973).

<sup>33</sup>See ‘Bibliography’ under Bennett; cassette tapes are listed as an appendix to the main bibliography.

<sup>34</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.3

<sup>35</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.3

<sup>36</sup>Perhaps most notably the evening meditations (see page 65) – although it may well be that their purpose is to be understood from a Gurdjieffian perspective. Utilization of the “aesthetic element” (see page 72) cannot be claimed as an *exclusively* Gurdjieffian component. The methods employed in “Individual Counselling” (see page 70) and the teaching of “Group Dynamics” (see page 68) may well owe as much or more to humanistic psychology than they do to Gurdjieff. (However, Gurdjieff undoubtedly taught at an individual level (“individual counselling”) and placed emphasis on “group dynamics” as a means to self-knowledge. It may be that the Academy *was* following a Gurdjieffian paradigm, and the recourse to humanistic psychology is to be seen as a function of the more structured character of the Academy courses as compared, e.g., to the activities at Gurdjieff’s Institute – see below.) Lastly, not all of the ‘theoretical’ courses that were offered have any obvious connection to Gurdjieff (see page 73).

<sup>37</sup>The Academy’s programme placed considerable emphasis on its “morning exercise(s)” (which were mainly, if not exclusively, the inner exercises taught by Gurdjieff – see page 65) and learning Gurdjieff’s “Movements” or “Sacred Dances” (see page 66). Gurdjieff’s “Stop Exercise” was also used (see page 67). Bennett’s so called “Decision Exercise” bears a close relationship to Gurdjieffian practice and is explicitly attributed to Gurdjieff’s ideas (see page 65). Each course included group reading of the whole of *Beelzebub’s Tales To His Grandson* (see page 76); and Bennett expressed a close affiliation to Gurdjieff through use of the latter’s “toasts to the idiots” (a form of ritualized ‘individual counselling’ – see page 71).

<sup>38</sup>It can (also) be argued that the over all orientation of the Academy – in terms both of fundamental beliefs concerning the human situation and the general methodology for dealing with it – was predominantly Gurdjieffian. The Academy’s teaching was in accord with the basic Gurdjieffian starting point that “*man cannot do*” (see page 65); it taught the corresponding fundamental strategies of attempting “self remembering” (see page 69) and “self observation” (see page 66). Following Gurdjieff’s methodology these efforts were largely focused through the medium of “practical work undertaken in groups” (see page 68). The Academy also accorded with Gurdjieff’s emphasis on the need for psychocosmological studies (see page 76) and, particularly, the study of the transformations of psycho-physiological and psycho-spiritual energies in the human being – a special focus for self observation (see page 66).

<sup>39</sup>One recent commentator (not a Gurdjieffian) has suggested that there was nothing genuinely creative about the Academy: “It was Lyne, Coombe and the Prieuré all over again....” (Peter Washington in *Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon*, p.399).

<sup>40</sup>Page nine of the *Prospectus* speaks of the Academy as a “research laboratory”. – Bennett regarded the Academy itself as an experiment (*Witness*, pp.378 and 381). – It was seen as an episode in an ongoing exploration of human potential and the methods of its realization.

<sup>41</sup>This emphasis on the development of ‘spiritual technologies’ – i.e., *an emphasis on methods* – within the lineage should not be understood as undervaluing the importance of a teacher who is him or herself directly connected to a higher level of authority. – This latter theme is of central importance to the thesis and I will continue

to develop it in later chapters. – To use Bennett’s own language, it is only when a psychokinetic school under the over all guidance of an “Initiate” (who is him or herself in contact with the psychoteleios order) that the “Guides” and “Specialists” who perform specific tasks within the school can function effectively coherently, i.e., that it is a true school. (See *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.261.)

<sup>42</sup>Basically, the argument runs that what Gurdjieff was able to achieve through ‘personal charisma’ and ‘psychological pyrotechnics’, Bennett and his associates hoped to achieve through better understanding of the methods which Gurdjieff himself had pioneered. However, this is not to say the Academy *was* able to equal his results (in terms of the inner development of pupils). Moreover, it can equally well be suggested that the Academy *had* to rely on formalized structure because Bennett did not possess the *degree* of spontaneous insight into his pupils that many accounts indicate Gurdjieff to have possessed. In this connection, it is timely to note that Bennett never said anything to suggest that he was Gurdjieff’s equal.

<sup>43</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.6

<sup>44</sup>During the final two years of his life Bennett conceived the idea of setting up a community in the U.S.A. which would run a school along the lines of the Academy. A property was eventually found and bought near Charles Town, West Virginia. This was less than a month and a half before Bennett’s death allowing him no time to oversee its organization. However, the Claymont School for Continuous Education did come into being under the directorship of Pierre Elliot, a long time associate of Bennett and a personal pupil of Gurdjieff (Elizabeth Bennett, ‘Epilogue’ in *Witness*, pp.381-3). The school at Claymont continued to exist after the end of the Sherborne experiment

<sup>45</sup>*Prospectus of the Claymont School for Continuous Education*, p.9

<sup>46</sup>Drawing on my experience as a participant observer at several weekend sessions and one ten day seminar run by Elizabeth Bennett and other senior followers, it is possible to assert that the “Morning Exercise” techniques emphasise effort and concentration whereas the evening meditations emphasise openness and receptivity.

<sup>47</sup>There is a considerable problem of evidence with regard to these Gurdjieffian spiritual exercises in so far as they have always been transmitted exclusively orally, and Bennett, in common with Gurdjieff’s other followers, has maintained a strong reticence against publication. – Jean Vaysse’s book *Toward Awakening* is an exception in so far as it discloses the basics of “relaxation” and “sensing” which are the foundation of more advanced exercises. – However, there are three sources from which a fragmentary picture can be constructed: - (i) biographical mention of the exercises that were taught in Paris (1948-9) – e.g. , *Witness*, p.240; (ii) allusion to the ‘current exercise’ in transcripts of question and answer sessions with students; and (iii) my own experiences as participant observer at a present day group of Bennett followers.

<sup>48</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.6

<sup>49</sup>See, e.g., Gurdjieff in P.D.Ouspensky’s *ISOM*, p.21: “Man is a machine. All his deeds, actions, words, thoughts, feelings, convictions, opinions, and habits are the

results of external influences, external impressions. Out of himself man cannot produce a single thought, a single action. Everything he says, does, thinks, feels—all this happens. Man cannot discover anything, invent anything. It all happens.”

<sup>50</sup>There are at least two published references to the decision exercise. See *Witness*, p.377 and J.G.Bennett's posthumously compiled *The Sevenfold Work*, p.103 where it says:

It is only with our consent that our real ‘I’ can work in us and it is supremely important to find a way in which we can experience a contact with ‘I’ so that we can know what consent means. The most powerful method for this is the decision exercise and great care should be taken in its practice and teaching so that the purity of the contact is not muddled or destroyed by carelessness and misunderstanding.

<sup>51</sup>*Witness*, p.377

<sup>52</sup>It is worth noting that the decision exercise bears some resemblance to the second of Rudolf Steiner’s “six accessory exercises” which is prescribed to develop the will. In this exercise the person undertakes to perform a particular act – which may be in itself trivial – at the same hour every day. (See Steiner’s *Occult Science: an outline*, p.247; London: Pharos Books, 1979.) Steiner’s exercise differs from the Bennett-Gurdjieff decision exercise in that the latter incorporates prior visualization of the act that is to be performed. However, the decision exercise itself may be seen as a variant of a discipline, performed more routinely in Gurdjieffian circles, of attempting, without fail, to remember oneself or perform a spiritual exercise at a regular and specific time.

<sup>53</sup>The Gurdjieff movements are without doubt a central and unique aspect of his teaching. This section of the Academy’s *Prospectus* continues: “These exercises develop bodily skill, powers of sustained attention, coordination of mind and body, emotional stability, and group sensitivity.” The most basic principle of the movements is to be found in the idea that everyone has a definite set of habitual physical postures which are closely related to a corresponding set of psychological states: hence if one knows how to work on ‘posture’ one is able to study and even change one’s inner states (see Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, p.168; and C.S.Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.8 ). The main aim of practising the movements seems to be to experience the possibility and to help establish a state of harmony between the physical, emotional and intellectual faculties (“centres”). This achievement of inner balance is a fundamental aim for people following the Gurdjieff path without which no further progress is possible (see, e.g., Ouspensky, *ISOM*, p.72). The Gurdjieff movements are said to facilitate simultaneous work on all three faculties (see J.H.Reyner, *The Gurdjieff Inheritance*, pp.43-4). In addition, the movements have the characteristic of being “sacred dances” with names like “The Initiation of a Priestess” and “Dervish Prayer”. Gurdjieff said that these were based on dances that he had seen at centres of spiritual training in Central Asia (C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.8). As such they can also be understood as expressions of “objective art” (see Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.296) which, according to Gurdjieff is a means of transmitting definite cosmological truths in an incorruptible way which is only intelligible to people with a sufficient degree of wakefulness.

<sup>54</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.6

<sup>55</sup>Anna Durco first met Gurdjieff when she was a child and a close friendship was established between them (J.G.Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, pp. 20-1). Pierre Elliot had been a pupil of Ouspensky, Gurdjieff and Bennett and his work with Gurdjieff was, presumably, during the 1948 to 1949 period (Elizabeth Bennett, 'Epilogue' in *Witness*, p.383).

<sup>56</sup>These words "essential to all and everything" – which are otherwise a rather quaint and clumsy formulation – may be taken as a pointer to an underlying Gurdjieffian authority because *All and Everything* was the collective title which Gurdjieff gave to his three series of writings. (The title *All and Everything* has come to be taken as an alternative title for Gurdjieff's first series of writings, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* Vols 1 ,2, and 3.)

<sup>57</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.6

<sup>58</sup>Gurdjieff referred to the human as a "three brained being": it is this characteristic of possessing three "brain systems" that distinguishes his structure from those of the rest of the animal kingdom which have one or two brain systems (see: *Beelzebub*, Vol.1, p.25; Ouspensky, *ISOM*, p.318). According to Gurdjieff's cosmic law of three-foldness any transformation requires that there should be three separate forces present related to each other as positive, negative and neutral (or "affirming", "denying" and "reconciling"). Where only two forces are present then the system is static and no evolutionary change can occur (see, e.g., Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p77). Man's constitution from three separate brain systems – the thinking (intellectual), the feeling (emotional) and the moving (physical) – gives him the potential to embody the three forces and thereby to evolve individually (*Beelzebub*, Vol.2, p.70; Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, pp.103-6). However, in man 'as he finds himself' these three systems are not working in concert as they should be: on the contrary their inter-relationship is thoroughly chaotic such that one of them is over developed at the expense of the others, they interfere with each others work ("stealing energy") and even interfere with the independent instinctive and sexual functions (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, pp.109-10 and 282). Radical and fundamental re-education of the activity of these three systems is said to be required (e.g., the movements) such that the state of internal balance which is the prerequisite for development can be reached (Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, p.141).

<sup>59</sup>One of the premises of the Gurdjieff teaching consists in the idea that:

The human organism represents a chemical factory planned for the possibility of a very high output. But in the ordinary conditions of life the output of this factory never reaches the full production possible to it, because only a small part of the machinery is used which produces only that quantity of material necessary to maintain its own existence.  
(Ouspensky, *ISOM*, p.179)

The reorganization of the "chemical factory" is to some extent synonymous with the re-education of the "brain systems" (such that they can function as three independent forces) and both of these processes go hand in hand with the awakening from



mechanical existence. Gurdjieff presents a detailed spiritual psycho-physiology which explains the relationship between the production of higher substances and the awakening and possible evolution of the individual (see, e.g., Ouspensky, *ibid.*, pp.179-91 for a ‘straightforward’ presentation; and *Beelzebub*, p.353 *et sequa* for a deeper presentation).

<sup>60</sup>Gurdjieff placed great emphasis on the idea that man's condition is so aberrant that he has no place within himself from which he can begin to make real changes. He lives, to a large extent, in an imaginary world and any ‘home made’ attempt at development will come to nothing: he is asleep and needs someone who is already awake to wake him up. This aspect of the teaching is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>61</sup>The inner exercises are known to have been taught by Gurdjieff during the final phase of his teaching. Certainly it seems that Ouspensky did not have knowledge of them (although there is mention of the preliminary technique: Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.351) as Bennett writes of his experience returning to Gurdjieff in 1948:

We were learning something new and altogether extraordinary: that is the deep significance of the physical body of man and its latent powers. Gurdjieff showed us exercises so new and unexpected in their effects that we all felt that a new world was opening for us. (Bennett, *Witness*, p.245)

These exercises develop the power of attention and through the discrimination of internal energies help the practitioner to become ‘fully present’ and awake and to develop a real centre of being – e.g., the “exercise of sensing and feeling” (see Bennett, *Witness*, p.240).

<sup>62</sup>Gurdjieff first taught the “stop exercise” to his St. Petersburg group in 1917. He implied that the technique originates in Central Asia suggesting that it is commonly used as a method of spiritual training (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.353-6). The exercise was a mainstay of the training at the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at Fontainebleau (Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, p.155-8). At a pre-arranged signal from the teacher – e.g., the command “stop” – the students must arrest themselves in precisely the position that the command finds them. This enforced interruption of the normally seamless process of moving from one habitual posture to another allows the student to see himself from an unaccustomed point of view.

<sup>63</sup>All of the accounts of life at Gurdjieff's Institute (e.g., C.S.Nott, *ibid.* and Fritz Peters, *Boyhood With Gurdjieff*) agree that the day to day work at the Prieuré – everything from cooking and cleaning to animal husbandry and building – was all performed by the students and that these practical tasks were an important aspect of the teaching. Pupils were confronted with tasks that were alien to their habitual mode of being – e.g., Gurdjieff gave hard labouring tasks to the psychotherapist Maurice Nicoll and to the literary critic A.R.Orage (J.G.Bennett, *Witness*, p.105) – in order to help them become more balanced. Moreover, Gurdjieff placed high value on the continuous acquisition of new skills as a method of training the faculties and of preventing inner fixity (see G.I.Gurdjieff, *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.250-1). In general pupils were expected to use the practical work as an opportunity for

developing a state of wakefulness in which all ‘three brains’ are participating. Dr Stjoernval, one of Gurdjieff’s most senior pupils, told the neophyte C.S.Nott:

‘You know, Mr Gurdjieff says we should learn to work like men, not like ordinary labourers. Like men, not like machines. Try to save your energy while you are chopping stones. You waste much energy in resenting what you are doing. Make a list of thirty or forty words in a foreign language and memorize them while you are working; at the same time try to sense your body and notice what you are doing.’  
(C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.49)

There was also a strong interpersonal dimension to these day to day activities. Gurdjieff stated that one of the main aims of work at his Institute was to divest people of their comfortable personas. In this endeavour he claimed to be very successful such that “When a new person arrives with his luggage, he is at once undressed.” (Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, p.109) C.S.Nott, who spent a substantial amount of time at the Institute in the 1920s writes:

Gurdjieff constantly manipulated people and situations so as to provoke friction, to promote negative emotions between them and give them an opportunity of seeing something in themselves.  
(C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.54)

The students were specifically enjoined to take advantage of these situations. One of the aphorisms inscribed on the study house wall read:

5. Remember you come here having already understood the necessity of struggling with yourself—only with yourself. Therefore thank everyone who gives you the opportunity.  
(Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, p.273)

Fritz Peters' book *Boyhood With Gurdjieff* is full of anecdotes illustrating Gurdjieff's ability to teach people lessons by manipulating situations. Gurdjieff even told Peters that he placed a specially high value on the presence at the Institute of the Russian refugee Rachmilevitch because of his innate talent to “cause friction” in all circumstances. (See Fritz Peters, *ibid.*, p.8 for a succinct account of the role of practical work in groups at the Institute.)

<sup>64</sup>Bennett' posthumous *The Sevenfold Work*, p.55 records a student asking a question which refers to the “stop exercise.” Additionally, I have seen the “stop exercise” used in a contemporary group of Bennett followers.

<sup>65</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.7

<sup>66</sup>There are numerous accounts of incidents that demonstrate these qualities of Gurdjieff. That the activity of the Institute was maintained by his personal powers is well illustrated by Fritz Peters' account of the affect that the news of Gurdjieff's near fatal motor accident of July 1924 had on the resident pupils:

It is difficult to describe the impact of such an announcement. The very existence of the “Institute” depended entirely on Gurdjieff's presence. It was he who assigned work to every individual—and up to that moment he had supervised, personally, every detail of the

running of the school. Now, the imminent possibility of his death brought everything to a standstill. It was only thanks to the initiative of a few of the older students, most of whom had come with him from Russia, that we continued to eat regularly.  
(Fritz Peters, *ibid.*, p.9)

A similar impression is conveyed by C.S.Nott's account:

..it was as if the mainspring of a great machine had broken and the machine was running on its momentum. The force that moved our lives was gone.....

Routine work was much more difficult without the stimulus of Gurdjieff's presence...  
(C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.82)

<sup>67</sup>See Elizabeth Bennett's, 'Epilogue' in *Witness*, pp.381-3.

<sup>68</sup>See: A.G.E.Blake, 'Introduction to Book One' in *The Way to be Free*, p.7; and Elizabeth Bennett, 'Foreword' in *Idiots in Paris: Diaries of J.G.Bennett and Elizabeth Bennett, 1949*, p.x.

<sup>69</sup>It may be that the higher degree of structure at the Academy can be, in part, explained by the following: Bennett and his colleagues considered that Gurdjieff's Institute had been in the nature of a 'preliminary experiment', whereas the Academy, although still experimental, represented a more advanced stage in the collection of techniques of transformation and their adaptation to contemporary Western needs. (As would seem to be indicated by the allusion to Gurdjieff as a 'starting point' on page 3 of the *Prospectus*.)

<sup>70</sup> *Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.7

<sup>71</sup>It is to be noted that the emphasis on working on oneself within *a group* invokes a fundamental Gurdjieff idea; however, we cannot at this stage of the investigation evaluate the relationship between the established context of 'Gurdjieff groups' and the structure of life at Sherborne.

<sup>72</sup>Throughout the 1960s members of the I.C.S.H.P.S., including Bennett himself, were concerned with a variety of projects aimed at enhancing communication within the fields of scientific and industrial research and education. It was in these contexts that the encounter group type techniques of humanistic psychology were first explored.

<sup>73</sup>See page eight of the *Prospectus*.

<sup>74</sup>We have emphasized Gurdjieff's reputed highly developed 'intuitive' faculties in his dealings with his pupils. However, it must also be noted that Gurdjieff claimed to be in possession of an 'exact science of human types.' See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, p.76 where he speaks of "twenty-seven different definite types" of human being; also Gurdjieff's *The Herald of Coming Good*, p.22 where, in connection with his researches into the operations of the human psyche (c.1912), he refers to his need "...to have at my disposal representatives of all the 28 [sic] "categories-of-types" existing on earth, as they were established in ancient times."

<sup>75</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.6

<sup>76</sup>My evidence for this comes from participant observation.

<sup>77</sup>The basic principle here is set out in Ouspensky, *ISOM*, p.188. Awareness of our activity and surroundings is a source of “*impressions*” which are, in the Gurdjieff teaching, the third type of *food* (the first two being ordinary food and air). In ordinary man these impressions are received passively, as a consequence of which they do not enter the ‘psycho-physiological chemical factory’ (see note 59) with sufficient impetus to enter into transformations. By the making of the effort to self remember simultaneously with the effort to be aware of actions and environment, sufficient energy is brought to the point of entry of the impressions such that they *can* enter into transformations. The ‘higher substances’ thereby produced, in their turn, make the task of self remembering – being ‘awake’, rather than ‘asleep’ – easier. (The above is just a sketch of one part of a subject which is covered comprehensively in *ISOM*, Chapter 9 (see especially pp.187-91); moreover, full understanding of the subject requires knowledge of Gurdjieff’s laws of threefoldness and of sevenfoldness.)

<sup>78</sup>James Webb sums up the evidence concerning the pattern followed by students entering Gurdjieff’s Institute as follows:

A preliminary assessment, then a two month period of observation, during which the pupil would be switched rapidly from task to task in order to determine his problems and capacities; a revised assessment based on how the pupil behaves during the period of probation; and a definite recommendation from Gurdjieff of a particular line of work.

(James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.236)

A clue as to the form that this individual advice might take is to be found in the idea of “Chief Feature”. According to Gurdjieff everyone has one central ‘defect of personality’ which can be objectively determined only by a teacher and on which the focus of inner struggle will be particularly effective (Ouspensky, *ISOM*, pp.266-8).

<sup>79</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.7

<sup>80</sup>One Academy student, who reached a very tangible form of life-crisis during the period of the course, has described to me the way in which Bennett counselled her. This involved both of them using one of the inner exercises to achieve a “collected state”. Then, under Bennett’s guidance, she perceived the answer to her situation. There appears to be some similarity between this procedure and that of “Subud testing” (see Chapter Six).

<sup>81</sup>This anticipates the questions of transmission which are addressed at the end of the present chapter. The most extreme example of the teacher pupil relationship that we might take is the situation of the teacher ‘lending’ the pupil spiritual energy of which Bennett believed Gurdjieff capable (*Witness*, pp.115-22). If Bennett himself was able to help pupils in this way – something for which there is no documented evidence – then it would have come *from or through him*. From one point of view this action could only be said to have an indirect relationship to Gurdjieff via the frame of reference within which it was understood. However, if we emphasise the *through* rather than the *from*, then there is the possibility that both teacher and pupil were tapping the same source. In this case the question of lineage with regard to the

teacher-pupil relationship (i.e., Gurdjieff-Bennett::Bennett-Academy pupils) becomes relevant. If this latter view is upheld, then the possibility is opened for its application to the less extreme examples of teacher-pupil help. (Although it must be said that in the absence of any evidence of the ‘most extreme example’ the case for lineage is weakened.).

<sup>82</sup>See, e.g., Elizabeth Bennett’s ‘Preface’ in J.G.Bennett, *The Way to be Free*, p.3; and A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.89.

<sup>83</sup>See Elizabeth Bennett’s ‘Preface’ to *Idiots In Paris: diaries of J.G.Bennett and Elizabeth Bennett, 1949*, p.x.

<sup>84</sup>*Witness*, p.376

<sup>85</sup>C.S.Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.101

<sup>86</sup>C.S.Nott writes:

Gurdjieff said that the science of idiotism was a mirror in which a man could see himself [this is closely related to the idea of “chief feature”]. Not everyone had the right to be included in a category of which there were twenty-one.  
(C.S.Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.102)

Bennett says that Gurdjieff explained that the science of idiotism “...consisted in tracing the path of man's evolution from a state of nature to the realization of his spiritual potential.” To commence work on ones self is, from the point of view of Gurdjieff’s doctrine, to touch reality for the first time, and so one enters at the bottom of the scale as an “ordinary idiot.” The twenty-one gradations reach right up to ...the Absolute Reason of God, and only the sons of God like Jesus Christ can have the two gradations of reason that are nineteenth and twentieth. Thus the aim of every being who aspires to perfection must be to reach the eighteenth gradation.  
(Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making A New World*, pp.157-8)

<sup>87</sup>Bennett records Gurdjieff saying that he had learned the ‘Science of Idiotism’ “...in a Sufi community [in Turkestan? ], which he used to visit,...” (Bennett, *ibid.*, p.157)

<sup>88</sup>Bennett also relates Gurdjieff explanation of his use of fairly liberal quantities of Armagnac in the “toasts to the idiots” as “..not to get drunk, but to strengthen the power to wish.” (*ibid.*, p.158)

<sup>89</sup>However, from the point of view of Gurdjieffian lineage, the fact that Bennett was prepared to take responsibility for conducting the “toasts to the idiots” ritual may of itself be seen as significant. James Moore writes:

The Toast to the Idiots was discontinued immediately on Gurdjieff’s death in 1949, it being felt that, without his decisive presence, it stood in danger of becoming a mere form without content.  
(*Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, p.355)

From this point of view, Bennett’s adoption of the ritual form suggests either that he was guilty, by Gurdjieffian standards, of a ‘hubristic crassitude’ or that he considered himself to possess qualities of presence approaching those attributed to Gurdjieff.

<sup>90</sup>*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.7

<sup>91</sup>In his account of his time at Gurdjieff's Institute (August 1923), Bennett notes that: "Learning new skills in the shortest space of time was part of the training at Gurdjieff's Institute." (*Witness*, p.108)

<sup>92</sup>Like Bennett's Academy, Gurdjieff's Institute was situated in a rural setting (in forested country near Avon, France). It is noteworthy that Gurdjieff should have chosen to set up his 'centre of intensive training' in a rural environment because, although there are obvious practical considerations – i.e., of space and finance – to be taken into account in the choice of premises, the Gurdjieff way is one that is pursued amidst ordinary life, not in retirement from it (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.49). One factor was almost certainly the need for privacy in order to establish an 'island of intensity' (which was for Gurdjieff partly an experiment and for his pupils meant to be a stage to establish them on the path and never an end in itself). However, beyond this there are factors concerned with the 'education of the feeling centre'. Gurdjieff's musical compositions definitely played a large role in this, as did the sacred dances and the decor of the "study house" in which they were performed. In Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* there is frequent reference to the need to establish a proper relationship to "Great Nature, the Common Mother," (see, e.g., *ibid.*, Vol.1, p.39 and Vol.3, p.297). In this light the agricultural character of many of the practical tasks is more than accidental. One of Gurdjieff's aphorisms (written on the Study House wall) states: "Practice love first on animals, they are more sensitive." (Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, p.274)

<sup>93</sup>The "special course" titles referring to special and general techniques already discussed are:

- "Gurdjieff movement exercises";
- "Commitment and decision: the illusion of doing";
- "Role playing and other encounter group exercises", "Group dynamics workshop and task group exercises" and "Group decision making";
- "Energies: the control and use of sensation, emotion and thought energy" and "Human body: the full use of the body throughout life" (referring to "Energy", "Spiritual Exercises" and "Weekly theme");
- and "Self expression through new techniques in art and music" and "Drama, music and the emotions" referring to "The aesthetic element".

(*Prospectus of the International Academy for Continuous Education*, p.8)

<sup>94</sup>However, this is a clue which can only be read retrospectively – i.e., not by people reading the *Prospectus* in 1972 – as his books *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* and *The Masters of Wisdom* had not at that time been published. In this connection, it is also to be noted that the updated version of *Witness* (including the years 1962 to mid-1973 and an apocalyptic Preface to which I make considerable reference in the next section) was not published (in the U.S.A.) until 1974 (and 1975 in Britain).

<sup>95</sup>The idea of "triadic logic" as a key to understanding is clearly related to Gurdjieff's law of threefoldness. Gurdjieff himself made use of and reference to human typologies – twelve fold (apostolic types, see *Witness*, p.262) twenty-one fold (see

above on “Idiotism”) and twenty-eight fold (Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.22). He also stated that *astrology*, properly understood, is the science of human essence-types. The specific application of “triadic logic” to human types may, however, come via Bennett’s development in *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, Part 11 (pp.69-211).

The title of the course on history can be seen as invoking Gurdjieff’s psycho-historical perspective in which humanity is seen as having degenerated rather than progressed (as expounded throughout *Beelzebub*). The use of the word *hazard* indicates the Gurdjieffian idea that all processes require “shocks” from outside in order to maintain their trajectory and that in human processes these shocks must be *consciously* introduced (all of this refers to Gurdjieff’s law of octaves, or sevenfoldness, which is further explained in the next chapter – see especially note 34, page 573). If humanity is *not* conscious then its purposes must fail.

<sup>96</sup>*ISOM*, p.89

<sup>97</sup>*ISOM*, p.122

<sup>98</sup>E.g., the universe, in one representation, is composed of three “octaves”: the Absolute to the Sun, the Sun to the Earth, and the Earth to the Moon (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, pp.167-9). These three octaves respectively play the affirming, reconciling and denying roles in the ‘law of threefoldness’ (*Beelzebub*, Vol.2, pp.370-2); and it is this trinitarian structure of the Universe as a whole (the “Megalocosmos”) which gives it the possibility of evolution, or a “return flow” to its source (Gurdjieff, *ibid.*, pp.137-9). It is the duty of the proper human being to participate consciously in this return flow of the Universe by evolving on his own account (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.306; see also the “being-obligolnian-strivings” – note 99 below). The human being has this possibility because his own threefold structure mirrors that of the whole Universe (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.191).

<sup>99</sup> The actual term which Gurdjieff uses in *Beelzebub* is ‘*being-obligolnian-strivings*’. C.S.Nott is undoubtedly referring to these when he speaks of “the five strivings of Objective Morality” as being one of the fundamental pillars of Gurdjieff’s “method of inner development” (C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.238). The other four of these strivings are:

[1] “...to have in their ordinary being-existence everything satisfying and really necessary for their planetary body.

[2] “...to have a constant and unflagging instinctive need for self-perfection in the sense of being.

[4] “...the striving from the beginning of their existence to pay for their arising and their individuality as quickly as possible, in order afterwards to be free to lighten as much as possible the Sorrow of our COMMON FATHER.

[5] “...The striving always to assist the most rapid perfecting of other beings, both those similar to oneself and those of other forms, up to the degree of the sacred ‘Martfotai’ that is up to the degree of self-individuality.

(*Beelzebub*, Vol.1, p.386)

<sup>100</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.1, p.386

<sup>101</sup>*Guide and Index to Gurdjieff's Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, p.503

<sup>102</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.3, p.5

<sup>103</sup>Gurdjieff taught that the Universe involves from the primary unity of the Absolute into successively denser and more mechanical levels. The level of “Divine Reason”, or *intelligence* that can manifest at any given level is expressed by the *number of laws* defining the level. The more laws, the more mechanical and the less ‘intelligent’. The laws proliferate down through the levels by successive divisions of unity into threefoldness. Man's starting point is very far from the Absolute (48 or even 96 law worlds); but he has the possibility to come under progressively less laws (48→24→12→6), or, put another way, to inhabit higher worlds. One aspect of this evolution is the acquisition of “higher bodies” which correspond to the natures of the higher worlds. (See Ouspensky, *ibid.*, Chapter 5, especially pp.87-8 and p.94)

<sup>104</sup>That this third “being-obligolnian-striving” is concerned with an aspect of man's approach to the Divine is also indicated by its place between the second and fourth strivings (see note 99).

<sup>105</sup>During the six years following Bennett's death the Institute published several books compiled from Bennett's talks (mainly at Sherborne). The editing was undertaken by A.G.E.Blake who had collaborated closely with Bennett throughout the 1960s and early 1970s; and the books were published by Coombe Springs Press (the Institute's own publishing operation). The books include: the ‘Sherborne Talks’ series (seven books, including the important *The Sevenfold Work* later reprinted independently); the ‘Studies from the Dramatic Universe’ series (three books); *Deeper Man*; and *The Way to be Free*.

<sup>106</sup>*Deeper Man* differs from most of the other posthumous records in so far as Bennett's lectures have been much more heavily edited in an attempt to make a coherent book. This task was undertaken by Blake (see above) in collaboration with one of Bennett's young American students, Brian Hartshorn, with whose help Bennett himself had intended to construct a book based on his ‘Study of Man’ series of talks. (A.G.E.Blake, ‘Introduction’ in *Deeper Man*, p.13)

<sup>107</sup>In addition to the ‘purely Gurdjieffian’ ideas, *Deeper Man* also contains expositions of Sufic ideas and ideas which Bennett developed in his *The Dramatic Universe* (especially Vols II and III). With regard to these latter, *Deeper Man* makes particular use of Bennett's *four developmental levels of selfhood* (*ibid.*, Chapter 4) and his *twelve fold scale of energies* (“material”, “vital” and “cosmic”; *ibid.*, Chapter 2). Although these ideas are very closely related to canonical Gurdjieff ideas, it would be a mistake, at this stage of the investigation, to assume that they are *elucidations* of the Gurdjieffian ideas. It might, for instance, be the case that in attempting to construct a coherent psycho-cosmological scheme Bennett obscured or even corrupted Gurdjieff's ideas. Alternatively, there may be a case for saying that Bennett's formulations were *authentic developments* of the Gurdjieffian starting point. However, these matters cannot be discussed before the various internal and external influences (especially Subud and Sufism) have been covered.

<sup>108</sup>E.g., the “ray of creation” and the proliferation of laws; the succession of levels possible for man; the doctrine of centres. Fundamentally, the book expounds



Gurdjieff's perspective on the human condition (of sleep/unconsciousness) and its possibilities (see specifically *Deeper Man*, pp.121-4).

<sup>109</sup>Both of Gurdjieff's "fundamental laws of world creation" pervade most of the book. In addition Chapter 6 is titled 'The Law of Three'.

<sup>110</sup>*Talks On Beelzebub's Tales* is made up of lectures from two distinct periods: seven (plus the 'Prologue' and the 'Epilogue') are dated 1950 – i.e., the year immediately following Gurdjieff's death; and thirteen come from 1974 (third and fourth Sherborne courses). The book is divided into five sections dealing with different concerns of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* ('History', 'Cosmology', 'Cosmogony', 'Work' and 'Reality'). It is interesting to note that the talks from the two periods are unevenly distributed between the subjects. Four of the five 'History' talks come from the 1950 period. The talks of greatest metaphysical concern – under 'Cosmology', 'Cosmogony' and 'Reality' – are all drawn from the 1974 period. The most practically orientated section, 'Work', contains three from each period: however, it is noteworthy that two of the three 1974 talks address subjects of a fairly abstruse nature which have a bearing on spiritual work and the conditions in which it can flourish, but which are not aimed at the immediate task of "work on ones self". Thus it seems that Bennett's use of *Beelzebub's Tales* at the Academy was predominantly to teach Gurdjieff's metaphysical ideas. A similar conclusion is to be reached from consideration of the taped lecture series: only two of the seven address matters of immediate relevance to "the work" and the other five concern high level cosmological and cosmogonical matters.

<sup>111</sup>See, e.g., Bennett's *The Way to be Free*, p.33; and *The Sevenfold Work*, p.11

<sup>112</sup>I have been informed of this.

<sup>113</sup>See, especially, *ISOM*.

<sup>114</sup>A whole book (*Enneagram Studies* – see bibliography) is devoted to his lectures on that subject.

<sup>115</sup>The symbol known as the enneagram originated – at least as far as the modern western world is concerned – with Gurdjieff (c.1916 – see *ISOM*, pp.286-295). However, it has in recent decades, via the interest of the Jesuits, become detached from its Gurdjieffian origin. (See Anthony C.Edwards, 'Competitiveness and Apartheid in the New Age: The Enneagram Schools', *Religion Today* 7 (2), Spring 1992.)

<sup>116</sup>It is claimed that the enneagram is applicable to any complete process or structural totality. It has, for instance, been applied to: the preparation of a meal; learning to sing; the Beatitudes; the transformation of substances in the body; the structure of a school; and the Plan of Creation.

<sup>117</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.1

<sup>118</sup>E.g., 'The Arch-absurd', 'The Arch-preposterous', 'The Holy Planet Purgatory' and 'The Law of Heptaparaparshinokh'.

<sup>119</sup>This lecture series is based on ideas first published in Bennett's *The Dramatic Universe* (mainly Vol.II).

<sup>120</sup>See the *Prospectus*, p.1.

<sup>121</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.46

<sup>122</sup>Bennett, *ibid.*, p.48

<sup>123</sup>Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, pp.43-8.

<sup>124</sup>Elizabeth Bennett – then Elizabeth Mayall – had been a pupil of Bennett's at Coombe Springs. As a result of a crisis in her inner life Bennett advised her to go to Paris and “..ask Gurdjieff to accept her as his pupil.” She lived in Paris during the final year of Gurdjieff's life. Bennett writes:

Gurdjieff gave her special responsibilities and I believe that only Lise Tracol saw more of him than she did, as she was at his apartment for many hours each day. He gave her his confidence to an unusual degree, and entrusted her with many delicate missions. (Bennett, *ibid.*, p.256)

<sup>125</sup>Bennett, Elizabeth in ‘Preface’ *The Way to Be Free* , p.3

<sup>126</sup>See the quotation from M. de Salzmann on page 116 and *especially note 227*.

<sup>127</sup>This issue is addressed in Chapter Five.

<sup>128</sup>See the posthumously compiled *The Sevenfold Work* (e.g., p.39). Bennett had, during the nineteen sixties, similarly described a necessity for balance between ‘active’ and ‘receptive’ work in terms of four “sources” of spiritual development (see his posthumously discovered, unfinished, book *Transformation*.)

<sup>129</sup>See *The Sevenfold Work*, p.35. This is not the place to discuss the specifics of Bennett's lines of work with regard to the question of his degree of ‘Gurdjieffian orthodoxy’. However, it can be noted in advance that this scheme makes powerful use of *both* Gurdjieff's fundamental cosmic laws – the *law of threefoldness* and the *law of sevenfoldness* (or octaves). These laws express different aspects of the prerequisites for transformation to a new level of wholeness.

<sup>130</sup>See James Moore, ‘Moveable Feasts: The Gurdjieff Work’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.9, No.2, March 1994, pp.11-16.

<sup>131</sup>It must be borne in mind that the above survey of the activities at Sherborne has not been definitive. It has concentrated on the identification of the influence of Gurdjieff on the Academy's work. In so doing it has not sought to delineate the other strands of influence that were involved.

<sup>132</sup>As a prologue to Part II of *The Way to be Free* the editor (A.G.E.Blake) has quoted the following:

If I look back, I have to say that without Gurdjieff I would have been very small indeed and it was largely through having the benefit of his most extraordinary search and sacrifice that I and others have had possibilities. (Bennett, *The Way to be Free*, p.31)

<sup>133</sup>The main sources are *Gurdjieff Today* – the text of a public lecture given in December 1973 – for Bennett’s representation of Gurdjieff and the ‘Preface to the American Edition’ of *Witness* – probably written early in 1974.

<sup>134</sup>See Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>135</sup>The question of whether the Christian revelation holds a special position within Gurdjieff’s scheme will be addressed in Chapter Three. Briefly, this discussion will show that Christianity *can* be said to be central to Gurdjieff’s teaching; but that Bennett derived the *Parousia* idea from other sources.

<sup>136</sup>Bennett’s understanding of an *evolutionary* sacred history is, from a Gurdjieffian point of view, somewhat problematical. (See Chapter Three.)

<sup>137</sup>He writes: “Why a school? This question which Krishnamurti put to Ouspensky in 1932...” (*Witness*, p.372). Krishnamurti’s ‘spiritual teaching’ was, on the face of things at least, very different from that of Gurdjieff and his followers. In Krishnamurti’s view structured doctrines and the whole ‘teacher-pupil’ syndrome stand in the way of immediate perception of reality and unconditioned creativity. He saw the propagation and the following of such forms as fundamentally immature. Hence Bennett’s explicit reference to Krishnamurti, in the context of his intention to found a school, must be taken as indicative of a degree of acknowledgement of Krishnamurti’s perspective; and hence that he did not take lightly the responsibility of ‘setting himself up as a teacher.’

<sup>138</sup>*Witness*, p.372

<sup>139</sup>*Witness*, pp.372-3

<sup>140</sup>*ISOM*, p.313.

<sup>141</sup>*ISOM*, pp.37-8.

<sup>142</sup>Bennett alludes to this metaphor when discussing the etymology of the word *Sarmoun* (sometimes *sarman*), the name of the secret Central Asian brotherhood which Gurdjieff suggested he had contacted. He says that the word can be assigned to “old Persian” and suggests three meanings, the first of which is: “It is the word for bee, which has always been a symbol of those who collect the precious ‘honey’ of traditional wisdom and preserve it for future generations.” (Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making A New World*, pp.56-7) The bee symbol was subsequently taken up by some of Bennett’s successors who used it as the emblem of their “Alexandria Foundation” (see Chapter 7 and the sketch of Gary Chicoine, page 26)

<sup>143</sup>*Witness*, p.iii-vi

<sup>144</sup>*Witness*, p.iii

<sup>145</sup>See Chapter Three (Part 2, Section ‘Human development *versus* human decline’) for a description of Bennett’s understanding of epochal development. (See also Chapter One.)

<sup>146</sup>*Witness*, p.iv

<sup>147</sup>See *Gurdjieff Today*, p.18; see also *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.285.

<sup>148</sup>*Witness*, p.v

<sup>149</sup>“We are at the present moment in a **dinosaur civilization**. Enormous, slow-moving, small-brained organizations are now dominating the world. The dinosaurs gradually lost as the climate became too inhospitable for them. They became more and more helpless and a new form of life emerged: that is the warm-blooded mammals. This is extraordinarily like the present situation in the world.” (Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.35.)

<sup>150</sup>*Witness*, p.iv

<sup>151</sup>*Witness*, p.v

<sup>152</sup>*Witness*, p.iv

<sup>153</sup>*Witness*, p.vi

<sup>154</sup>*Witness*, p.v

<sup>155</sup>*Witness*, p.v

<sup>156</sup>Bennett, from a private letter, quoted by Elizabeth Bennett in her ‘Epilogue’ to *Witness*, p.383 (1978)

<sup>157</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.1, pp.366-89

<sup>158</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.60

<sup>159</sup>The ‘prophet to come’ interpretation of Gurdjieff’s Ashiata Shiemash chapters first became an important element of Bennett’s search during the early to mid-fifties (— i.e., the years immediately following Gurdjieff’s death). This culminated in his belief that Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (“Pak Subuh”) was the expected ‘prophet of the new epoch’ and the corollary that Bapak’s new religious movement Subud was the force destined to spread throughout the world ‘awakening conscience.’ (See, e.g., *Witness*, p.284 and p.325; and Bennett’s *Concerning Subud*, p.257). These matters are fully discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>160</sup>The actual, year of publication was 1966.

<sup>161</sup>*Witness*, p.iii

<sup>162</sup>Bennett, *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.423

<sup>163</sup>The passage cited stresses the ‘transcendent’ aspect of the “Unitive Energy”. The full definition given by Bennett emphasises the paradox of its being simultaneously ‘immanent’ and ‘transcendent’: “...it must be experienced everywhere and in everything. The Unitive energy thus produces unity not only horizontally throughout Universal Existence, but also vertically as between the finite and the infinite modes of existence.” (Bennett, *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.2, p.232.)

<sup>164</sup>See also, Bennett, *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, pp.249-50.

<sup>165</sup>*Witness*, p.vi

<sup>166</sup>The sacred evolutionary-history of mankind is the subject of Chapters 45 to 50 of Bennett’s *The Dramatic Universe* (Vol.IV). In these chapters he refers to the Higher Powers that guide evolution, as the “Demiurgic Intelligences” to signify their

intermediate role in the scheme of Creation. It is they who form and execute the pattern of evolution at the planetary level. They are, however, obedient to a primary impulse originating on a higher level.

<sup>167</sup>If these attributes – of receptiveness, openness and submission – are accepted, then it may be the case that there are epithets other than spiritual master/teacher which might be applicable to Bennett. For instance, there may be aspects of his spiritual life that could justify the expression “friend of God” – i.e., Saint.

<sup>168</sup>*Witness*, p.v

<sup>169</sup>Bennett originally used the this title for a series of lectures which he gave at Denison House, London, on the 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th of October 1949 (—i.e., during the month prior to Gurdjieff's death). The exact title of the lecture series was ‘Gurdjieff – the Making of a New World.’ When these lectures were published in 1973, the title *Is There “Life” On Earth: An Introduction to Gurdjieff* was substituted, the original title having been used for the publication of his major work on Gurdjieff a few months before (*both* books were published in 1973). The title ‘Gurdjieff: Making a New World’ was also subsequently used for the cassette version of the November 1973 talk published as *Gurdjieff Today*.

<sup>170</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.30

<sup>171</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, pp.30-1

<sup>172</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.34

<sup>173</sup>See *ISOM*, p.309; also, *Beelzebub*, Vol.2, p.104 and Vol.3, p.231.

<sup>174</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.18

<sup>175</sup>See Chapter Three.

<sup>176</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.21

<sup>177</sup>It is worth noting at this point that when Bennett speaks of “service to the future” he has in mind a precise concept of the existential status of this *future*. This future is a *creative future* which can have an influence on the present. He refers to this kind of future as the *hyparchic future* which is *predestined* as distinct from the sequential future of ‘clock time’ which is *predetermined* (see *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, pp.48-56). He connects this to his idea of the *Parousia*. That Christ told his disciples that he was going ahead of them into the Kingdom of Heaven, Bennett understands as referring to a ‘movement’ into the hyparchic future. From this ‘future place’ humanity is being led towards its potential. The *Parousia*, then, is an opening of a pathway into this *hyparchic future* – an increased possibility of realizing the promise of Christ. (See Bennett, *ibid.*, p.349.) It can be seen from the above that the ideas of “service to the future” and “service to the Higher Powers” are connected in Bennett's thinking to an unexpected degree. These “Higher Powers” which “In a very real sense...are the manifestation of Christ in the world” *are* ‘the future.’

<sup>178</sup>See, Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, Ch.9, pp.204-13; and *Gurdjieff Today*, p.16.

<sup>179</sup>See, e.g., *ISOM*, p.373; and cf. Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New world*, ‘Appendix II’, pp.281-97.

<sup>180</sup>This is the idea of the “Ray of Creation”: see, e.g., *ISOM*, pp.82-87.

<sup>181</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, Vol.I, pp.136-7. Gurdjieff’s doctrine concerning the involution and evolution of Creation is set out in Chapter Three (Part 2, section ‘Time: Entropy and Redemption’.)

<sup>182</sup>Gurdjieff writes that for beings like man (—i.e., “three brained”)

...the fundamental aim and sense of...existence...is that there must proceed through them the transmutation of cosmic substances necessary for what is called the ‘common-cosmic Trogoautoegocratic-process.’  
(Gurdjieff, *ibid.*, p.130)

Gurdjieff goes on to explain the distinction between man and the rest of organic life on earth. The latter play a role in the transformation of substances which is of a local and circumscribed character (“only for that solar system or even only for that planet alone”). However, the individual capacity of “three-brained beings” for development beyond the limits of organic maturity gives them the potential to serve a much higher order of Creation. (Gurdjieff, *ibid.*, pp.130-1; see also *ibid.*, Vol.II, pp.354-5.) (N.B. In the Gurdjieffian context use of the term “organic maturity” must be taken to include man’s unique attributes as a “social animal.” )

<sup>183</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.II, pp.366-7

<sup>184</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.I, p.388

<sup>185</sup>A clear expression of this idea is to be found in the “being-obligolnian strivings”. The second of the strivings enjoins people to cultivate a sense of the need for “self perfection...” . The third – “...the conscious striving to know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance” – concerns the development of an understanding of the *context* of self perfection. Then the fourth:

...the striving from the beginning of their existence to pay for their arising and their individuality as quickly as possible, in order afterwards to be free to lighten as much as possible the Sorrow of our COMMON FATHER.

encapsulates the essence of this context. ‘Payment for one’s arising and individuality’ refers to the fulfilment of *involutionary* obligations; and ‘lightening...the Sorrow of our COMMON FATHER’ is a reference to the special evolutionary duties of three-brained beings.

<sup>186</sup>Gurdjieff states that “Great Nature” endeavours to maintain equilibrium in the overall exchange of substances of the trogoautoegocratic-process. If humanity is not as it should be, then it does not produce the necessary vibrations to satisfy the needs of the involutionary process (“food for the moon”). In this case nature, in order to maintain harmony on the larger scale, extracts from mankind the necessary payment. Instead of a finer quality of vibration, consciously produced, nature causes mankind to produce, unconsciously, a much larger quantity of coarser vibrations. These latter are produced when human beings die. This unconscious necessity results, according to

Gurdjieff, in an increase in the birth rate and a shortening of life. A major consequence of this is the phenomenon of war, which takes place when the equilibrium requires especially large quantities of the necessary substances to be released from specific locations on the earth's surface. In Gurdjieff's view war is almost entirely a phenomenon of the 'collective unconscious' and has very little to do with the causes to which people attribute it. It is outside his control except in so far as it can be said to result from his failure to fulfil his cosmic obligations. (See especially, *Beelzebub*, Vol.III, p.295 and Vol.I, p.327-8; see also, *Beelzebub*, Vol.I, p.388 and Vol.II, p.216; and *ISOM*, p.57 and p.143.)

<sup>187</sup>The issue of whether or not Christianity had a special position in Gurdjieff's teaching is dealt with in Chapter Three.

<sup>188</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.25

<sup>189</sup>*Witness*, p.iv

<sup>190</sup>Elizabeth Bennett, 'Epilogue' in *Witness*, pp.381-3

<sup>191</sup>Although the 'advanced' Academy course, for the most successful graduates of the earlier courses (Bennett, *Witness*, p.378; *Gurdjieff Today*, p.46), never took place, it is not necessarily the case that the 'cream' of the earlier courses were lost to Bennett's purpose. Bennett's community and educational project at Claymont Court, Charles Town, U.S.A. was largely staffed by graduates of the Academy under the leadership of Bennett's nephew (by marriage to 'Mrs Beaumont', d.1958) and senior pupil Pierre Elliot. In her 'Epilogue' to *Witness* (p.381) Elizabeth Bennett writes that each of the Academy courses "...produced two or three serious students with the potentiality of serving the work in the future."

<sup>192</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.46

<sup>193</sup>See Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.310 where Gurdjieff is quoted as saying: "...two hundred conscious people, if they existed and if they found it necessary and legitimate, could change the whole of life on the earth."

<sup>194</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.46

<sup>195</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.46

<sup>196</sup>Bennett went on to speak of a still more advanced (*esoteric*) level work which involves aligning oneself with the will of the higher powers. (*Gurdjieff Today*, p.47) As we have seen, this expresses his own self-ascribed role in the establishment of the school. This can be understood as concurring with Gurdjieff's doctrine of the ultimate purpose of human evolution which can be understood as to become the 'head brain' of creation (see Chapters 3 and 5).

<sup>197</sup>See, e.g., *Witness*, p.372

<sup>198</sup>*Gurdjieff Today*, p.35

<sup>199</sup>See previous section. Moreover, (i) the training of the "helpers" for the "fourth way task" was based on "Gurdjieff's method brought up to date"; and (ii) Bennett speaks of the Academy as a continuation of the experiment which Gurdjieff initiated at his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.

<sup>200</sup>Bennett also gives special emphasis to Gurdjieff's doctrine of Reciprocal Maintenance in *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (See chapter 9, pp.204-213). Here he represents it as the fulfilment of Gurdjieff's stated aim to understand the "sense and significance of life on the earth in general and of human life in particular" (p.184) and as his major philosophical contribution to the world.

<sup>201</sup>In fact Bennett here speaks of *three* stages (Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, pp.46-7). In doing so he makes reference to Gurdjieff's three levels of 'esotericism' – the "exoteric", the "mesoteric" and the "esoteric" (see Ouspensky, *ibid*, pp. 310-11; also Gurdjieff *Herald of Coming Good*, p.38). These are depicted as concentric circles with the "esoteric" at the centre. The majority of humanity are said to be in a fourth, or "outer," circle. The "esoteric," or innermost, circle of humanity of Ouspensky's account is, in Bennett's depiction found to be synonymous with the Higher Powers themselves (Bennett, *ibid.*, p.47). Clearly, this implies that if an individual succeeds in entering the innermost circle, then they 'join' the Higher Powers. There is ample evidence to show that this *was* how Bennett conceptualized the situation (see *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. III, Ch. 41, especially p.269 (note‡)). (The doctrine of the "outer circle" and the "inner circles" of humanity will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.)

<sup>202</sup>There is, in fact, ample evidence showing that Bennett took the fundamental metaphysical teachings which underpin the idea of Reciprocal Maintenance very seriously. As we have seen in our discussion of the theoretical teaching at Sherborne, Bennett devoted considerable time to the task of acquainting his students with Gurdjieff's cosmogonical and cosmological doctrines as they are expressed in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.

<sup>203</sup>However, it is a well known and often quoted fact that Gurdjieff once described his teaching as "*esoteric Christianity*." (*ISOM*, p.102) It was Gurdjieff's view that an ordinary person can only truly say that he "...*desires* to be a Christian" (note emphasis) if he tries to carry out Christ's precepts. To *actually be* a Christian one must have the inner constancy to succeed in living by these precepts, and this takes training such as that which he (Gurdjieff) offered (*ISOM*, pp.299-300). The teaching, as presented in *Beelzebub* has an explicitly monotheistic character. Moreover, it has an essentially 'gnostic' character in so far as the individual spiritual aspirant is understood to participate in the evolutionary return to source by developing through successive levels; and knowledge is understood to be a 'valuable substance' (analogous to "gold") which is collected and concentrated by those engaged in the quest (Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.37). It may be that the overall soteriological structure of the teaching finds its closest corollary with a known tradition in Christian Gnosticism (See C.S.Nott's chapter 'Some notes on the Gnostics' in his *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*).

<sup>204</sup>This fact anticipates the problem that Bennett's view of human history (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. IV: History) appears somewhat different to Gurdjieff's (*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*). Bennett's view is structured as a progressing series of epochs, whereas Gurdjieff seems to present a decline from a certain point in the remote past, punctuated by brief periods of relative enlightenment due to the intervention of "sacred individuals sent from above", and culminating in the present



period of accelerated decline of “real values”. This apparent inconsistency will occupy our attention in a later chapter in relation to a discussion of their views on the purpose and guidance of human life on earth within the wider cosmic purpose.

<sup>205</sup>Throughout *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* Gurdjieff refers to the “angels” and “archangels” who assist God (“His Endlessness”) in the maintenance of harmony throughout His creation. Part of Bennett's definition of the “Demiurgic Intelligences” states that they are a class of being “...that is responsible for maintaining the universal order, especially at the planetary level, where existence is contingent and hazardous.” (*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. II, p.315) He makes it clear that these beings are synonymous, among other things, with the angels and archangels of the Christian tradition (*ibid.*, pp.313-4).

<sup>206</sup>Bennett, *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. III, p.265

<sup>207</sup>See Bennett, *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. II, p.346 and cf. *ISOM*, p.323. This matter is considered in greater detail in the second part of Chapter Three (Part 2, section ‘Time: Entropy and Redemption’.

<sup>208</sup>*Witness*, p.379

<sup>209</sup>Kathleen Riordan, a life-long Gurdjieffian and academic psychologist writes:

In most of the major cities in the Western world you can, if you make a serious attempt to do so, find a group of people who are, as they say, “in the work” — that is, who attempt, together and as individuals, to function more consciously and harmoniously by studying the ideas and practicing [sic] the techniques given by George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff.  
(Kathleen Riordan, ‘Gurdjieff’ in Charles Tart's *Transpersonal Psychologies*, p.283)

<sup>210</sup>In Chapter Six I discuss the development of Bennett's relationship to the Higher Powers and the Great Work during earlier stages of his life.

<sup>211</sup>This last point must be understood in the context of Bennett's view that Gurdjieff was “more than a Teacher and less than a Prophet.” (*Witness*, p.379) Drawing on Bennett's presentation of the four degrees of the Psychoteleios order of humanity (*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.266), this can be seen to indicate that Gurdjieff was, in his view, a “Saint”. One of the differences between “Saints” and “Prophets” is that, whereas the latter are perfected beings who are born with a Divine mission to found or revitalize a religious tradition, the former is the highest level that can be attained from ordinary birth. “Saints” also conduct Divine Will, but compared to “Prophets” they are more subject to the hazards of existence.

<sup>212</sup>Bennett, quoted in his posthumously published compilation of lectures (1974), *The Way to be Free*, p.31

<sup>213</sup>As described in Chapter One, the origins of Gurdjieff's teaching are obscure; and it is not known whether his mission was entirely his own, or whether he was acting as the agent of a terrestrial ‘school of wisdom.’ This question will prove to be of great importance to an understanding of Bennett's quest. In addition to the question of the transcendental purpose of the Gurdjieff teaching, there is also the question of the, by

some hypothesized, contemporary activities of a terrestrial source with which Gurdjieff was connected.

<sup>214</sup>Gurdjieff's 'Third Series' of writings is the book *Life Is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'* (the 'First Series' being *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* and the 'Second Series' *Meetings With Remarkable Men*). Largely due to Bennett efforts the 'Third Series' was first published in 1976. However, the published version is a much abridged version of the original book which Gurdjieff prepared. He himself had, apparently, destroyed several chapters, but it seems likely that personal pupils such as Bennett possessed more complete typescript or mimeographed versions and that advanced Gurdjieff pupils still have access to these. The issue of Gurdjieff's intentions regarding the publication of his books is a significant bearing on the question of authentic lineage in the 'Gurdjieff tradition' and will receive attention in Chapter Six.

<sup>215</sup>*Witness*, p.378

<sup>216</sup>Although Bennett is bold in setting out his understanding of the true significance of the Gurdjieff teaching, he is cautious with regard to his status in relation to the 'orthodox lineal descendants'. For instance, in *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* he writes of them as passing on Gurdjieff's teaching "without modifying it or adding anything from other sources" (p.6); but, while emphasizing that he had taken a different route (pp.6-7), he is careful to state that he "cannot find fault with [the orthodoxy's attitude] because it has the great advantage of ensuring that what was left by Gurdjieff will be available at all times, without encountering the difficulty of separating what has come from other sources." (p.9)

<sup>217</sup>*Witness*, p.378

<sup>218</sup>See, Bennett, *Witness*, p.316. Although Bennett writes of there being an inevitable necessity about this – he hoped temporary – separation, his account suggests that it was at least as much Madame de Salzman's initiative as his own which brought it about.

<sup>219</sup>Interview (London, May 1988).

<sup>220</sup>The press publicity – particularly in the *Daily Mail* during late 1957 and early 1958 – focused on the healing by Pak Subuh of the film star Eva Bartock (who had been one of Bennett's pupils).

<sup>221</sup>James Moore, 'Gurdjieff Groups in Britain' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No. 2, May-Sept. 1986, p.2

<sup>222</sup>Kathleen Riordan, 'Gurdjieff' in Charles Tart's *Transpersonal Psychologies*, p.316

<sup>223</sup>James Moore, 'Gurdjieff Groups in Britain' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No. 2, May-Sept. 1986, p.3

<sup>224</sup>James Moore, 'Gurdjieff: The Man And His Literature', reprinted from *Resurgence*.

<sup>225</sup>Following the death of Madame de Salzmann in 1990, Michel de Salzmann emerged as the new international leader of the *Work*. (Personal communication with James Moore, June 1993.)

<sup>226</sup>M. de Salzmann, 'Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature' in *Parabola* Vol.5, Part 3, 1980, p.94

<sup>227</sup>de Salzmann's use of the words *considered to be* suggests that he did not view Bennett's representation of the Gurdjieff teaching to have been accurate. (See page 82 where I provisionally discuss the potentially heterodox nature of Bennett's position in terms of his emphasis on the importance of 'receptive lines of work'.)

<sup>228</sup>Bennett's interest in the Sufi teacher Hasan Shushud (from 1968) has already been mentioned. His active interest in Sufism can be said to date back to 1953 when he travelled in Turkey, Syria and Iraq with the primary aim of locating a connection to the source of Gurdjieff's teaching. He considered Sufism to be the most promising area in which to search and hoped to find connection in terms of both *techniques* and *purpose*. (See *Journeys In Islamic Countries* (2 Vols) which is the published diary of Bennett's journey; also *Witness*, pp.287-302) During this journey he met Sufi teachers of the Naq'shbandi and Mevlevi orders and the major significance of these encounters seems to be: (i) that he was recognized as being a serious and advanced seeker; and (ii) that he did not think that he had found anything comparable with the Gurdjieff teaching in the techniques that he was shown. He made a further journey, to Cyprus, Syria, Iraq and Northern Persia in 1955 which appears to have been significant in setting the scene for his secession from the Gurdjieff Foundation and his subsequent embracing of Subud (*Witness*, pp.308-15). (I shall have much to say about the significance of these searches in Chapter Six.) The first of Bennett's books which explicitly shows the influence of Sufi spiritual ideas is *A Spiritual Psychology* which is the record of a seminar which he held at Coombe Springs in 1962 following his withdrawal from Subud and return to the 'Gurdjieff methods of effort.' (It should be noted that Sufic ideas also entered Bennett's thinking from the teaching of Pak Subuh due to Subud's origination from an Islamic background.) Subsequent books (e.g., *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, 1966) also utilize Sufi terminology.

In 1962 Bennett came under the influence of Idries Abutahir Shah (1924- ). It seems that Idries Shah convinced Bennett that he represented some kind of 'higher order Naq'shbandi brotherhood' (-i.e., in Bennett's mind, Gurdjieff's Sarmoun brotherhood). On this basis he established the urgency and precedence of his 'mission in the West and Bennett subsequently (1966) handed over to him the building and grounds of Coombe Springs (valued at £100,000 in 1965) and responsibility for a large proportion of his pupils. (See *Witness*, pp.355-62)

<sup>229</sup>James Moore, 'Gurdjieff Groups in Britain' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No. 2, May-Sept. 1986, p.3

<sup>230</sup>Kathleen Riordan, 'Gurdjieff' in Charles Tart's *Transpersonal Psychologies*, p.327

<sup>231</sup>See *Witness*, pp.116-7.

<sup>232</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma* (lectures from Summer, 1963), pp.84-5.

<sup>233</sup>I will use the transliterative spelling which was favoured by Bennett and the transcribers of his talks. (The more common “*barakah*” is not used; and “*baraqah*” occurs only in talks given to Beshara.)

<sup>234</sup>See, e.g., *Gurdjieff: Making a New world*, p.31.

<sup>235</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.31.

<sup>236</sup>*The Sevenfold Work*, p.95; and *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.219. For a definition of “*hanbledzoin*” see *Beelzebub*, Vol.2, p.160. The exact expression “higher emotional energy” does not actually occur in *ISOM*; however, Ouspensky does record Gurdjieff speaking in precise terms of concerning the quality of energy associated with the higher emotional centre (*ISOM*, p.194).

<sup>237</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.221.

<sup>238</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.278.

<sup>239</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.219.

<sup>240</sup>In fact, and as we shall see in later chapters, the situation is probably not so black and white as this. It is possible that the methods themselves carry a degree of *baraka* – a momentum which will run down if not renewed by individuals who have attained advanced levels.

<sup>241</sup>*Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma*, p.85.

<sup>242</sup>*Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma*, p.85.

<sup>243</sup>*Intimations: talks with J.G.Bennett at Beshara*, p.58.

<sup>244</sup>Bennett's writing is a dimension of his activity which we have had very little occasion to mention in the present chapter. It is Moore's opinion that he was prolix: he was certainly prolific. A brief account of his main works follows. Moore speaks of “the breathtaking catholicity of his...eclecticism”. His *The Dramatic Universe* (4 Vols; 1956, 1961, 1966 and 1966) undoubtedly covered a great deal of ground in its attempt to lay foundations for a synthesis of human knowledge which would integrate scientific and spiritual understandings. In addition, he has to his credit *The Crisis in Human Affairs* which was the first publication about the Gurdjieff teaching (1948), but which also expressed early workings of many of the ideas which eventually constituted *The Dramatic Universe* (Vols III and IV). This was closely followed by *What Are We Living For?* (1949) – essentially a ‘Gurdjieffian’ critique of the ‘existential vacuum’ which contemporary secularization has exacerbated. His book *Concerning Subud* (1958) was the first English language account of this new religion. *Christian Mysticism and Subud* (1961) embodied his own meditations on the relationship between discipline and grace in spiritual development, and presaged his withdrawal from Subud. Soon after this withdrawal, the Shivapuri Baba commissioned him to write an account of *his* teaching for Western people (*Long Pilgrimage*; 1965). *A Spiritual Psychology* (1964), is an account of Bennett's own teaching, although showing a definite Gurdjieffian basis with inputs from Subud and Sufism, at a Coombe Springs seminar in 1962. By contrast, Bennett's *Transformation* (written at some time in the 1960s, but not published until 1978) takes the form of down to earth advice to seekers and is notable for an absence of overt references to

systems. Bennett's books *Gurdjieff: Making A New World* (1974) and *The Masters of Wisdom* (posthumous, 1977) together serve to create a picture of his understanding of Gurdjieff's significance and the "Great Work" as revealed through sacred history. In addition there are other smaller publications, including the posthumously published diaries *Journeys In Islamic Countries* and *Idiots In Paris* (with Elizabeth Bennett – personal accounts of the months prior to Gurdjieff's death); and a large number of posthumously published compilations of lectures.

<sup>245</sup>James Moore, 'Gurdjieff: The Man And His Literature', reprinted from *Resurgence*.

<sup>246</sup>See *Witness*, pp.237-72; also *Idiots In Paris: Diaries of J.G.Bennett and Elizabeth Bennett, 1949*, p.1-60.

<sup>247</sup>Gurdjieff states that (post c.1928) he introduced the strategy of sending away his best pupils and closest friends as a 'reminding factor' for *himself* in order to facilitate creativity (*Life Is Real Only Then: When "I Am"*, p.45).

<sup>248</sup>See Gurdjieff, *Herald of coming Good*, pp.12-13.

<sup>249</sup>See James Webb's *The Harmonious Circle*, pp.424-5 and pp.552-3; also Bennett's *Gurdjieff: Making A New World*, pp.234-37.

<sup>250</sup>Of his departure from the Prieuré in September 1923 (his last meeting with Gurdjieff until 1948) he subsequently wrote:

It was only after Gurdjieff reached the end of his life that I became aware that the pattern of his own life required him to drive away all those who could be most useful to him. He drove away from him P.D.Ouspensky, Alexander de Salzmann and even his most devoted friend Thomas de Hartmann. He also drove away A.R.Orage, Maurice Nicoll and many others. None of these was ever able to return—though several tried. *I was most fortunate in being able to go back to Gurdjieff. This was certainly through no merit of my own, but probably because I was much younger than the others, and twenty-five years later was still alive to take another chance.* (my italics; *Witness*, p.122.)

<sup>251</sup>In the context of his decision in January 1924 to follow Ouspensky rather than Gurdjieff, he says: "It was...as if Gurdjieff himself had withdrawn from me and would not let me follow him." (*Witness*, p126.)

<sup>252</sup>Prior to 1948 there were only a very small number of English pupils who were led by Jane Heap whom Gurdjieff had sent to London (C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.103). Jane Heap would have nothing whatever to do with Ouspensky or his pupils (Bennett, *Witness*, p.245); but C.S.Nott did try, mainly without success, to interest Ouspensky in what he, being a direct pupil of Gurdjieff, saw as the authentic teaching (C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, pp.102-11). Heap's group also contained Major F.S.Pinder (C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.89) who had met Gurdjieff in Tiflis in 1920 (Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.177).

<sup>253</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.237

<sup>254</sup>Bennett first began teaching an Ouspenskian rendering of ‘Gurdjieff’s system’ to a small group in 1930 at which time he was temporarily estranged from Ouspensky (*Witness*, p.152). Ouspensky retreated to the U.S.A. early in 1941 because of the war (*ibid.*, p.178) and Bennett, responding to what he saw as the vacuum left by Ouspensky’s departure and a *need* for activity, gave lectures and expanded his group (from 1943) (*ibid.*, p.195). Ouspensky responded adversely to what he saw as this unauthorized activity as did many of his other English pupils. In a letter of Autumn 1943 he explicitly forbade Bennett to lecture on “the System” (*ibid.*, p.196); but Bennett evidently felt that he could not comply and continued to give public lectures and expand his group (*ibid.*, p.201 and p.206). Ouspensky formally ‘excommunicated’ him in 1945 (*ibid.*, p.206) (This break with Ouspensky is in some respects a precursor of his break with the Gurdjieff Foundation ten to twelve years later, and raises a similar issue of *form* versus *essential content*.) By August 1948 he had a substantial following of his own. He gives no precise number, but says: “During August 1948, I did bring about sixty of them to Gurdjieff’s flat. Scores more clamoured to go...” (*ibid.*, p.244).

<sup>255</sup>Note 254 provides some measure of Bennett’s commitment. He more than once relates his feelings of inadequacy as a teacher, indicating that his putting himself forward and allowing people to follow him was a response to *need* (e.g., *Witness*, p.217). In 1945 he had spoken to his pupils of the importance of the teaching in terms of an emerging action on a global scale (*ibid.*, p.209). This shows that his leadership embraced all of Gurdjieff’s “three lines of work” which are vital to the successful action of the teaching. These are discussed in detail in Chapter Five, but for present can be described as: work on and for ones self, work with others and work for the purpose of the teaching (*ISOM*, pp.268-9 and p.274)

<sup>256</sup>I will examine the issues of the hiatus in Bennett’s relationship with Gurdjieff, Bennett’s time with Ouspensky, his emergence as a teacher of ‘Gurdjieff’s system,’ his last intensive period with Gurdjieff and Nott’s evidence in Chapter Six.

<sup>257</sup>See C.S.Nott’s *Teachings of Gurdjieff* and *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*.

<sup>258</sup>C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, pp.240-2

<sup>259</sup>However, the fact that there is (apparently) no way to find reliable *historical* answers to these questions, does not mean that there is no point in asking them at all. I will argue that it is important to examine the matter of Gurdjieff’s spiritual antecedents from the perspective of *what he can plausibly be construed as having intended to be believed*. (See Chapter Four.)

<sup>260</sup>James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.475

<sup>261</sup>See Chapter Six.

<sup>262</sup>See Chapter Five.

<sup>263</sup>See *ISOM*, pp.310-11.

<sup>264</sup>*Gurdjieff Making a New World*, p.278.

<sup>265</sup>Gurdjieff speaks of Angels and Archangels throughout *Beelzebub*; see also *ISOM*, pp.323-4.

<sup>266</sup>I introduce Gurdjieff's doctrine of the higher centres – “higher emotional” and “higher thinking” centres – in the next chapter. These ideas are further developed in Chapter Five. For basic definitions see *ISOM*, pp.194-5.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Psycho-Cosmological Ideas

### *Abstract*

This chapter is divided into two main parts. Part 1 examines Gurdjieff's doctrines of the human condition and its possibilities – from both psychological and cosmological perspectives – in order to establish the distinguishing features of the teaching in a way which is independent of Bennett's perspectives. (This establishes criteria for making doctrinal comparisons with Subud in Chapter Six and serves to introduce Gurdjieffian terminology and models as a foundation for the discussions in Chapters 4 and 5.) Building on Gurdjieff's cosmological ideas as introduced in Part 1, Part 2 seeks to establish the extents to which Bennett's ideas of the Great Work, cosmic and human evolution, the higher powers and their role, and Christianity (as introduced in Chapters 1 and 2) can be seen as having bases in Gurdjieff's teachings. It is concluded that a high degree of compatibility can be identified. However, it is shown that, while Bennett accepts Gurdjieff's psychological analysis of the human condition he expresses more optimistic views concerning the possibilities of collective evolution.



## Sources

Before embarking on the subject matter of this chapter it will be useful to survey the main primary sources of information on Gurdjieff's teachings – i.e., his own books and P.D.Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*. (Gurdjieff's books will be further discussed from the point of view of their autobiographical dimensions in Chapter Four.)

Gurdjieff's own *magnum opus*, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*,<sup>1</sup> which he saw as his legacy to humanity,<sup>2</sup> is a detailed exposition of the human situation in which the entire range of his psycho-cosmological ideas are interwoven in a complex narrative tapestry<sup>3</sup>. The difficulties of complexity are compounded by the bizarre terminological innovations which he employs. This is represented as teaching material *par excellence*<sup>4</sup>: for the person who is prepared to make the effort involved in reading it, the book's ideas, its overall structure, the complexities of the narrative and sentence structures and the terminological obstacles are all, presumably, designed to further the single aim of maximizing the impact:

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.<sup>5</sup>

Gurdjieff's 'second Series of writings', the far more readable *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, appears, on one level, to be an account of his search for esoteric teachings which could answer his fundamental question concerning the sense and meaning of (human) life on earth. However, like *Beelzebub*, this is represented as teaching material designed to provide the suitably qualified reader with necessary data

for the growth of their inner world.<sup>6</sup> His ‘Third Series of writings’ – *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am”* – which was originally intended only for private circulation among advanced students, or at least people who were thoroughly acquainted with his other books, has been published in a highly truncated form.<sup>7</sup> This, in common with the other two books, does not easily lend itself to any kind of systematic approach.

By contrast, P.D.Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous—Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* provides a clearly structured account of Gurdjieff’s teachings to his pupils in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Essentuki (1915-18). As such it suggests a more promising avenue than Gurdjieff’s own books. However, it is necessary to be cautious about placing too much reliance on the version of the teaching given by *one pupil* of the master – particularly as he was schismatic from 1924 (see the brief sketch in Chapter One; Ouspensky’s relationship to the Gurdjieff lineage is discussed in Chapter Six).

Despite Ouspensky’s questionable position as a transmitter of Gurdjieff’s teaching, it does seem that the latter warmly endorsed the former’s account (known then as *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*), seeing it as an accurate and useful adjunct to his own writings. Evidence for this comes from at least three of Gurdjieff’s close personal pupils. Referring to Gurdjieff’s visit to the U.S.A. in the winter of 1948-9 (more than a year after Ouspensky’s death), C.S.Nott writes:

Madame [Ouspensky] had presented him with the complete typescript of *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, and Gurdjieff, hearing it read, said that Ouspensky *in this respect* was a good man. He had written down what he had heard from him, exactly: ‘It is as if I hear myself speaking.’  
(My italics.)<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Bennett – who accompanied Gurdjieff on this visit to the U.S.A. – records:

He had just taken the final decision to publish *All and Everything – Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, and had been asked by Madame Ouspensky whether or not Ouspensky's own book, *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, should also be published. He remained undecided about the latter for some time, pointing out when he heard it read aloud that certain of his ideas were far more strongly expressed in *Beelzebub*. He finally agreed on condition that it should not be published in advance of his own book. ....he praised Ouspensky for the accuracy of his reporting. Once I read aloud in front of him an early chapter of *In Search of the Miraculous*. He listened with evident relish, and when I finished he said: "Before I hate Ouspensky: now I love him. This very exact, he tell what I say."<sup>9</sup>

(It should be noted that "far more strongly expressed" refers to *a calculated impact* rather than to intelligibility.)

The import of the above records is amplified by Gurdjieff's typically laconic comment, in the presence of René Zuber, concerning Ouspensky and his *In Search of the Miraculous*:

Asked what he thought of Ouspensky, he answered: 'Ouspensky? Yes, he good journalist.'<sup>10</sup>

Gurdjieff clearly thought that Ouspensky's book was a first rate piece of journalism in so far as he had accurately remembered and coherently recorded the teaching as it had been given during the period 1915-18. For this reason the book was considered useful and received the unique accolade of official sanction. However, it is necessary to anticipate the discussion of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky schism (Chapter Six) and note that the unspoken subtext of the terse 'Ouspensky? Yes, he good journalist.' is '...but unfortunately he did not understand what he wrote!' Nevertheless, the fact that Gurdjieff instituted readings from *In Search of the Miraculous* at his Paris flat<sup>11</sup> suggests that he considered it to have more than merely historical value.

It seems that it is reasonable to have confidence in the authenticity of *In Search of the Miraculous* and to use it as a source from which to establish the doctrinal

structures. However, wherever practicable reference will also be made to corresponding presentations in *Beelzebub*.

# Part 1: Gurdjieff's Doctrine of the Human Condition and Human Possibility.

## Introduction

The following sections will provide a description of Gurdjieff's teachings concerning the human situation. This teaching embodies parallel and closely interconnected psychological and cosmological components.

Taking the psychological dimension first I will focus on Gurdjieff's central ideas that 'man as he is' is *mechanical* and that he is enmeshed in a complex multi-causal situation from which he cannot escape without help from outside. An important corollary of this inherent mechanicalness is that people do not have the conscious attributes that they believe themselves to have. This will be explored in terms of: (i) the key assertion that people *do not remember themselves*; (ii) their lack of 'constant selfhood' and inner unity; and (iii) Gurdjieff's assertion that "man cannot *do*." These ideas are then shown to be embodied in Gurdjieff's depiction of people 'as the exact reverse' of what they should be; and Gurdjieff's conclusion that people cannot be held responsible for their situation *because they cannot do anything about it* is introduced.

I then move on to discussions of Gurdjieff's idea of "centres" and his 'essence versus personality distinction.' At an individual level, the human 'bondage to mechanicalness' is explored in terms of the imbalance and mutual dysfunctionality of the inner "centres"; and it is shown that, from Gurdjieff's point of view, people with biases towards physical, emotional or intellectual activity are, fundamentally, in identical situations. Gurdjieff's term "essence" is introduced as defining that which is

*real* in the human; and an exploration of the way in which the ‘seed of essence’ can grow into the ‘flower of man as he can become’ also introduces the idea of developing *higher bodies*. Essence is contrasted with “negative personality” which signifies identification with that which is *unreal* in the human and from which nothing real can grow. The ideas of essence growth and the creation of higher bodies are further expanded in terms of Gurdjieff’s description of the human being as an ‘alchemical factory.’ I examine the distinction between the factory’s curtailed functioning in mechanical people – which is *equivalent to that of animal life* – and the functioning that can give rise to inner evolution. This will lead to a more philosophical discussion of how it is possible, in Gurdjieff’s system, that the “man machine” can cease to be a machine, and raises the important doctrinal issue of the *need for help*.

Lastly, the psychological discussion turns to Gurdjieff’s concept of “buffers” – psychological devices designed to *prevent* contact with essence and to *maintain* identification (with negative personality) – and his idea of an ‘*hypnotic force*’ in the human that keeps it in an identified state. Consideration of these ideas will lead directly into the cosmological material.

Considering the cosmological scenario set out in *Beelzebub* we find a degree of ambiguity: on one hand, man, as a “three brained being,” has definite cosmic possibilities and duties which he has an *obligation to fulfil* (cf. the “being obligolnian strivings”); on the other he is suffering from a dysfunctionality for which he cannot be held responsible. The latter view is explained in terms of Gurdjieff’s ‘cosmic myth’ in which, for reasons that were not its fault, prehistoric humanity was forced to serve a lower order of creation (the “moon”) and had an ‘organ’ (“kundabuffer”) placed in it to prevent it from seeing this cosmically aberrant situation. This ‘organ’

was later removed. However, humanity subsequently found its way back to this lower mode of existence because of the habitual residue of its earlier behaviour being transmitted by means of a ‘Lamarckian’ hereditary process. The habit of servitude has since become deeply engrained. A consideration of the cosmological account given in *ISOM* serves to amplify the above ambiguity.

In *ISOM* the collective sleep of mankind in ‘enslavement to the moon’ is presented as an entirely normal and *lawful* occurrence for the involutory structure of creation. In this version, liberation is only cosmically feasible or desirable for a tiny minority. It is argued that this converges with *Beelzebub*’s description of the *practical situation as it has become*, but seems to contradict *Beelzebub*’s message that the *whole* of humanity *could* change.

I then consider the question of which account deserves priority. It is concluded that, because it is not possible to be certain about the reason for the difference, it is necessary to accept that the Gurdjieff teaching embodies this ambiguity. The consequences of this are briefly explored.

Finally, I turn to Gurdjieff’s allegory of the “two rivers”. These represent the ‘evolutionary direction’ of conscious people and the ‘involuntary direction’ of mechanical people. Consideration of this allegory will allow us to focus the cosmological material on the situation of individual development; it will also help to clarify the relationship between the cosmological and psychological perspectives. Gurdjieff’s ideas about the role of inherited and environmental influences are discussed in relation to the idea of essence and the different possibilities individual people have of actualizing the specifically human possibilities. – According to Gurdjieff, normal development through childhood is rare and becoming rarer for reasons of hereditary degeneration and maleficent educational influence. – His

criterion for a ‘non-aberrant attainment of adulthood’ is discussed. Lastly consideration of the “two rivers” allegory provides a new focus for the question of how mechanical people can become conscious. This perspective provides insight on Gurdjieff’s views concerning the *possibility* and *difficulty* of a person achieving such a transition.

### ***Psycho-Cosmological ‘fragments’.***

Before introducing the psychological and cosmological material it will be useful to discuss the *status* of the ideas in terms of the original context of their presentation and the extent to which they can be deemed to be systematizable.

The idea of the importance, in the Gurdjieff teaching, of the parallel study of man and the world has already been introduced (see Chapter Two). The psychological schemes – i.e., the study of man – and the cosmological schemes – the study of the world – are closely integrated with each other. In addition to the reasons described in Chapter Two, this may be seen as being of necessity for the reason that people cannot understand their condition and its possibilities without reference to the nature of the world or worlds in which they have their being: thus, the psychological ideas must be connected to cosmological ones at every point. The resultant discipline has been termed “psycho-cosmology.” Clearly, for the serious follower of the Gurdjieff way these matters are a *practical* concern. As Anthony Hodgson puts it:

...cosmology (or more fully psycho-cosmology) is ultimately a map of who we are, where we are, what our predicament is and what we can expect to go through if we are going to get out of that predicament.<sup>12</sup>

The psycho-cosmological doctrines are seen as being of a radically different order to mere speculative metaphysics. Whereas the latter would be seen as



originating in the ordinary mind of undeveloped people, the former may be seen as coming from the “Objective Reason” of an “Inner Circle of Humanity.”<sup>13</sup> Presumably, these different schemes cohere as part of a whole which is apparent from a state of “Objective Consciousness”; but they do not necessarily do so from below. Ouspensky reports Gurdjieff as saying (to his St. Petersburg group, c.1916):

Schools teach fragments<sup>14</sup>... “Do you think that anything is given in a complete form in schools [it is not]?”<sup>15</sup>

And in 1923 he told students at his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man:

All this teaching given in fragments must be pieced together, and observations and actions must be connected to it. If there is no paste, nothing will stick.<sup>16</sup>

The “paste” of which he spoke can only be generated by efforts at self-development guided by the “fragments” which the teacher has deemed it useful to provide; the understanding that is offered can only be made one’s own by means of an effort involving the whole being. This is not to say that the different schemes and diagrams are, from the point of view of ordinary consciousness, totally disparate. In Chapter Five I will argue that a relatively coherent model of the levels of ‘man’s possible evolution’ and their characteristics *is* possible if the attempt to produce a ‘grand design’ is avoided; (because such attempts tend to result in unresolvable structural inconsistencies). *Rather, the approach which must be adopted is one in which the different schemes are used to amplify and illuminate one another.*

## The Psychological Perspectives.

### *Man is not as he believes himself to be.*

Fundamental to Gurdjieff's teachings is a strong critique of 'man as he is' as compared to 'man as he should be'; and basic to this critique is the assertion that man does not have the attributes of consciousness, a constant self, a will or a soul which he believes himself to have. On the contrary, he is mechanical.<sup>17</sup> Although it *is* possible for people to cease being mechanical and to gain the attributes that they mistakenly believes themselves already to have, Gurdjieff's analysis shows that it is extremely difficult for them to disentangle themselves from the web of multi-causality in which they are ensnared.

Gurdjieff makes no compromise about his assertion of humanity's mechanicalness: even the things that are conventionally thought of as the highest cultural products – both artistic and intellectual<sup>18</sup> – are for Gurdjieff conceived, like all the other manifestations of ordinary man, as being produced by mechanical, and basically *random*, associations.<sup>19</sup> People, says Gurdjieff, hold the tacit, and if challenged explicit, beliefs that they are conscious, that they possess a constant selfhood, that they can act intentionally and in some cases that they are in possession of an immortal soul.<sup>20</sup> He challenges these beliefs relentlessly, the first three on empirical bases and the fourth more doctrinally.

Gurdjieff's primary psychological assertion is that "we do not remember ourselves."<sup>21</sup> This is because we are absorbed in or *identified* with what we are doing, or, more precisely, *what is happening to us*.<sup>22</sup> We are asleep, in a state of 'waking dreaming' and we pass through our lives only partially aware of our existence.<sup>23</sup>

Why, then, do people believe that they have self consciousness, an inner constancy and the capacity for self directed action if it is not so? If Gurdjieff's proposition that the ordinary person exists in a state of identification, sleep and dreaming is accepted, then it must follow that a person's beliefs in his or her consciousness and autonomy are themselves features of the dream state – i.e., illusions. This explanation is the pith of Gurdjieff's position; as a philosophical proposition it appears circular and hence unverifiable. However, Gurdjieff is not putting forward a philosophy: his analysis of the human situation is primarily *psychological*. Several of the major features of this psychological explanation of the human state of mechanicalness and sleep will be explored below. In the present context it is sufficient to give a brief explanation of how the illusion of a conscious and constant selfhood is deemed to be generated. Gurdjieff speaks of a part of the human "intellectual centre" (the doctrine of "centres" receives detailed attention below) which he calls the "formatory apparatus". This is meant, even in the evolved human being, to function mechanically as a coordinating centre or clearing house for sense impulses, feelings and thoughts. It is this function which gives the illusion of constancy and consciousness: it gives an erroneous impression of "I" and intentionality to whatever impulses it is coordinating at any given moment. Gurdjieff states that this function usurps the position of the "Real I" which is absent in the ordinary person.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the fact that people will not seriously seek to achieve attributes which they already believe themselves to have contributes to the perpetuation of the situation.<sup>25</sup> It is Gurdjieff's view that the momentum of this state of mechanicalness is so great that even when, on occasions, people do awaken they are immediately drawn back into the sleep state; often in such situations the person then 'dreams of wakefulness'.<sup>26</sup>

True “self remembering” can only be consistently experienced as a result of persistent inner “work on oneself”. Gurdjieff prescribes that people can become convinced of their inability to *remember themselves* – that is to say, to remain fully conscious of their own presence in conjunction with ordinary activity – by setting themselves the task of attempting to do so over a specific period of time. At the outset they succeed, but after a short period, especially if any additional activity is attempted, they forget, only to ‘re-awaken’ at some later point. (Ouspensky provides a telling account of his own performance of this experiment in *ISOM*.<sup>27</sup>) As I will describe below, this effort, while inevitably unsuccessful at the beginning, plays a crucial role in the developmental process which goes beyond the initial recognition of one’s own true state.

Such a recognition of lack of selfhood and of the capacity to remain conscious would, of itself, serve as a shock to the habitual status quo. It is from such a recognition of the *true state*, as opposed to an imagined one, that real “work on oneself” can commence. However, if this is to have the possibility of leading anywhere then the person requires detailed knowledge of the mechanisms by which the habitual state is maintained. It is to the various ‘maps’ of the human situation which Gurdjieff provides that I now turn.

Gurdjieff describes the human being’s inner inconstancy in terms of a collection of semi-autonomous sub-personalities each one awaiting the particular set of external stimuli which will evoke it so that it can be “king for a five minutes”<sup>28,29</sup> Why then are people not aware that this is how they are constituted? Firstly, people in the ordinary state have no point of objective reference within them from which they could see this – they are simply subject to it. And secondly, the illusion of constancy is strongly sustained by the role of the “formatory apparatus.” As described above, this

is merely an automatic coordinating function, analogous to that of an automatic switch board. The illusion of “I” which it gives can now be understood as referring to whichever sub-personality (themselves particular patterns of reactions to the stimuli of thought, feeling and sense data) is connected at the given moment.<sup>30</sup> Thus there is always ‘I’ even though the ‘self’ to which it refers is continually different. He says:

*Man has no permanent and unchangeable I. Every thought, every mood, every desire, every sensation, says ‘I.’ And in each case it seems to be taken for granted that this I belongs to the Whole, to the whole man, and that a thought, a desire, or an aversion is expressed by this Whole. In actual fact there is no foundation whatever for this assumption. Man’s every thought and desire appears and lives quite separately and independently of the Whole.<sup>31</sup>*

(Further aspects of the process by which people remain identified with their illusory world will be introduced below). Again, Gurdjieff holds that if we take the trouble to observe ourselves honestly we can find clear behavioural evidence of this inner inconstancy. In *an early lecture* Gurdjieff gave a fictitious account of a day in the life of a ‘typical person’ from the point of view of the different sub-personalities that are successively activated, illustrating the unnoticed incessant transition from one mechanically induced state to the next. He concludes with the strong implication that, in this sketch, we should recognize ourselves.<sup>32</sup>

If man lacks any inner constancy, then his supposed “will” and “ability to do” are easily disposed of. How can there be any intentional achievement, or, indeed, any *real* intentionality in such a plural and unstable being? “Will” and “intentionality” fall with consciousness and selfhood. Gurdjieff emphasizes that one ‘I’ can decide on a course of action, but that those that follow it do not necessarily recognize the validity of the decision and have no reason to continue the course (but may, nevertheless, have to deal with unwanted consequences).<sup>33</sup> Even actions that are not subsequently countermanded by another ‘I’ are said to have little chance of success

because, according to Gurdjieff's "law of octaves"<sup>34</sup> a complete process requires, in addition to its initiatory impulse, additional shocks to be administered at crucial points to keep it on course. In the absence of such shocks, an intention can be converted into its opposite over the course of time. However, such are people's inconstancy and capacity to delude themselves that they frequently believe such antithetical outcomes to be precisely the things which they originally intended. Gurdjieff gives the example, on a collective scale, of the transformation of the love taught in the Gospels into the Inquisition of mediaeval Christianity.<sup>35</sup>

Gurdjieff depicts *man as he is* as a parody of *man as he can become*. In fact, human functioning is presented as the exact reverse of what it should be; but people take this parody for the real thing. What should occur is that the individualized will governs the intellect which in turn guides the emotions which supply motivational impetus to the physical body. The physical body, being a machine, obeys its instructions. What *does* occur is that the physical body receives 'accidental shocks' from the environment (sensory stimuli) which trigger emotional reactions according to past programming; these emotional reactions give rise to 'thoughts' each of which says "I", thereby masquerading as the will.<sup>36</sup> Gurdjieff compares the situation to that of a carriage which should be owned by a "master" who decides where it will go and for what reason. However, in the absence of a master with the authority to properly direct the functioning of the carriage, it has become a dilapidated 'taxi'<sup>37</sup>, with the driver picking up anyone who hails him.<sup>38</sup> The contrasting situations are depicted in a pair of diagrams in *ISOM*<sup>39</sup> which are reproduced below:

[Man as he is]

→

<b>Automaton working by external influences</b>	<b>Desires produced by automaton</b>	<b>Thoughts proceeding from desire</b>	<b>Different and contradictory wills created by desires</b>
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[Man as he should be]

←

<b>Body obeying desires and emotions which are subject to intelligence</b>	<b>Emotional powers and desires obeying thought and intelligence</b>	<b>Thinking functions obeying consciousness and will</b>	<b>I Ego Consciousness Will</b>
--	--	--	---

An important consequence of man's inability to remember himself, his inner disunity and his lack of *will* is that, from an 'objective' point of view, he cannot be held responsible – either collectively or individually – for his actions; nor can he be expected to maintain a genuine ethical standpoint.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, Gurdjieff is uncompromising in his view that no belief system – however well intentioned – can alter the human situation. All good intentions will rapidly be lost, or even turn into their opposites. All mankind's experience simply *happens to him*, and while he remains inwardly mechanical he can do nothing to change this.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Centres.***

A further analysis of the human condition is given by Gurdjieff in his doctrine of "centres". He speaks of a total of seven centres. These are divided into three main categories:

- (i) The "moving centre," the "emotional centre" and the "intellectual, or thinking, centre." These three centres are 'blank' at birth, but are 'programmed' by

environmental influences during the formative years (prior to adulthood). These centres are the perceptual tools through which a person interacts with the environment.<sup>42</sup>

- (ii) The “instinctive centre” and the “sex centre.” These two centres exist fully formed in people from birth. The former may be thought of as equivalent to the autonomic nervous system. The latter, as its name suggests, is concerned with generative and regenerative functions; however, it has the wider significance of maintaining the body’s overall organic coherence. The sex and instinctive centres are designed to work without interference from other faculties.<sup>43</sup>
- (iii) The “higher emotional centre” and the “higher intellectual centre.” These two centres exist, fully formed, “inside man”; but they are not normally available to him in his ordinary state.<sup>44</sup> However, the attainment of stable connection to them is an integral part of the individual’s proper evolution.<sup>45</sup> They may be thought of as levels of transcendent understanding; and connection to them can bestow objective knowledge of the nature of creation and humanity’s place in it.<sup>46</sup>

It is the functioning of the first category of centres that is here of primary concern to us. The moving, emotional and thinking centres are designed to work in harmony with each other.<sup>47</sup> However, in ‘man as he finds himself’ the activity of the centres is not harmonious because of the dysfunctionality programmed into them as a result of maleficent formative influences. Each person has a particular functional imbalance, over-emphasizing one of the three centres: unregenerate people are designated “Man Number 1,” “Man Number 2” and “Man Number 3” depending on whether they have an overemphasis on physical, emotional or intellectual experience.



However, from Gurdjieff's point of view, each of these three types is in essentially the same position. The difference is simply in the particular direction of the imbalance.<sup>48</sup>

According to Gurdjieff, the situation is further exacerbated by the tendency which the centres have, once imbalance is established, to "steal" energy from each other such that they leave each other drained and attempting to function with entirely the wrong 'grade' of energy.<sup>49</sup> This situation is made more serious by the fact that this wrong relationship between centres extends to include the functioning of those of the second category. This 'interference with organic functioning' greatly confuses the human situation (at individual and collective levels). Gurdjieff places particular emphasis on the misuse of the energy of the sex centre. This situation is particularly serious because the energy of the sex centre is much too powerful for the centres of the first category and can only lead to accentuation of the original imbalance when used in them. The sex centre's energy can be stolen by any of the first category of centres, depending on which type of imbalance a person has. For instance, Man No.2 is likely to appropriate the energy of the sex centre to the activity of the emotional centre: the result of this could be any kind of obsessiveness or fanaticism. In addition to this accentuation of imbalance aspect, the misappropriation of the sex centre's energy has two further serious consequences. Firstly, it weakens the activity of the sex centre itself. Apart from any genetic degeneration to which this might lead, it can be said that, to the extent that the sex centre functions to give man his overall organic coherence (see above) and that it may be regarded as part of the "essence" (see below), a depletion of the sex centre will further weaken a person's contact with any innate sense of what he could and should be. Secondly, when operating in the centres of the first category the energy of the sex centre intensifies man's tendency toward delusion and day dreaming.<sup>50</sup>

So long as the situation of the centres of the first two categories remains confused a person cannot develop. Development requires that the centres are in correct relationship to one another such that the energies necessary for inner growth can be generated. Furthermore, while the centres of the first and second categories remain in mutual imbalance, it is not possible for the two centres of the third category to manifest.<sup>51</sup>

Gurdjieff offers a further complementary perspective on the human situation in his **“essence-personality” distinction**. I will, first, discuss essence and its innate potential for development.

### ***Essence development and Higher Bodies.***

“Essence” is defined as that with which one is born – i.e., the basis for a psychophysical constitution with the potential to evolve objective characteristics of “consciousness,” “will” and “knowledge.” Gurdjieff says:

A man’s real I, his individuality, can grow only from his essence. It can be said that a man’s individuality is his essence, grown up, mature.<sup>52</sup>

The centres of the second category may be thought of as essence; and the two higher centres (third category) may be thought of as of essence in so far as they represent aspects of the potentiality for right development. The centres of the first category are of essence only in so far as they are given, unprogrammed, at birth with particular roles to play in the person’s evolution.<sup>53</sup> The essence may also be considered to include “*conscience*.” In *Beelzebub*<sup>54</sup> Gurdjieff places emphasis on this conscience which he presents as being a spiritual faculty placed in man so that he can rightly order his life in relation to cosmic reality. However, as long as personality, and

especially the mechanism of “buffers” (see below), entirely obscure the essence, the guidance of conscience remains unavailable.<sup>55</sup>

Gurdjieff likens these innate potentialities (–i.e., “essence”) to a mixture of powders in a retort.<sup>56</sup> The separate powders may be thought of as analogous to man’s centres. A certain kind of action – i.e., the application of ‘heat’ – can cause these ‘powders’ to fuse into a ‘chemical compound’ with properties which none of the original components possessed. (The application of *heat* symbolizes the intensive work on oneself that is necessary to bring about fusion.) This new substance is then capable of taking on still further, more sophisticated, properties. This ‘new substance’ and the ‘sophisticated properties’ which it can acquire symbolize the second, third and fourth bodies which a person has the potential to develop by transmutation of the raw material of his or her essence.<sup>57</sup>

These ‘higher bodies’ are referred to in *ISOM* as the “astral,” “mental” and “causal” bodies (also: “natural,” “spiritual” and “divine”).<sup>58</sup> In *Beelzebub* the astral and mental bodies are given the names “kesdjan body” and “higher being body”<sup>59</sup> and it is these terms which will be used throughout the present work in order to avoid confusion with non-Gurdjieffian (e.g., theosophical) ideas. There is no explicit identification of a ‘fourth body’ in *Beelzebub*; however, as will be argued later,<sup>60</sup> the idea of the planet (or *state*) of Purgatory can be understood as directly equivalent to the development of the fourth or Divine body.

The successive acquisition of these bodies is equivalent to the consolidated attainment of “self consciousness,” “objective consciousness” and a “Real I/Will” – the respective bodies may be thought of as the vehicles necessary to manifest these higher faculties.<sup>61</sup> A further aspect of the kesdjan and higher being bodies is that they respectively give constant connection to the higher emotional and higher thinking

centres.<sup>62</sup> (These correspondences will be discussed further in Chapter Five – p.371.)

The successive bodies also give increasing degrees of immortality beyond the death of the physical body.<sup>63</sup>

In Gurdjieff's teaching the human is not born with an immortal soul. He says that the soul

...is the aim of all religions, of all schools. It is only an aim, a possibility; it is not a fact.<sup>64</sup>

In this teaching people have to earn a soul through rightly directed effort. The three higher bodies may be thought of as equivalent to the idea of a an immortal soul in distinct degrees of perfection and consolidation. For the person who remains undeveloped death is an annihilation. The different spiritual, psychological and physiological substances of which the person's essence was composed undergo dissolution and return to their natural levels and 's/he' is no more.<sup>65</sup> The essence may be thought of as a kind of 'loaned soul' from which – somewhat similarly to the parable of the talents – an individuated soul can be gained through proper work and investment.

### ***Personality.***

In contrast to essence, "personality" is that which a person acquires from the influences of external conditioning.<sup>66</sup> Personality, as such, is not deemed by Gurdjieff to be 'bad' – it is a component necessary for individual development, supplying a tension necessary for the development of the potentialities of the essence.<sup>67</sup> However, when Gurdjieff says that *man is asleep* one of his principal meanings is that *he is not awake in his essence*. This is because he is 'asleep' in his personality, living almost entirely in 'personality dreams' on the very periphery of his being.<sup>68</sup> Personality in

this wholly negative sense – also known as “false I”<sup>69</sup> – can be thought of as resulting from *identification* with the sequence of sub-personalities that are continually invoked by the impact of outer circumstances on a person’s specific complexes of physical, emotional and mental memories. The mechanism of this identification has been defined above in terms of the activity of the “formatory apparatus.” Thus, when people are captivated by the “formatory apparatus” they are *identified* with their mechanical reactions and can be said to be *asleep in their personality*, living with the illusion of a “real I”. In this way they are cut off from real experience – internal and external – remaining unaware of their essence and its obligations (see below) and failing to provide essence with the ‘nutrition of real contact with experience’ which it requires in order to grow.<sup>70</sup> Gurdjieff states that many people, including people in positions of power and importance, have impressive personalities with which they are wholly identified. These impressive personalities conceal essences which may have ceased to develop at as early as six years old.<sup>71</sup>

Without *essence growth* people can never even begin to acquire the attributes of consciousness, a “Real I” and an immortal soul which they already believe themselves to have. Living in a state of identification with their personality they fail even to approach the start of the path towards realization of the essence potentials spoken of above. The ethico-religious aspect of this will be explored below from the cosmological perspective. It is the psycho-physiological aspect that is explored here.

### ***Psychophysiology.***

Gurdjieff sees the human potential for development of higher bodies in terms of an *inner alchemy*. He likens the human condition to that of a large and complex

chemical factory with the potential capacity for high production of sophisticated products, but which is only functioning at a small fraction of this potential, whole areas being entirely unused.<sup>72</sup> It is not necessary to describe the functioning of this factory in technical detail.<sup>73</sup> It will be sufficient to give an outline of the structure, main features and purpose of this psycho-physiological apparatus.

The human, according to Gurdjieff, is a “three brained being.” This refers to the three centres of the first category. For the purpose of the present analysis Gurdjieff speaks of the human factory as having a three storied structure comprised, from bottom to top, of: the “back and lower part of the body,” the “chest” and the “head.”<sup>74</sup> There is a close correspondence between these three stories and the moving, emotional and intellectual centres; however, the energies corresponding to the activities of the sex and instinctive centres are also located in the bottom and middle stories respectively.<sup>75</sup> In accordance with Gurdjieff’s “law of three”<sup>76</sup> it is this trinitarian structure that gives man the possibility to evolve on his own account, in a way that is not possible for the higher animals (which are ‘two-storied structures, only having two “brain systems”). In Gurdjieff’s psycho-physiology man requires the input of three separate types of “food.” These are: (i) ordinary, or physical, food entering the lower story; (ii) “the air we breath” which enters the middle story; and (iii) “impressions,” or *mental* food, entering the top story.<sup>77</sup>

On entering the organism the possibility exists for each of these three foods to evolve into higher substances according to the law of octaves (see note 34, page 275). When the factory is functioning as it was designed to, the octaves support each other, providing “shocks” to bridge the stages of discontinuity such that the substances can continue to evolve. The octave beginning with ordinary food is allowed to pass the hiatus in its development by the extra impetus which is supplied by the entry of the air

octave. This “shock” is of a wholly mechanical nature, being provided by nature and requiring no conscious participation. It can be understood in terms of conventional biochemistry<sup>78</sup> in so far as the oxygen which is captured by the haemoglobin molecules allows the body to use the energy of the food it has digested. This mechanical shock happens in the same way in animals as it does in man: it is said to enable the food octave to evolve up to the ‘high grade of energy’ necessary for the operation of the sex centre.<sup>79</sup>

The shock that can enable the “air octave” to evolve beyond its hiatus point is by no means as straight forward as that described in the foregoing. This second shock does not occur at all in animals (which do not have a ‘third story’). The fact that it is possible is that which, in terms of the evolution of energies, distinguishes the human from the animal kingdom.<sup>80</sup> *In its absence, man amounts to nothing more than an animal with unrealized higher possibilities.* Under this circumstance the “air” octave cannot proceed and the “impressions” octave cannot begin.<sup>81</sup> This shock is known as the “first *conscious* shock.” The word “conscious” signifies both intentionality and the role of *consciousness* in the shock itself. The “first conscious shock” can only come about if a higher energy is *brought* ‘to the right place.’ The key to this is the effort to *remember oneself*. Gurdjieff says that the desired effect can only be brought about “...by making a conscious effort [to remember oneself] at the moment when an impression is received.”<sup>82</sup> The effort to perceive oneself simultaneously with perception of the incoming impression has a dual effect: (i) by intensifying the energy received from the impression itself, this impression is brought in contact with the corresponding point in the “air” octave, thus providing the shock necessary for it to pass its hiatus point; and (ii) by bringing the high grade emotional energy, associated with the effort of self remembering, to the situation the beginning of the

“impressions” octave itself is provided with the ‘higher affirmation’ which is necessary for its own evolution to commence.<sup>83</sup>

As a result of persistent effort at self remembering the “air” and “impressions” octaves are both enabled to evolve psycho-spiritual substances up to a level *equivalent* to that of the energy of the sex centre. However, Gurdjieff is emphatic that these energies are distinct from the sex energy.<sup>84</sup> Whereas the function of the sex energy is the maintenance of the overall morphological pattern of the organism and to bring about organic regeneration and the *generation of new lives*, the equivalent creative function of these ‘consciously produced’ energies is the generation of the kesdjan body.<sup>85</sup> (However, it must be noted that a higher stage of work – the “second conscious shock” – is required before the *kesdjan* body can be fully formed.<sup>86</sup>) The reader will recall that the kesdjan body is associated with the ability to maintain a constant experience of “self consciousness” (see page 195). Hence it can be seen that the formation of the kesdjan body makes easier the self remembering that is a prerequisite for the generation of its substance. Theoretically, as the effort at self remembering becomes established, the rate of production of the higher substances can be expected to increase because the high grade emotional energy necessary for the “first conscious shock” becomes more readily available and the ability to remember oneself correspondingly greater.

### ***The ‘paradox’ of the human situation.***

This psychophysiological idea is one way of understanding the contradiction between the seemingly futile efforts of a ‘totally mechanical entity’ to remember itself and the *actual experience of self remembering* which implies a genuinely conscious being who is no longer a machine. However, this may only be to remove the problem by a



stage because the possibility of getting the process started depends on the availability of this higher substance to bring to the incoming impression (which is an equivalent energy to the sex energy, but which cannot actually *be* that energy for the reasons given in the discussion of the misuse of the sex energy<sup>87</sup>). But this energy is not produced in the body until the first conscious shock has occurred. Gurdjieff himself expresses the situation in the following way:

In order to extract more, it is necessary to have in our organism a certain quantity of corresponding fine substances. Then the fine substances contained in the organism act *like a magnet* on the fine substances contained in the inhaled air. We come again to the old alchemical law: 'In order to make gold, it is first of all necessary to have a certain quantity of real gold.' 'If no gold whatever is possessed, there is no means whatever of making it.'<sup>88</sup>

However, he does not directly say how a person is to obtain the 'gold' which is required to start the inner alchemy.

It seems possible that the necessary substance is 'provided' in the human essence in the form of the latent faculty "conscience." In so far as conscience, and the closely related idea of *cosmic obligation*<sup>89</sup>, can be thought of as connected with higher emotional functioning, it can be seen as a candidate for the source of the necessary 'higher emotional energy.' (Since work on "self observation" accompanies efforts to "self remember" from the beginning of the Gurdjieff path, providing the person with some objective insights into himself, it is plausible to assume that "conscience" becomes partially awakened at a relatively early stage.<sup>90</sup>)

From the above point of view, although humans are machines, they possess all the necessary equipment to awaken. However this may be, Gurdjieff lays great stress on the assertion that 'mechanical man' cannot become conscious without *help* from someone who is already conscious: the sleep walker needs someone to awaken him and to *re-awaken* him when he falls asleep again.<sup>91</sup> He cannot gain the use of

whatever faculties or substances might be at his disposal until he has some consciousness. In Gurdjieff's terms this 'help from a conscious person' must be understood as including the provision of a 'culture' of higher substance – an inoculation against the disease of identification. The justification for suggesting this comes from consideration of Gurdjieff's idea of the quasi-substantial nature of esoteric knowledge<sup>92</sup> and the “*magnetic centre*” that can be formed out of ‘fragments of this knowledge substance’ which can enable a person to come in contact with a teacher<sup>93</sup>. (See the discussion of the magnetic centre and different types of influence in Chapter Four.<sup>94</sup>) Gurdjieff states that, when such contact is established, a special kind of higher influence is transmitted which can never be transmitted by conventional means or under ordinary circumstances. This higher influence is said to free the pupil from the “law of accident”.<sup>95</sup> Hence, whatever the latent ‘anti-mechanical’ energies which are available in the human, in the first instance it is a helping influence that is transmitted directly from the teacher which serves to interrupt the cycle of mechanicalness.

### ***Humanity is ‘hypnotized.’***

The “false I” as presented above is like a mask or role with which the wearer has become totally identified. However, it is not invulnerable to the influence of external stimuli of an unusually strong or unaccustomed character (e.g., bereavement or a situation in which the person has no ready made role to play). Such situations could ‘dislodge the mask’ temporarily exposing the person to the naked reality of an immature essence and the pain of “conscience” which Gurdjieff represents as being part of the essence.<sup>96</sup> Such experiences – of “remorse of conscience” – are very uncomfortable and disruptive to the dysfunctional *status quo*. They disturb the ‘sleep’

of the subject and also threaten to disturb that of the surrounding people. Gurdjieff says that for these reasons a special mechanism known as “buffers” has developed and that these buffers are socially inculcated and transmitted. Buffers are psychological devices which prevent people from experiencing the full force of contradictions between what they really are and what they believe themselves to be.<sup>97</sup>

Identification with one’s mechanical reactions (“false I”) and the special mechanisms called “buffers” that function to *maintain this identification* together function to “hypnotize” people causing them to live wholly imaginary lives.<sup>98</sup> Gurdjieff says:

Without any self-imagination or self-calming<sup>99</sup>—impulses which have become inseparable from contemporary men—he will cognize that his life is nothing but a blind reacting to...attractions and repulsions.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, the ‘power of imagination’ engenders a state of total identification with, and complete belief in, the world of his habitual experience even though, from an objective point of view, it is lacking in coherence. There is an extent to which “imagination” can be said to be the cause of mankind’s bondage<sup>101</sup> – although, as has been shown, the precise explanation is one of complex multicausality.

In *ISOM* Gurdjieff gives the basis of the power of man’s internal “tyrant”<sup>102</sup> the name “*kundalini*” (see below). He tells a tale, which he says is “a very good illustration of the human position”, in which a magician has a flock of sheep which he is keeping for reasons of his own (–i.e., not because he cares for them). However, he is too mean to put up fences or hire a shepherd, so he *hypnotizes* the sheep. He makes them believe that they have a kind and loving master and that no harm will come to them and that

...if anything at all were going to happen to them, at any rate not that day, and *therefore* they had no need to think about it.<sup>103</sup>

This last point refers to Gurdjieff's doctrine of the human "disease of tomorrow"<sup>104</sup> and man's total incapacity to appreciate the fact of his inevitable death. The incapacity of individual people to truly realize the inevitability of their own death is emphasized by Gurdjieff in *Beelzebub* as the most major of the illusions maintaining their servitude. He says that if a people in their unregenerate state were to suddenly be faced with the stark reality of their death – which is, for them, annihilation – then they would "hang themselves."<sup>105</sup> The importance of the 'realization versus non-realization of the inevitability of death' issue is stressed by the account of the prayer, of Gurdjieff's wise and compassionate literary persona Beelzebub, that an organ should be added to man's constitution such that he is, throughout his life, continuously cognizant of his mortality.<sup>106</sup> The tale in *ISOM* concludes:

Further the magician suggested to his sheep that they were not sheep at all; to some of them he suggested that they were *lions*, to others that they were *eagles*, to others that they were *men*, and to others that they were *magicians*.

And after this all his cares and worries about the sheep came to an end. They never ran away again but quietly awaited the time when the magician would require their flesh and skins.<sup>107 108</sup>

It has been shown that, in Gurdjieff's account, man's capacity for imagination makes him prey to the 'hypnotism of life' causing him to experience almost total identification with the dream world of his personality. In the above allegory, the willingness of the sheep to believe that they are grand and independent entities parallels the individual person's belief that s/he is a self conscious, self directing entity and, in some cases, that s/he has an immortal soul (–i.e., is not subject to the

mortality of his physical body). However, the allegory implies that there is a causative dimension beyond the psychological: What then do the magician, his magic and his purposes signify?

### **The Cosmological Perspectives.**

As was anticipated above, Gurdjieff provides a *cosmological* explanation which parallels his psychological one. I have, in the previous chapter, touched on this aspect of Gurdjieff's teaching in my discussion of Bennett's presentation of Gurdjieff's doctrine of "Reciprocal Maintenance" and the human duty to participate in the evolutionary backflow of creation (see page 120). In this section I set out Gurdjieff's cosmological doctrines as given in *Beelzebub* and in *ISOM* and highlight an ambiguity with regard to the teaching about constraints on human development.

#### ***Cosmological perspectives in Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson.***

In *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff refers to the human as a "three brained being", that is a special type of organism which exists throughout the Universe and which has the potential for *independent evolution on its own account beyond that which is given by nature*.<sup>109</sup> This potential is not just a luxury, but signifies an *obligation* to achieve self-perfection in and for the service of the Divine purpose.<sup>110</sup> This obligation, pertaining to beings such as man, is most clearly expressed in the five "being-obligolnian strivings" (see note 99, page 159). However, Gurdjieff's main point throughout *Beelzebub* is that

man is *not* as he should be and comes nowhere near to the proper fulfilment of the cosmic obligation inherent in his being.

There is a degree of ambiguity in Gurdjieff's cosmological account of the human situation. On one hand the individual human being is presented as being subject to the cosmic obligation as explained above and is, therefore, responsible for his inadequacy. However, from a collective point of view, the human race is presented as being in a thoroughly benighted situation *which is not its fault*, such that people have very little hope of fulfilling their essence potential (see below). The first of these points of view may be explained as being addressed to the soteriological aspirations of the reader. The odds are heavily stacked against him and for this very reason his only chance is to assume responsibility and make a rightly guided effort.

The second perspective is explained by Gurdjieff in terms of an historico-cosmic myth. He tells how in the remote past, when human beings had not long existed on the earth, the 'angelic deputies' of the creator God, who had responsibility for the harmonious evolution of our portion of the Galaxy, made an 'error of calculation' and thereby allowed a comet to crash into the earth.<sup>111</sup> The collision resulted in the breaking off of a large fragment from the earth which became the Moon (together with a smaller fragment which Gurdjieff refers to as "Anulios"). This accident threatened to become a disaster on a much larger scale because of the disharmony which it would cause to the evolution of the solar system as a whole. A 'damage limitation' strategy was undertaken. This required that vibrations be supplied from the earth's organic life in order to sustain the Moon and thereby to maintain harmony in the solar system. The newly arisen human beings on the earth were also required to participate in this provision of stabilizing vibrations.<sup>112</sup>

Providing ‘food for the Moon’ is depicted as a terrible fate for a “three brained being” such as man who has been designed to fulfil a higher destiny. Mankind could not be expected to willingly accept such a fate. For this reason it was deemed necessary to implant a special organ in man which would serve to make him unaware of the objective nature of his being or of the fate which he was being forced to serve. Gurdjieff tells us that this organ was located near the base of the spine and gives it the name “kundabuffer.”<sup>113</sup>

The location and the first part of the name of this organ seem to indicate a connection with the *kundalini* of Tantric Yoga. Moreover, the second half of the name indicates a close connection with Gurdjieff’s own concept of “buffers” (see above) as given in both *ISOM* and *Beelzebub* (where it is named “self-calming”). Indeed, as was noted above, the internal source of man’s extreme vulnerability to ‘the hypnotism of life’ is, in *ISOM*, specifically connected with this “*kundalini*”. Gurdjieff claimed that the conception of *kundalini* as a liberating force that can be awakened is a totally mistaken one. He says:

In reality Kundalini is the power of imagination, the power of fantasy, *which takes the place of a real function*. When a man dreams instead of acting, when his dreams take the place of reality...it is the force of Kundalini acting in him. Kundalini can act in all centers [sic] and with its help all the centers can be satisfied with the imaginary instead of the real.<sup>114</sup>

His perspective bears some similarity to that of Tibetan Buddhist Tantric Yoga where *kundalini* is acknowledged to be a dangerous and potentially destructive “natural force” that should be consciously controlled through the higher centres (and should only be released by the thoroughly trained and prepared adept).<sup>115</sup>

However, the precise connection between the more commonly understood meaning of *kundalini* and Gurdjieff’s “kundabuffer” remains uncertain.<sup>116</sup>

Returning now to Gurdjieff's 'myth' in *Beelzebub*, he goes on to explain that after a certain time (still, as far as we are concerned, in pre-history) the cosmic situation had sufficiently stabilized so as to no longer threaten a large scale disaster. It therefore became possible for mankind to be allowed to return to its proper and befitting evolutionary path, and the organ kundabuffer was, consequently, removed.<sup>117</sup> We now come to the second 'unforeseeingness' on the part of the agencies of the Divine and the explanation of what Gurdjieff sees as the great and ongoing misfortune of the human race. Mankind had become addicted to his slavery. Even when the kundabuffer was removed, he continued to manifest as though it was still there.<sup>118</sup> That is to say, he manifested according to the mechanical ("itoklanoz") cosmic principle befitting to animals rather than the conscious ("foolasnitamnian") cosmic principle proper to "three brained beings throughout the Universe."<sup>119</sup>

In *ISOM*, in the context of "kundalini" and the "hypnotism of life", Gurdjieff states that "...there is no organic reason for sleep and man *can* awaken."<sup>120</sup> However, this "*can*" is fraught with conditions. In *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff emphasizes *mankind's declining possibilities* due to the millennia long collective habit of sleep. Inherent faculties, necessary for proper individual development, have become "atrophied" due to lack of use.<sup>121</sup> The human life span has, contrary to ordinary belief, progressively declined giving people insufficient time – even were conditions ideal – to complete the process of self perfection.<sup>122</sup> Hence it can be seen that, although Gurdjieff says there is "no organic reason for sleep", he also tells us that there are strong 'quasi-organic' factors working against the possibility of wakefulness.

The mechanism by means of which the habits of sleep are transmitted from generation to generation down the ages is explained in terms involving both 'genetic'



factors and processes of social inculcation. The human condition of sleep is explained as a collective habit. Gurdjieff wrote:

Although this organ [–i.e., kundabuffer] was later “removed”...from their common presences, yet owing to a cosmic law expressed by the words “the assimilation of the results of oft-repeated acts”—according to which law, from the frequent repetition of one and the same act there arises in every “world concentration” under certain conditions a predisposition to produce similar results—this law-conformable predisposition which arose in our forefathers was transmitted by heredity from generation to generation, so that when their descendants in the process of their ordinary existence established numerous conditions which proved to be congenial for the said law-conformableness, from that time on the consequences of the various properties of this organ arose in them, and being assimilated owing to transmission by heredity from generation to generation, they ultimately acquired almost the same manifestations as those of their ancestors.<sup>123</sup>

This is to say that, because “oft-repeated” acts ‘carve out a channel’, future situations are increasingly likely to find this same channel which becomes an habitual course.<sup>124</sup> Gurdjieff is saying that the after effects of the ‘former organ kundabuffer’ became established in humanity by virtue of a *resonance* of their socio-cultural conditions with the habitual pattern transmitted to them from the kundabuffer time. From then on the aberrant condition was maintained by means of the same law of the ‘reproduction of habit.’

Speaking of the formation of “buffers” in an individual he said:

‘Buffers’ are created slowly and gradually. Very many ‘buffers’ are created artificially through ‘education.’ Others are created under the hypnotic influence of surrounding life. A man is surrounded by people who live, think and feel by means of ‘buffers.’ Imitating them, their opinions, actions and words, a man involuntarily creates similar ‘buffers’ in himself. ‘Buffers’ make a man’s life easy. It is very hard to live without ‘buffers.’<sup>125</sup>

It is as if Gurdjieff were explaining the force of the collective – with its habits of sleep and self deception – as analogous to a magnetic field. The individual human being, born into conditions of this kind, may be likened to a small piece of iron which cannot

escape magnetization when placed in a strong field. Just as all of the atoms in the iron take on the orientation of the field, so the human being imbibes the habits of sleep, lying and delusion prevalent in the environment and learns to reproduce them in himself. This social learning process is made easy by virtue of the internal, ‘quasi-genetic’, dimension of transmission. Thus, although the individual elements that make up the field are continually changing, the field itself remains relatively constant. (The appositeness of this analogy will become clear in the context of discussion of the role of the “magnetic centre” in a person’s awakening.)

***The cosmological perspective in In Search of the Miraculous.***

In *ISOM* Gurdjieff is recorded as giving an explanation of the cosmological causes of the human condition which, while similar to the *Beelzebub* account, nevertheless seems to differ on an important soteriological point. This difference between the two texts intensifies the ambiguity between the views of ‘man as he is and *cannot help being*’ and ‘man as he ought to be *and has a duty to become*’ which has been spoken of as internal to the *Beelzebub* account.

Here “Moons” are depicted as a normal occurrence – they are the furthestmost limit of the “Ray of Creation” (which starts in the Divine, or Absolute) beyond which is chaos. The purpose of organic life on earth is to facilitate the transmission of the Ray of Creation to the Moon such that it can evolve and eventually become a planet. Ouspensky records Gurdjieff speaking of the Moon as a gigantic electro-magnet which sucks the sustenance which it requires from organic life on earth.<sup>126</sup> He also records Gurdjieff’s explanation of the impossibility of liberation for the majority of the human race:

The evolution of a certain small percentage may be in accord with nature's purposes. Man contains within him the possibility of evolution. But the evolution of humanity as a whole, that is, the development of these possibilities in all men, or in most of them, or even in a large number of them, is not necessary for the purposes of the earth or of the planetary world in general, and it might, in fact, be injurious or fatal. There exist, therefore, special forces (of a planetary character) which oppose the evolution of large masses of humanity and keep it at the level it ought to be.

For instance, the evolution of humanity beyond a certain point, or, to speak more correctly, above a certain percentage would be fatal for the *moon*. The moon at present *feeds* on organic life, on humanity. Humanity is part of organic life; this means that humanity is *food* for the moon. If all men were to become too intelligent they would not want to be eaten by the moon.<sup>127</sup>

Liberation is only possible, or, cosmically speaking, useful, for a tiny minority of the human race. In this account Gurdjieff seems to present a different perspective on mankind's continuing bondage to the needs of the Moon which, in terms of the *Beelzebub* scenario, he could – theoretically speaking – completely relinquish.

### **Beelzebub and ISOM compared.**

The *Beelzebub* account seems to be in agreement with the above passage to the extent that while the majority of mankind remain in bondage to the moon then it will be necessary for the majority of mankind to *continue* to remain in bondage to the moon. This 'catch-22 situation' arises from the idea that nature has adapted itself to mankind's low level of functioning such that the moon has to receive from him a large quantity of low grade vibrations to compensate for the smaller quantity of high grade vibrations which he is unable to provide.<sup>128</sup> These 'low grade vibrations' are primarily produced as a result of human death.<sup>129</sup> This is the cosmological corollary of the psychological account in terms of the after effects of the "organ kundabuffer" (or '*kundalini*'). Mankind is collectively subject to a variety of delusory psychoses resulting in periodic outbreaks of violent behaviour (e.g., wars and revolutions) in

order to produce the required vibrations through mass deaths.<sup>130</sup> This, coupled with the idea that mankind is degenerating<sup>131</sup> rather than improving, is also Gurdjieff's explanation for 'shortening life span' and exponential population increase.

However, in the terms of the *Beelzebub* account, the account in *ISOM* appears to speak *as if* (for an overwhelming statistical majority) the "organ kundabuffer" had not been removed. As I have described, Gurdjieff's account in *ISOM* places emphasis on the idea of there being no organic reason for sleep, such that man *can* awaken (this concurs with *Beelzebub*). But he also emphasizes this inherent limitation to mankind's collective possibilities which is *built into the cosmological structure*. The emphasis in *Beelzebub* seems to be significantly different. I have shown above that from a *practical point of view* the *Beelzebub* scenario approximates closely to the inherently limiting cosmological structure depicted in *ISOM*. The major difference is that, in *Beelzebub*, Gurdjieff offers the possibility that, through wise intervention from above, humanity as a whole – or large portions of it – *could* be guided out of its state of imprisonment in servitude to the moon.<sup>132</sup>

In *Beelzebub*, Gurdjieff specifically tells how at various times throughout history Divine agents have been sent to earth with the task of awakening mankind to its true possibilities and liberating it from the after effects of the organ kundabuffer.<sup>133</sup> He even states that at one time considerable success was achieved by one whom he refers to as Ashiata Shiemash, but that these auspicious results were soon destroyed and mankind returned to its former mode of existence.<sup>134</sup> Clearly, it would be nonsense for Divine beings to be sent to earth to perform a task which is inherently impossible within the cosmological structure. Consequently, it can only be concluded that within the cosmological structure as given in *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff *is* allowing the possibility of mass liberation. This seems to directly contradict the above quotation from *ISOM*

which rules out “...the development of these [higher] possibilities in all men, or in most of them, or even in a large number of them...”

However, despite this difference, it is to be reiterated that the situation depicted in *Beelzebub*, with mankind having accumulated a self-perpetuating legacy of mechanical behaviour, *approximates* to the ‘inherent cosmological limitation’ of *ISOM* in so far as nature is said to have adapted herself to man’s dysfunctionality such that it is now extremely difficult – in both collective and individual terms – for him to function as he should do.

To paraphrase *Beelzebub*: mankind is severely trapped in an ‘habitual ditch’ of its own making, but there is still no *absolute* reason for this ditch to exist, *and it could cease to exist*. This is not to say that the *Beelzebub* scenario envisages a situation in which a liberated mankind would ‘owe nothing’ to the moon. It agrees with *ISOM* that humanity, in so far as it is a part of organic life on earth, has to help nourish the moon. Mankind, in a more liberated state, would provide the moon with a smaller quantity of a higher quality material, thereby discharging its obligation at that level and setting itself free to pursue the higher aspects of its destiny. Gurdjieff’s fourth “being obligolnian striving” may be seen as referring to the human obligation at this level:

...the striving from the beginning of their existence to pay for their arising and their individuality as quickly as possible, in order afterwards to be free to lighten as much as possible the Sorrow of our COMMON FATHER.<sup>135</sup>

This ‘paying for one’s arising’ may be seen as related to another of Gurdjieff’s principles (in *ISOM*) which states that people engaged in spiritual development have to be able to help others to attain their own present level before they themselves can be free to achieve the next higher one (see Chapter Five). As mentioned above, the

idea of the ‘feeding of the moon’ in *ISOM* is presented in the context that ‘moons’ *can* (but not, inevitably, *will*) evolve to become ‘planets’; similarly, planets may then, in turn, become ‘suns’. The parallel between these two ideas is obvious; and the cosmological principle of “reciprocal maintenance” (see page 120) – or “reciprocal feeding” – can be seen to be a fundamental to the human situation and its possibilities in both accounts. However, in *Beelzebub* this idea of ‘settling one’s account’ at the level of organic life, and thereby fundamentally altering one’s relationship to the moon, in order to be free to serve higher levels is presented as potentially applicable to *all* people.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, in *ISOM* it is said that not only is the evolution of humanity as a whole dangerous to the moon, but that it is unnecessary for, and potentially injurious to, “...the earth or...the planetary world in general...” The “planetary world in general” is a stage above the earth (–i.e., an individual planet) in the “ray of creation.”<sup>137</sup> For this reason, just as slavery to the moon (‘below’ the earth) signifies a level of human functioning *below* the proper level (–i.e., *hypo-normal*), so the “planetary world” signifies a level of functioning which is *hyper-normal* – a result of conscious evolution. If mankind as a whole is required to consciously participate in the evolutionary backflow of creation then he must function on this *hyper-normal* level and thereby have an effect in the planetary world.

To summarize the difference between *ISOM* and *Beelzebub*: In the former, humanity as a whole is fixed, by cosmic necessity, at a low level of creation in a situation of mechanical servitude. The requirements of nature determine that human awakening, on anything but a very small scale, is not desirable. In the latter, humanity’s servitude is not an absolute necessity: it only exists through collective force of habit. Theoretically speaking, mankind as a whole *could* awaken from the mechanical mode. Indeed, in this presentation it is, from a cosmic point of view,

highly desirable that he *should* awaken such that he can discharge his destined obligations and so that the ‘local cosmic situation’ can finally be normalized.

How should the discrepancy between the two accounts and the resultant ambiguity be interpreted? Despite the emphasis placed on the authenticity of Ouspensky’s *ISOM* in the introduction to the present chapter, it is reasonable to give precedence to Gurdjieff’s own ‘official version.’ Moreover, if the difference can be accounted for in terms of a process of reformulation and/or development, then since the *Beelzebub* version post-dates the *ISOM* version, it can be assumed to be the more definitive. However, we do not actually *know* the reason for the observed discrepancy between the two sources. The differences *might* result from factors relating to the time, place and, particularly, the circumstances of transmission and the particular impact which was sought for in either or both of the cases. It is to be remembered that *ISOM* is a record of Gurdjieff’s teaching to a group of pupils *already working on the path*, whereas *Beelzebub*, although used with his personal pupils, was also designed by Gurdjieff for much wider consumption.

Since we cannot be certain which text contains the most ‘authentic’ version of the doctrine, then it is necessary to face the fact of the ambiguity. However, the significance of the discrepancy should not be *overemphasized*: both versions agree that humanity is severely mired, that there are strong cosmic forces – either habitual (*Beelzebub*) or lawful (*ISOM*) – holding it in this situation, and that the possibilities for liberation of any individual are, under present conditions, slender. However, the divergence seems fundamental; and the *balance* of emphasis which is made between these two divergent ways of understanding the possibilities of humanity as a whole can be expected to influence the way in which the Gurdjieff teaching is continued.

The ‘possible for the whole of humanity’ versus ‘impossible for the whole of humanity’ dichotomy can be expected to correlate respectively with ‘open’ and ‘closed’ attitudes to the propagation of the Gurdjieff teaching.

### **The allegory of the two rivers.**

In the final chapter of *Beelzebub*, ‘From the Author’, Gurdjieff comes out from behind his Beelzebub persona to address the reader directly. This chapter consists, in the most part, of the transcript of a ‘standard introductory lecture’, expounding his doctrine of the inconstancy of the human psyche. He writes that this lecture was “Last Read in New York in the Neighbourhood Playhouse, January, 1924” – i.e., during Gurdjieff’s first visit to the U.S.A. He relates that on this occasion he interrupted the reader and made an addition.<sup>138</sup> The ‘addition’ consists of an allegory concerning a river which bifurcates into two separate rivers respectively representing the situations of conscious man and mechanical man. This account recapitulates some of the material embodied in the main narrative of *Beelzebub* concerning the cosmological aspect of the human condition. However, its particular virtue in the present investigation is that it also serves to clarify:

- (i) the way in which the cosmological situation bears on the possibilities of the individual human being; and
- (ii) the relationship between the conscious and the mechanical categories of humanity.



The book *Views From the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* contains a transcript of Gurdjieff's exposition of this allegory on a separate occasion (New York, 22 February 1924).<sup>139</sup> This alternative source provides an account which is identical in all essential details. The following discussion draws mainly on the version appended to *Beelzebub*.

Historically speaking, Gurdjieff says that the separation of the rivers occurred at the time of the "'Tikliamishian civilization," which directly preceded the Babylonian civilization."<sup>140</sup> (In this talk Gurdjieff introduced the ideas of the "kundabuffer" and the requirements of "Great Nature" with the promise of further elucidation of the matters in later lectures.<sup>141</sup>) This can be taken to mean that the bifurcation resulted from mankind's unnecessary simulation of the effects of the, no longer present, kundabuffer. The two rivers respectively represent the involutory down-flow and the evolutionary back-flow of creation. The separate drops of water which make up the rivers represent individual people. The drops in the 'evolutionary river' move according to "law", whereas the drops in the 'involuntary river' move according to "accident" – i.e., randomly.<sup>142</sup>

Gurdjieff speaks of the 'involuntary river' as "...in itself a link in the cosmic chain."<sup>143</sup> Its course ends with it flowing into

...the crevices of the Earth's "nether regions," where it participates in the continuous process called "involuntary construction" which proceeds within the planet<sup>144</sup>, it is transformed into steam and distributed into corresponding spheres of new arisings.<sup>145</sup>

Hence the "drops" in this stream cease to exist individually. This is equivalent to the situation, at death, of people who have lived their lives under mechanical laws and remained in sleep. He emphasizes that for these drops

...there is not a separate predetermination of...personal fate—a predetermined fate is for the whole river only.<sup>146</sup>

By contrast, the ‘evolutionary river’ eventually empties into an ocean.

Congruous with this river’s evolutionary character, this “ocean” represents

...that sphere of general Nature which often has what is called repeated “reciprocal exchanges of substances between various great cosmic concentrations”...in consequence of which this drop of water has the possibility to evolve, as it is, to the next higher concentration<sup>147</sup>

The “drops” in this river must also serve the wider cosmic purpose, but they serve consciously and the direction of their service is upwards rather than downwards. By virtue of the upward direction of movement, according to the laws of the evolutionary river which they are serving, these “drops” evolve on their own account and gain an individual destiny and immortality beyond the end of the river.

From the point of their bifurcation the two rivers never again come in direct contact with each other. However, they *do* remain close, existing in a kind of symbiosis. Both rivers are necessary and neither one can exist without the other.<sup>148</sup> Presumably, they are both required to maintain the balance of existence. (However, as explored above, this does not mean that humanity could not, in principle, be collectively liberated from the ‘involutionary river’ leaving this role to the rest of organic life.)

Crucially, although the rivers themselves do not mix, Gurdjieff states that “Nature” has arranged things such that it is possible for individual drops to be ‘splashed’ from the ‘involutionary’ to the ‘evolutionary river’ at points where the rivers run close to each other.<sup>149</sup>

How, then, does the cosmological scenario depicted in the allegory effect the individual human being? Precisely what determines which river he exists in? Gurdjieff says that:

Individually the life of every man up to his reaching responsible age corresponds to a drop of water in the initial flow of the river, and the place where the dividing of the flow occurs corresponds to the time when he attains adulthood.<sup>150</sup>

It is clear from his comments a few pages earlier<sup>151</sup> that the factors which determine which “river” a person enters at the threshold of adulthood are ones of heredity and formative influence.<sup>152</sup>

Presumably, then, people inherit varying degrees of susceptibility to the ‘kundabuffer-like manifestations.’ As will be clear from the earlier discussion of Gurdjieff’s ideas concerning the way in which human dysfunctionality arose and is passed from generation to generation (see page 209), Gurdjieff undoubtedly held a ‘Lamarckian’ view of human heredity. Thus, our own possibilities of avoiding falling into the mechanical mode of existence would have partly depended on the extent to which our forebears, and most immediately our parents, exerted themselves to try and be conscious and to counteract the various factors favouring sleep. Similarly, the possibilities for our own children and descendants of attaining real, rather than illusory, existence would depend, in part, on the efforts that *we* make to attain consciousness.

The formative influences aspect is much more accessible, and this depends more immediately on the example which parents set by the way they lead their lives. It also depends on the direct formative influence of education, the examples of the teachers themselves and of other authority figures and also the more indirect and pervasive influence of the society as a whole. As elucidated above, the level of existence of a

person's forebears can be said to affect the *essence* and thereby provide particular probabilities for the person either attaining or not attaining the real mode of existence. But the way in which these probabilities are actualized depends on the development of *personality* – i.e., the entire psychological matrix of sub-personalities and buffers. This, in turn, depends on the mechanical associations with which the three brain systems are programmed and the process of development of buffers to deal with contradictions which arise between reality and the habitual mode. These factors are imbibed from the environment, and the process of programming is complete and unalterable by ordinary means when the threshold of adulthood is reached at the age of seventeen.<sup>153</sup> According to Gurdjieff, the majority of the formative influences acting on a child's developing and impressionable psyche are pernicious. That this is especially the case in the contemporary western world is, he says, due largely to modern education which fosters mechanical and one-sided learning processes.<sup>154</sup> He holds that a child's innate capacities to develop, from its essence, the real faculties that are latent in it (–e.g., “conscience”) are hijacked by the demand, implicit and explicit, coming from all sides of the social environment, that he conform to norms of behaviour which *simulate* these faculties. Hence, for instance, a child develops false sincerity which obscures the place from which the corresponding ‘real essence feelings’ could arise.<sup>155</sup>

While it is by no means impossible that the combination of hereditary and environmental influences should be such as to allow an individual to reach adulthood without succumbing, it is nevertheless, in the contemporary world, increasingly rare.<sup>156</sup> In the early chapters of Gurdjieff's semi-autobiographical account *Meetings With Remarkable Men* he seems to represent himself as such a phenomenon. Here he emphasizes the special educational influences which were brought to bear in his youth

by the concerted agencies of his father and his “first tutor” Dean Borsh (both “remarkable men”). These are presented as having permitted him to attain adulthood without sacrificing the open and inquiring mind of childhood and with the ability to chart his own course through life without having to rely on a fixed set of relationships with the external environment to provide inner stability.

This second factor points to the core of what has to be attained before the ‘bifurcation of the rivers.’ In *Beelzebub* he writes:

A man who has in his common presence his own “I” enters one of the streams of the river of life; and the man who has not, enters the other.<sup>157</sup>

Gurdjieff’s developmental spiritual psychology will be fully explored in Chapter Five, but it is necessary here to be sure about what is being referred to by a man having “his own “I””. This is not the “unperishable I” of the highest attainment possible for man – i.e., Gurdjieff’s “Man Number 7”<sup>158</sup> This “self-individuality” is, from Beelzebub’s extraterrestrial perspective, the natural and proper starting point for the adult life of “three brained beings”; however it is very difficult to attain for humans. It is the *real starting point* for individual evolution. Below this level nothing real can grow under its own direction. This attainment of “I” or “self-individuality” signifies the presence in a man of an inner self sufficiency which allows him to choose how he will respond and which aspects of his programming to bring to bear on a situation. This is the *conscious man*. He contrasts strongly with the majority of people who, lacking such an individual centre, can only respond mechanically according to their pre-programmed inner associations.

Were it not for the provision by “Nature” of the possibility that individual “drops” should be able to get from the ‘involutionary river’ to the ‘evolutionary river’

after their separation, then there would be no place for a teaching such as Gurdjieff's.<sup>159</sup> He speaks of it being possible for individual drops to learn to use the currents, shape and wind effects of the 'involutionary river' in order to 'get into the right place at the right time to be splashed across.'<sup>160</sup> The 'learning about currents etc.' in this allegory corresponds to the self observation of the features of one's mechanicalness which, as the first stage of the Gurdjieff training, is the prerequisite for any real change.

The precise doctrine concerning the means by which basically mechanical beings can begin to make choices which can lead to "the first liberation"<sup>161</sup> will be discussed in later sections.<sup>162</sup> However, it is appropriate here to be a little more precise about what is involved in this 'transfer between rivers.' Consequently, it is necessary to anticipate more precise knowledge concerning Gurdjieff's system of levels of being. Ordinary people in the 'involutionary river' are Gurdjieff's Men Numbers 1, 2 and 3 (see above). Those in the process of studying the mechanical laws of the river and learning to 'navigate' can become Man Number 4. Man Number 4 is a transition state: he has achieved a provisional balance within himself and established a relatively constant place within himself from which work on himself can proceed.<sup>163</sup> This 'self' is only the precursor of the "I" or "self-individuality" which is the minimum requirement of being in the 'evolutionary river.' Moreover, his situation is still highly volatile and his 'provisional organization' can be swept away. For these reasons it must be concluded that the situation which Gurdjieff designates as "Man No. 4" is still in the 'involutionary river' although approaching the possibility of transition. Furthermore, in order to make the crossing a person has to be willing to die completely to the "attractions" of the 'involutionary river' – to "his 'false I,' and then all the fantastic ideas about his 'individuality,' 'will,' 'consciousness,' 'capacity to

do'..." etc. – and to develop a “strong desire” to be reborn in the evolutionary one.

Gurdjieff says:

...it is necessary to become dead to what has become for you your ordinary life.

It is just this death that is spoken of in all religions.

It is defined in the saying that has reached us from remote antiquity, “Without death no resurrection,” that is to say, “If you do not die you will not be resurrected.”<sup>164</sup>

And more specifically:

...Christ and all the others spoke of the death which can take place in life, the death of the tyrant from whom our slavery comes, that death which is a necessary condition of the first and principal liberation of man.<sup>165</sup>

Thus, it would seem that it is only at a stage much above that of ordinary people that the transfer to the ‘evolutionary river’ can occur. Gurdjieff summed up his view concerning the extreme difficulty of succeeding in this transition in the following words to prospective pupils:

This is difficult. No, difficult is not the word. The word “impossible” is also wrong, because, in principle, it is possible; only it is a thousand times more difficult than to become a multimillionaire through honest work.<sup>166</sup>

## **Conclusions.**

Having made a substantial presentation of Gurdjieff’s material concerning the human condition, the task now is to distil its essential content. This is necessary in order to gain a perspective on that which is truly vital in the teaching as distinct from more contingent aspects. The aim is to separate the fundamental features that distinguish Gurdjieff’s position from the particular language and form of presentation that he

uses. However, it must be acknowledged at the outset that this course may not be entirely valid: Gurdjieff speaks of true esoteric knowledge – such as his own teaching – as possessing an objectively precise character. Hence, for instance, it is necessary to be cautious in the handling of ideas, such as the doctrine of centres or the human alchemical factory, which serve to describe the human situation in *precise* ways.

That which seems at first sight most strongly to characterize Gurdjieff's presentation of the human situation is its *bleakness*: the fate of the vast majority of people is to be annihilated in the involutory cosmic process and he offers very little hope of escape. It could be suggested that no 'more optimistic version' of the teaching could qualify as authentically Gurdjieffian. However, it is necessary to examine the issue more carefully. His subtitle for *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* was 'An Objective and Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man.' His stated aim was to awaken people to an *objective view* of their situation and certainly not to provide comfort. Indeed, the comfort offered by conventional and popular religious forms – promising, as he would characterize it, salvation by doing or believing this or that<sup>167</sup> – could be seen as one of his principal enemies (cf. his allegory of the magician and the sheep). From his point of view a value judgement such as "bleak" might be seen as beside the point. Certainly, in the context of unpleasant insights of an individual nature, he states that reactions of dislike simply lessen the impact of the observation and prevent the recipient from gaining anything from it.<sup>168</sup> So it may be missing the point to see Gurdjieff's perspective as *pessimistic*. But while taking into account the teaching's view concerning the invalidity of conventional reactions, Gurdjieff's aim to *shock* should not be overlooked. As has been pointed out before, Gurdjieff wrote *Beelzebub* in order to produce a definite and calculated *impact* on the reader; similarly the ideas in *ISOM* can be seen as having been designed to have *definite*



*impacts* on his pupils (in Moscow and St.Petersburg). There is no reason to suppose that the cosmological doctrines did not, from Gurdjieff's point of view, convey truth. However, it seems unlikely that they should be taken entirely at face value. In particular, the "organ kundabuffer" story seems to be more allegorical – showing how humanity holds onto chains to which it is not fixed – than literally true (although it might depict some definite hiatus in the development of pre-historic man<sup>169</sup>). In some instances the impact of Gurdjieff's doctrines may have been as, or even more, important than the doctrine themselves. It could be the case that Gurdjieff deliberately overstated the difficulty of the human situation in order that his pupils might not *themselves underestimate* the task. (This would also have had the virtue of discouraging people with little potential.) In these cases it could be that for those who pursue the Gurdjieff way the possibility of achieving "the first liberation" is less slender than he said.

Nevertheless, there is a 'flavour of stark objectivity' about this teaching which offers no easy path, nor one that all can follow *under present, or immediately foreseeable, conditions*. Moreover, there are a central core of assertions concerning which it is difficult to see how any compromise would be possible. This core may be formulated in terms of the following set of related statements:

- The vast majority of people are mechanical, operating on the basis of habitually determined processes.
- Their total identification with this mechanism generates the illusion that they are not mechanical.

- This illusion consists of the naive suppositions that they have self consciousness (“self remembering”), that they possess a ‘unified self’ and that they can act intentionally.
- While they remain in this state they are existing on the level of animal life and failing to actualize specifically human potentialities.
- Human beings are not as they *should* be. In the *Beelzebub* version, this failure is more than just a ‘personal misfortune’ because it leaves people unable to fulfil their befitting level of cosmic obligation. However, in *ISOM* it is envisaged as normal and inevitable that the higher potentials of the majority remain unactualized.
- Man has to serve the cosmic purpose. If he cannot fulfil his obligations to the evolutionary flow of existence, then he serves the involutory stream as part of organic life in general.
- Man is not ‘born with an immortal soul.’ However, he does have the seed, or potentiality, to develop higher bodies which can enable him to function ‘as he should do’ and which give him degrees of immortality beyond the death of the physical body.
- In the absence of such development his death will serve the involutory stream as did his life. In this situation death is the total cessation of separate existence and the ending of all possibility for individuated development.
- In addition to the potentiality for higher development, people are also born with an hereditary tendency to *dysfunctional* development. This gives a predisposition to succumbing to the collective habit of sleep as inculcated through environmental influences. The quality of these environmental influences (e.g., education) is also

a factor in determining whether an individual reaches adulthood in a non-aberrant (–i.e., conscious) state.

- If this condition is not fulfilled, it is still possible for a person to attain normality such that further development can take place. However, this is not an easy or a quick process due to the ‘habitual web’ from which a person has to become disentangled.
- Moreover, nothing can be achieved without *help*. In so far as he lives in the ‘unreal world’ of his “personality”, mechanical man has no place from which to awaken – he cannot succeed alone. He needs a conscious man to help him to awaken and to help him counter the ‘forces of sleep’ that are both in him and around him.

## Part 2: Comparisons

In the four main sections that follow I build on the Gurdjieffian cosmological ideas which have been introduced in Part 1 in order to make comparisons between Gurdjieff's doctrines and four central areas of Bennett's position as introduced in Chapters 1 and 2.

The first section compares the ultimate and local aspects of the "Great Work" in Bennett's presentation with Gurdjieff's teachings concerning the "trogoautoegocratic process" ("reciprocal maintenance") and the relationships between the cosmoses. It is argued that the Great Work ideas *are* inherent in Gurdjieff's doctrines (although the local, planetary Great Work aspect is not so explicit) and that Bennett is correct in asserting the Great Work as a context for work on oneself.

In the second section I assess the extent to which Bennett's idea of a historical progress through "epochs" is compatible with Gurdjieff presentation of the human situation (and sacred history). This involves comparing the ways in which they conceptualize the origin of human 'sinfulness' (or 'defilement of consciousness'). It is concluded that Bennett seems to have a more optimistic perspective than that which Gurdjieff presents; however, Bennett's idea that human progress is potential *but not inevitable* is also emphasized.

The third section asks how far Bennett's focus on Christianity can be seen as Gurdjieffian. Firstly, I discuss the centrality of Bennett's Christian ideas to those presented in the foregoing two sections. I then seek to evaluate the extent to which the Work can be said to be *especially* Christian through (i) ideas of the Gurdjieff

teaching as “esoteric Christianity”, (ii) evidence concerning Gurdjieff’s own profession of faith and (iii) the extent to which Christ is represented as unique in *Beelzebub*. It is concluded that the Work *does*, in some way, have a basis in Christianity. However, in the final subsection I conclude that there is no obvious way in which Gurdjieff can be construed as having taught the *Parousia* idea, and point to other sources in Bennett’s life from which this might have been derived.

In the fourth section I turn to the matter of ‘comparative angelology’. Through summarizing the main characteristics of Bennett’s “demiurgic intelligences” (or “higher powers”) and setting out the natures and purposes of Gurdjieff’s angelic and archangelic classes, I conclude that, while there are several points of similarity, Bennett’s entities are depicted as more closely involved in human evolution than are Gurdjieff’s. However, it is briefly argued that there is scope in both presentations for seeing these ‘beings’ as potentials of human spiritual evolution.

### **The Great Work and Cosmic Evolution**

Bennett’s picture of the “Great Work” and of the roles of planetary and human evolution within this was set out in Chapter One. In Chapter Two it was shown that Bennett strongly implied that this picture of the ultimate, and more ‘local’, cosmic contexts of the Work was in agreement with Gurdjieff’s understanding. It is now necessary to ask the questions: How far does Gurdjieff’s picture of the involution and evolution of Creation (“reciprocal maintenance”) concur with Bennett’s ideas concerning the Great Work? And, how much support can be found in Gurdjieff’s teachings for Bennett’s ideas concerning the relationship between planetary and

human evolution. At the end of the present section, the pertinence of these issues to Bennett's lineal position is brought into focus in addressing the question of to what extent Gurdjieff can be understood as presenting the 'Great Work' as an immediate context for work on oneself.

(It should be noted that the comparative discussion in this section is confined to the ultimate and cosmological aspects of the 'Great Work' – the historical aspect is dealt with in the next section. Comparisons with regard to the Christological dimension and the nature and role of 'angelic intelligences' are made in the subsequent sections.)

### ***Time: Entropy and Redemption***

In *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* Gurdjieff refers to this total involutory-evolutionary scheme of creation as the "Trogoautoegocratic-process". He writes:

...this Most Great common-cosmic Trogoautoegocratic-process was actualized by our Endless Uni-Being, when our Most Great and Most Holy Sun Absolute had already existed, on which our All-Gracious Endless Creator had and still has the chief place of His existence; this system, which maintains everything arisen and existing, was actualized by our Endless Creator in order that what is called the exchange of substances or the Reciprocal-feeding of everything that exists, might proceed in the Universe and thereby that the merciless Heropass might not have its maleficent effect on the Sun Absolute.<sup>170</sup>

The "merciless Heropass" is "the flow of time".<sup>171</sup> It can be said that Gurdjieff's "Trogoautoegocratic-process" of "Reciprocal-feeding" describes Creation as a kind of 'perpetual motion machine': the Divine succeeds in counteracting entropy which is unavoidably inherent in existence. (The Divine Source could not remain entirely self-sufficient – "autoegocrat" – but had to begin 'eating' – "trogoautoegocrat" – in order to sustain itself.<sup>172</sup>) Successive levels of Creation are related to each other in such a

way that an evolutionary *increase of order* can take place. In this way, the Absolute not only ‘radiates into’ Creation, but also receives ‘subtle energy back from’ it.

...there was required outside of the Sun Absolute corresponding sources in which such forces could arise and from which they could flow into the presence of the Most Most Holy Sun Absolute...<sup>173</sup>

Gurdjieff explains that the Creator deliberately established the laws of creation in such a way that he would ‘lose control over it’ in order for the return flow to be possible. This is explained in terms of the deliberate disharmonization of the law of sevenfoldness.<sup>174</sup> The involving creative impulse gave rise to a ‘vertically symbiotic’ succession of cosmological levels which are progressively less directly influenced by the Will of the Absolute. In Gurdjieff’s scheme existence is fundamentally a soteriological process in which not only does the Creation need God, but God needs the Creation.

I will expand this description of Gurdjieff’s cosmogony below<sup>175</sup> to include his doctrine of the special role of human beings within the trogoautoegocratic process. The immediate purpose is to assess how far the theological ideas of Gurdjieff and Bennett were in agreement.

As has been described in Chapter Two, Bennett taught Gurdjieff’s cosmological, cosmogonical and theological ideas to his pupils at Sherborne and he made *Beelzebub* the central text of the course. His posthumously compiled *Talks on Beelzebub’s Tales* from this period contains commentaries on Gurdjieff’s fundamental cosmogonical ideas as described above.<sup>176</sup> There is no suggestion that he disputes the reality of any of this material.

A major theme of Bennett’s own metaphysical presentation in *The Dramatic Universe*, Volume 2 is the way in which Divine Will is manifested in creation. There

is no doubt that his structure of ideas is within a basically ‘Gurdjieffian paradigm’.<sup>177</sup> He places especially strong emphasis on the idea of “hazard” which expresses the Gurdjieffian notion that, in order for the return flow from creation to the Source to be possible, there has to be a degree of autonomy *within* creation – i.e., that the outcome of creation cannot be predetermined.<sup>178</sup> He says that the “Reflux of the Spirit”, his own term for the return-flow of creation, is:

The transformation of existence by the bond of life. The flowing back of the Spirit. The interpenetration of essence-classes. The linking of eating and being eaten...<sup>179</sup>

The relevance to the (Gurdjieffian) doctrine of Reciprocal Maintenance of the expression “The linking of eating and being eaten” can be easily grasped by reference to Gurdjieff’s ‘great chain of being’ diagram which shows how beings on successive levels ‘eat’ the class of being two levels below them and are in turn *food for* that class which is two levels above them.<sup>180</sup>

Bennett’s version of the “merciless heropass” idea involves the introduction of some concepts and speculations of his own. Arguably, these elucidate rather than corrupt Gurdjieff’s ideas. Certainly, they do not substantially alter the picture as regards the idea that the ultimate purpose of creation is itself soteriological.

It may be deemed somewhat surprising that the Sun Absolute should be subject to impermanence. In Gurdjieff’s scheme, all levels of Creation – right up to and including “the Absolute” – are, in some sense *material* (“In the Absolute vibrations are the most rapid and matter is the least dense”<sup>181</sup>) Bearing this in mind, it is *less* surprising that the Absolute should be subject to the ravages of time.<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, it remains something of a strange notion.



Bennett suggests that Gurdjieff's "heropass" means more than just time. He says that the etymology of "heropass" is from the Greek:

*Hero* means "holy one", but *pass* is the masculine form for "All". Heropass means, therefore: "the Holy One who is All" or "He who is everything".<sup>183</sup>

He further suggests that the underlying idea comes from Zurvanite Zoroastrianism:

The Merciless Heropass corresponds to Zurvan and the Creator Endlessness [who 'dwells on' the Sun Absolute] to Ahura Mazda or the good spirit.<sup>184</sup>

Bennett speaks of Zurvan (Heropass) as the ground of all being, beyond the Creator God and says:

Zurvan is indifferent to the fate of the world. It is beyond concern with that, beyond concern with the success or failure of creation. It merely establishes the conditions within which the creation is possible.<sup>185</sup>

The distinction which Bennett indicates can be usefully elucidated by reference to that which Jung makes (in his *VII Sermones ad Mortuos*) between the *pleroma*, which is the ground of everything, embodying all opposites and beyond distinctions, and *creatura* which includes everything with distinct existence. With regard to God, Jung writes:

Only in so far as he is definite and distinct is he creatura, and in like measure is he the manifestation of the effective fullness of the *pleroma*.<sup>186</sup>

Similarly, it would seem that in Bennett's understanding, the difference between the heropass ("the Holy One who is All") and the Creator God is that the latter is committed to definite existence (*creatura*) whereas the former contains all possibilities in a wholly unmanifest state. By the Creator God's distinction from the "*pleroma*" (to

use Jung's term) He is subject to the laws of existence – including time and, hence, impermanence.

Although it is an aspect of the heropass which gives rise to the problem of impermanence, it also allows for the possibility of a 'closed system' such that the entropic effect of time does not lead to complete dissolution. There is neither the space nor the necessity for a full investigation of Bennett's ideas concerning time-like dimensions ("laws of framework"<sup>187</sup>). However, some brief introduction in relation to the trogoautoegocratic process will be useful for subsequent discussions. Bennett spoke of three time-like dimensions: chronological time, eternity and *hyparxis*.<sup>188</sup> These can be seen as standing to each other in a Gurdjieffian trinity of denying, affirming and reconciling. Time is inherently entropic and can be seen as related to the involutory and *manifest* aspects of creation. Bennett's eternity is the 'negentropic' principle that can counter time. It is the domain of potentiality, rather than actuality; it is associated with the ideas of value and level of being; and it can be seen as relating to the evolutionary aspect of creation. Bennett's third time-like dimension, *hyparxis*, is characterized as *ableness to be*. It is associated with the strength of will, or 'I-ness' of a particular being. It serves to reconcile the time and eternity aspects, bringing them together in such a way as to make possible the involutory-evolutionary cycle and hence "*the creation of fresh order*".<sup>189</sup>

It can be concluded that, while Bennett invokes somewhat more sophisticated concepts, there is a fundamental concurrence with regard to the ultimate, involutory-evolutionary, soteriological purpose of creation.

## ***Planetary Evolution***

As was described in Chapter One, Bennett contextualizes the historical evolution of humanity within the broader “spiritualization of the biosphere”. Bennett describes the role of humanity in transforming sensitive and conscious energies within the biosphere.<sup>190</sup> Gurdjieff’s concordance with this idea can be straightforwardly shown by reference to *ISOM*. He said that:

Organic life on earth is a complex phenomenon in which all the separate parts depend upon one another. General growth is possible only on condition that the ‘end of the branch’ grows...

The evolving part of organic life is humanity.<sup>191</sup>

Bennett states that if humanity fails to fulfil its proper role, then it will be replaced with a new species.<sup>192</sup> Again this can be shown to be Gurdjieffian. Gurdjieff stated:

...if humanity ceases to evolve it becomes useless from the point of view of the aims for which it was created and as such it may be destroyed. In this way the cessation of evolution may mean the destruction of humanity.<sup>193</sup>

## ***The Great Work and Work on Oneself***

The last two subsections have shown that Bennett’s understanding of the Great Work, in both its ultimate and its planetary-historical aspects is authentically Gurdjieffian. In the light of Bennett’s emphasis on these ultimate aspects of the Work, it is necessary to address the question: to what extent *is* the ‘Great Work’ an immediate context for work on oneself in Gurdjieff’s presentation?

I have referred, in Part 1 of this chapter,<sup>194</sup> to the independent evolution on its own account beyond that which is given by nature which is possible for the human being. It was emphasized that in Gurdjieff’s teaching this is not only a possibility, but is, in objective terms an *ethico-cosmic obligation*. Clearly, this in itself is a strong

indication that the Great Work is a valid and necessary context for work on oneself. A preliminary<sup>195</sup> outline of the special role that the human being is, according to Gurdjieff, designed to play in the return-flow of creation will serve to indicate that they should be an overarching context for work on oneself from the beginning.

In the ‘The Holy Planet Purgatory’ chapter of *Beelzebub* it is stated that “three brained beings”, such as man, are created with the possibility of higher evolution in order that they can make an individual contribution to the totality of the Universe (rather than simply being a link in the trogoautoegocratic process). Gurdjieff states that our “COMMON FATHER ENDLESSNESS”, seeing that a certain property of autonomy had arisen in tetartocosmoses (animals) had

the Divine Idea of making use of [this property] as a help for himself in the administration of an enlarging world.<sup>196</sup>

Following from this Divine insight, the possibility was given for the transmutation of substances to take place in *some* of these beings so that

...new independent formations might be coated in them with the inherent property of acquiring ‘individual Reason.’<sup>197</sup>

Specifically this refers to the development of higher bodies which can be understood as bestowing the capacity to connect to the intelligence of the higher centres.<sup>198</sup> In general it refers to the idea that human (type) beings have the potential for evolutionary return to the source in an independent and individuated way. The reason why this is required will be discussed in a later section with regard to the relative roles of angels and humans. Here it is sufficient to say that the human is a microcosm of the totality of creation, embodying within itself an equivalent potential to the involutionary-evolutionary universe as a whole.<sup>199200</sup> The proper destiny of such

beings is to blend with and serve the Sun Absolute as individuated results of creation.<sup>201</sup>

Gurdjieff's "being-obligolnian-strivings"<sup>202</sup> can be seen as unequivocal statements that people must strive to realize and thence to fulfil these evolutionary obligations to the creation and to the creator.

It must, therefore, be concluded that in so far as Bennett placed emphasis on this vertical, or ultimate, aspect of the Great Work he was correct to do so.

### **Terrestrial Evolution, Sacred History and the Origin of Sin**

The last section has shown that Bennett finds support from Gurdjieff for the idea that the Great Work is a necessary underlying context for work on oneself. However, this only refers to the Great Work in a non-specific sense. Moreover, although it has been shown that Bennett is in agreement with Gurdjieff concerning the energy transforming role that human beings must play within terrestrial evolution, of itself this gives no indication whether or not Bennett's *specific* ideas concerning human evolution and sacred history can be thought of as authentically Gurdjieffian. This issue is addressed in the present section.

#### ***The primaeval hiatus in human development***

To summarize Gurdjieff's historico-mythic account concerning the genesis of human aberration, he states that:

1. There was an accident – i.e., an *unforeseen* cosmic event – which resulted in the formation of the moon.

2. As a result of this it was deemed necessary, by the angelic intelligences, to harness humanity to the production of vibrations to ‘feed the moon’ in order to maintain balance within the solar system.
3. This meant the tragic deviation of early humanity from its proper destiny (to evolve as individuated servants of the Divine Source). In order that humanity should not rebel against this fate the “organ kundabuffer” was inserted at the base of the spine: this invoked a state of illusion from which people could not see their true situation.
4. The local cosmic situation was eventually sufficiently stabilized such that humanity could return to its proper destiny, and the organ kundabuffer was removed.
5. However, even though the kundabuffer was removed it left an habitual propensity towards living in a state of illusion. In this state human beings are divorced from “conscience” and unaware of their cosmic obligations. Through generations of transmission this has become organically embedded in human nature such that the “consequences of the organ kundabuffer” have, rather than dying away, become progressively more dominant.
6. Hence, from the time of the removal of the organ kundabuffer, humanity has been progressively degenerating (with temporary remissions due to interventions from above).

The above describes the origin of sin, or inner defilement, in the Gurdjieffian sense of abnegation of obligation. How, then, does Bennett deal with this?

## **Bennett's Scenario**

Bennett describes human evolution in terms of the successive acquisition of higher energies (and this is related to the role of the human in the processing of these energies for the biosphere as a whole). This evolutionary process has been guided by the demiurgic intelligences. According to Bennett, the human being has evolved from the animal kingdom (or “essence class”) which “concentrate sensitive energies in almost all its possible varieties.”<sup>203</sup> These sensitive energies are most evolved in the higher mammals. – The sensitive energy can be understood as bestowing on organisms highly complex responses that are far more intelligent, in the sense of being flexible and adaptable, than autonomic responses, but which nevertheless lack true conscious awareness. – In the human being this variety of sensitive functioning was synthesized and brought to perfection.<sup>204</sup> To this was added the “conscious energy” which bestowed the possibility of self-awareness, but still not individual will. This latter came with the “creative energy”. As we shall see, it is the bestowal on mankind of the creative energy which Bennett associates with the possibility of sinfulness. Beyond this is the “Unitive Energy” by means of which the human individual can become connected to the purpose of existence. Bennett connects the Unitive energy with Christ through whom the self-willed egoism – i.e., sinfulness – associated with the creative energy can be redeemed.

Having, in *The Dramatic Universe* Volume IV: History, surveyed the early evolution of the human species up to the emergence of *mind*, associated with the conscious energy, Bennett states that the stage of the enquiry has been reached “when the problem of the **origin of evil** can no longer be postponed.”<sup>205</sup> He writes:

...let us pause to ask ourselves how and when **sin** could have entered the life of man. There is only one possible moment: when the Will of man was made effectual by contact with the creative

energy. Before this moment, man could not have been responsible and therefore he could not have been sinful. Nor can we suppose that sin came later, for this would require the existence of creative and yet sinless men, whose will was free from evil dispositions.<sup>206</sup>

Bennett's suggested explanation of why the creative will of man should have become tainted with evil has two aspects: (i) that something had already gone wrong with the evolutionary process itself; and (ii) that the potential for sinfulness was transmitted to humanity by the demiurgic intelligences. Central to both of these aspects is an emphasis on the idea of *hazard* being inherent in creation. The demiurgic intelligences, although above humanity, are fallible rather than omnipotent. Bennett depicts their task in guiding the evolution of life on earth towards a preordained goal as being a very gradual process of influencing the great 'inertia' of the lower energies. Their goal can be understood as the creation of intelligent instruments that can themselves *incarnate* the creative intelligence for the purpose of the "spiritualization of the biosphere".

With regard to the first aspect of Bennett's explanation of the origin of sinfulness, he refers to an earlier hiatus in human evolution:<sup>207</sup>

"The delay [what ever its cause], not evil in itself, may have produced an imbalance in the mind-stuff. Consciousness may have been too firmly embedded in, or inextricably mixed, with sensitivity to make it easy to elicit responsible actions from *H. sapiens sapiens* when creativity came."<sup>208</sup>

I shall return to this idea of an hiatus in human evolution below in the context of comparison with the kundabuffer myth. With regard to the second aspect of Bennett's explanation of sinfulness, he suggests that evil entered the human situation through "...the intervention of a hostile but superior Intelligence."<sup>209</sup> – i.e., a 'renegade' Demiurgic Intelligence. He explains:



...Creativity had to be imparted to man by the Demiurgic Intelligences whose very nature is to be creative. Why should they give man the possibility of reaching their own level—or even surpassing it because of man’s link with the Cosmic Individuality—except as an act of obedience.<sup>210</sup>

He emphasizes the necessarily free, and hence ‘hazardous’, character of the demiurgic intelligences as agencies of creativity:

The Demiurgic Nature is not to be regarded as a passive instrument whereby the Divine Will is inexorably and impeccably put into execution; but rather as a Creative Intelligence with an immense freedom of action.<sup>211</sup>

Putting together the two aspects of his explanation, Bennett arrives at the following:

Man by his **natural** bond of sexual intercourse with the Demiurgic Intelligences<sup>212</sup> was given a share in their creative energy. With this his mind was set free to conquer Nature. At the same time, his Will remained connected by a **supernatural** bond with the cosmic individuality. The mind of man is his own mind; within it his will is intended to work creatively and consciously.

This mind, newly awakened to its own creative power, but weakened by its prolonged—over-prolonged—infancy and so excessively drawn towards the objects of sense, was confronted with the suggestion that its destiny was to become **Master** of the world. This suggestion was made by Demiurgic Intelligences acting in disobedience to the task they had undertaken. In his confusion, his weakness—but also in a false estimation of his own creativity—man chose the **Path of Egoism**.<sup>213</sup>

The following quotation serves to amplify the idea of sin as the choice of self-will over service and hence as a failure to fulfil conscious obligation:

...the Will of man was, from the start, linked through the Universal Individuality with the Cosmic Individuality: that is with Christ. Once he acquired Intelligence, he could not be wholly unaware of his Ultimate Destiny to be reunited with his Source. This being so, he could not be wholly absolved from responsibility if he accepted the ‘evil suggestion’ that he could become an independent creator in his own right.

Man was not foreordained to Egoism: he was free to choose. His choice was very far from being wholly evil: but it was a sinful act and as such exposed him to the hazard of a two-fold contradictory nature the conflict of which could be resolved only by the attainment of Individuality.<sup>214</sup>

Bennett explains the transmission of the propensity to sinfulness, the “taint of egoism”, or – in Christian terms – original sin, in terms of the idea that human selfhood, arising from the combination of conscious and creative energies, is drawn from the collective “soul stuff pool”.<sup>215</sup>

As I will show in later discussions, Bennett’s account of the origin of sin, in terms of the misuse of creativity, is closely connected with his understanding of the Incarnation and the *Parousia*. His certainty, in the above quotations, that from the beginning of humanity’s sinfulness it has been connected with the “cosmic individuality” serves to suggest that the “taint of egoism” can be redeemed.

### ***Issues and Comparison***

Bennett agrees with Gurdjieff concerning the nature of sin: “*Sin is an act of wilful disobedience to an obligation of which we are conscious.*”<sup>216</sup> But how far is it true to say that his presentation is in agreement with Gurdjieff concerning the *origin* and transmission of sin?

#### **‘Cosmic hazard’ versus ‘local hazard’.**

As described in the previous section Bennett’s idea that “hazard” is necessarily inherent in the involutory-evolutionary scheme is explicitly consistent with Gurdjieff’s doctrines of the ‘deliberate disharmonizing’ of law of sevenfoldness and the loss of direct control over creation on the part of the Divine Source. Gurdjieff and Bennett can be said to agree that the possibility of failure, and hence in the case of conscious individual beings, *sin*, is necessarily inherent in creation.

With regard to the actual descriptions of the origin of human defilement, Bennett is in agreement with Gurdjieff that something *specifically* problematic

occurred in human evolution – the origin of sin. However, he also speaks in terms of a degree of ‘inevitability’ of human sinfulness resulting from the gift of creativity.<sup>217</sup> If hazard is inherent in the creative process, it is not unreasonable to assume that the individuation of the “creative energy” would also involve the individuation of hazard itself. But in Gurdjieff’s kundabuffer account this perspective is not given in any obvious way. There seems to be some lack of agreement regarding the relationship between ‘general hazard’ and the specific problem – of sin, egoism, kundabuffer – which has arisen on earth.

In Gurdjieff’s account there is a disjuncture between these two aspects. A brief description of Gurdjieff’s doctrine of the Holy Planet Purgatory will serve to elucidate this. (It will also serve as an introduction to an important aspect of Gurdjieff’s teaching to which it will be necessary to refer in subsequent chapters.)

In *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff explains that, during the early stages of the existence of the Universe, fully formed third bodies were taken directly onto the “Sun Absolute” in order to fulfil their foreseen role as the ‘brain cells’ of creation. However, this arrangement had to be changed for reasons that are paraphrased as follows: A stage was reached – which Gurdjieff calls the “Choot-God-Litanical Period” – when it was realized that presently forming “higher being bodies” were impure and could no longer blend with the “Sun Absolute” as had previously been the case. It was understood that the “higher being bodies” which had already blended with the “Sun Absolute” had somehow reacted with it in such a way as to alter its emanations (“theomertmalogos”); in consequence of this, presently forming “higher being bodies,” whose growth depended on these emanations, were developing in an impure form.<sup>218</sup> The subsequent creation of the “Holy Planet Purgatory” as a transition stage in which “higher being bodies” could undergo purification of these “sins of the soul”

was seen to be a tragic, but unavoidable necessity. Gurdjieff's "Purgatory" is depicted as a state which is outwardly 'heavenly' and ideal, but inwardly one of continuous anguish because these developed beings directly see the necessity, which they are prevented from fulfilling, of being taken onto the "Sun Absolute" to serve the Divine purpose – i.e., of merging with the Will of the Absolute.<sup>219</sup>

What, then, is the nature of this imperfection which must be cleansed from the "higher being bodies" in order that they can merge with the "Sun Absolute"? The explanation in terms of the change in substance of the "theomertmalogos" due to the influence of beings which had entered the "Sun Absolute" from creation,<sup>220</sup> although complex, is suggestive of a 'taint of the created, and impermanent, worlds' which cannot be carried back into the immutable world of the Creator.

The "Choot-God-Litanical Period" doctrine relates to a 'hazard' that is inherent in the creation at the most pervasive level. All ('three-brained') beings who have their evolutionary origin in the lower worlds are subject to this problem of being 'tainted with existence. However, the kundabuffer doctrine is given as an entirely separate account in which the human situation is depicted as *especially* benighted.

In Bennett's account of human creativity and egoism the two aspects – 'cosmic' and 'local' hazard – are welded together such that the latter is seen more as a 'law conformable' aspect of the former than as an out and out aberration.<sup>221</sup> This is demonstrated in the following quotation where, with regard to the redemption of human egoism, he says that his view requires that

...the redemption of mankind be regarded not as a unique act of will made solely in the context of human history on this planet earth; but as part of an Act totally present within and throughout the entire existing universe...<sup>222</sup>

This serves to emphasize the idea that the ‘hazard’ involved in giving human beings freedom of will is a universal one rather than something limited to the terrestrial situation. There may be some conflict between this view and Bennett’s belief that something specific went wrong (see the discussion of the ‘hiatus in human development’ aspect below). However, it remains the case that in Bennett’s picture the human situation is depicted as being in line with the cosmic plan to a far greater extent than is the case with Gurdjieff’s account.

This difference of emphasis can be seen to be significant in so far as that it correlates with another difference of emphasis with regard to the issue of human progress versus human decline (see the last subsection of the present section).

### **Demiurgic sin, or Angelic error?<sup>223</sup>**

Gurdjieff’s and Bennett’s accounts agree that higher intelligences are implicated in the human fall. However, there are considerable differences between the ways in which this is presented. In Gurdjieff’s account the archangelic intelligences made an error of calculation in the organization of the cosmos which resulted in the (premature) formation of the Earth’s moon (whatever this is understood to mean). But there is no imputation of deliberate wickedness in this – it is only said that even higher intelligences can be fallible. In Bennett’s account there is the definite idea that some demiurgic intelligences rebelled against Divine authority.<sup>224</sup> However, the ‘man had spent too long waiting for creativity’ side of Bennett’s account may have more in common with Gurdjieff’s idea of angelic miscalculation.

### **An hiatus in human development.**

Bennett's scenario can be seen as having a similar basic structure to Gurdjieff's kundabuffer myth. Both speak of an hiatus in humanity's development during which it did not see its purpose:

In the Bennett case this was the overly long period during which human consciousness remained immersed in sensory experience.

In the Gurdjieff case it was the period of the organ kundabuffer.

Similarly, both accounts say that after the hiatus, when humanity *should* have been able to fulfil its proper destiny, something went wrong:

In Bennett's account this was due to humanity allowing itself to be led astray by 'renegade demiurgic intelligences into self-willed egoism.

In Gurdjieff's account it was due to the residual consequences of the organ kundabuffer.

Hence, in both accounts the subsequent failure of humanity to fulfil its predestined obligations is, at least in part, attributable to the hiatus. In fact, with regard to his own hiatus idea, Bennett explicitly admits the plausibility of Gurdjieff's view that "...the retardation of human development was imposed by circumstances of a higher order even than the destiny of man."<sup>225</sup> – He does not, however, venture any opinion as to what this might have been. – These considerations serve to indicate that, in constructing his ideas on the evolution of early humanity, Bennett was primarily 'working within a Gurdjieffian paradigm'.

### **The transmission of sinfulness.**

Setting aside the question of the origin of human sinfulness, Gurdjieff and Bennett agree that the propensity of human beings to live in a state of illusion and not to fulfil

their cosmic obligations has been transmitted from prehistoric times to the present. Gurdjieff speaks of the ‘kundabuffer-like’ behaviour patterns, through a social learning process from generation to generation, having become quasi-organically entrenched in the human essence. In Bennett’s version the “taint of egoism” has been transmitted through the soul stuff pool which can be understood as the collective repository of energies which form human essences.<sup>226</sup> These ideas can be seen as amounting to the same thing. (The idea that specific grades of psycho-spiritual energy enter into the construction of the human being is itself straightforwardly Gurdjieffian.<sup>227</sup>) Although Gurdjieff’s account places more emphasis on the ‘social learning’ aspect, there is no reason to suppose that Bennett would disagree with this aspect.

### ***Human development versus human decline***

It has been shown above that there is considerable convergence between the views of Gurdjieff and Bennett concerning the origin and transmission of human sinfulness. However, as anticipated in relation to the question of ‘local’ *versus* ‘cosmic’ hazard, this convergence is not to be found when it comes to the question of sacred history.

As was briefly described in Chapter One, Bennett understood history in terms of a series of epochs (which last approximately 2,500 years) within much longer periods which he calls Great Cycles (lasting approximately 25,000 years).<sup>228</sup> He represents this as an evolutionary process under the guidance of the demiurgic intelligences.

According to Bennett, the present Great cycle commenced around 10,500 B.C. with a period of “Withdrawal and Concentration” during which four major spiritual cultures were prepared.<sup>229</sup> This was part of a great plan to prepare humanity to receive the Unitive Energy through the anticipated Incarnation (of the Cosmic Individuality).

– This will be further described in the next section. – However, it must be noted that whilst the demiurgic intelligence could, in so far as they were obedient to the higher plan, prepare humanity for the Incarnation, there is a sense in which this was something of a wholly different order to the evolutionary progression of Great cycles and Epochs.

Bennett says that the epochal transition which we are now experiencing is between the “Megalanthropic” epoch and the “Synergic” epoch. He places the last transition around the sixth century B.C. This was the end of the “Hemitheandric” epoch (age of the god-king) during which the lives of ordinary people had been deemed to be of little or no significance, and salvation (immortality) had been the exclusive prerogative of the semi-divine rulers. This was superseded by the “Megalanthropic” epoch which Bennett sees as: (i) the origination of the idea of a path to liberation for the individual (e.g., Buddhism)<sup>230</sup>; and (ii) the beginning of humanistic thought especially in Greece.<sup>231</sup> In Bennett's view this epoch of ‘man's reliance on his own power’ achieved its peak in the eighteenth century phenomena of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.<sup>232</sup> Bennett sees more recent phenomena such as widespread atheism and logical positivism as being the final excesses of an already obsolete ideal. The “Synergic Epoch”, which we are now in the process of entering, requires mankind to recognize that he is not “the measure of all things”, that he is not the sole arbiter of legitimate purpose, but that he must begin to learn how to enter into *conscious cooperation* with the demiurgic intelligence (– i.e., a “synergic” relationship).<sup>233</sup> For this reason the nature of the transmission of the ‘new dispensation’ for the forthcoming epoch may be significantly different in character from that of previous transitions.



Throughout *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff provides a very different historical perspective. From the time of the ‘loss of Atlantis’<sup>234</sup> the consequences of the organ kundabuffer became more and more prevalent and the quality of humanity began to decline.<sup>235</sup> This decline has continued, with brief remissions (see below), until the present day.<sup>236</sup> Similarly, in *ISOM* Gurdjieff is unequivocal in his demolition of the idea of progress. He stated (late 1916):

...in the actual situation of humanity there is nothing that points to evolution proceeding. On the contrary when we compare humanity with a man we quite clearly see a growth of personality at the cost of essence, that is, a growth of the artificial, the unreal, and what is foreign, at the cost of the natural, the real, and what is one's own.

..[man is becoming more automatic].man's slavery grows and increases. Man is becoming a willing slave. He no longer needs chains. He begins to grow fond of his slavery, to be proud of it. And this is the most terrible thing that can happen to a man.<sup>237</sup>

And further that

...in examining the life of humanity as we know it historically we are bound to acknowledge that humanity is moving in a circle. In one century it destroys everything it creates in another and the progress in mechanical things of the past hundred years has proceeded at the cost of losing many other things which perhaps were more important for it. Speaking in general *there is every reason to think and to assert that humanity is at a standstill and from standstill there is a straight path to downfall and degeneration.*

(My italics.)<sup>238</sup>

The two viewpoints seem to differ irreconcilably. While Bennett emphasizes hazard, saying the outcomes are not certain and predetermined, his over all picture is one of an unfolding plan. As I have shown in Chapter Two, he held that humanity has reached a crisis point at which some change of heart, away from self-willed egoism, is necessary if complete catastrophe is to be avoided. However, this is presented in terms of the “excesses of megalanthropy” (i.e., specific to modernity) rather than as the result of millennia of degeneration.

For his part, Gurdjieff admits the idea of Divine intervention in the form of “sacred individuals” who have at various times been sent from the Sun Absolute in an attempt to counteract the consequences of the organ kundabuffer (see next section).<sup>239</sup> However, in Gurdjieff’s account these messengers are depicted as singular expressions of Divine compassion for humanity rather than as being part of a developing long term plan; and angels are not depicted as being especially interested in helping humanity at all. These points may be seen as compatible with Bennett’s view that the intervention in history of the Cosmic Individuality is of far more soteriological significance than the activities of the demiurgic intelligences. For instance, he says that human evolution would already have

...come to grief as a result of the contamination of the soul-stuff with egoism and the consequences of sin, but for the intervention of the Cosmic Individuality made manifest in the Incarnation.<sup>240</sup>

Similarly, he states that in the Synergic Epoch “Creativity will play a far greater part in human life”,<sup>241</sup> which, in his own terms, could only be safely possible in the light of the Incarnation and Parousia.

To summarize: Bennett’s idea of a developing plan seems to be at odds with Gurdjieff’s emphasis on human degeneration. However, this can, to some extent, be understood as a difference of emphasis. Bennett is unequivocal that egoism has led humanity to the brink of disaster. Moreover, while he talks about ‘demiurgic guidance through epochs’ – which has no obvious equivalent in Gurdjieff’s teaching – he is also clear that this is not sufficient to rescue humanity. This can only be achieved through direct intervention from above; and on this point he is in agreement with Gurdjieff. Whether or not Gurdjieff can be said to attribute a *unique* position

among the sacred individuals to Jesus Christ is a question to which I turn in the next section.

## **Christianity**

In this section I draw together the different elements of Bennett's Christological position which have been introduced in Chapters 1 and 2 and in the preceding section of the present chapter. I then move on to ask whether there is any extent to which the Christian Revelation may be said to have a central position in Gurdjieff's teaching; and more specifically, whether any support for the *Parousia* idea can be found in his doctrines.

### ***Bennett's Christology***

In Chapter One, I briefly introduced Bennett's understanding of the *Parousia* as the "envelopment or overshadowing of mankind by the Unitive Energy" for the purpose of realizing the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>242</sup> In Chapter Two I expanded on this idea to demonstrate the relationship between the 'vertical intervention' of the Unitive Energy and the more 'horizontal' epochal evolution associated with the guidance of the higher powers (demiurgic intelligences). The last section of the present chapter has introduced the context of sin and redemption in relation to these 'dimensions'. Through substantial reference to Bennett's statements, the present section will draw together these elements of Bennett's Christology into a single account.

## **Cosmic Energies.**

The Unitive Energy is not concentrated by the Demiurgic Power and did not enter the human soul-stuff together with creativity...Love entered the soul-stuff of humanity with the Incarnation.<sup>243</sup>

The Unitive Energy has, according to our interpretation, been brought into concentrated action with the human soul-stuff through the Incarnation and Passion of Jesus Christ—the Cosmic Individuality.<sup>244</sup>

The above quotations serve to emphasize that the Unitive Energy, or the energy of Love, into contact with which the Incarnation brought humanity, is of an utterly different order to the creative energy associated with the demiurgic intelligences. While these latter, when obedient, can be understood as guiding the evolution of humanity towards the goal intended by the Cosmic Individuality,<sup>245</sup> their activity can be seen as basically historical ('horizontal'). By contrast the direct and revelatory action of the Cosmic Individuality itself can be understood as universal and transhistorical ('vertical').

## **Sin and the Incarnation.**

As has been described, Bennett believed that demiurgic intelligences had not all acted in obedience to the higher purpose of the Cosmic Individuality, but had 'led humanity astray' – a deviation for which it might already have had a predisposition due to some kind of 'hiatus' in its development. In this way humanity became involved in sin, which is understood in terms of self-willed egoism (or, negatively, the abnegation of cosmic obligation). The "taint of egoism" was subsequently transmitted to future generations, thereby preventing humanity from fulfilling its proper destiny to become directly connected to the Cosmic Individuality. Bennett writes:

The normal evolution of humanity would no doubt have provided for the contact, at an opportune moment, between the human soul

and the Cosmic Individuality, enabling a transfusion of the Unitive Energy (E2) to transform the whole race. The ‘normal’ situation did not and could not arise on account of the taint of egoism.<sup>246</sup>

However, the necessity for the Incarnation, or the “intervention of the Cosmic Individuality in human history”, was “...already foreseen from the time that the human soul-stuff was first tainted with the ineradicable taint of egoism...”<sup>247</sup> This serves to further emphasize that because the “taint of egoism” originated in the creative energy it could only be cured from a higher level: egoism could only be redeemed by love. Of the intervention itself, Bennett states:

We believe that man was set free from the consequences of the atavistic taint, by the Incarnation of the Cosmic Individuality, by the death and resurrection of Jesus and by the coming of the Holy Spirit. But the purpose of the Redemption was to make *possible* the conquest of egoism, not to ensure it.<sup>248</sup>

The italicization can be seen as serving to emphasize that even this highest form of redemptive action remains within the necessity for a return-flow of free and individuated beings. Such an action cannot, by definition, be in the realm of temporal causality – by its very nature it must take place in a dimension of freedom, the ‘vertical’ and transhistorical dimension. This is Bennett’s *hyparxis*, the dimension of “ableness to be”, or *will*, in which the actual (*time*) and the potential (*eternity*) are reconciled.<sup>249</sup> He writes:

Jesus in all his references to the Kingdom of God is concerned with the Hyparchic Future and not with the temporal or predetermined future.

...The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is not to be interpreted as implying that the soul of Mary by its purity was non-human, but that it was drawn from the hyparchic past before sin entered.<sup>250</sup>

Bennett also says that, in the dimension of *hyparxis*, even the past *can* be redeemed.<sup>251</sup> This serves to further emphasize the transhistorical aspect of the

Incarnation: it was not just the turning point in history, but was an intervention into causal time from a radically distinct dimension.

### **Parousia.**

Similarly, with regard to the Parousia, Bennett says:

The parousia cannot be realized in the predetermined future, which will never be ready for it; but in the Creative [i.e., Hyparchic] Future from which it has, does and always will **act upon every Present Moment.**<sup>252</sup>

In the context of the present period of history Bennett says that “the transformation of the human soul-stuff is bound to take a very long time.”<sup>253</sup> But by saying that in the Synergic Epoch “Creativity will play a far greater part in human life”,<sup>254</sup> he indicates that such progress is taking place. Although he says that people have failed “to accept the implications of the Christian Gospel”,<sup>255</sup> it seems to be his view that collective transformation of the soul-stuff has occurred. According to his own ideas a greater role for creativity could only be safely possible to the extent to which self-willed egoism is redeemed. All of this suggests that he thought further progress was possible and this seems to be the context for the Parousia which he says is

...quite distinct from the Incarnation, for it remains within the region of the Cosmic Energies—Transcendent, Unitive, Creative and Conscious. By this act, the Cosmic Individuality intervenes in human destiny. This is quite a different matter from the redemption of the past which required the Incarnation. It is aptly described in the phrase ‘come again in Glory’ for the Cosmic energies are the Glorious Energies.<sup>256</sup>

### ***Esoteric Christianity***

In this subsection I will show – by reference to Gurdjieff’s statements c.1916 as recorded in *ISOM* and to the perspectives of two Gurdjieffians – that there is a

powerful case for saying that (some kind of) Christianity had a central position in Gurdjieff's teaching.

In *ISOM* it is recorded that, in answer to the question "What is the relation of the teaching you are expounding to Christianity as we know it?", Gurdjieff said

I do not know what you know about *Christianity*," answered G., emphasizing this word. "It would be necessary to talk a great deal and to talk for a long time in order to make clear what you understand by this term. But for the benefit of those who know already, I will say that, if you like, *this is esoteric Christianity*."<sup>257</sup>

With regard to the relationship between esoteric Christianity and the established Church, Gurdjieff said the following:

The Christian church is—a school concerning which people have forgotten that it is a school. Imagine a school where the teachers give lectures and perform explanatory demonstrations without knowing that these are lectures and demonstrations; and where the pupils or simply the people who come to the school take these lectures and demonstrations for ceremonies, or rites, or 'sacraments,' i.e., magic. This would approximate to the Christian church of our times.<sup>258</sup>

Gurdjieff says that: "...the ascetics of the early centuries [were] studying *esoteric Christianity*..."<sup>259</sup> All of this clearly indicates that he saw his own teaching as being in a tradition of *true* Christianity.<sup>260</sup> However, the first of the above quotations shows that he did not really expect his pupils to be able to understand the truth of his claim, and this is underlined by:

In actual fact [the] Christianity [of man] number one, number two and number three is simply external imitation...They are not masters of themselves and therefore they cannot decide to be Christians and really be Christians...Only man number four strives to be a Christian and only man number five can actually be a Christian. For to be a Christian means to have the being of a Christian, that is, to live in accordance with Christ's precepts.<sup>261</sup>

In the context of speaking about the Last Supper<sup>262</sup> he says that the Gospels were "written *for those who know*."<sup>263</sup> He says that they say much about sleep<sup>264</sup> and

awakening<sup>265</sup>: “How many times is this said in the Gospels, for instance? ‘Awake,’ ‘watch,’ ‘sleep not.’”<sup>266</sup> He also claimed that the developmental analogy of the human as a household<sup>267</sup> and the fundamental idea of the need to awaken in order to die in order to be born<sup>268</sup> are to be found in the Gospels.

The question arises, how exclusive does this indicate Gurdjieff’s allegiance to Christianity to have been? Might it not be the case that he saw his teaching as being the esoteric hub of all traditions? In that vein it would have been the case that he would have claimed to have been teaching the ‘esoteric version’ of the religion of whatever country he was working in. Hence, it might be argued, that in the conservatively Orthodox pre-revolution Russia it is no surprise that he at least alluded to a Christian connection. However, it can be shown that at least two other senior Gurdjieffians were late to see this aspect of the teaching as fundamental.

### **“A virile version of the Gospels”**

René Zuber a French pupil of Gurdjieff, and subsequent right hand man to Madame de Salzmänn,<sup>269</sup> records that

One day I made a note of a thought that had just struck me:  
*‘This teaching is a virile version of the Gospels.’*<sup>270</sup>

He emphasizes that this perception was prior to the publication of *ISOM*, “Otherwise we would have been able to verify that [Gurdjieff] defined his teaching as ‘Christian Esotericism’...But this is not how it was presented to us.”<sup>271</sup> Further on he says:

The essentially Christian flavour of the teaching, so rightly called ‘unknown’ by Ouspensky, generally passes unnoticed. That Gurdjieff wished it to be so is beyond doubt. If he had revealed to us that he was teaching in the direct line of the Gospels – which is what emerges for us from the reading of his books – he would have caused the worst kind of misunderstandings. We were not *ripe* for such a confidence.<sup>272</sup>



It will be noticed that much of this is in the first person plural. That he should use the words “*emerges for us*” suggests that this is very much a shared perception.<sup>273</sup> Zuber goes on to ask: “Could it be that a new bud is sprouting on the old Christian tree before our eyes?” and suggests the possibility of restoring living meaning to the fossilised dogmas of the Church by comparing “them with the electrifying affirmations which correspond to them in the teachings of Gurdjieff.”<sup>274</sup> This demonstrates that Gurdjieff’s indication that his teaching was connected to an early *true* form of Christianity is something that has been taken seriously by the orthodoxy.

### **Maurice Nicoll**

As has been noted in Chapter One, Maurice Nicoll can also be seen as an ‘orthodox’ figure. In his books *The Mark* and *The New Man* he makes no direct reference to Gurdjieff or to his teaching. However, the connection would be apparent to anyone familiar with Gurdjieff’s ideas on the human situation (even if they did not actually know of Nicoll’s Gurdjieffian allegiance). These two books can be seen as following up Gurdjieff’s idea that the Gospels can be ‘decoded’ from an esoteric standpoint.

For instance he writes that “In the Gospels the word translated as *sin* means in the literal Greek *αμαρταγω*, ‘missing the mark’”<sup>275</sup>

Everyone who makes an effort from what is not really his own or does something that is not from himself can only *miss the mark*, for the one thing in him that can succeed is not being used.<sup>276</sup>

This can be understood as describing the Gurdjieffian understanding of essence and personality. The correspondence is further exemplified by the following:

Man is regarded as lost as he is...at first he must learn to live in the world and acquire from it, as it were, an apparatus for living. But this is not, in the view of the teaching in the Gospels, his *end* (τελοδ). The apparatus a man acquires from life and if it is bad there does not exist in him anything that can carry him further. All

good that man acquires from life is not really *his own* but is his first stage, and a stage that is absolutely necessary to reach, in regard to the whole teaching about human *evolution*. This acquired side of him, which is not really his own and at the same time makes it possible for him to play some useful part in life, and to behave decently, do his duty and so on, is not the part of him from which he can evolve. But unless it is formed in him no inner growth is possible.<sup>277</sup>

This relates to Gurdjieff's teaching that the work cannot commence on a lower level than ordinary life.<sup>278</sup> Nicoll says that the true meaning of the term *metanoia*, normally translated as "repentance", is *awakening* (from identification with the sensory world).

This is *metanoia* in the fullest meaning. It is a new state of *consciousness*, suddenly touched and as suddenly vanishing. In this state of consciousness a man finds himself. He finds what is lost. He finds 'I'. *This is the first truth*—the first realization of it. This is when a man becomes alive and is the point from where inner evolution starts.<sup>279</sup>

This is clearly connected to the idea of becoming "awake in essence" – i.e., *self-remembering*.

With regard to the necessity for esoteric knowledge he writes:

From Matthew XXIV we can see that man regarded psychologically from the standpoint of higher and esoteric teaching must be given truth to lift him from the level of violence, self interest and appetite, and that when this truth by its passage through generation after generation becomes completely distorted, a period of confusion follows which leads to a second manifestation of the truth, *represented* as the second coming of the Son of Man.

(My italics.)<sup>280</sup>

The first part of this quotation can be seen as claiming Biblical support for the idea of the necessity for esoteric schools which can supply live esoteric ideas.<sup>281</sup> However, it is the last part of this quotation which is of special interest here. Nicoll is suggesting something that *could* be taken as equivalent to Bennett's *Parousia*. In this connection it is also noteworthy that Nicoll says that of the transformation spoken of in the Gospels as in the future:

This future, which is not in future time but now, can be thought of as vertical to time—as belonging to an upright line, indicating higher and lower states, like a scale or ladder.<sup>282</sup>

This is strongly reminiscent of Bennett’s idea of the Kingdom of Heaven being in the hyparchic future.<sup>283</sup> In a more general way, it is also similar to the idea that the Incarnation and Parousia intersect history from a radically different dimension.

### ***Was Gurdjieff a Christian?***

We have seen above that it can be said that “esoteric Christianity” was at least one dimension of what Gurdjieff was teaching. Zuber speaks of Gurdjieff “behind a tantric mask, making his way towards the West after two thousand years of Christianity.”<sup>284</sup> But he (Zuber) refuses to be drawn into an either/or argument about ‘whether or not Gurdjieff was a Christian’ saying

The question whether or not Gurdjieff was a Christian (or whether at one and the same time he was and was not) is much too important to be dismissed superficially.<sup>285</sup>

It is also the case that we cannot actually know what part Christianity played in Gurdjieff’s own inner world. However, it is at least possible to review the evidence concerning his external allegiance.

It is to be noted that Gurdjieff was brought up as a Christian. According to his own account he received his education in a Russian Orthodox (Military) Cathedral School.<sup>286</sup> (It is also highly probable that, because one side of his family was Armenian and his family lived in Armenia, he would have had some contact with the Armenian Orthodox Church.) There is no evidence that Gurdjieff was ever in adulthood a ‘church-goer’ (and he manifested a somewhat irreverent<sup>287</sup> attitude towards the clergy). However, there is evidence that even while travelling in non-

Christian countries he observed the major festivals;<sup>288</sup> and there is abundant evidence that he made Christmas an event of great importance at the Prieuré and, in a more modest way, in later years. He and his family were all buried as Russian Orthodox Christians. With regard to his creative work: Some of the Gurdjieff-de Hartmann piano pieces, composed during the nineteen twenties, have Christian titles and have a solemn, deeply moving and ‘liturgical’ character. More than once he expressed the notion that *Beelzebub* might be read in churches.<sup>289</sup> I would argue that the over all picture that emerges is of a person who, whilst having a positively tongue in cheek attitude towards the established church, was nevertheless, in his inner life, deeply involved with the Christian revelation.

### ***Christ and the other Sacred Messengers***

In this subsection I demonstrate that Gurdjieff wrote of Christ as having been of a different order to the founders of the other major religions.

I have referred above (see page 250) to the “Sacred Individuals” whom the God has, at different time throughout history, sent to try to free humanity from the crystallized consequences of the organ kundabuffer. Among these he includes the founders of the major world religions whom he refers to as messengers sent from above. He gives these high beings the title “saint” (e.g., “saint Moses,” “saint Buddha” and “saint Mohammed”<sup>290</sup>). These messengers are actualized as the “germ of a sacred individual” in a human being who then acquires “Reason” within the prevailing conditions.<sup>291</sup>

However, Christ and early Christianity are described in somewhat different terms to that applied to the other avataric messengers and their associated religions. In *ISOM* Gurdjieff is recorded as saying that Jesus Christ may be thought of as “Man

No.8”<sup>292</sup> which, by definition, places him higher than the highest to which a created being can attain. Similarly, in *Beelzebub*, Jesus Christ is the only founder of a religion for whom he tends not to use the title “saint,” using instead formulae such as “the Divine Teacher Jesus Christ.”<sup>293</sup> Gurdjieff places contemporary exoteric Christianity on a par with the exoteric forms of all the other religions in so far as they are all said to have degenerated from their original message to a point where they would not be recognized by their founders. However, he describes the *original* Christianity as having been “...the religion and teaching upon which the highest Individuals placed great hopes...”<sup>294</sup> These facts serve to indicate that Gurdjieff considered Christianity – which he characterizes as being “based on ‘resplendent love,’”<sup>295</sup> – and Jesus Christ himself to have an unique status among religions and their founders. The conclusion must be that Gurdjieff is indicating that Christ was associated with a higher level than the other Sacred Individuals.

However, it may not be the case that Gurdjieff saw Christianity as the unique repository of the highest truth.. In 1923 he said:

...it is possible to say that the whole world is Christian – the difference is only in name. And it has been Christian...[for] thousands of years. There were Christians even before the advent of Christianity.<sup>296</sup>

This suggests that he considered the high reality – of “resplendent love” – revealed in Christianity to be the central truth revealed in all other religions. If this is what he is saying, it can be seen as coming very close to Bennett’s idea of the Incarnation as a transhistorical redemption of the human soul-stuff.

## *Parousia*

To summarize the Gurdjieff's position: There is evidence that, despite his "tantric mask" (to use Zuber's expression) Gurdjieff was in a deep sense a Christian. He defined his teaching as esoteric Christianity; and Nicoll and Zuber (and implicitly others) have perceived this in his teaching. Moreover, there is the suggestion from Zuber that this esoteric Christianity is not just a matter of secret knowledge (of methods), but may be to do with the regeneration of the Christian tradition from its source. Gurdjieff definitely places Christ on a higher level than the founders of the other world religions. However, taken with his indication that he considers the Christian revelation to express the central truth of all religions, this might be taken as suggesting something of the 'pivotal role' that Bennett attributed to it. Nevertheless, Gurdjieff says nothing to suggest a *direct* redemptive influence of the "resplendent love" revealed by Christ on the "crystallized consequences of the organ kundabuffer (or, in Bennett's terms, the collective soul-stuff of humanity). Moreover, Gurdjieff says nothing to specifically indicate the Parousia idea (although he says nothing that would in principle rule it out). But it is of interest that Nicoll, working from a Gurdjieffian standpoint, appears to tentatively suggest something of the kind.

It is not clear whether Bennett thought that his Christological idea were supported by Gurdjieff's doctrines. However, what is clear is that there were at least three other (non-Gurdjieffian) influences that may have led him towards the Parousia belief. 1. He records that his first spiritual mentor, the Turkish Prince Sabaheddin, knew Rudolf Steiner, was well versed in Anthroposophy and undertook his education in these (and similar) matters.<sup>297</sup> A central aspect of Steiner's teaching was to "proclaim the 'reappearance of the Christ in the etheric spiritual realm'."<sup>298</sup> This idea

seems virtually identical to Bennett's understanding of the Parousia. He does not mention this as an influence, but it seems highly likely that he would have known of the idea from *circa* nineteen twenty. 2. In *Concerning Subud* he speaks of Alice Bailey's *The Reappearance of the Christ* as an influence that contributed to his belief that a major new dispensation was imminent. Bennett does not use the word Parousia in this context. However, it is clear from Bailey's book, in which she speaks of the Christ manifesting through networks of people (the "World Servers") that her understanding of the reappearance of Christ was not a Second Incarnation. 3. In 1953 Bennett had interactions with Emin Chikhou a 'Christianized' Naq'shbandi Sheikh living in Damascus (see Chapter Six). Chikhou told Bennett of his belief in "the New Dispensation that he identified with the Second Coming of Christ."<sup>299</sup> It is not entirely clear whether Chikhou was talking in terms of a Second Incarnation or the Parousia. However, during this same journey Bennett noted that "the Marionite Christians of the Lebanon believe in the proximity of the Parousia."<sup>300</sup>

### **Angels, Demiurgic Intelligences and Higher Powers**

In this section I ask how far it is true to say that Gurdjieff's "Angels" and "Archangels" correspond, in terms of ontological status and teleological function, to Bennett's Higher Powers. First I draw together the different strands of Bennett's ideas concerning the "demiurgic intelligences", which have been introduced in the previous sections and chapters. Second I describe the main elements of Gurdjieff's angelology. Last I make comparisons between the two sets of ideas.

## *Demurgic Intelligences*

Bennett suggests that ideas corresponding to his Demiurgic Intelligence (higher powers) have existed in many spiritual traditions. He writes: “They have been known as Neter in Egypt, as Devas in India, Malaik in the Semitic languages and Angels in the West.”...“they are spiritual powers that, though imperceptible to us, are more concrete, more fully real, than Selves in the state of embodied existence.”<sup>301</sup>

Bennett says that the Demiurgic Intelligences are a distinct “essence class”. It will be useful for the following discussions to give a brief description of his idea of essence classes.

Bennett’s scheme of essence classes is very similar to Gurdjieff’s “Diagram of Everything Living” as given in *ISOM*.<sup>302</sup> This diagram, which is a dynamic ‘staircase’ or ‘Great Chain of Being’, can be understood as an explication of the idea of ‘reciprocal maintenance’ (or ‘reciprocal *eating*’). Gurdjieff says:

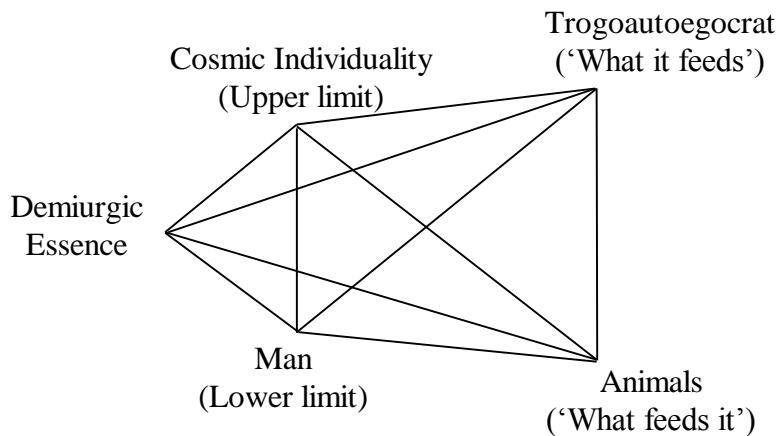
According to this diagram every kind of creature, every degree of being, is defined *by what serves as food for this kind of creature or being of a given level and for what they themselves serve as food*, because in the cosmic order each class of creature feeds on a definite class of lower creature and is food for a definite class of higher creatures.<sup>303</sup>

This reciprocal feeding process extends from chaos, up through inorganic matter (two classes), plant life, animal life (two classes), to “Man” and the higher classes (see below). It is synonymous with the evolutionary backflow of creation. In fact each class ‘feeds on’ the beings which are two levels below it and is ‘food for’ the beings which are two levels above it. The idea of “eating” is not to be taken literally in the sense of internal nutrition – which is described in other terms and is, relatively speaking, an *horizontal* process<sup>304</sup> – but is a means of determining relative positions in



the *vertical* involutory-evolutionary hierarchy. ‘To be food for a higher level’ can be taken as meaning to *serve* that higher level; and in the upper end of this diagram this service is *conscious*. It serves to show the purpose of the being within creation as a whole.

Although Bennett uses different terms for some of his “essence classes”<sup>305</sup> the over all scheme is the same. He represents each essence class on a pentagramic figure with the being itself at the ‘apex’, the adjacent essence classes – its upper and lower limits – on the points to each side and the ‘food’ and that which it ‘feeds’ at the furthest points. In the specific case of the demiurgic essence the situation is as shown below:



Bennett gives the following formal definition of the role that the demiurgic intelligence plays in creation:

*There is a class of Cosmic Essences—called Demiurges—that is responsible for maintaining the universal order, especially at the planetary level, where existence is contingent and hazardous.<sup>306</sup> These essences have a three-fold nature, the nucleus of which has a bodily support composed of sensitive energy beyond the reach of human sense perception.*

(Additional emphasis mine)<sup>307</sup>

The importance of this role to the maintenance and purpose of the total involutory-evolutionary scheme is emphasized further:

...Demiurgic Essences...bear the responsibility for adjusting the operation of the universal laws to maintain cosmic harmony...evolution would stop and ultimately fail if there were no agencies to provide for the conscious renewal of the process wherever and whenever it is threatened.<sup>308</sup>

As we have seen, the demiurgic intelligences are associated with the creative energy and on earth they are responsible for the evolutionary process which Bennett terms the spiritualization of the biosphere. This has included the creation and development of humanity as well as all other life forms. They *should* work in submission to the Cosmic Individuality (Unitive Energy) through which the ultimate authority of the trogoautoegocrat comes. However, as has been described above, in the context of the human fall, Bennett understands the demiurgic intelligences as being capable of sin in the sense of turning away their trogoautoegocratic obligation towards self-will.

Lastly, Bennett emphasizes that the demiurgic project with humanity is to produce a species which can incarnate their own role. For instance, he says:

“The Demiurgic Essence...is the instrument of Cosmic Order. When it enters into human nature it endows man with creative power and also with responsibility for the order of the Biosphere.”<sup>309</sup>

And in 1973, reflecting on the above statement, he wrote:

“Even when I was writing this, I did not see the full force of it. I was still thinking of the ‘Higher Powers’ as somehow outside humanity. I put forward the hypothesis of a ‘hidden directorate’ composed of people who had attained objective reason and could therefore communicate with the Demiurgic Powers.

Now, in the course of talks with Hasan Shushud and even more as a result of practicing the *zīkr*, I began to see that the ‘Higher Powers’ cannot work except through man. They can do nothing without human instruments.”<sup>310</sup>

### ***Gurdjieff’s Angelology***

#### **Angels, Archangels and the Great Chain of Being**

In *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff writes about angels and archangels. As will be described below there is the possibility of ‘individual evolution’ between these classes. Nevertheless, in *ISOM* they are described as two distinct ‘essence classes’. With reference to his ‘Diagram of Everything Living’ Gurdjieff says that above man stands “...a class of beings that we do not know. Let us call them ‘angels.’” And that above ‘angels’ there is a further class “...let us call these beings ‘archangels.’”<sup>311</sup> It is to be noted that Gurdjieff’s angels are in the same position as Bennett’s demiurgic intelligences, above man, fed by (higher) animals and being food for the “Eternal Unchanging” (which, using the later *Beelzebub* terminology, Bennett calls the Trogoautoegocrat). Gurdjieff’s archangels are in the essence position which Bennett calls Cosmic Individuality. They have equivalent essence attributes in so far as that they feed the Absolute (which Bennett calls Endlessness) and are fed by man.

#### **Angels are born ‘perfect’**

Angels are born ‘perfect’ in the sense that they come into existence with all three bodies fully formed. Unlike men they do not have to develop their “higher being body” through the process which Gurdjieff calls “conscious labours and intentional suffering.” Gurdjieff writes of a planet, which he calls “Modiktheo,” on which angels are born through the union of three sexes. Each angelic sex contributes one of the three bodies (physical, *kesdjan* and “higher being”) to the totality of the newly formed

angelic being. In this there are both expected and surprising elements. That angels are born with all three bodies formed means that they are, *in a sense*, born perfect.

### **Angels are distinct from higher man**

Gurdjieff draws a definite distinction between the angelic and archangelic essence classes and spiritually advanced human beings. He says that such advanced human beings have a quality of wisdom, necessary to the Divine source, which the angelic orders can never possess.

...ordinary three-brained beings, who acquire information about every kind of genuine cosmic fact exclusively only thanks to their being-Partkdolg-duty ["conscious labours and intentional suffering"], are more competent than any of the Angels or Cherubim with their prepared Being, who, though perfected in Reason to high gradations, yet as regards practical confrontation may appear to be only such Individuals as our respected Mullah Nassr Eddin defines in the following words:

‘Never will he understand the sufferings of another who has not experienced them himself though he may have divine Reason...’<sup>312</sup>

### **The role of angels**

Angelic beings are depicted as having a definite role to play in the field of “World-creation and World-maintenance.”<sup>313</sup> It is through their services in “conformity” to the purposes of the Divine Will that they approach perfection. Unlike “three brained beings,” the role of angelic beings was conceived at the very beginning of creation.<sup>314</sup> For this reason – and notwithstanding the fact of ‘angelic evolution’ (see below) – the being classes “angel” and “archangel” can be seen as part of the ‘natural history’ of the upper reaches of the ray of creation such that their purpose and place at these levels is assured in a way that it is not for “three brained beings.” However, as the kundabuffer myth serves to emphasize, angels and archangels are neither infallible nor omniscient.

## Angelic development

According to Gurdjieff, angels can become archangels through attaining higher degrees of perfection of their Reason. There are two examples of this in *Beelzebub*.<sup>315</sup> The case of the angel Looisos is particularly instructive: Gurdjieff tells how, immediately following the accidental creation of the moon which threatened to disharmonize the evolution of the solar system,

...a [Most High] Commission consisting of Angels and Archangels, specialists in the work of World-creation and World-maintenance...<sup>316</sup>

was sent to deal with the situation. This commission was under the direction of the “Most Great Archangel Sakaki” who had on his staff the “Chief-Common-Universal-Arch-Chemist-Physicist Angel Looisos.” It is this latter who is said to have been responsible for designing and implementing the “organ kundabuffer.”<sup>317</sup> The nature of the task and expertise of this commission well illustrates the ordained role of the angelic beings as maintainers of order and harmony in creation. It seems that it is through the dedicated performance of these duties that angelic beings raise their level of understanding (“being-Reason”) to the level where it can become fully harmonized with the Divine Will.<sup>318</sup> Although only an *angel*, Looisos's elevated title and degree of responsibility illustrates that, if there are sub-gradations of angel, he was a very senior one. Gurdjieff subsequently indicates that he was ‘promoted’ to the status of archangel, with the formula “His Conformity, the Angel – now already Archangel – Looisos...”<sup>319</sup> – The words “His Conformity” serve to emphasize the idea of coming into harmony with the Divine Will. – There are certainly degrees of perfection among Archangels. Some are referred to as “Most Great” as in the case of the “Most Great

Archangel Sakaki” above. However, even this status does not designate the highest to which an angelic being can attain as is evinced by the following:

...the Archangel Sakaki had, in the meantime, become worthy to be the divine individual he now is, one of the four Quarters-Maintainers of the whole Universe<sup>320</sup>...<sup>321</sup>

### ***Comparisons***

Gurdjieff and Bennett’s angelologies can be seen as being in definite agreement on five points:

1. As distinct essence classes, angelic beings/demiurgic intelligences and humans have distinct positions and roles in creation. Angelic beings are *created* higher than human beings, but their role is more circumscribed and, in a sense, predetermined.
2. They work in the field of “World-creation and World-maintenance” (however, Bennett is more explicit about what this is).
3. They have a ‘threefold structure’. (Gurdjieff emphasizes this most strongly, implying a similarity to Man No.6 – see Chapter Five.)
4. Their actions are in submission to higher authority.
5. They are, in Bennett’s terminology, subject to hazard.

However, with regard to this last point there is a difference of emphasis: Gurdjieff speaks of angelic fallibility whereas Bennett speaks in terms of sinfulness.

In Gurdjieff’s angelology it is definitely the case that there are sub-gradations of the angelic and archangelic classes and that evolution can take place within and between them. Bennett does not say this. (However, he does refer to a personal insight in which he realized that some angels sleep and others do not: those that can sleep can also evolve.<sup>322</sup>) However, this question of angel evolution must be seen in

the context of the more general problem that Gurdjieff has two main classes of angelic being while Bennett has only one. Bennett's sequence of essence classes is very similar to Gurdjieff's, so it is tempting to ask whether the Cosmic Individuality must be equivalent to Archangels. In this connection it is useful to point out that, while Bennett's essence classes are qualitatively distinct, they also have a *range* of possible levels between the two adjacent classes. Bennett's demiurgic intelligences should be acting in submission to the Cosmic Individuality. However, depending on, in Gurdjieff's terms, their degree of perfection of being-Reason they can be more or less connected to this higher authority. This goes some way to bridging the gap between Gurdjieff's two classes and Bennett's one class, but it is somewhat tenuous. (And it may be that Bennett envisaged other 'distinct beings' at the level of the Cosmic Individuality such as, for instance, Alice Bailey's "Avatar of Synthesis" with whom Christ is united in the Parousia<sup>323</sup>.)

The interaction which Bennett depicts between 'human affairs' and 'demiurgic affairs' is much greater than in Gurdjieff's account. Bennett says that in the distant past demiurgic intelligences have mated with, and incarnated as, human beings.<sup>324</sup> While the angelic work of "World-creation and World-maintenance" involves activity at the planetary level (as in the kundabuffer incident), there is never, in any of Gurdjieff's writings, the slightest suggestion that angels incarnate as human beings. With regard to the future, Bennett says that humans must evolve to incarnate the demiurgic essence. Again, Gurdjieff says nothing comparable. However, in the context of this issue, it will be useful to end this section with a brief discussion of the extent to which either Gurdjieff's angels or Bennett's demiurgic intelligences may be seen as metaphors for 'higher states' or spiritual energies latent in the human rather than as distinct beings. Bennett's idea of human 'individuation' of demiurgic

qualities tends to suggest the former aspect, but he did not say that the demiurgic intelligence is not a distinct class of beings. In the case of Gurdjieff, it can be noted that the 'hydrogen numbers' that he associates with the angelic and archangelic classes are, respectively, the same ones that he associates with the higher emotional centre and the higher thinking centre.<sup>325</sup> This might be taken as implying a *psychological* as well as a strictly ontological aspect. Similarly, the fact that 'the human feeds archangels' could be taken as referring to the destiny to function at that level as an individuated intelligence,<sup>326</sup> or as Bennett puts it to become connected to the Cosmic Individuality.



## Notes and References to Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* is sometimes referred to as *All and Everything*; however, this is imprecise. Properly speaking, the latter title designates Gurdjieff's entire literary project of three stages: *Beelzebub*, *Meetings With Remarkable Men* and *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*.

<sup>2</sup>See Gurdjieff's circular letter to his pupils (13.1.1949):

By this publication I shall begin to actualize the plans I have prepared for the transmission of my ideas to the whole of contemporary and future humanity.  
(Printed in *Witness*, p.252.)

The issue of Gurdjieff's intentions with regard to the dissemination of his three series of books is discussed in Chapter Six, Part 2, 'Dissemination and purpose', p.419.

<sup>3</sup>The complex structure of the narrative of *Beelzebub* is discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>4</sup>The 'historico-mythic' dimension of Gurdjieff's writing may be understood – in part – in relation to the environment in which he grew up. The time and region of his childhood (late nineteenth century Armenia under Russian dominion) can be thought of as a geographical, cultural and even temporal cross roads. Oral tradition was still a distinct feature of everyday life, and Gurdjieff had access to the traditions of many races exemplifying Christian, Muslim and Zoroastrian beliefs. Gurdjieff's own father was, apparently, well known in the district (Kars) as an *Ashokh* – an exemplar of the ancient bardic tradition of Asia Minor. Gurdjieff came to believe that these ancient tales were one of the forms in which wise people of the past had encapsulated objective knowledge so that it could survive to be 'read' by future generations irrespective of intervening cultural and political chaos (other forms include architecture and sculpture). He termed this 'encoded' objective wisdom "legominism". His own *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* was undoubtedly designed with similar intentions. Gurdjieff's writings may also be seen as related to the tradition of Sufi teaching stories (as, e.g., popularized through the writings of Idries Shah). This dimension is more apparent in *Meetings With Remarkable Men* than it is in *Beelzebub*. However, this connection is intentionally suggested in the latter work by the repeated reference to "our highly esteemed Mullah Nassr Eddin" (see, e.g., *Beelzebub*, p.135) who is almost certainly the hero of Sufi teaching stories better known as "Nasrudin." (See Shah, *The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin* and *The Pleasantries of Mulla Nasrudin*.)

<sup>5</sup> This statement is to be found at the front of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* where Gurdjieff sets out the graduated purposes of his first, second and third series of writings. He warns that the aspiring reader should adhere strictly to his admonition to read his books in the proper order, only proceeding after having read each book in three distinct ways ('normally', as though to another person and with the intention of

really understanding). – Thus one should not, according to Gurdjieff, read his *Meetings With Remarkable Men* before having read *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* three times, advice to which many people have failed to adhere due to the difficulties of *Beelzebub* and the relative readability and much greater entertainment value of *Meeting With Remarkable Men*. – The purposes of the Second and Third Series are given as follows:

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 feeling of the reader, of a veritable, non-fantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality.

<sup>6</sup>See note 5 above.

<sup>7</sup>See J.G.Bennett's *An Introduction to Gurdjieff's Third Series "Life is Real only then, when I AM"*.

<sup>8</sup>C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.243

<sup>9</sup>Bennett, *Witness*, pp.251-2

<sup>10</sup>René Zuber, *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff*, p.29

<sup>11</sup>See, e.g., Elizabeth Bennett in *Idiots In Paris*, p.18

<sup>12</sup>A.M.Hodgson, *ibid.*, p.20

<sup>13</sup>Gurdjieff's teaching concerning the distinction between these two types of ideas will be explained in Chapter Four. – See *ISOM*, p.204 and p.310.

<sup>14</sup>Ouspensky's record of Gurdjieff's teaching, *In Search of the Miraculous*, is subtitled *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*. This was the original title under which he presented the book, "In Search of the Miraculous" being the title preferred by his publisher when the book was posthumously published (R.K.P., 1950). "In Search of the Miraculous" had previously occurred as a chapter title in Ouspensky's *A New Model of the Universe* – substantially written prior to his meeting with Gurdjieff, but not published until 1931 – which describes some experiences from his own search for sources of esoteric knowledge prior to his meeting with Gurdjieff.

<sup>15</sup>Ouspensky, *ISOM*, p.277

<sup>16</sup>Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, p.194

<sup>17</sup>See Gurdjieff in *Views From the Real World*, p.80; see also *ISOM*, p.66; see also pp.40-3 pp.19-21, pp.59-61 and pp.117-22.

<sup>18</sup>Gurdjieff's definition of 'true art' was that it should transmit definite and objective truth. By contrast most of what passes for art is of a purely subjective and, therefore, meaningless nature. (See *ISOM*, pp.295-8; and *Beelzebub*, II, 'Art', pp.40-113.) He had a similarly low activity of conventional intellectual activity which he referred to be such derogatory phrases as "wiseacring" (e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.238), "a mill for nonsense" (e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.344) and "pouring from the empty into the void" (e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.95-6). See also *ISOM*, p.144.

<sup>19</sup>*ISOM*, p.18.

<sup>20</sup>Gurdjieff, *Views From the Real World*, p.49.

<sup>21</sup>*ISOM*, p.117.

<sup>22</sup>*ISOM*, p.150-1 (see also p.143).

<sup>23</sup>*ISOM*, p.143.

<sup>24</sup>Gurdjieff, *Views From the Real World*, pp.128-35.

<sup>25</sup>*ISOM*, p.142.

<sup>26</sup>*ISOM*, p.220.

<sup>27</sup>*ISOM*, pp.117-21.

<sup>28</sup>*ISOM*, pp.53-4.

<sup>29</sup>*ISOM*, pp.59-60.

<sup>30</sup>See, *Views from the Real World*, pp.128-35.

<sup>31</sup>*ISOM*, p.59.

<sup>32</sup>Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub*, III, pp.394-7.

<sup>33</sup>*ISOM*, p.60.

<sup>34</sup>Gurdjieff's law of octaves, sevenfoldness or, in *Beelzebub*, "heptaparaparshinokh" is one of two fundamental cosmic laws – the other being the law of three (see note 76). According to Gurdjieff, this law describes the way in which any complete process either evolves or involves from its initiator impulse. The starting point and finishing point of the process are both designated by the musical "do" and are considered to be separated by an octave which contains the six intermediate notes (in 'evolutionary order'): "re," "mi," "fa," "sol," "la" and "si". This octave is considered to be arranged in a way equivalent to a major scale – i.e., with the interval sequence: tone, tone, *semi-tone*, tone, tone, tone, *semi-tone*. In both the evolutionary and the involutory octaves the semi-tone divisions – i.e., mi-fa and si-do – signify hiatus points in the octave's development (because there is no intermediate note as a transition point between these qualitatively different stages of development). For example, in order for an evolutionary octave to continue its development when it reaches "mi" it must receive some additional impetus, a "shock", from outside the process; in the absence of such a "shock" involution will take place. Gurdjieff says that on all scales of existence these shocks are provided by intersections with the octaves of other processes: the initial impetus – the "do" – of a second octave can supply the extra impetus necessary for the first octave to pass its hiatus point. Gurdjieff says that the understanding of this law is an example of the *objective knowledge* which is available in true esoteric schools and that such schools are themselves organized according to this law. (*ISOM*, p.134) Moreover, because the law of octaves describes processes on all scales including that of the human being and that of the "Ray of Creation" – i.e., the largest process of all – it constitutes an important bridge between the parallel psychological and cosmological areas of study. (For a basic exposition of the law, see

*ISOM*, pp.122-135; for a deeper and more complex discussion, see *Beelzebub*, pp.3-60.)

<sup>35</sup>*ISOM*, p.129.

<sup>36</sup>*ISOM*, p.41-2.

<sup>37</sup>Gurdjieff told Bennett: "I want you to have real, unperishable 'I' – this must be your aim...Now you are taxi. Every five minutes your 'I' change." (*Idiots in Paris*, p.27.)

<sup>38</sup>See *Beelzebub*, III, pp.382-91.

<sup>39</sup>*ISOM*, p.42.

<sup>40</sup>See *ISOM*, pp.19-20, p.66 and p.143.

<sup>41</sup>*ISOM*, p.143.

<sup>42</sup>See *Beelzebub*, II, p.29; and cf. *Views From the Real World*, pp.73-4.

<sup>43</sup>*ISOM*, p.55 and pp.257-9.

<sup>44</sup>*ISOM*, p.142.

<sup>45</sup>*ISOM*, p.282.

<sup>46</sup>*ISOM*, p.279 and 282.

<sup>47</sup>*ISOM*, p.282.

<sup>48</sup>*ISOM*, p.71.

<sup>49</sup>*ISOM*, 109-11. See also *ISOM*, p.194.

<sup>50</sup>*ISOM*, pp.257-9.

<sup>51</sup>*ISOM*, p.282.

<sup>52</sup>*ISOM*, p.161.

<sup>53</sup>See *Views From the Real World*, p.136ff. See also *ISOM*, p.163 and cf. p.43.

<sup>54</sup>See also *ISOM*, pp. 157-9.

<sup>55</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, Ch.27, especially pp.371-4.

<sup>56</sup>*ISOM*, p.43. At this stage of the exposition of *ISOM* the term "essence" has not been introduced. However, it seems reasonable to equate the raw material of the separate "powders" with the different dimensions of man's undeveloped "essence".

<sup>57</sup>*ISOM*, p.43-4.

<sup>58</sup>*ISOM*, p.41.

<sup>59</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.131 and p.372.

<sup>60</sup>See Chapters Four, 'Purgatory, after death experience and reincarnation' and Chapter Five, 'The Formation of Higher Bodies.'

<sup>61</sup> *ISOM*, pp.41-4.

<sup>62</sup>*ISOM*, p.191.

<sup>63</sup>*ISOM*, p.44 and p.94.

<sup>64</sup>*Views From the Real World*, p.214.

<sup>65</sup>*Views From the Real World*, pp.214-5; and *ISOM*, pp.31-2.

<sup>66</sup>*ISOM*, p.161.

<sup>67</sup>See *ISOM*, p.164 and p.248.

<sup>68</sup>*ISOM*, pp.164-5. Consider also the experiment of separating essence from personality in two subjects described on pages 251-53.

<sup>69</sup>*ISOM*, p.228.

<sup>70</sup>This idea of providing the essence with the ‘nutrition of real contact with experience’ refers to the idea of the “first conscious shock” which is discussed in the following paragraphs.

<sup>71</sup>*ISOM*, pp.248-9.

<sup>72</sup>*ISOM*, p.179.

<sup>73</sup>See *ISOM*, pp. 181-93 and *Beelzebub*, II, p.353.

<sup>74</sup>*ISOM*, pp.181-2.

<sup>75</sup>Earlier in *ISOM* Gurdjieff refers to the moving, instinctive and sex centres as together constituting man’s “lower story” (p.55). There is undoubtedly a strong correspondence between the three foods and the three centres of our first category. The idea of “air” being the ‘food of the emotional centre’ is clearly given in *Beelzebub* where the common partaking of the ‘second being food’ by Beelzebub and his fellow extra-terrestrials is referred to in terms of *emotional* sustenance (*Beelzebub*, III, pp.350-2). However, it must be noted that in the ‘three storied factory’ model, presently under discussion, the *energies* corresponding to the activity of the moving and instinctive centres (see *ISOM*, p.194 and cf. p.339) are both found in the *middle* story. (This serves to illustrate the inherent danger, spoken of in the introduction to the present chapter, of attempting a definitive model encompassing all of Gurdjieff’s ideas.) Nevertheless, there is no doubt concerning the close correspondence between the idea of the three centres of the first category and the ideas of man as a three *brained* and three *storied* being, both of which distinguish him with the possibility of further evolution which animals (*two* brained/storied) do not have.

<sup>76</sup>Gurdjieff’s “law of three,” “law of threefoldness,” or, in *Beelzebub*, “*triamazikamno*” is presented as a fundamental law of creation which is operative at all levels. It states that for a new ‘whole’ to be generated three independent forces are necessary, standing in the definite relationship to each other of “affirming,” “denying” and “reconciling.” The terminology “active,” “passive” and “neutralizing” is also used. The former set of terms seem to suggest a more progressive, evolutionary, situation, whereas the latter are more indicative of transformations of an involutory or mechanical character. Although Gurdjieff states that all three forces must be present to bring about a new totality, in some cases of this transformation according to triads, the “reconciling” or “neutralizing” force seems to *be* the new substance. This is the case in the detailed analysis of the transformation of substances in Gurdjieff’s

“law of seven” (see note 34). For instance, in an evolutionary octave, as under consideration in our present exposition of Gurdjieff psycho-physiology, transformation of substances ‘to the next note’ proceeds by means of the present note being the “denying” force in relation to a substance of an order *two* levels higher which acts as the “affirming force.” These two forces ‘blend’ to actualize the new note which occupies the level between them and is thought of as the “reconciling force”; this new note subsequently becomes the “denying force” in the next transformation (if the requisite “affirming” substance is available). (*ISOM*, pp.182-92) However, as regards man’s possibility of evolution (rather than its specific details), it is the prerequisite of the *simultaneous* presence of the three forces – that is his ‘three storiedness’ or “three brains” – which gives him the possibility to generate a new totality – in this case, the *kesdjan* body.

<sup>77</sup>*ISOM*, p.181.

<sup>78</sup>However, Gurdjieff also speaks of the possibility to absorb “higher” substances from ‘air.’ (See also note .)

<sup>79</sup>*ISOM*, pp.182-86.

<sup>80</sup>*ISOM*, pp.318-9.

<sup>81</sup>See *ISOM*, p.187 (fig. 36).

<sup>82</sup>*ISOM*, p.188.

<sup>83</sup>*ISOM*, pp.188-9.

<sup>84</sup>See *ISOM*, p.190 (fig. 39).

<sup>85</sup>*ISOM*, p.193.

<sup>86</sup>*ISOM*, pp.191-93.

<sup>87</sup>See also *ISOM*, p.193.

<sup>88</sup>*ISOM*, p.189.

<sup>89</sup>See *Beelzebub*, I, pp.384-86.

<sup>90</sup>It is also to be noted that Gurdjieff speaks of the “second conscious shock”, necessary for the full formation of the *kesdjan* body, as “...connected with the emotional life...it is a special kind of influence over one’s emotions.” He goes on to say that: “The practice of not expressing unpleasant emotions...is the preparation for the *second effort*.” (*ISOM*, p.191) This non-expressing of negative emotions may be seen as related to Gurdjieff prescriptive dictum “conscious labour and *intentional suffering*” (see, e.g., *Beelzebub*, p.292). This intentional suffering is to be thought of as the activity of *conscience* in relation to the unpleasant personal insights (which will be experienced as a result of work on oneself) without identifying with the experience (see *ISOM*, p.274).

<sup>91</sup>*ISOM*, pp.221-2.

<sup>92</sup>*ISOM*, p.37.

<sup>93</sup>*ISOM*, pp.200-4.

<sup>94</sup>‘Transmission and Initiation.’, p.241.

<sup>95</sup>*ISOM*, p.201.

<sup>96</sup>Gurdjieff speaks of conscience as being an innate faculty which should be an active factor in peoples' lives but which is buried in their “subconsciousness” (see *Beelzebub*, I, p.360).

<sup>97</sup>See *ISOM*, pp.154-60; and cf. *Beelzebub*, I, p.382.

<sup>98</sup>*ISOM*, pp.219-20.

<sup>99</sup>“Self-calming” can be understood as synonymous with the action of “buffers” (see *Beelzebub*, I, p.382).

<sup>100</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.401.

<sup>101</sup>Actually, for Gurdjieff, the human capacity for imagination, or “self-deception”, is a truly ‘double-edged sword’. The positive aspect consists in the idea that when *intentionally* use the human power of imagination can have far reaching soteriological value. This positive aspect consists in the possibility to use the power of imagination deliberately and *creatively*, in order to *simulate necessary characteristics of growth*, such that a ‘seed’ is planted in the unconscious – i.e., in the essence. This principle is embodied in some of the exercises that he taught. (See *Life Is Real Only Then: When I Am*, p.132ff.)

<sup>102</sup>See *Beelzebub*, III, pp.422-3.

<sup>103</sup>*ISOM*, p.219.

<sup>104</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, 322-3.

<sup>105</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.412.

<sup>106</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.373.

<sup>107</sup>*ISOM*, p.219.

<sup>108</sup>See also *Beelzebub*, III, p.416 where it is the relationship of “Nature” to man which is spoken of in these terms of animal husbandry.

<sup>109</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, pp.353-6.

<sup>110</sup>This principle of the struggle to develop in order to serve the Divine purpose is given the name “Partkdolg-duty.” See *Beelzebub*, II, p.384.

<sup>111</sup>This introduces an important distinguishing feature of Gurdjieff’s theology and cosmology – i.e., the idea that creation, although arising from God, is not wholly *controlled* by Him, but requires a deputization to semi-autonomous agencies. Moreover, the evolution of the Universe becomes more hazardous at the lower levels of the “Ray of Creation”. These ideas are strongly taken up by Bennett who writes of “Demiurgic Intelligences” which guide the evolution of life on earth and emphasizes “*hazard*” as being inherent in the evolutionary process.

<sup>112</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, pp.82-9.

<sup>113</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, pp.88-9.

<sup>114</sup>*ISOM*, p.220.

<sup>115</sup>From the perspective of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, Lama Anagarika Govinda writes:

The latent energy of this centre [the *Muladhara-Cakra* situated at the base of the spine] is depicted as the dormant force of the goddess *Kundalini* – who as the *sakti* of *Brahma* embodies the potentiality of nature, whose effects may be either divine or demoniacal. The wise, who control these forces, may reach through them the highest spiritual power and perfection, *while those who ignorantly release them, will be destroyed by them.* (My emphasis; from *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p.139.)

Further on he writes:

...in the Buddhist *Tantra Yoga* concentration is not directed on the *Kundalini* or the Root Centre, but on the channels, the main power-currents whose tension...is regulated by a temporal damming-up and modification of the energy-content in the upper Centres.

Instead of the natural power of the *Kundalini*, the inspirational impulse of consciousness...is made the leading principle... (*ibid.*, pp.193-4)

<sup>116</sup>Gurdjieff himself sees the idea that kundalini is a liberating energy as an aberration of “so-called ‘occult’ literature” and states that:

It is very curious how these occultists have got hold of the word somewhere but have completely altered its meaning and from a very dangerous and terrible thing have made something to be hoped for and to be awaited as some blessing. (*ISOM*, p.220)

From the standpoint of Indian Tantric Yoga, Georg Feuerstein writes that:

No school of Yoga has been subject to graver misunderstanding and greater hostility from uninformed critics, both in India and in the West, than *kundalini-yoga*. (*Textbook of Yoga*, p.168)

It is hard to see how, from Feuerstein’s point of view, Gurdjieff’s comments could be seen as anything other than a prime example of such grave understanding.

<sup>117</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.89.

<sup>118</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, II, pp.287-88.

<sup>119</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, pp.131-2.

<sup>120</sup>*ISOM*, p.220.

<sup>121</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, III, p.6.

<sup>122</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.129-33.

<sup>123</sup>This idea bears a striking similarity to C.H.Waddington’s biological concept of the “Chreode”, defined as a “canalized pathway of development” which becomes



established as a morphological determinant through repetition. (See Sheldrake, R., *The Presence of the Past*, p.100.)

<sup>124</sup>*ISOM*, p.155.

<sup>125</sup>*ISOM*, p.85.

<sup>126</sup>*ISOM*, p.57.

<sup>127</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.106.

<sup>128</sup>E.g., *Beelzebub*, I, pp.327-8.

<sup>129</sup>See *Beelzebub*, I, p.174 and II, p.6.

<sup>130</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, III,423 and *ISOM*, p.309.

<sup>131</sup>See, e.g., the account of the period following Ashiata Shiemash's intervention, during which the local cosmic situation was sufficiently harmonized that the birth and death rates both decreased (*Beelzebub*, I, p.388).

<sup>132</sup>See especially, *Beelzebub*, I, Ch. 25 (pp.347-52) and Ch.26 (pp.353-365); and II, Ch.38 (pp.286-335).

<sup>133</sup>See *Beelzebub*, I, Chapters 27 and 29 (pp.366-410).

<sup>134</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.386.

<sup>135</sup>In relating how Ashiata Shiemash succeeded in convincing people to work on themselves according to the "being obligolnian strivings", Gurdjieff writes: "All the beings of this planet then began to work in order to have in their consciousness this Divine function of genuine conscience..."

<sup>136</sup>See, e.g., *ISOM*, p.82.

<sup>137</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.409.

<sup>138</sup>Gurdjieff, *Views From the Real World*, pp.236-42.

<sup>139</sup>*Beelzebub*, III,p.425. Particularly in volume one of *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff develops his 'alternative history of the human race' in considerable detail speaking of civilizations which are unknown to conventional scholarship. For our present purpose, the statement that the Tikliamishian civilization immediately preceded the Babylonian may simply be taken as indicative of a time before recorded history.

<sup>140</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.410.

<sup>141</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.417-19.

<sup>142</sup>*Views From the Real World*, p.237.

<sup>143</sup>The inside of the planet can be taken as equivalent to the "moon". In terms of the *Beelzebub* cosmological scenario, the lower limit of the "ray of creation" is in the moon, but was formerly inside the earth (from which the moon was broken) (*Beelzebub*, II, p.363). Similarly the parallelism between the "moon" and the Earth's "nether regions" can be seen by comparison between Gurdjieff's basic 'octave of the Ray of Creation' (*ISOM*, p.82) which ends with the moon and his 'great chain of being' diagram (*ISOM*, p.323) which ends with the mineral realm.

- <sup>144</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.420.
- <sup>145</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.419.
- <sup>146</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.420. (The physical analogy being used here is with cyclones sucking up water.)
- <sup>147</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.420.
- <sup>148</sup>*Views From The Real World*, p.237. See also, *Beelzebub*, III, pp.421-2.
- <sup>149</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.418.
- <sup>150</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.409.
- <sup>151</sup>See *Beelzebub*, II, p.28 for a complete exposition of the (seven) factors effecting the outcome for a particular individual.
- <sup>152</sup>See *Beelzebub*, II, p.29; and *Views From the Real World*, p.138.
- <sup>153</sup>*Beelzebub* III, pp.420-1.
- <sup>154</sup>*Views From the Real World*, p.125.
- <sup>155</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.420-1.
- <sup>156</sup>*Beelzebub* III, p.419.
- <sup>157</sup>See *ISOM*, p.71. – I will argue that the level signified by “Man No.7” is, despite the use of the word “I”, a station of being utterly beyond selfhood. What is being spoken of here is equivalent to the “degree of self-individuality” spoken of in the fifth “being-obligolnian striving” (*Beelzebub* I, p.386).
- <sup>158</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.421.
- <sup>159</sup>*Views From the Real World*, p.237.
- <sup>160</sup>*Beelzebub* III, p.422.
- <sup>161</sup>*ISOM*, p.72.
- <sup>162</sup>See Chapter Four “Transmission and Initiation.” and Chapter Five.
- <sup>163</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.422.
- <sup>164</sup>*Views From the Real World*, p.238.
- <sup>165</sup>*Views From the Real World*, p.239.
- <sup>166</sup>*Views From the Real World*, p.239.
- <sup>167</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, II, p.167. In *Beelzebub*, Gurdjieff depicts the conventional and exoteric forms of religious teaching as historically corrupted to the point where they have become factors of “self-calming” —i.e., buffers.
- <sup>168</sup>This is because by indulging in conventional reactions of the like-dislike kind the experience becomes incorporated into the personality: one then *identifies* with the experience rather than simply *seeing*. This ‘personality identification’ will give rise to the desire to change – i.e., not to be as one has seen oneself to be – but these changes are simply tinkering within the domain of personality. The act of *seeing*,

without reaction, is in it self a much more powerful force of genuine change. Initially, efforts to change particular habits should only be made under the direction of the teacher. (See A.R.Orage in C.S.Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.136; and cf. *ISOM*, pp.145-50.)

<sup>169</sup>This – as we shall see in Part 2 of the present chapter – is Bennett’s view. See his *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV: History, Chapter, 46.

<sup>170</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.I, pp.136-7

<sup>171</sup>*ibid.*, p.35

<sup>172</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, pp.344-5.

<sup>173</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.345.

<sup>174</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.345.

<sup>175</sup>See the final subsection of the present section.

<sup>176</sup>See especially ‘Merciless Heropass’ (pp.89-94) and ‘Law of Sevenfoldness’ (pp.95-8).

<sup>177</sup>For instance, he elucidates Gurdjieff’s teaching on the involutory proliferation of laws in specific terms.

<sup>178</sup>The importance of the idea of “hazard” to Bennett is indicated by its embodiment in the title *The Dramatic Universe*. (See *The Dramatic Universe: A short guide and glossary*, p.5.)

<sup>179</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, II, p.346.

<sup>180</sup>*ISOM*, p.323.

<sup>181</sup>*ISOM*, p.89.

<sup>182</sup>This is, of course, wholly in accord with the Buddhist assertion that even the Gods are subject to impermanence.

<sup>183</sup>Bennett, *Talks On Beelzebub’s Tales*, p.91.

<sup>184</sup>Bennett, *Talks On Beelzebub’s Tales*, p.90.

<sup>185</sup>Bennett, *Talks On Beelzebub’s Tales*, p.91.

<sup>186</sup>C.G.Jung, *VII Sermones ad Mortuos*, p.15.

<sup>187</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, I, pp.153-72.

<sup>188</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, IV, pp.13-21

<sup>189</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, IV, p.20.

<sup>190</sup>See, e.g., *The Dramatic Universe*, p.277.

<sup>191</sup>*ISOM*, p.306. See also p.83.

<sup>192</sup>Bennett, *Needs of a New Age Community*, p.10.

<sup>193</sup>*ISOM*, p.306.

- <sup>194</sup>See the first paragraph of section ‘Cosmological perspectives in Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson’.
- <sup>195</sup>These matters are dealt with more fully in Chapter Five in relation to Bennett’s “seven lines of work” and in the context of a model of the stages of development on the ‘Gurdjieffian path’ (see especially the final subsection ‘The Great Work Context’).
- <sup>196</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.354.
- <sup>197</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.355.
- <sup>198</sup>See Chapter Five.
- <sup>199</sup>See *Beelzebub*, III, p.398.
- <sup>200</sup>This idea is elaborated in Chapter Five.
- <sup>201</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.357.
- <sup>202</sup>See Chapter Two, note 99.
- <sup>203</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.289.
- <sup>204</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.289.
- <sup>205</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.253.
- <sup>206</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.255.
- <sup>207</sup>See *Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.220-26.
- <sup>208</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.254.
- <sup>209</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.255.
- <sup>210</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.256.
- <sup>211</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.257.
- <sup>212</sup>See also *Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.242 for comparison of this idea with *Genesis* 6.
- <sup>213</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.258.
- <sup>214</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.359.
- <sup>215</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.258.
- <sup>216</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.257.
- <sup>217</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.259.
- <sup>218</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.357.
- <sup>219</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.337.
- <sup>220</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.390.
- <sup>221</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.II, p.336.
- <sup>222</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.427.

<sup>223</sup>A fuller account of the differences and similarities between Bennett's demiurgic intelligences and Gurdjieff's angels and archangels is given in the final main-section of the present chapter.

<sup>224</sup>This idea of rebellion against divine authority on the part of high beings is not entirely absent from *Beelzebub*. Beelzebub himself was exiled from his home planet, Karatas, proximity to the Sun Absolute precisely because of his youthful rebellion. However, while the status of Beelzebub is somewhat ambiguous, he is basically depicted as a "three brained being" and not as an angel.

<sup>225</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.254.

<sup>226</sup>See *Dramatic Universe* Vol.III, pp.172-3.

<sup>227</sup>See, e.g., *ISOM*, pp.182-98.

<sup>228</sup>Bennett, *The Masters of Wisdom*, pp.41-3.

<sup>229</sup>Bennett, *The Masters of Wisdom*, pp.42-5.

<sup>230</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.344.

<sup>231</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.361.

<sup>232</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.377.

<sup>233</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.386-93)

<sup>234</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, e.g., p.177.

<sup>235</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.233.

<sup>236</sup>See the chapter 'Beelzebub in America' in *Beelzebub*, III (e.g., p.231).

<sup>237</sup>*ISOM*, p.309.

<sup>238</sup>*ISOM*, p.307.

<sup>239</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, pp.287-8.

<sup>240</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.420.

<sup>241</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.421.

<sup>242</sup>See Chapter One, section 'Christ: Incarnation and Parousia'.

<sup>243</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.345.

<sup>244</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.383.

<sup>245</sup>See *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.292.

<sup>246</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.323.

<sup>247</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.330-1.

<sup>248</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.422.

<sup>249</sup>Just as there are different levels of potentiality – or *being* – in the dimension of eternity, so there are different levels of realization (ableness to be) in hyparxis. The

will associated with the redemptive action of Christ is the transpersonal Will of the Absolute to which it is the human destiny to become connected.

<sup>250</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.348.

<sup>251</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.350.

<sup>252</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.349.

<sup>253</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.423.

<sup>254</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.421.

<sup>255</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.422.

<sup>256</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.423.

<sup>257</sup>*ISOM*, p.102.

<sup>258</sup>*ISOM*, p.302.

<sup>259</sup>*ISOM*, p.129.

<sup>260</sup>There is no space here to look at the question of how and where Gurdjieff might have become connected to a tradition of ‘original Christianity’. However, the interested reader is referred to *Gurdjieff: a Very Great Enigma*, p.29, where Bennett speculates about Gurdjieff’s connections to vestiges of Nestorian and Assyrian Christianity, as an interesting starting point.

<sup>261</sup>*ISOM*, p.74 – the part of this quotation between the ellipsis comes at the end of the next paragraph in the original text. See also *ISOM*, p.299; and ‘To Be A Christian’ – a talk given by Gurdjieff at the Prieuré (28.2.1923).

<sup>262</sup>Gurdjieff held special views about the role of Judas in this final drama – see Chapter Six.

<sup>263</sup>*ISOM*, p.97.

<sup>264</sup>*ISOM*, p.144.

<sup>265</sup>*ISOM*, p.217.

<sup>266</sup>*ISOM*, p.144.

<sup>267</sup>*ISOM*, p.61. – See Chapter Five.

<sup>268</sup>*ISOM*, p.217. – This paraphrases the work of Man No.4 and the final transition to Man No.5. See Chapter Five.

<sup>269</sup>James Moore, ‘Moveable Feasts: the Gurdjieff Work’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.9, No.2 (1994), p.13.

<sup>270</sup>René Zuber, *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff*, p.31.

<sup>271</sup>René Zuber, *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff*, p.31.

<sup>272</sup>René Zuber, *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff*, p.44.

<sup>273</sup>Moreover, it should be noted that it is not common for ‘orthodox’ Gurdjieffians (particularly of Zuber’s seniority) to publish their views. This suggests that when one does it is probably with the blessing of the others.

<sup>274</sup>René Zuber, *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff*, p.46.

<sup>275</sup>Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*, p.140.

<sup>276</sup>Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*, pp.141-2.

<sup>277</sup>Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*, pp.145-6.

<sup>278</sup>*ISOM*, p.154.

<sup>279</sup>Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*, p.152.

<sup>280</sup>Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*, p.186.

<sup>281</sup>See, e.g., *ISOM*, pp.203-4.

<sup>282</sup>Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*, p.108.

<sup>283</sup>In Bennett’s terms, technically speaking, Nicoll’s description indicates eternity-hyparxis.

<sup>284</sup>René Zuber, *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff*, p.45.

<sup>285</sup>René Zuber, *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff*, p.45.

<sup>286</sup>Gurdjieff, *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.50.

<sup>287</sup>Fritz Peters, *Gurdjieff*, p.104.

<sup>288</sup>Gurdjieff, *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.142-3.

<sup>289</sup>C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.77; and *Witness*, p.263.

<sup>290</sup>See, respectively, *Beelzebub*, II, p.291, p.316 and p.296.

<sup>291</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.288.

<sup>292</sup>*ISOM*, p.319.

<sup>293</sup>In fact he does use the formula “Saint Jesus” once (*Beelzebub*, II, p.298), but on other occasions he uses formulae such as “Divine Teacher,” “Divine Jesus” and “the Divine Teacher Jesus Christ,” whereas he consistently uses the word “Saint” to refer to all of the other avataric messengers.

<sup>294</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.325.

<sup>295</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.294. and as revealing “the All-lovingness and All-forgivingness of our CREATOR, suffering for beings” *Beelzebub*, II, p.295.

<sup>296</sup>Gurdjieff, ‘To Be A Christian’ (Prieuré, 28.2.1923) – Privately circulated, no details given.

<sup>297</sup>*Witness*, p.41.

<sup>298</sup>T.H.Meyer, *The Bodhisattva Question*, p.1.

<sup>299</sup>*Witness*, p.293.

<sup>300</sup>Bennett, *Journeys in Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.86.

<sup>301</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.II, p.313.

<sup>302</sup>*ISOM*, p.323.

<sup>303</sup>*ISOM*, p.322

<sup>304</sup>For instance, according to the diagram of everything living the ‘food’ of man is “invertebrates” (“germinal essence” in Bennett’s language) which is H96; whereas the substance which is literally eaten, to undergo evolution in the human organism, is H768 (see *ISOM*, p.182).

<sup>305</sup>See Bennett *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, pp.282-93.

<sup>306</sup>Bennett says that “...wherever there is life there is hazard...Life bears the responsibility for the destiny of Existence.

...Life, in all its multitudinous forms, occupies a central place in the pattern of all Existence...” (*Dramatic Universe*, II, p.337.)

<sup>307</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.II, p.315.

<sup>308</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.II, p.315.

<sup>309</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, pp.349.

<sup>310</sup>*Witness*, p.368.

<sup>311</sup>*ISOM*, p.323.

<sup>312</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.350.

<sup>313</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.68.

<sup>314</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, III, p.351.

<sup>315</sup>??

<sup>316</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.82.

<sup>317</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.88.

<sup>318</sup>The twenty one level scale of being-Reason reaches from “absolute ‘firm calm’” to the perfect Reason of God. (*Beelzebub*, II, p.361). – See Chapter Five.

<sup>319</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.179.

<sup>320</sup>Gurdjieff’s four ‘senior Archangels’ designated the “Quarters-Maintainers” may be designed to correspond to the four archangels traditionally identified in the Christian *Bible*. I.e., the archangels Michael, Uriel, Gabriel and Raphael. Gurdjieff’s four “All-Quarters Maintainers” are “the Most Great Archcherubs” Peshtvogner and Helkgematios, and “the Most Great Archangels” Setrenotzinarco and Sakaki (see *Beelzebub*, I, p.90, p.175, p.205; and II, p.392). – It must be added that Gurdjieff makes passing reference to “the Archangel Gabriel”, whom he calls “His Truthfulness (*Beelzebub*, I, p.28.) However, this is in the introductory chapter when Gurdjieff is speaking to the reader directly rather than from behind his Beelzebub persona.

<sup>321</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.90



<sup>322</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.113.

<sup>323</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.39.

<sup>324</sup>Bennett, *The Masters of Wisdom*, p.45.

<sup>325</sup>Cf. *ISOM*, p.323 and p.194.

<sup>326</sup>See Chapter Five. \_

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Gurdjieff, Transmission and the Esoteric Centre

### *Abstract*

This chapter focuses on the idea of the ‘esoteric centre’ in a Gurdjieffian context. I ask in what balance the term (a) designates some form of terrestrial organization, or (b) is used as a metaphor to describe a level of spiritual realization which has inherent authority. I seek to assess the evidence for Bennett’s suggestion that Gurdjieff was connected to the “hidden directorate”. In line with the methodological limitations discussed in Chapter One, the evidence is in terms of whether or not it is true to say that Gurdjieff indicated such connection. I investigate the content and status of Gurdjieff’s ‘autobiographical’ indications concerning his own connection to esoteric brotherhoods; and, specifically, I assess the validity of Bennett’s assertions that “Gurdjieff was, more than anything else, a Sufi” and that he was in some way connected to the Khwajagan-Naq’shbandi lineage.

## **The idea of the esoteric centre**

The task of this chapter is to establish the extent to which Bennett's understanding of the idea of the esoteric centre and of *Gurdjieff's connection to it* is supported by Gurdjieff's own statements. In this section I establish a criterion by means of which to evaluate statements about 'the esoteric centre' and apply this to Bennett's structure of ideas.

It will be useful at the outset to distinguish between two ways of understanding the idea of the esoteric centre. Firstly, there is the literal, historico-geographical interpretation which I designate the 'strong' version. Secondly, there is the psychocosmological approach which I shall designate the 'weak' version. In this latter understanding the esoteric centre can be characterized as signifying a level of being which connects the subject to corresponding higher orders of intelligence in the structure of creation,<sup>1</sup> *but without necessarily having an external (i.e., geographical) correlate*. Clearly, it does not have to be an either-or situation. – It is hard to conceive of a 'strong' version which would not be built on a 'weak' substratum; and there are intermediate situations where individual initiates are interconnected (e.g., through a commonality of perception), but without any 'central organization'. – However, identification of these two 'poles' will constitute a useful tool for discussion of Bennett's and Gurdjieff's positions.

Bennett's ideas concerning the existence and role of the esoteric centre have been set out in Chapter One.<sup>2</sup> To summarize his position, he suggests that: (i) the "esoteric centre" has an historical and geographical reality; (ii) it is constituted by

people of advanced spiritual development whom he calls the “psychoteleios order” and the “Hidden Directorate”; (iii) these people work in harmony with the demiurgic intelligences in maintaining and furthering collective human evolution; (iv) this is accomplished both by their own ability to transform energies and by ‘feeding’ influences into the collective situation; and, crucially, (v) Gurdjieff and his mission were connected with the esoteric centre. Obviously this is a very ‘strong’ version of the esoteric centre idea which is exemplified with regard to Bennett’s understanding of Gurdjieff in the following quotation.

After many years of search he arrived unexpectedly at one of the sanctuaries of the Sarmán Brotherhood...In short, he was privileged to receive help and instruction from Masters of Wisdom of whose very existence very few people are aware.<sup>3</sup>

However, it must be noted that although Bennett’s representation of the esoteric centre is a ‘strong’ one, it also has a ‘weak’ substratum which could in principle function on its own. There are two points:

1. In the historical perspective Bennett sees the Hidden Directorate as having developed from the incarnate demiurgic guides.<sup>4</sup> But with regard to the future, he says that the evolution of humanity *as a whole* will entail the incarnation of the demiurgic function of creative guidance.
2. As was stated in Chapter One, he says that the beings who constitute the Hidden Directorate are “Saints” by virtue of the fact that they have transcended selfhood. (Bennett’s classification of these beings as Saints will be of interest below in relation to discussion of Gurdjieff’s “Holy Planet Purgatory”.) Collectively, they constitute the “...future soul of Humanity called the **Communion of Saints**.”<sup>5</sup>

Taken together these two ideas serve to suggest that authentic connection to the esoteric centre could be purely on the level of *inner realization*.

It was argued in Chapter Two that, aside from his specifically lineal connection from Gurdjieff, Bennett's own authority claim was based on just such an inner realization of the purposes of the higher powers. This emphasizes the 'weak version' of the esoteric centre. But, as we have seen, with regard to Gurdjieff he maintained a 'strong version'. He demonstrated a connection between the inner realization ('weak') and the geographically located esoteric power house ('strong') aspects in the following:

The Hidden Directorate, possessing knowledge of a high order, would be a centre for the transformation and concentration of energies. That such centres have existed and do exist is verifiable by anyone who is willing to undergo the training necessary to recognize the working of 'higher energies'.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, he did not seem to say explicitly that he himself had personal connection to the Central Asian esoteric powerhouse. However, there is in the biographical material a clear, but inconclusive, implication that he *did* see himself as having been on the track of the terrestrial esoteric centre. Biographical details will be given in later chapters.<sup>7</sup> Here his 'connection' can be characterized as having been to the historical Khwajagan, or Masters of Wisdom, of Central Asia whom he connects with the Sarmoun Brotherhood and in relation to which the Naq'shbandi Sufis function as an outer order. Bennett's association with the 'Naq'shbandi' Idries Shah, who with varying degrees of explicitness claimed to be an emissary of the 'esoteric power house' that sent Gurdjieff, suggests that he must have thought that he was on the right track (unless it is concluded that he became disillusioned with Shah). Similarly, his contact with the 'latter-day Khwajagan' Hasan Shushud, which he represents as having catalysed his emergence as a master in his own right, can, be seen as implying

personal connection to this spiritual tradition (which he associates with Gurdjieff and the Sarmoun Brotherhood). All of this serves to *suggest* that Bennett did apply a ‘strong’, as well as a ‘weak’ model of the esoteric centre to his own situation.

In this connection it will be interesting to quote from a letter sent to me by A.G.E.Blake, a senior member of Bennett’s Institute, in 1986.<sup>8</sup> The overall vein of this letter is that Bennett’s activity was most definitely in the context of the operations of the esoteric centre (he does not use this term). He writes of “the operation now in progress being directed by the central group in Asia.” With regard to Gurdjieff lineage he says that

When Bennett made contact with Idries Shah, he had found a link with the source of Gurdjieff’s teaching that superseded his previous years of search.

And with regard to the identity of the source, Blake identifies as of “central significance”

the contact Bennett made with the Khwajagan – first of all, with Idries Shah and then, later, from another direction, with Hasan Shushud.

Blake’s position will also be of interest in Chapter Six with regard to his own contact with Gary Chicoine after Bennett’s death. Here it is only necessary to note that even though Bennett stopped short, for whatever reason, of explicitly invoking a ‘strong’ version of the esoteric centre in relation to his own authority claim, there were some among his followers who, after his death, were willing to do this for him.

In the following sections I seek to determine what textual evidence there is, in the Gurdjieff canon, in support of Bennett’s ideas concerning (i) the existence and nature of the esoteric centre itself and (ii) the extent of Gurdjieff’s own connection to it.

## Gurdjieff's idea of the esoteric centre

The primary purpose of this section is to see what Gurdjieff had to say about the idea of the esoteric centre. There is also a secondary purpose of establishing ideas about the structure of the Gurdjieffian path which will be built upon in Chapter Five.

### *The esoteric centre and the inner circles of humanity*

Gurdjieff's only (recorded) *explicit* reference to the esoteric centre is to be found in *ISOM* (from c.1916); and as presented, this is predominantly a 'weak' version. However, it will be argued in later sections that the idea is implicit in his own writings (of later years) and that, in relation to allusions to particular places, it is presented in a 'strong' version.

Gurdjieff spoke of the necessity for a live – i.e., authentically transformative – teaching to be connected to the esoteric centre through the teacher.<sup>9</sup> He emphasizes that the esoteric centre is outside ordinary life and, hence, that it is above the “law of accident”.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, he states that the true *way*, which requires a person to have their own inner contact with the esoteric centre, starts at a level above that of ordinary life.<sup>11</sup> (I shall return to the issue of the chains of transmission and initiation below.)

Somewhat later, he expanded on the idea of the esoteric centre in terms of the “*inner circles of humanity*”. He spoke of three concentric inner circles: the “esoteric”, the “mesoteric” and the “exoteric”. Again he emphasized that even what he called the exoteric inner circle is high above the level of ordinary life:

The humanity to which we belong, namely, the whole of historic and prehistoric humanity known to science and civilization, in reality constitutes only the *outer circle of humanity*, within which there are several other circles.<sup>12</sup>

...the exoteric circle is something very far from us and very high.  
For ordinary man this is already esotericism.<sup>13</sup>

With regard to the attributes of members of the esoteric inner circle Gurdjieff says that they have achieved the “highest development possible for man”.<sup>14</sup> The specific qualities which he lists are identical to those which he ascribes to “Man No.7”; similarly, the attributes of people in the mesoteric and exoteric circles can respectively be associated with Gurdjieff’s “Man No.6” and “Man No.5”.<sup>15</sup> The nature of these attributes will be explored further in Chapter Five. The immediate need is to establish what Gurdjieff said concerning their respective roles as ‘levels’ of the esoteric centre.

Of the esoteric circle Gurdjieff said:

They cannot perform actions opposed to their understanding or have an understanding which is not expressed by actions. At the same time there can be no discords among them, no differences of understanding. Therefore their activity is entirely co-ordinated and leads to one common aim without any kind of compulsion because it is based upon a common and identical understanding.<sup>16</sup>

He says that the situation is very similar with members of the mesoteric circle among whom “there can be no misunderstanding.”<sup>17</sup> – The difference between the esoteric and mesoteric circles is that, whereas the former “cannot perform actions opposed to their understanding or have an understanding which is not expressed by actions”, the latter “know and understand many [cosmic] things which have not yet found expression in their actions.” (This difference concurs with the basic definition of “Man No.6” as an incomplete version of “Man No.7”.<sup>18</sup>) – The understanding of people in the exoteric circle is described as being still less direct, but again it is emphasized that “there cannot be differences of understanding between them. What one understands all the others understand.”<sup>19</sup>



Gurdjieff's description of the inner circles of humanity – at least as reported by Ouspensky<sup>20</sup> – is immediately followed by his main exposition of his teaching that schools of the fourth way always and necessarily exist in the context of “some *work* of a definite significance”,<sup>21</sup> which I have emphasized in Chapters 1 and 2. Fairly clearly, it is being said that the authority behind fourth way activity emanates from the inner circles (see below for discussion of the chain of transmission). But what kind of esoteric centre is being depicted here? The emphasis on mutual *understanding* tends to suggest a ‘weak’ version such that the esoteric centre would mean simply a certain level of objective being. This is emphasized in Gurdjieff's reply to a question about whether the higher order of humanity all know each other:

How could it be otherwise...Imagine that there are two or three people who are awake in the midst of a multitude of sleeping people. But those who are asleep cannot know them.<sup>22</sup>

It must be concluded that in *ISOM* the esoteric centre is represented in terms of a state of being and not in any obvious way as a geographical place.

### ***Transmission and Initiation.***

In this subsection I look further at the role of the esoteric centre with regard to (i) its role in the world and (ii) the ‘Gurdjieffian path’.

Gurdjieff speaks of three distinct kinds of influence which Ouspensky designates ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ influences.<sup>23</sup> ‘A’ influences are ordinary mechanical influences that originate in the world – even if they have a philosophical or religious formulation they can have no spiritually transformative effect whatsoever. ‘B’ influences are ones which have originated from the esoteric centre, but which have come into the world and no longer have a ‘live’ connection to their source. Here

Gurdjieff can be seen as implying that it is the role of the inner circles to transmit ideas into the general collectivity of humanity; and this would seem to be at least part of what is meant by the specific work for which fourth way schools exist. ‘B’ influences are also said to function as a kind of bridge between the ordinary world and involvement with a school. According to Gurdjieff by studying ideas which *originate* from the esoteric centre people can grow within them a “magnetic centre” which can serve to attract them to a genuine teaching. When this happens a person encounters influences of the third kind, ‘C’ influences. “Influences of the third kind can proceed only from one person to another, directly, by means of oral transmission.”<sup>24</sup> These influences are available by virtue of the teacher’s connection to the esoteric centre and can be seen as associated with the particular work of the school. Gurdjieff spoke of a major role of the fourth way school as being the “concentration” of higher knowledge.<sup>25</sup> He also said that the transformative knowledge available in fourth way schools is of a more precise and potent nature than is the case with the other ways.<sup>26</sup>

Such transformative, ‘C’, influences initially act through the magnetic centre. However, this is not, according to Gurdjieff, the ‘beginning of the path’. As was described in the last subsection, the *true way* starts at the level associated with the “exoteric” inner circle which is “far from us and very high”. Gurdjieff stated that between the first contact with the teaching and entry to the *way* (exoteric inner circle) there is a transitional stage, or series of stages, which he calls the “stairway”. He said:

The moment when a man who is looking for the way meets a man who knows the way is called the first threshold or the first step. From this first threshold the stairway begins. Between ‘life’ and the ‘way’ lies the ‘stairway.’ Only by passing along this ‘stairway’ can a man enter the ‘way.’ In addition, the man ascends the stairway with the help of the man who is his guide; he cannot go up the stairway by himself. The way begins where the stairway ends, that is, after the last threshold on the stairway, on a level much higher than the ordinary level of life...in ascending the stairway a man is

not sure of anything, he may doubt everything, his own powers, whether what he is doing is right, the guide, his knowledge and his powers. At the same time, what he attains is very unstable; even if he has ascended fairly high on the stairway, he may fall down at any moment and have to begin again from the beginning. But when he has passed the last threshold and enters the way, all this changes. First of all, all doubts he may have about his guide disappear and at the same time the guide becomes far less necessary to him than before. In many respects he may even be independent and know where he is going. Secondly, he can no longer lose so easily the results of his work and he cannot find himself again in ordinary life. Even if he leaves the way, he will be unable to return where he started from.<sup>27</sup>

In the previous subsection a correspondence was observed between, respectively, the esoteric and mesoteric circles and man numbers six and seven. Here similar correspondences can be observed between the stairway and the volatile achievements of Man No.4 and between crossing the final threshold and the inner stability of Man No.5. (The last of these can also be seen as equivalent to the transition into the ‘second river’. This series of correspondences will be explored more fully in Chapter Five.) However, the immediate importance of the above quotation is to emphasize that direct connection to the esoteric centre – the “final threshold” – cannot be achieved except through work with someone who is already themselves connected.

There is apparently no necessity for a teacher at the lower levels to be themselves connected at the highest level. Gurdjieff said that

The knowledge of man number four...comes from man number five, who in turn receives it from man number six, who has received it from man number seven.<sup>28</sup>

This suggests an esoteric ‘chain of command’ radiating out from the esoteric inner circle. More specifically he stated that

...as regards the teacher's situation in relation to the esoteric centre...he may know more or he may know less about the esoteric centre, he may know exactly where this centre is and how knowledge and help is received from it; or he may know nothing of this and may only know the man from whom he himself received

his knowledge. In most cases people start precisely from the point that they know only one step higher than themselves. And only in proportion to their own development do they begin to see further and to recognise where what they know came from. The results of the work of a man who takes on himself the role of teacher do not depend on whether or not he knows the origin of what he teaches, but very much depends on whether or not his ideas come in actual fact from the esoteric center and whether or not he himself understands and can distinguish esoteric ideas, that is, ideas of esoteric knowledge, from subjective, scientific, and philosophical ideas.<sup>29</sup>

However, it would seem to be the case that if the “man who takes on himself the role of teacher” has not crossed the “final threshold” – i.e., he does not himself have his own contact with the esoteric centre – then the situation is very uncertain for those who follow him on the stairway: if such a person loses contact with their own teacher the chain of connection will be broken. Such a danger is suggested by Gurdjieff in the following quotation which emphasizes that there is an inherently reciprocal relationship between the ‘downflow’ of transmission and the ascent of initiation.

The pupil cannot go on without the teacher, and the teacher cannot go on without the pupil or pupils. And this is not a general consideration but an indispensable and quite concrete rule on which is based the law of man's ascending. As has been said before, no one can ascend onto a higher step until he places another man in his own place. What a man has received he must immediately give back; only then can he receive more. Otherwise from him will be taken even what he has already been given.<sup>30</sup>

With regard to the three inner circles there is no reason to suppose that the chain of transmission could become broken (because the exoteric circle has an *inner* connection to the higher levels). However, the situation on the stairway is far more precarious such that if the connection through to the exoteric circle is broken (for whatever reason) progress on the “stairway” would grind to a halt.

## The Esoteric Centre in Gurdjieff's Writings

In this section I investigate the extent to which Gurdjieff's own writings can be seen as supporting Bennett's belief that Gurdjieff was connected to the esoteric centre in a 'strong' sense.

As is suggested by the foregoing section Gurdjieff presented his doctrine of the esoteric centre 'in the abstract' in the sense that he did not explicitly say 'I am a member of the inner circles' or 'I am your connection to the esoteric centre'. And, when he states that a teacher may be connected through a chain and not themselves actually know the origin of the teaching, he gives no indication of his own status. It is clear from the context that he *was* claiming this kind of connection for himself, but the fact remains that he never actually said so. The furthest he goes in this direction is to speak in a very general way of his personal aim in terms closely related to the idea of fourth way schools existing for a particular purpose:

I certainly have an aim of my own...But you must permit me to keep silent about it. At present my aim cannot have any meaning for you, because it is important that you should define your own aim. The teaching by itself cannot pursue any definite aim. It can only show the best way for men to attain whatever aims they may have.<sup>31</sup>

This quotation indicates that Gurdjieff did represent *himself* as the teacher of a fourth way school and also that, in the context of his pupils' level of development, he considered it irrelevant to explain the details of his situation.

Nevertheless, it is the case that, even during the period which is recorded in *ISOM*, Gurdjieff made *some* references to contacts with esoteric brotherhoods. Ouspensky records:

About schools and where he had found the knowledge he undoubtedly possessed he spoke very little and always superficially. He mentioned Tibetan monasteries, the Chitral, Mount Athos; Sufi schools in Persia, in Bokhara, and eastern Turkestan; he mentioned dervishes of various orders; but all of them in a very indefinite way.<sup>32</sup>

There is no suggestion that these allusions were made in relation to the idea of the esoteric centre; but if they *are* taken in these terms they suggest a ‘strong’ version.

The programme for the performances of Gurdjieff’s movements and sacred dances in Paris in 1923 gives similar allusions. Webb writes:

Gurdjieff’s program included the “Stop” exercise, “The Initiation of the Priestess,” and gymnastic exercises said to derive from a “school called ‘The Seers’” which had “existed from antiquity in large artificial caverns in Kafiristan, on the heights of Kijera.” There were movements from monastic orders in Chinese Turkestan, Kafiristan, Tibet, Caucasia, and Kashgar...<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Bennett states that when he saw the “Initiation of a Priestess” performed in Constantinople (1921) it was announced as originating from “...a cave temple in the Hindu Kush.”<sup>34</sup> Such statements are, in line with Ouspensky’s observation, very indefinite and amount to nothing but allusion. During Gurdjieff’s writing period, from late 1924 to c.1935, he committed to paper many more such indefinite indications of his connections. These are, as noted above, not *explicitly* related to the idea of the esoteric centre. However, if they can be understood in this way, and not simply as representing places where Gurdjieff ‘gleaned’ different fragments of his teaching,<sup>35</sup> they can be taken as indicating a ‘strong’ version of the esoteric centre.

Gurdjieff wrote four books all of which, in different ways, can be seen as giving biographical indications concerning his esoteric connections.

*Life Is Real Only Then: When “I Am”* (or *Third Series*)<sup>36</sup> and *Herald of Coming Good*<sup>37</sup> both contain statements which, while they explicitly state certain connections

with monasteries and esoteric brotherhoods, remain indefinite as to where and what these are.

*Meetings With Remarkable Men* is the most explicitly autobiographical of Gurdjieff's books. However, autobiography is not its aim.<sup>38</sup> Parts are obviously allegorical; moreover, the chronology does not make sense (brief examples of this are given below). As a whole it seems to be an allegory of inner development which approaches the same central message by different routes. Nevertheless, he does seem to be telling us things about his own outer search, and some of these things resonate with indications given in his other books.

*Beelzebub* is not presented as autobiography. However, I will argue that attention to the narrative and, more especially, to the over all structure of this work reveals a fundamental autobiographical strand. Explication of this strand will highlight, not only specific indications which resonate with those in *Meeting With Remarkable Men*, but, in parallel with these, an emphasis on the idea of the esoteric centre. However, due to the complexity of the issues involved, the 'decoding of *Beelzebub*' will require a main section of its own.

### ***Indications in the Third Series and Herald of Coming Good.***

I shall not attempt to list all of Gurdjieff's statements in these books concerning his contacts with esoteric brotherhoods. Rather, I shall identify some cross themes between the two books and points of resonance with indications given in *Meetings With Remarkable Men* and *Beelzebub*.

In *Herald* Gurdjieff states that at the threshold of his career as a spiritual teacher he decided

to confide my intentions to a “brotherhood” (a kind of monastery existing in the very heart of Central Asia), with a view to securing in certain ways their future co-operation.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, in the *Third Series*, he says:

I must tell you that, many years ago, before the organization of the Institute, when I planned and worked out this program in detail...[I had to]...address myself for advice and direction concerning several questions to honourable and impartial people from among those I eventually had the happiness to meet in the course of my life, and who, by the way,...had already overcome more than two centuries of their existence...<sup>40</sup>

This claim to have been connected with a monastery containing people of over two hundred years old suggests that this is the same place to which he refers in the final chapter<sup>41</sup> of *Meetings With Remarkable Men* – i.e., the “World Brotherhood”.<sup>42</sup> Gurdjieff represents his encounter with the World Brotherhood as the culmination of his search and as a major turning point in his inner life (see page 311). Turning back to the account in *Herald*, we find another passage which has strong resonances with the “World Brotherhood” of *Meetings With Remarkable Men*:

This opportunity [to withdraw, plan and consider] took place during my stay in Central Asia, when, thanks to the introduction of a street-barber, whom I accidentally met and with whom I became great friends, I happened to obtain access into a monastery well known among the followers of the Mahometan religion, and availed myself of the hospitality of the good brothers.

Once, after a talk with some of the brothers of this monastery about the nature and quality of human faith, and the consequences of the action of its impulse on man, I...became still further convinced that I must abide by my decision and profit immediately by this opportunity in this very monastery.<sup>43</sup>

Briefly, the similarities are: (i) that this visit represents a major developmental threshold;<sup>44</sup> (ii) the emphasis on the understanding of “human faith” that he received in this place;<sup>45</sup> and (iii) the words “a monastery well known among the followers of the Mahometan religion” bear a similarity to those which he uses with regard to his



first contact with the “World Brotherhood”.<sup>46</sup> However, in this case his proposer was his friend the “street-barber”. There is a parallel here with an account in the *Third Series* where he speaks of a “barber-physician” who gave him initial aid after he had been seriously wounded by a bullet.<sup>47</sup> This latter tale also culminates in major turning point in Gurdjieff’s inner life.<sup>48</sup> Why “barbers”? I suggest that the word may be a symbol of a monastic order (because of the shaving of the head). “Street barber” could, therefore, be taken as signifying an order that rather than withdrawing is active in the world. This would suggest the Naq’shabandi Sufis,<sup>49</sup> in which case the “barbers” of *Herald* and the *Third Series*, who both have a transitional and introductory role, have strong resonance with the dervish “Bogga-Eddin” of both *Beelzebub*<sup>50</sup> and *Meetings With Remarkable Men*<sup>51</sup> whose name, Bennett argues, is a ‘Russianization’ of Bahauddin the founder of the Naq’shabandi.<sup>52</sup> In both of these latter cases “Bogga-Eddin” plays an introductory role. (See page 310.)

### ***Meetings With Remarkable Men.***

*Meetings With Remarkable Men* contains a wealth of autobiographical hints. However, any attempt to sort out a definitive chronology meets with insurmountable problems. – Bennett suggests that Gurdjieff “...takes one particular story and puts a bit of it here and a bit of it there.”<sup>53</sup> – As I have suggested above, I will argue that, whatever its basis in autobiographical fact, it is an allegory of the *inner* search which approaches ideas from different directions. Space does not allow for an analysis of the ‘enfolded chronology’ or description of the different strands that flow through it. The main necessity is to discuss the strands relating most directly to Gurdjieff’s possible connection to an esoteric source. There are related, during the course of the book, many encounters with people possessing different kinds of spiritual

knowledge.<sup>54</sup> However, there are two events which stand out as particularly eligible as ‘candidates’ to be Gurdjieff’s esoteric source: (i) the visit to the “Sarmoung monastery” in the ‘Prince Yuri Lubovedsky’ chapter (in the middle of the book); and (ii) the visit to the “World Brotherhood”, as mentioned above, in the ‘Professor Skridlov’ chapter (at the end of the book).

As I shall argue these are, in some respects, the ‘same place’ from different points of view. However, before looking at the chronology leading up to and relating these two events, it will be useful to discuss the significance of the characters of Professor Skridlov and Prince Yuri Lubovedsky and their relationship to Gurdjieff.

### **Prince Yuri Lubovedsky, Professor Skridlov and Gurdjieff.**

Much of *Meetings With Remarkable Men* concerns the expeditions of Gurdjieff and his comrades – the ‘Seekers of Truth’. (In *Life Is Real Only Then: When “I am”* Gurdjieff refers, in factual terms, to the searches of himself and “...a specially organized group of people of the highest contemporary culture, who devoted themselves to the search for objective truth.”<sup>55</sup>) Among these ‘Seekers of Truth’, Prince Yuri Lubovedsky and Professor Skridlov (the archaeologist) stand out as the senior members. In *Meetings With Remarkable Men* it is related that Gurdjieff met these two people at the Great Pyramid.<sup>56</sup> The de Hartmanns relate that, around 1917, Gurdjieff said that

we must become acquainted with the origin of this Work. The beginning, he told us, was a prearranged meeting in Egypt at the foot of one of the pyramids. There three persons met after long years of separate work in places where initiation centres were still maintained. The first of these three was a man of science, who was able, through Western knowledge, to verify and evaluate in a scientific way all that was apparently miraculous. The second man was a connoisseur of religions and their histories. The third man could be called a ‘man of being’.<sup>57</sup>

Whatever the basis in fact, this is clearly a prototype of the allegory which Gurdjieff subsequently developed in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*. The “man of science” obviously corresponds to Professor Skridlov. The “connoisseur of religions” can be seen as referring to Gurdjieff himself.<sup>58</sup> This would leave Prince Yuri Lubovedsky in the role of “man of being”. The significance of all this to *Meetings With Remarkable Men* is amplified by the following from the *Third Series* where Gurdjieff speaks of three categories of genuine initiate:

The initiates belonging to the first category were those who thanks to their intentional sufferings and conscious labors attained a high gradation of what is called Being, and for this they acquired the title “Saint.” To the second category belonged those who thanks to the same factors acquired a great deal of all kinds of information, and to their names was added the title “Learned”; and to the third category, those who by means again of the same factors attained Being and also enlightened themselves concerning a great number of objective truths, and to their names was added the title “Sage”.<sup>59</sup>

I will now show that in *Meetings With Remarkable Men* the arrival at the “Sarmoun monastery”, associated with Prince Yuri Lubovedsky, signifies the attainment of real being – sainthood – through death to the unreal in oneself; and that the arrival at the “World Brotherhood”, associated with Professor Skridlov, signifies the same thing, but with the addition of knowledge – sagehood. I.e., that these two places represent the ‘same place’ on a different level. I will argue that, parallel to this allegorical isomorphism, it is suggested that they are also the same or closely related to the extent that they represent real places.

Although the situation is highly complex and both strands connect with other currents – e.g., Gurdjieff’s discoveries of evidence of the existence of the Sarmoun brotherhood<sup>60</sup> and the “map of pre-sand Egypt”<sup>61</sup>– I shall start at a point which has definite chronological and symbolic commonality for both of the strands. Both

strands may be said to begin with Gurdjieff's return from Mecca in the company of some Bukharian dervishes with whom he planned to travel, via Constantinople, to Bukhara.<sup>62</sup> In the context of the second account he specifies that his visits to Mecca and Medina had been disappointing.

I only made clear to myself that if there were anything in this religion it must be sought not there, as everyone says or believes, but in Bukhara, where from the beginning the secret knowledge of Islam has been concentrated, this place having become its very centre and source.<sup>63</sup>

However, in Constantinople Gurdjieff met Prince Yuri Lubovedsky for the penultimate time who asked him to accompany a lady called Vitvitskaia to Russia. It is here that the two strands bifurcate.

### **The Sarmoung brotherhood.**

In the Prince Yuri Lubovedsky strand, which is the one that develops directly from the above events, several years pass. (The narrative is interrupted by a description of the subsequent participation of Vitvitskaia in the Seekers of Truth – events which probably do not fit here chronologically.) Gurdjieff eventually meets Prince Yuri Lubovedsky again in the Sarmoun monastery to which they have both found their way independently (see below). Subsequent to their meeting in Constantinople Gurdjieff had lost contact with Prince Yuri Lubovedsky and had given him up for dead. This turned out to be, symbolically speaking, true. The man through whom he came to the Sarmoun brotherhood said to him:

If you quite clearly feel and recognize without any doubt that everything for which you have striven until now has been a mirage, and if you agree to one condition, I will try to help you. And this condition is that you consciously die to the life you have led until now, that is to say, break away from all the automatically established practices of your external life and go where I shall tell you.<sup>64</sup>

It must be emphasized that Prince Yuri Lubovedsky was no novice on the path – indeed it is indicated that he had worked on himself for forty-five years.<sup>65</sup> As will become clearer in the next chapter this death corresponds to the final threshold on the stairway and entry to the exoteric inner circle. And it is significant to note at this point that the Sarmoung monastery is represented as having three concentrically arranged courts which can be seen as corresponding to the inner circles of humanity.

The idea of death to one's former way of being is further emphasized by the 'Soloviev' section of the chapter which immediately precedes the Sarmoung brotherhood part of the 'Prince Yuri Lubovedsky' chapter and then resumes to finish the chapter in an entirely symbolic and non-chronological way.

Very briefly, Gurdjieff helped Soloviev, who was an alcoholic, and brought him to a state where he could become a member of the seekers of truth. At the end of the chapter Gurdjieff relates an utterly fantastical 'expedition of the Seekers of Truth, under the leadership of Professor Skridlov, to find a 'buried city' at the heart of the Takla Makam desert.<sup>66</sup> There is no space to detail all of the ways in which Gurdjieff uses this to represent work on oneself. However, it is worth noting that the fact that he relates that, at the edge of the Takla Makam, the river disappears "into the fathomless depths of the sand"<sup>67</sup> serves to invoke ideas associated with the necessity to pass from the 'mechanical' river to the 'conscious' river. It is related that when, by means of their fantastical contrivances,<sup>68</sup> the Seekers are approaching their goal, Soloviev is killed by wild camels.<sup>69</sup> In response to this the other seekers decide to abandon their quest and return to normal conditions.<sup>70</sup>

I suggest that Soloviev's alcoholism is an allegory for the spiritual methods which had taken Gurdjieff to a certain point. To be 'cured of alcoholism' is equivalent to Prince Yuri Lubovedsky having to let go of "all his automatically

established practices". Similarly, in the Takla Makam allegory, a point was reached where the contrivances of work on oneself had to be relinquished. It is to be noted that in the *Third Series* Gurdjieff speaks of having reached a point where he had to let go of the occult powers that he had developed in order to make further progress;<sup>71</sup> and a similar theme is explored through the character of 'Ekim Bey' in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*.<sup>72</sup> It can be concluded that the main theme of the 'Prince Yuri Lubovedsky' chapter, which reaches its culmination with Gurdjieff's arrival at the Sarmoung monastery, is the idea of a 'death' or spiritual breakthrough which must occur before the true path can be entered.

The significance of the Sarmoung monastery, as described above, could be *entirely* symbolic and hence, as a representation of the esoteric centre, 'weak'. However, consideration of the sequence of outer events that took Gurdjieff there will indicate a different 'stronger' level of meaning. As was described, Gurdjieff had decided that the true secrets of Islam were to be found in Bukhara. After the Vitvitskaia narrative hiatus we find Gurdjieff in the *city* of Bukhara awaiting news of his friend the dervish "Bogga-Eddin" concerning whom Bennett writes:

Gurdjieff invariably rendered the letter h by a g, as there is no appropriate h in Russian, Armenian or Greek. Bogga-Eddin would, therefore, be 'Bahauddin': and the founder of the Naq'shbandi dervishes was also a native of Bokhara.<sup>73</sup>

When the Bukharian dervish Bogga-Eddin, who may represent the Naq'shbandi, finally appears he introduces Gurdjieff to a member of the Sarmoung brotherhood for whom he has been acting as guide in Upper Bukhara. "Upper Bukhara" signifies a region of the Pamir mountains (in formerly Soviet Central Asia), bordering on the Hindu Kush and Kafiristan to the south (which is the general location given for the "World Brotherhood").<sup>74</sup> Upper Bukhara is also the region to which Bogga-Eddin

takes Beelzebub (see next section). The Sarmoung monastery is implicitly emphasized as a source of Gurdjieff's sacred dances and of his understanding of the law of sevenfoldness.<sup>75</sup>

### **The World Brotherhood.**

This strand commences with Gurdjieff telling Professor Skridlov of his visit to Mecca, how he had become convinced that the secrets of Islam were only to be found in Bukhara, but that he had been prevented from going there by the Vitvitskaia incident. Professor Skridlov responds that he too had decided that this region was archaeologically significant and wished to go there, so they agree to go together. (It is not possible to fix the time period between Gurdjieff being in Constantinople and this meeting with Professor Skridlov – Gurdjieff simply says that it was “very soon”.<sup>76</sup>)

Gurdjieff devotes several pages to a description of their journey up the river Amu Darya towards Afghanistan, relating all of the different races and kinds of people who were travelling on the ferry.<sup>77</sup> This constitutes a strange emphasis as he does not seem to be presenting any profound observations of the people. Again his two rivers allegory comes to mind. The picture he suggests is of being still in the *first* river amidst the whole medley of humanity; however, the journey is a purposeful one which is *up* stream, against the current and thereby signifying evolution.<sup>78</sup> That a major threshold of development was reached on this journey is indicated by Gurdjieff's assertion that

Professor Skridlov reached a turning-point in his general inner psyche in the sense that, from then on, it began to be activated not only by his thoughts but also by his feelings and instinct.<sup>79</sup>

In terms of inner development the major emphasis of the chapter is on the development of real understanding. Father Giovanni, who acted as mentor to

Gurdjieff and Professor Skridlov during their stay in the monastery of the “World Brotherhood”, said:

‘Yes, Professor, knowledge and understanding are quite different. Only understanding can lead to being, whereas knowledge is but a passing presence in it. New knowledge displaces the old and the result is, as it were, a pouring from the empty into the void.

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

‘And in order to be able to understand the phenomena of nature, according and not according to law, proceeding around us, one must first of all consciously perceive and assimilate a mass of information concerning objective truth and the real events that took place on the earth in the past; and secondly, one must bear in oneself the results of all kinds of voluntary and involuntary experiencings.’<sup>80</sup>

This serves to show why Gurdjieff felt it necessary to approach describing the same stage of transcendence from two separate directions. As anticipated at the beginning of this section, the Prince Yuri Lubovedsky approach is to do with *being* and *sainthood*, whereas the Professor Skridlov approach is to do with *understanding* and *sagehood*. The knowledge of Professor Skridlov is not devalued, rather it is brought into the light of real being. Hence the experience represents a similar break through to that which occurred in connection to the Sarmoung brotherhood, but with the addition of objective understanding.

The above serves to suggest that, as allegory for inner development, the “Sarmoung monastery” and the “World Brotherhood” represent different possibilities of a breakthrough to real being. Hence, there is an extent to which the two ‘places’ are the same kind of ‘weak’ esoteric centre. But what of the more literal form of indication?

As mentioned previously, Gurdjieff locates the “World Brotherhood” in the mountains of Kafiristan. This is on the other side of the Hindu Kush from Upper



Bukhara, the suggested general location of the Sarmoung monastery, and it would seem to be a distinct place. However, Gurdjieff may be indicating that the Sarmoun monastery is part of the “World Brotherhood”. Father Giovanni tells Gurdjieff and Professor Skridlov that the brotherhood has four monasteries

...ours, the second in the valley of the Pamir, the third in Tibet, and the fourth in India.<sup>81</sup>

The monastery in “the second in the valley of the Pamir” *could* be the Sarmoung brotherhood. Similarly, the one in Tibet *could* be the “Olman monastery, which is on the northern slopes of the Himalayas” and which is connected to the Sarmoun monastery.<sup>82</sup> Gurdjieff leaves this inconclusive. However, while the Sarmoung monastery is depicted as a place where Gurdjieff learned some profound things, the “World Brotherhood” in Kafiristan is much more eligible as a candidate for a terrestrial esoteric centre from which Gurdjieff obtained his mandate to teach. As its name suggests it is depicted as a world brotherhood which is entirely non-sectarian, containing people originating from all faiths.<sup>83</sup> These people are called the “‘self-freed’ monks”.<sup>84</sup> Whether this is intended to designate that they were free from selfhood or that they had made themselves free is not clear; but either way the implication is that they are *at least* of the exoteric inner circle – or, put another way, that they are in the ‘second river’.<sup>85</sup> (This matter will receive further attention at the end of the subsection ‘Purgatory, after death experience and reincarnation’ – see page 333.)

## *Beelzebub*

The structure of *Beelzebub* is at least as complex as that of *Meetings With Remarkable Men*. The aim of this section is to ‘decode’ the narrative and structural indications.

However, before proceeding with this task, it will be useful to review the picture that has emerged through the previous sections. Gurdjieff’s teachings concerning the esoteric centre in *ISOM* are given in general and predominantly psycho-cosmological terms. This suggests ‘weak’ version, but it does not in any way preclude a strong one. The main points arising from the foregoing discussions of Gurdjieff’s allusions and indications in *Herald of Coming Good*, the *Third Series* and *Meetings With Remarkable Men* can be summarized as follows:

- The term “esoteric centre” is not used.
- The places which are described are not necessarily meant to indicate the ‘esoteric centre’ idea: they may simply be depicted as sources of specific ideas and initiations.
- (However) Gurdjieff does, more than once, speak of a place where he had consultations and made agreements at the threshold of his teaching career.
- The indications in *Meetings With Remarkable Men* can be taken as a ‘weak’ version of the esoteric centre in the form of allegory.
- Despite the complexity of *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, it is possible to discern an emphasis on the ‘secrets of Islam to be found in Bukhara (Naq’shbandi)’ theme.
- The “World Brotherhood” does have attributes that make it a plausible candidate for a terrestrial – i.e., ‘strong’ – esoteric centre.

Consideration of the *Beelzebub* evidence will serve primarily to establish a connection between the *idea of the esoteric centre* in Gurdjieff's teaching and the *indications concerning specific places*. It will also serve to amplify the idea that Gurdjieff intended people to believe: (i) that he was not acting alone, but in relation to some kind of spiritual organization with which he had consulted; and (ii) that his teaching was in some way related to esoteric Islam.

### ***The structure of Beelzebub.***

*Beelzebub* consists of forty eight chapters divided into three books. The first and last chapters are in 'authorial voice'; but for the intervening forty six chapters Gurdjieff stands aside for his extraterrestrial 'literary alter ego' Beelzebub. These chapters consist of Beelzebub's teaching to his grandson – which is based around his tales concerning the human race. There are two distinct chronologies involved. The first is the chronology *in which the tales take place*, which I shall refer to as 'time line 1' (TL1); and the second is the chronology *of the tales themselves*, which I shall call 'time line 2' (TL2). I will argue that these chronologies are designed to be symbolically complementary such that certain events and junctures in TL2 are mirrored in TL1. Before proceeding to a discussion of this complementarity I will introduce the basic structure and significance of each of the chronologies.

#### **Time line 1.**

Chapter Two commences:

It was the year 223 after the creation of the world, by objective time calculation, or, as it would be said here on the "Earth," in the year 1921 after the birth of Christ.

Through the Universe flew the ship *Karnak* of the "transspace" communication.

It was flying from the spaces “Assooparatsata,” that is from the spaces of the “Milky Way,” from the planet Karatas to the solar system “Pandetznokh,” the sun of which is also called the “Pole Star.”

On the said “transspace” ship was Beelzebub with his kinsmen and near attendants.

He was on his way to the planet Revozvradendr to a special conference in which he had consented to take part, at the request of his friends of long standing.<sup>86</sup>

This is the situation within which Beelzebub is speaking to his grandson. In fact, TL1 events impinge very minimally on the Beelzebub’s tales. Between Chapter 3<sup>87</sup> and Chapter 47<sup>88</sup> there is only one substantial TL1 event, the brief chapter ‘A change in the appointed course of falling of the transspace ship Karnak’ (see below). The other TL1 events – three visits to planets – are mentioned in so far as they constitute a break in Beelzebub’s tales to his grandson, *but they are not described*. The three events are:

1. The visit to Revozvradendr in the Pole Star system.<sup>89</sup>

Then on the return journey to Karatas:

2. A visit to the “Holy Planet Purgatory”<sup>90</sup> where Beelzebub’s son Tooilan is employed<sup>91</sup>. And then,
3. A visit to a planet called “Deskaldino”<sup>92</sup> which is the home of Beelzebub’s first educator “the Great Saroonoorishan”<sup>93</sup>.

In all three cases it is simply said, at the end of a chapter, that they arrived at a certain place and, at the beginning of the next chapter, that they continued their journey. Clearly, Gurdjieff is not *emphasizing* the significance of these TL1 events. In fact, in Gurdjieff’s original division of the chapters into the three books,<sup>94</sup> two of these events (Revozvradendr and Deskaldino) occurred between the end of one book and the beginning of the next. In this early version the structural significance of these TL1 events would have been much more noticeable. However, in the version that was

eventually published the chapters had been redistributed between the three books (possibly merely to make the books of approximately equal lengths) such that the TL1 junctures are even less noticeable.

## **Time Line 2.**

The chronology of the tales themselves (TL2) concerns Beelzebub's exile to our Solar System from his home planet Karatas, near to the Sun Absolute, as a result of the sins of his youth<sup>95</sup> and his eventual pardon (largely for his good work on Earth).<sup>96</sup> Much of the narrative consists of Beelzebub relating his six 'descents' to the planet Earth (he was based on Mars). These extend from the prehistoric, Atlantean, period to the early twentieth century. It is only Beelzebub's sixth (final) descent during which he is not only Gurdjieff's 'literary alter ego', *but also Gurdjieff himself*<sup>97</sup> which is of direct interest in the present context. It is necessary to establish that this is the case by setting out the structure of the latter part of TL2.

TL2 can be seen to parallel Gurdjieff's own life history from Chapter 31, 'The sixth and last sojourn of Beelzebub on the planet Earth' (early in Volume 2), and his *independently known* biography from Chapter 34, 'Russia'. Chapters 32 and 33, respectively titled 'Hypnotism' and 'Beelzebub as professional hypnotist', tell of Beelzebub's researches using the methods of hypnotism (during his final visit to earth). This may be taken as paralleling Gurdjieff's portrayal, in *The Herald of Coming Good*, of his time in Tashkent immediately prior to starting his groups in Russia.<sup>98</sup> Chapter 34 is simply called 'Russia.' This period is independently documented (from 1915) in *ISOM*. Following his final flight from Russia in 1920<sup>99</sup> Gurdjieff and his retinue spent about a year in Constantinople, Turkey. There is no chapter called 'Turkey'; however, he can be seen to be hinting at Turkey when, *at the*

*very end of 'Russia'*, in speaking of the mistake that traditional Asiatic peoples make in giving up their own wholesome ways in favour of degenerate European ones, he gives this syndrome the name "turkeyness."<sup>100</sup> In the overall context of *Beelzebub*, this "turkeyness" can be seen as related to the country Turkey by virtue of his specific condemnation of the abolition of the Fez and the banning of "Dervishism" in (Kemal Atatürk's) Turkey (see the later chapter 'Religion').<sup>101</sup>

The chapter following 'Russia' – 'A change in the appointed course of falling of the transspace ship Karnak – is *ostensibly* concerned with events in the 'first time line' and is discussed below.

Chapter 36 is called 'A wee bit more about the Germans.' It is a brief chapter; and its existence parallels the fact that, after leaving Turkey to settle in Europe, Germany was the first country where he attempted to establish his *Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man*. Gurdjieff *et. al.* stayed in Germany for about a year and then went to France: Chapter 37 is called simply 'France.' However, this chapter commences with a coded, but unmistakable<sup>102</sup> reference to his visits to England prior to the establishment of his Institute, near Fontainebleau, in France. 'France' is followed by four essentially theoretical chapters<sup>103</sup> together with two briefly mentioned TL1 events (Purgatory and Deskaldino) and some biographical detail brought in by means of a different mechanism (see below). Then comes 'Beelzebub in America' (Chapter 42), reflecting several visits to that country in the late 1920s and early 1930s and the predominant nationality of his younger pupils (c.1927-c.1933).<sup>104</sup>

From the above outline, and without the introduction of any further data, it can be readily seen that the order in which Beelzebub relates the events of his final visit to Earth closely mirrors Gurdjieff's own external journey from Tashkent to Russia,

thence to France via Turkey, Germany and, briefly, England and finally to the U.S.A. (in relation to which he developed special hopes for the future of his teaching<sup>105</sup>). Further support is lent to the idea of an autobiographical intention in *Beelzebub* by Gurdjieff's statement, in *Herald of Coming Good*, that information concerning the disruptions that prevented him from establishing his Institute in Russia had already been given in his 'first series.'<sup>106</sup> Hence, TL2, at least from the chapters on hypnotism to 'Beelzebub in America', can be thought of as *autobiographical*. This autobiographical chronology stretches from some time before Gurdjieff's appearance in Moscow – he says 1912<sup>107</sup> – to c.1933.

The two chronologies (TL1 and TL2) are set out in parallel (with the chapter titles) in Appendix 2.

### **The 'crossing of the time lines'.**

Although the two chronologies run parallel to each other, there is also a sense in which they must intersect. TL2 extends from prehistoric times to the early 1930s (the time of writing).<sup>108</sup> TL1 commences in the Earth year 1921; and since the duration of interstellar journey cannot be more than about three months (including visits to planets), then logically it must intersect with TL2. This fact, while it might not be obvious to many readers, can certainly be assumed to have been known to the author. With regard to "objective art" as a means by which esoteric truths are transmitted from generation to generation ("legominism"), Gurdjieff speaks of "intentional inexactitudes"<sup>109</sup>: the implication is that awareness of such intentional inexactitudes should focus attention on the truth which is being transmitted. I suggest that the fact that the two chronologies must cross, even though this is a temporal impossibility, is

just such an intentional inexactitude designed to draw the reader's attention to the relationship between them.

Before looking at this relationship, I will first describe the extent to which the crossing point – i.e., 1921 in TL2 – can be understood as pivotal in both chronologies.

With regard to TL2 we have seen above that 1921 was the year when Gurdjieff brought his teaching to Europe.<sup>110</sup> This was undoubtedly a decisive point in his life. He records – in *The Herald of Coming Good* and in *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* – that he had previously made a definite and positive decision to found his Institute, and to find the necessary "helper-instructors," in Russia.<sup>111</sup> However, the political conditions prevented him from achieving this aim and he, now with a retinue of students (and other dependants), was forced to change his plans in mid-stream.<sup>112</sup> In terms of 'Beelzebub's account,' this crisis in Gurdjieff's course can be said to occur between chapter 34 ('Russia') and chapter 36 ('A wee bit more about the Germans').

The intervening chapter (35), as mentioned above, ostensibly concerns TL1 events. However, this chapter is undoubtedly at the point of intersection *between* the two chronologies. It is, significantly, titled 'A change in the appointed course of falling of the transspace ship *Karnak*'. The relevance of this chapter title to the intersection point is fairly obvious – a change of direction is involved in both cases; moreover, as noted above, this chapter is the only substantial intrusion of TL1 events into the flow of Beelzebub's narrative. It is necessary to recall here that since the beginning of Chapter 31 ('The sixth and last sojourn of Beelzebub on the planet Earth') Beelzebub *et. al.* have been on their homeward journey, away from the planet where the "conference" took place and towards Karatas. This chapter deals with the necessary 'course corrections' in order that two, previously unscheduled, visits – to the 'planets' "Purgatory" and "Deskaldino" (see page 316) – can be made during the



return journey.<sup>113</sup> What is being spoken of is a kind of ‘mid-course correction’ (– and its placement as the first new chapter after the mid-way point of the three volumes serves to emphasize this idea.)

Hence, and as anticipated, the place in *Beelzebub* where its two ‘time lines’ intersect is one at which there is a close reciprocity between the two sequences. Recognition of this fact must focus our attention on the nature of the events (destinations) in the ‘first time line’ in order to try and determine their significance to the ‘autobiographical material’ implicit in the tales themselves.

I shall now deal with the four main TL1 junctures – Revozvradendr, the ‘change in appointed course’, Deskaldino and Purgatory – and show how these are structurally related to the parallel TL2 events.

### ***Pole Star and Esoteric Centre.***

The visit to Revozvradendr in the system of the “Pole Star” where Beelzebub attends the conference which is the ‘purpose of the journey’ marks a critical stage in the development of the book from three points of view: (i) it is a symbolic *turning point* – after this the journey is *towards* Karatas<sup>114</sup>; (ii) it corresponds with a major juncture in the ‘second time line’ – from here the ‘history’ is modern and Beelzebub’s experiences parallel Gurdjieff’s; and (iii) it originally came at the transition between the first and second volumes. In the light of (i) and (ii) it can be said that the material *prior to* Revozvradendr, and therefore ‘prior to the commencement of Gurdjieff’s known personal history,’ might symbolize his period of research<sup>115</sup>, and also earlier stages of his own development, which brought him to the point where he had a teaching to transmit. In the same way, the material which *follows* Revozvradendr can be seen as symbolizing his effort to bring his teaching to the world.

From this point of view, Revozvradendr itself must symbolize a time of decision and planning. Hence, Beelzebub's conference stands for some kind of meeting at a time prior to Gurdjieff's groups in Moscow and St.Petersburg, and also, possibly, prior to the supposed period in Tashkent, at which his plan was agreed. This serves to amplify indications which he gives more explicitly in *Herald* and the *Third Series* (see page 304).

That the planet Revozvradendr is said to be located in the system of the “Pole Star” undoubtedly has great symbolic significance. This star, as a celestial centre, an axial place, about which everything turns,<sup>116</sup> may be taken as indicating the “esoteric centre”<sup>117</sup> or the innermost, “esoteric”, circle of the concentric “circles of humanity”,<sup>118</sup> from which genuine esoteric teachings emanate. (It is worth noting that, according to Olga de Hartmann, in the very earliest draft of *Beelzebub* this star was Sirius.<sup>119</sup> Presumably, Gurdjieff had definite reasons for changing this to the Pole Star.) The connection between the visit to the planet of this star and the account of Beelzebub's ‘sixth descent,’ which are immediately consecutive in the text, is thematically strengthened by the mention that, on the occasion of this ‘sixth descent’, they ‘parked their spaceship’ at the *north pole*.<sup>120</sup> From the key position within the narrative structure of the “conference” at Revozvradendr and from the symbolism of the “Pole Star” it can be seen that Gurdjieff is indicating that he, and his teaching, are connected to the “esoteric centre” and that some form of collaboration with representatives of this “inner circle of humanity” took place at the inception of his mission.<sup>121</sup> Hence, the symbolisms of a ‘conference at the Pole Star’ and ‘landing at the north pole’ serve to link together the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ aspects of Gurdjieff's accounts. (It is to be noted in passing that “pole” – or “axis” – suggests the Sufic idea that in every era there is a supreme initiate (*El-Qutb*) who is the “axis of the age”.<sup>122</sup>)

What is the significance of the change of course associated with visits to Purgatory and Deskaldino? – It will be recalled that in terms of TL2 the change of course coincided with Gurdjieff coming to Western Europe. – In the light of the interpretation that has been given to the conference at Revozvradendr, it would seem plausible to suggest that these later visits signify extra consultations which Gurdjieff was forced to make with the “esoteric centre” as a result of his imposed ‘change of course.’ The *second* visit – Deskaldino – is discussed first because it is more immediately susceptible to the analysis in terms of symbolism and structure.

### ***Deskaldino and Central Asia.***

Beelzebub tells the captain of the *Karnak* that he wishes to visit his “first educator” “the Great Saroonoorishan” in order to “fall once more at the feet of the prime creator of my genuine being” to express gratitude for “the entire satisfactoriness of the present functioning of all the separate spiritualized parts of my common presence”. It is further said that Saroonoorishan lives on the planet “Deskaldino,” that Beelzebub also visited this place after his departure from Earth (c.1933?) and that now, as then, it is a difficult place to reach.<sup>123</sup>

As previously noted, the actual visit to “Deskaldino” is only mentioned in the text and it occurred on the threshold between the second and third volumes (in the earlier arrangement) and immediately prior to ‘Beelzebub in America.’ This last serves to suggest reference to an event in the late twenties or early thirties. – Although the fact that *two* visits are indicated might be taken as indicating one in the late twenties and another *circa* 1933. – An investigation of the events which are related in the chapter which *ends* with mention of the arrival at “Deskaldino” will prove fruitful.

This chapter, ‘The Bokharian dervish Hadji-Asvatz-Troov’, tells of Beelzebub's journey in the “very mountainous” region of “Upper Bokhara” with his friend, “a ‘dervish’”, “whose name was ‘Hadji-Zephir-Bogga-Eddin’”.<sup>124</sup> It is further related that “Hadji-Zephir-Bogga-Eddin” takes Beelzebub to visit “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” who lives in a labyrinth of caves underneath the mountains and is a specialist in the psychological effects of music.<sup>125</sup> (I shall further discuss the significance of “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” at the end of this section in the context of a comparison with the indications in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*.)

“Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” tells them that

‘...there once came to see me through a very old friend of mine also a dervish, a still very young European traveler [sic] who sought my acquaintance on account of always this same action of the law of vibrations which interested me.

‘We were soon close friends, as he turned out to be firstly, very serious in the search for truth, and secondly, very kind and “susceptible regarding the weaknesses of all others without exception.”<sup>126</sup>

This passage, as I will show below, is undoubtedly meant to be taken as referring to Gurdjieff himself. Hadji-Asvatz-Troov further relates that through his researches the young European discovered the cause of the disease cancer, and that:

‘He then constated and could already actualize in practice the possibility that, by a certain mode of life and by a certain preparation, any man can consciously elaborate in himself vibrations by means of which, if he saturates the person infected with this terrible disease with those vibrations in a certain way and in a certain successiveness of the flow of time, it is possible to destroy it entirely.<sup>127</sup>

Many years later the European unexpectedly reappeared and related the following sequence of events:

- i. his wife had become ill with cancer;

- ii. owing to ‘the disruptive effect of collective conditions’ – i.e., influences beyond his control – he was unable to initiate a cure;
- iii. when a stable environment was finally achieved and the treatment had been commenced he was severely injured in a road accident;
- iv. during his ensuing period of unconsciousness his wife's illness passed a critical point;
- v. when this was discovered recourse was made to the X-ray treatment of European medicine;
- vi. this destroyed the initial growth, but, to his surprise, others appeared elsewhere in her body;
- vii. “without consideration for his own state, he began to elaborate in himself the necessary vibrations and to saturate the body of the invalid with them”;  
but
- viii. she finally died after two years.
- ix. He had now returned to conduct research into the undesirable side effects of the X-ray treatment.<sup>128</sup>

The stages (i)-(viii) roughly parallel what is known, from other sources, of Gurdjieff's experiences. In his own *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am”*, he claims that he was uniquely qualified to cure his wife's disease, but that his “own illness,” resulting from his motor accident, had prevented him from being able to treat her.<sup>129</sup> From Fritz Peters's *Gurdjieff* we learn that Gurdjieff's wife, Madame Ostrovsky, had some form of terminal cancer<sup>130</sup>, that Gurdjieff spent many hours of each day with her, that he was – Gurdjieff told Peters – keeping her alive by his own efforts<sup>131</sup>, and that she finally died in the Spring of 1926<sup>132</sup>. Webb gives the date as June 26th

1926<sup>133</sup> – either way her death occurred approximately *two years* after Gurdjieff's accident. Webb also provides the additional information that: “Olga de Hartmann claims that once during Mme. Ostrowsky's [sic] last days, Gurdjieff caused a marked improvement in the invalid's condition by making her drink a glass of water which he had held for a few minutes in his hands.”<sup>134</sup> It is not at all *implausible* that the illness had begun at an earlier time and that the disruptive conditions caused by the Russian Revolution and their subsequent flight to the West obstructed Gurdjieff's attempts – of whatever kind – to cure her. Neither is implausible that X-ray therapy would have been tried.<sup>135</sup> We are not concerned here with the truth of Gurdjieff's apparent claim to know a cure for cancer, but only to establish that the European friend of “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” is a self depiction.

Hence, the latter part of this chapter which leads up to the arrival at “Deskaldino” is suggesting that Gurdjieff visited Central Asia at some time after the Summer of 1928. How literally we are intended to take the actual place described or the character whom he refers to as “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” it is not possible to say.

Of “Saroonorishan” we are told only that he was ‘Beelzebub's’ *first* teacher; and “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” speaks of his European friend as being “still very young”. “Saroonorishan” is given the title “Great.” Similarly, ‘Beelzebub’ states that “by his attainments” Hadji-Asvatz-Troov

was already ‘Kalmanuioir,’ that is, a three-brained being from that planet with whom it is not forbidden us from Above to be frank.<sup>136</sup>

This may be taken to mean that he also was a *great* initiate. Hence it could well be that Gurdjieff was thinking of them as equivalent. Upper Bukhara is rightly depicted as a very remote and difficult terrain, and “Deskaldino” is depicted as being physically difficult to reach. It would seem that by juxtaposing these two events so

closely together in the text Gurdjieff is deliberately provoking the reader to believe that they refer to the *same event* and, thereby, to interpret the emphasis so given as meaning that it is more than fictitious.

The name “Deskaldino” is itself revealing in this context: by a slightly imperfect anagram in the French language it can be seen as meaning “port of call turkey.”<sup>137</sup> This “turkey” is the bird, not the country. Despite the obvious relevance of the term “port of call” (or “destination”), the word “turkey” would seem to make this attempt to interpret “Deskaldino” end in nonsense. However, as the reader will recall, Gurdjieff has, in *the chapter immediately prior to* that in which “Deskaldino” is first mentioned, given a special significance to the word “turkey” (see note 100). Hence it may be seen as a ‘code word.’ It refers to regions of Asia which have come under European influence. It might, for this reason, refer to Turkey itself<sup>138</sup>, and possibly, by extension, to any of the Turkic speaking regions between there and Mongolia. However, the term “turkey” is also *specifically* used to describe people of the country Russia; and the cause of the rise of “Bolshevism” is said to be just that phenomenon which he refers to as “turkeyness.”<sup>139</sup> Consequently, the whole of the former Soviet Union can be thought of as “turkey.” In this light, “Deskaldino” would seem to signify a destination somewhere in the former U.S.S.R. (Moreover, the combined suggestion of the Soviet Union and ‘Turkey’ might be taken as indicating Turkestan.) The “Upper Bukhara” of the chapter leading up to “Deskaldino” lies just within the former Soviet Union (and in Turkestan) and could, presumably, be reached by a knowledgeable traveller – or one with local assistance – from Afghanistan without encountering Soviet authorities.<sup>140</sup>

It can be concluded that, through the combined impression of the tale of Hadji-Asvatz-Troov's European visitor and the detour to visit Saroonoorishan on Deskaldino, Gurdjieff *is* deliberately leading us to believe that he went to Asia, and possibly Upper Bukhara, to visit a 'high initiate' some time after 1928. The 'change in appointed course of falling' which results in the visit to Deskaldino has been shown to correspond to the crisis which brought Gurdjieff and his work to Europe in 1921. Gurdjieff clearly alludes to this crisis in the process of relating the course of the illness of the 'European's' wife; however, the *more general* significance of this crisis and its symbol in the 'change in appointed course of falling' serves to suggest a return to the "esoteric centre" to seek guidance for the future development of his work in its new environment. From this point of view Deskaldino represents the 'same place' as Revozvradendr. However, the significance of the latter is more fundamental because it symbolizes the authenticity of the teaching in terms of its connection to the "esoteric centre."

It is opportune to reiterate that this does not *prove* anything with regard to what Gurdjieff actually *did*. The present aim is merely to explicate the indications which he encoded in *Beelzebub*, in order that they can be clearly seen. Nevertheless, it is relevant to point out that the indication in *Beelzebub* of a 'secret journey to the East' in the late nineteen twenties or early nineteen thirties does connect with an 'oral tradition' of Gurdjieff mythology. Bennett cites several examples of such beliefs. He writes that: "Many of us who went to visit him in Paris in 1948 and 1949 believed that he made more than one visit to Asia on the pretext of going to Germany."<sup>141</sup> On a later page he is more specific:

At times he has hinted that he went in 1932 on a visit to Central Asia in order to pick up threads of his former contacts....According



to another version, he attributed the journey to 1933, after the publication of *The Herald of Coming Good...*<sup>142</sup>

Further on again Bennett records that:

From what Gurdjieff said once or twice in 1949, it seems that in 1935 he made a visit to Asia—he said ‘Persia’, which might include Turkestan. It must have been a short trip and presumably the purpose was to consult with persons he trusted about the next phase of his life.<sup>143</sup>

It is in relation to an ‘oral tradition’ such as this that the task of clearly elucidating the cryptic indications which are to be found in his published writings takes on its importance. While they remain only partially perceived they can only enter into a ‘muddy combination’ with the wider mythos. However, it seems fair to say that the combined effect of the ‘oral tradition’ and the literature is to suggest that, for whatever reason, Gurdjieff did wish people to believe that he had contact with ‘high initiates’ in Central Asia and that he had visited them again in the late nineteen twenties or early nineteen thirties.

### **Hadji-Asvatz-Troov and the Sarmoung Brotherhood.**

There are several points of similarity between the Hadji-Asvatz-Troov story in *Beelzebub* and the Sarmoung brotherhood story in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*:

1. Both tales involve the same geographical region, Upper Bukhara.
2. In *Meetings With Remarkable Men* it is related that, following his visit to Mecca and his meeting with some Bukharian dervishes, Gurdjieff had formed the opinion that the true secrets of the Islamic religion were to be found in Bukhara. The name “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” can be understood as indicating a very similar idea. In the earlier version of *Beelzebub*<sup>144</sup> “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” was given as “Hadja-Asvants-Truff.” *Asvants* – subsequently, *asvatz* – suggests a simple anagram of the

French “savants” (learned men). Similarly *Troov* suggests the French “trouver”, to find, and *Truff* suggest “truffe”, the French for truffle, suggesting something that is unearthed. (However, the fact that *Truff* was subsequently rendered *Troov* suggests that Gurdjieff might also have had in mind was the English “truth.”) *Hadji* is a standard transliteration of the Arabic word for the pilgrimage to Mecca and is frequently used as a title to signify one who has made the pilgrimage.<sup>145</sup> Hence, “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov”/“Hadja-Asvants-Truff” can be understood as signifying the uncovering of the truth of Islam by men of knowledge who have been to Mecca. (It is also relevant to note that in *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff says that the true message of “Saint Mohammed” has been kept alive by the dervishes.<sup>146</sup>)

3. The Sarmoung brotherhood is depicted as an esoteric order. Hadji-Asvatz-Troov, although depicted as a solitary researcher may represent a group of people (savants). However, he is, in his own right, depicted as a very high order of terrestrial initiate.
4. In both cases a character bearing the name Bogga-Eddin makes the introductions. In *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, whether or not he is a Naq’shbandi, he is not himself depicted as a member of the Sarmoung brotherhood. And in *Beelzebub*, he is depicted as being of a lower order than Hadji-Asvatz-Troov.
5. In both places Gurdjieff gained knowledge relating to his “law of seven”. However, in the Sarmoun monastery this was to do with sacred dancing and in the *Beelzebub* tale it concerned music (and the curing of cancer). In this context, it is worth noting that in the early presentations of his sacred dances Gurdjieff speaks of the Initiation of a Priestess, which is evocative of the Sarmoung monastery as coming from a *cave temple* in the Hindu Kush (see page 302).

### *Purgatory, after death experience and reincarnation*

Although Beelzebub's actual landing on the Holy Planet Purgatory to visit Hassein's uncle is described with the same brevity as the other two planetary landings, we are told a great deal more about the nature of this planet. The picture which Gurdjieff paints is ambiguous (see below). In this subsection I will argue that Gurdjieff's presentation of the idea of "Purgatory" as the after death situation of people who have developed "higher being bodies" can be understood as suggesting terrestrial concentrations of people of the mesoteric order. This requires some brief discussion of after death possibilities in general and of the status of the idea of reincarnation in the Gurdjieff teaching.

According to Gurdjieff, the situation of a person after death depends on the number and state of the higher bodies that they have developed. (The structure and significance of the higher bodies – the *kesdjan* body, the higher being body and the fourth (or Divine) body – will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.) The majority of people who have not, in Gurdjieff's terms, worked on themselves, have no higher bodies and have no individual after death possibilities. The person with a fully formed *kesdjan* body continues to exist until this body dissolves ("second death"). If at this stage they do not have the third, higher being, body then this is the end of their individual possibilities.<sup>147</sup> If the being is fully perfected direct ascent to merge with the Sun Absolute – i.e., the Divine Source – takes place. However, if the higher being body is developed, but *not* perfected then the being goes to the intermediate state which, in *Beelzebub*, Gurdjieff calls the Holy Planet Purgatory in order for the necessary purificatory work to take place. (In the terms of *ISOM* this is equivalent to

the formation of the fourth, Divine body.<sup>148</sup>) As I will argue in Chapter Five, this situation corresponds to Man No.6 and the mesoteric order.

The chapter ‘The Holy Planet Purgatory’ in *Beelzebub* is a central and highly complex presentation of Gurdjieff’s cosmological, eschatological and soteriological ideas. Gurdjieff’s explanation of the necessity for the existence of this intermediate stage to which non-perfected higher being bodies (“saints”) must go has been outlined in the last chapter.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, it is arguable that the Holy Planet Purgatory signifies, not only the after-death state of the individual who has developed a higher being body, but also the state of development *during life* of such a person.<sup>150</sup> However, it is somewhat strange, juxtaposed with the complexity and sophistication of these ideas, that Gurdjieff should represent the Purgatory idea as a physical *planet*. The idea of ‘planet’ may of course simply signify ‘station of being’. As we have seen Gurdjieff speaks of the origin of angels in terms of the planet “Modiktheo”; and it is perfectly reasonable simply to see ‘planet’ in this kind of case as allegorical. However, Gurdjieff seems to emphasize the physical planetary nature of Purgatory, writing of such things as its villages,<sup>151</sup> transport<sup>152</sup> and an etherogram station<sup>153</sup>. Furthermore, it is represented as a place that can be visited not only by beings who are still alive, but also by a young being (Beelzebub’s grandson) who could not have developed a higher being body. What is Gurdjieff trying to get at here? I suggest that by this awkward juxtaposition of a sophisticated metaphysical idea with a strangely detailed physical metaphor he is seeking to indicate the idea of a terrestrial place where spiritually advanced beings are concentrated. That is to say, the “Holy Planet Purgatory” is, in part, a way of indicating a terrestrial esoteric centre.

However, the fact that it is basically represented as an after-death state also suggests possibilities in terms of reincarnation of the higher being body. The picture

which Gurdjieff presents of Purgatory as an ideal planet where the situation is optimal for spiritual development could be understood as equivalent to the Buddhist idea of a propitious rebirth. As has been described in Chapter Three,<sup>154</sup> sacred messengers incarnate with a special potential for the rapid development of the higher faculties. In this light, Gurdjieff's ambiguous representation of the Holy Planet Purgatory can be taken as suggesting the reincarnation of the saintly beings who have achieved the purgatorial stage.

### **Purgatory and the “World Brotherhood”.**

The above ideas of Purgatory as a ‘terrestrial concentration of saints’ is somewhat evocative of the “World Brotherhood” in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*. Alluding to the teachings that he and Professor Skridlov received from Father Giovanni, Gurdjieff writes:

I shall place them, as relating to the question of the soul, that is, the third independently formed part of the common presence of a man, in the chapter entitled ‘The divine body of man, and its needs and possible manifestations according to law’, but only in the third series of my writings...<sup>155</sup>

This is suggestive of the state of the “saints” on the holy Planet Purgatory. If it can be taken as representing the level of inner work of the “‘self-freed’ monks” of the “World Brotherhood”, or at least some of them, then it suggests that they are, in Gurdjieff's terms (i) of the mesoteric inner circle of humanity and (ii) “saints”. In *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff speaks of a spiritual organization that existed in Central Asia around the fourteenth century called “The-Assembly-of-the-Enlightened” or “The-Assembly-of-All-the-Living-Saints-of-the-Earth”.<sup>156</sup> The latter of these two names seems to describe the “World Brotherhood” of *Meetings With Remarkable Men* in so far as that it is a ‘terrestrial holy planet purgatory’. Bennett associates “The-

Assembly-of-All-the-Living-Saints-of-the-Earth” with the Khwajagan *of the same period* with whom he believed Gurdjieff to have been somehow connected.<sup>157</sup> If in the idea of the “World Brotherhood” Gurdjieff can be seen as having depicted a modern day “The-Assembly-of-All-the-Living-Saints-of-the-Earth” this would lend support to Bennett’s position.

### ***Three aspects of the esoteric centre.***

The TL1 chronology – in which the Revozvradendr, Deskaldino and Purgatory ‘planetary landings’ occur – can be seen as representing a dimension of *symbolic depth* rather than one of simple sequence. From this perspective these three ‘places’ may be seen as depicting different aspects of *one* place.

Revozvradendr, with its symbolism of the Pole Star, stands for connection to the “esoteric centre.” It indicates a conference prior to Gurdjieff’s teaching career and can be taken as implying the authenticity of his teaching in terms of connection to a hidden tradition. Deskaldino supplies a different view point: here, by reference to Hadji-Asvatz-Troov, a place is indicated in terms of Gurdjieff’s own discovery of it through his search for truth. It is defined in terms of: (i) an approximate geographical location; and (ii) its relationship to a known spiritual tradition – i.e., Islam. However, the complex symbols of Revozvradendr and Deskaldino, while pointing to the ideas which have been suggested, are each inadequate to represent a terrestrial ‘esoteric powerhouse’. The conference at Revozvradendr is depicted as a *temporary* situation and there is no particular suggestion of a permanent group on that ‘planet.’ It is said that Hadji-Asvatz-Troov formerly lived in a Dervish monastery<sup>158</sup> and, it is indicated, still maintains Dervish contacts (e.g., Hadji-Zephir-Bogga-Eddin). And, as we have seen, the name “Hadji-Asvatz-Troov” may have been designed to indicate a group of

people. However, *he is depicted as a solitary character*. Similarly, Saroonoorishan is spoken of without reference to anyone else. The ‘deficiencies’ of Revozvradendr and Deskaldino are complemented by the depiction of Purgatory in substantial terms. This representation of Purgatory contributes the idea of a resident population of advanced beings in a particular location or locations.

Unlike the Deskaldino TL1 event, ‘Beelzebub's visit to the Holy Planet Purgatory’ does not appear as indicative of a ‘secret journey to Asia’ to visit initiates; and, unlike the Revozvradendr TL1 event, there is no symbolism suggestive of esoteric authority. However, it can, nevertheless, be said that the Holy Planet Purgatory *as a place which can be visited* serves to give a more complete image of the idea of a ‘strong’ esoteric centre which Gurdjieff can be seen as building from the symbolism of Revozvradendr and Deskaldino.

### **Conclusion.**

In *ISOM* Gurdjieff was unequivocal concerning the existence and profound significance of the esoteric centre, or inner circles of humanity. However, it is not clear whether he is talking about a ‘weak’, *purely* psycho-cosmological-initiatory, version or whether it is to be understood that there is a ‘strong’, historico-geographical correlate.

The most *explicit* indications that he gives concerning his own connections to actual places are in *Herald* and the *Third Series* where he speaks in terms of getting advice and assistance immediately prior to the commencement of his career as a

spiritual teacher. However, he does not say that this place (or places) was the 'esoteric centre'.

In this last respect, the evidence of *Meetings With Remarkable Men* has a similar status. The World Brotherhood, in particular, would seem to be a strong candidate for a terrestrial – i.e., 'strong' – esoteric centre, but he does not say, in so many words, that it is. Moreover, whatever its basis in autobiographical fact, there is a great extent to which the material in *Meetings With Remarkable Men* is an allegory of the *inner* search. And so, in so far as that the World Brotherhood and the Sarmoung monastery can be said to represent the esoteric centre at all, they may be just an allegorical version of the 'weak' esoteric centre as set out more philosophically in *ISOM*. However, there is the definite indication of an historico-geographical pattern relating to the 'secrets of Islam are to be found in Bukhara' idea.

In so far as that there is anything going on here at all, *Beelzebub* seems to hold the key to tying it all together.<sup>159</sup>

In *Beelzebub* the idea of a 'conference' prior to Gurdjieff's teaching career (cf. *Herald* and the *Third Series*) is found strongly juxtaposed with a *symbol* (rather than an allegory) of the esoteric centre (the "pole"). This alone serves to connect the 'weak' and 'strong' aspects. We also find the suggestion that Gurdjieff went back to Central Asia in the late nineteen twenties or early nineteen thirties which corroborates an 'oral tradition'. There are features of the Hadji-Asvatz-Troov/Deskaldino juxtaposition which have resonances with the Sarmoung brotherhood strand in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*. And the name Hadji-Asvatz-Troov can be seen to indicate the 'finding the secrets of Islam in Bukhara' idea (as emphasized in the Sarmoun monastery and World Brotherhood strands in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*). Taking Gurdjieff's ambiguous picture of the Holy Planet Purgatory (the



dwelling place of ‘dead saints’) with his mention of the Central Asian “Assembly-of-All-the-Living-Saints-of-the Earth” (which may refer to the Khwajagan) serves to suggest something very similar to the depiction of the World Brotherhood in *Meetings With Remarkable Men*.

To summarize, *Beelzebub* can be read as synthesizing:

- the idea of the esoteric centre (as in *ISOM*);
- the idea that, at the threshold of his career as a spiritual teacher, Gurdjieff received advice from people of advanced spiritual attainment in Central Asia;
- the Islam, Bukhara, Naq’shbandi (and possibly Khwajagan) and Sarmoun matrix of ideas; and
- the idea of an actual place where spiritually advanced people are concentrated.

In short, it brings together the ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ elements into one picture.

It has, therefore, been shown that there is an abundance of ‘canonical indications’ in support of Bennett’s position.<sup>160</sup> Referring to the summary of Bennett’s position (see page 291) it can be said that there is general support for points (i), (ii), (iv)<sup>161</sup> and (v). There is even support for point (iii) – concerning the relationship between the “Hidden Directorate” and the higher powers – in so far as that Gurdjieff speaks of Hadji-Asvatz-Troov as being a very advanced terrestrial initiate (“*Kalmanuio*”) for whom it is “not forbidden for us from above to be frank.” With regard to point (v), Gurdjieff not only indicates that in a general way he was connected to the esoteric centre, but also gives indications that justify the Naq’shbandi-Sarmoun-Khwajagan line of speculation.

What, then, is the status of these literary findings? In a sense they prove nothing except that there is enough consistency in Gurdjieff's *mythos* to make it tantalizing (and still enough vagueness to make it unverifiable). The fact remains that, as discussed in Chapter One, we do not know where Gurdjieff's teaching came from. In response to this situation the epistemological strategy has been to explicate the internal consistency of different aspects of the teaching in relation to Bennett's understanding of it. In the present case this approach has shown that Gurdjieff did, for whatever reason, give definite indications in his books concerning the esoteric centre, his connection to it and a 'higher Sufism' context. Bennett himself had his own reasons for believing these things over and above Gurdjieff's literary indications (of which he was, one may assume, fully aware). These can be understood as relating to his own stage of inner work and are, by definition, inaccessible to normal means of investigation. (Although, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, it *is* possible to establish developmental criteria by means of which to make judgements concerning whether or not, in terms of the teaching, he could have had direct knowledge of 'the esoteric centre'.) The final sections of this chapter have simply shown that there are in publicly available sources (i.e., in Gurdjieff's books and recorded statements) strong indications in support of Bennett's assertion that Gurdjieff's mission was connected to some larger 'organization'. However, in the final analysis it has to be admitted that, although Gurdjieff can be understood as unequivocal concerning the 'weak' version of connection to the esoteric centre, it is nevertheless possible to see all of the apparent indications of connection in terms of a 'strong' version as being allegorical.

If these indications are there to be seen by anyone who studies the books (including *ISOM*) carefully, the question must arise: Why is Bennett the only one of

Gurdjieff's pupils who seems to have made anything of all this? It is noteworthy that even the orthodox C.S.Nott (whose antipathy to Bennett will be mentioned in Chapter Six) records Gurdjieff saying "I am small compared with those that sent me"<sup>162</sup>, but that he makes *no* comment whatsoever concerning the implications of this statement with regard to lineage. There are three main possibilities to explain the orthodoxy's attitude: (i) that they do not believe them; (ii) that they believe them, but do not talk about them; and (iii) that they are agnostic about them. With regard to the first possibility, it seems implausible that they should completely disregard the idea of the esoteric centre; however, it is possible that they hold a 'weak' view and see the allusions to actual places and contacts as allegory. (The seeking of advice and the reiterated 'secrets of Islam in Bukhara' strand need not signify anything more than particular pieces of knowledge.) The second possibility could arise because it is felt that such ideas give the wrong impression and attract the wrong kind of attention. Related to this, but also an element in its own right, is the idea that for people approaching the teaching these ideas have no immediate relevance to work on oneself. This attitude would also arise from the third possibility which would emphasize the fact that, as John Pentland, Gurdjieff's appointed leader of the work in the U.S.A., says "...the sources of Gurdjieff's teaching are not known since he never divulged what they were."<sup>163</sup> In fact we can only infer the orthodoxy's attitude to these matters. However, the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy *have* been provoked into exhibiting a definite antipathy to the ('strong') suggestion that the authority behind Gurdjieff's teaching was an inner circle of Naq'shandi Sufism. (See the discussion of Bennett's interactions with Idries Shah in Chapter Six.)

## Notes and References to Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup>Exactly what this ‘connection to higher orders of intelligence in the structure of creation’ means will vary according to the particular spiritual psychology and/or cosmology involved. And even within the Gurdjieff teaching it could be understood in a more cosmological way (angels) or a more psychological way (higher centres).

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter One, section: ‘The terrestrial “esoteric centre”’.

<sup>3</sup>Bennett, in the ‘Introduction’ (1973) to his *Is There Life On Earth: an introduction to Gurdjieff* (lectures from 1949), pp.13-14.

<sup>4</sup>Bennett, *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.IV, p.325.

<sup>5</sup>Bennett, *Needs of a New Age Community*, p.21.

<sup>6</sup>*Dramatic Universe* Vol.IV, p.325.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter Six.

<sup>8</sup>It is highly relevant to note that at this time Blake was under the influence of Gary Chicoine. – See Chapter Six, Part III.

<sup>9</sup>*ISOM*, pp.202-3.

<sup>10</sup>*ISOM*, p.200.

<sup>11</sup>*ISOM*, p.200.

<sup>12</sup>*ISOM*, p.310.

<sup>13</sup>*ISOM*, p.311.

<sup>14</sup>*ISOM*, p.310.

<sup>15</sup>See *ISOM*, pp.310-11 and cf. p.72.

<sup>16</sup>*ISOM*, p.310.

<sup>17</sup>*ISOM*, p.311.

<sup>18</sup>See *ISOM*, p.72. – The difference between “Man No.6” and “Man No.7” is discussed and elucidated in Chapter Five.

<sup>19</sup>*ISOM*, p.311.

<sup>20</sup>It has to be borne in mind that Ouspensky wrote *ISOM* many years after the contact with Gurdjieff that it records. And, while its accuracy is attested by Gurdjieff, it *might* be the case that an element of interpretation crept in to the extent of his chronologically juxtaposing ideas which he saw as related but which were given separately.

<sup>21</sup>*ISOM*, p.312.

<sup>22</sup>*ISOM*, p.310.

<sup>23</sup>*ISOM*, p.204.

<sup>24</sup>*ISOM*, p.201.

<sup>25</sup>*ISOM*, p.37.

<sup>26</sup>*ISOM*, p.50.

<sup>27</sup>*ISOM*, p.210.

<sup>28</sup>*ISOM*, p.73.

<sup>29</sup>*ISOM*, p.202.

<sup>30</sup>*ISOM*, p.203.

<sup>31</sup>*ISOM*, p.99.

<sup>32</sup>*ISOM*, p.36.

<sup>33</sup>Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.263.

<sup>34</sup>*Witness*, p.59.

<sup>35</sup>In this context it is relevant to note that Gurdjieff spoke of the way of the sly, or cunning man:

The fourth way is sometimes called the way of the sly man. The 'sly man' knows some secret that the fakir, monk and yogi do not know. How the 'sly man' learned the secret—it is not known. *Perhaps he found it in some old books, perhaps he inherited it, perhaps he bought it, perhaps he stole it from someone.* It makes no difference. The sly man knows the secret and with it outstrips the fakir, the monk and the yogi. (My emphasis. *ISOM*, p.50.)

And:

You must be cunning, you must pretend, lead up to things in conversation..... You must know how to take when it is not given, to steal if necessary, but not to wait for somebody to come and give it to you. (*ISOM*, p.277.)

If these statements are deemed to apply to Gurdjieff himself, then the implication would be that, rather than having found esoteric connection through one geographically located place, he had 'gleaned' the necessary knowledge from wherever he could. This would suggest a 'weak' version of the esoteric centre in which, although knowledge and initiation can be obtained from outside, connection to the esoteric centre is *solely* internal.

<sup>36</sup>Written in the early to mid-1930s, but not published until 1976.

<sup>37</sup>Privately circulated in 1933. Withdrawn in 1934. Republished in 1974.

<sup>38</sup>Gurdjieff says that the purpose of this book is "To acquaint the reader with the material required for a new creation and to prove the soundness and good quality of it."

<sup>39</sup>Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.59.

- <sup>40</sup>*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, pp.78-9.
- <sup>41</sup>This refers to the 'Skridlov' chapter which is the last chapter which Gurdjieff wrote. (This is followed by 'The Material Question' which is a talk given by Gurdjieff in 1924.)
- <sup>42</sup>See *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, pp.241-2.
- <sup>43</sup>Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.18.
- <sup>44</sup>Cf. *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.226 and p.244.
- <sup>45</sup>Cf. *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, pp.239-40.
- <sup>46</sup>"The next day another man, this time *in the habit of a certain monastic order well known in Central Asia*, placed in my hand, instead of alms, a note." (My italics. – *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.237.)
- <sup>47</sup>*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.10.
- <sup>48</sup>*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.24.
- <sup>49</sup>See, e.g., Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions*, p.492.
- <sup>50</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.61.
- <sup>51</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.147.
- <sup>52</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.72.
- <sup>53</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: a very great enigma*, p.33.
- <sup>54</sup>E.g., *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.219, p.185, p.132 and p.138.
- <sup>55</sup>*Life Is Real Only Then: When "I am"*, p.77.
- <sup>56</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.119. – To be precise, Gurdjieff says that, on the day concerned, he was employed as a guide by Prince Yuri Lubovedsky and they met Skridlov, whom Prince Yuri Lubovedsky already knew, at the pyramid.
- <sup>57</sup>Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, *Our Life With Mr Gurdjieff*, pp.68-9.
- <sup>58</sup>See *Herald*, p.17 where Gurdjieff speaks of himself as having penetrated to the "holy-of-holies" of a large number of religious, hermetic and mystical organizations.
- <sup>59</sup>*Life Is Real Only Then: When "I am"*, p.132.
- <sup>60</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.90.
- <sup>61</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.99.
- <sup>62</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.121.
- <sup>63</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.227.
- <sup>64</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.159-60.
- <sup>65</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.158.
- <sup>66</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, pp.164-76.
- <sup>67</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.174.

- <sup>68</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, pp.167-73.
- <sup>69</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.176.
- <sup>70</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.176.
- <sup>71</sup>*Life Is Real Only Then: When "I am"*, p.25.
- <sup>72</sup>See *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.177 and cf., p.192.
- <sup>73</sup>*Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.72.
- <sup>74</sup>The name Bokhara, or *Bukhara*, now refers only to a large town in (former) Soviet Central Asia (Usbek S.S.R.). Formerly, this town was in the north of a region of the same name stretching across the northern border of Afghanistan and including southern parts of the present day Usbek and Tadjik S.S.Rs. The "Upper," or "very mountainous," region of Bukhara would undoubtedly refer to the Pamir mountains which border the Hindu Kush.
- <sup>75</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, pp.161-2.
- <sup>76</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.226.
- <sup>77</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, pp.232-36.
- <sup>78</sup>Cf. *ISOM*, p.47: "The way of the development of hidden possibilities is a way against nature, against God." – I.e., against the involutory downflow of creation.
- <sup>79</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.226.
- <sup>80</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.242.
- <sup>81</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.241.
- <sup>82</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.163.
- <sup>83</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.239.
- <sup>84</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.237.
- <sup>85</sup>See *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.243.
- <sup>86</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.51.
- <sup>87</sup>See *Beelzebub*, I, pp.57-8.
- <sup>88</sup>See *Beelzebub*, III, pp.363-73.
- <sup>89</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, pp.113-4.
- <sup>90</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, pp.335-6.
- <sup>91</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.249.
- <sup>92</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.107-8.
- <sup>93</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.250.
- <sup>94</sup>See *Herald of Coming Good*, pp.50-3,
- <sup>95</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.52.
- <sup>96</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.365-6.

<sup>97</sup>Bennett writes that "...when asked outright if Beelzebub were a portrait of himself, Gurdjieff often hinted at an affirmative reply." (*Concerning Subud*, p.36.)

<sup>98</sup>*Herald of Coming Good*, pp.19-21.

<sup>99</sup>Gurdjieff maintained his activities in Moscow and St.Petersburg until early 1917 when he went to Alexandropol (now Leninakan, Soviet Armenia) (Ouspensky, *ISOM*, p.324). He then went to Essentuki, on the Russian Black Sea coast, where he was joined by many of his pupils from Moscow and St. Petersburg. Teaching activities continued here for about a year (*ibid.*, p.371); Gurdjieff then went to Tiflis (Tbilisi, Soviet Georgia) which was at that time unaffected by the revolution (*ibid.*, p.380) where he reopened his Institute and maintained activities for a further year (until 1920). When conditions in Tiflis ceased to be viable he went to Constantinople, where he stayed until 1921 (*ibid.*, p.382) and thence to Germany in 1921 (*ibid.*, p.384) and, in February 1922, briefly England (*ibid.*, p.384). Gurdjieff and his retinue settled in France in the autumn of 1922 (*ibid.*, p.385).

<sup>100</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.247. Gurdjieff introduces this idea earlier in the chapter 'Russia' (*Beelzebub*, II, pp.190-3). He compares European people to "peacocks" and Asiatic people to "crows": the 'hybrid' which results when the latter try to imitate the former he depicts as the strange and awkward creature the "turkey." It is the Russians who are *particularly the turkey*, but the general principle could be extended to any Asiatic people who seek to imitate Europeans.

<sup>101</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.303. In this connection, see also *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.283.

<sup>102</sup>*Beelzebub* refers to spending a little time in "a community called 'Italy'." In 'A wee bit more about the Germans' he makes reference to the Germans being the modern day inheritors of ancient Greece. In the earlier chapter, 'The fruits of former civilizations and the blossoms of the contemporary', the 'former civilizations' are Greece and Rome, which are mirrored by the contemporary Germany and England. Hence, when he refers to 'Italy' (in scare quotes) he means England.

<sup>103</sup>These are: 'Religion', 'The Holy Planet "Purgatory"', 'Beelzebub tells how people learned and again forgot about the fundamental cosmic law of Heptaparaparshinokh' and 'The Bokharian Dervish Hadji-Asvatz-Troov.'

<sup>104</sup>Webb documents a total of five trips to the U.S.A. between 1929 and 1934 (Webb, *ibid.*, pp.357, 366, 412-3, 419 and 420.) For the American nationality of Gurdjieff's pupils during this period see Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.168.

<sup>105</sup>In addition to the above documentation of Gurdjieff's interest in the U.S.A., his statement, through *Beelzebub*, that "there remains among [Americans] the largest percentage of beings in whose presence the [possibilities for the acquisition of normal Being] is not entirely lost" serves to indicate that he considered the U.S.A. a fertile ground for his teaching.

<sup>106</sup>*Herald of Coming Good*, p.25.



<sup>107</sup>Gurdjieff says that he arrived in Moscow in 1912 (*Herald of Coming Good*, p.25; *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.28). Ouspensky first met Gurdjieff in 1915 (Ouspensky, *ISOM*, pp.6-7).

<sup>108</sup>See the chapter 'Beelzebub in America' where Gurdjieff refers to the time of prohibition (*Beelzebub*, III, p.112).

<sup>109</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.66.

<sup>110</sup>In *Herald of Coming Good* (p.40) Gurdjieff gives 1921 as the date when he established his Institute in France. However, other sources agree that it was not until late 1922 that premises were obtained in France (see Ouspensky, *ibid.*, p.385; also Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, pp.135-6). Whether Gurdjieff's 'mistake' should be taken as simply that, or whether "1921" is given as a *symbolic* rather than a literal date cannot be said.

<sup>111</sup>*Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.28; *Herald of Coming Good*, p.24.

<sup>112</sup>*Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, pp.29-30; *Herald of Coming Good*, p.25; *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.281.

<sup>113</sup>*Beelzebub*, pp.249-51.

<sup>114</sup>There is not space to fully discuss the significance of Beelzebub's home planet Karatas which stands at the beginning and end of both chronologies. I suggest that the name "Karatas" is meant to signify the Latin *caritas* from which the English *charity* and the French *charité* are derived. This, then, would be a symbol of the overall trajectory of *Beelzebub*. *Caritas* means love; and one of the meanings of *charity* is "love of one's fellow men." (*Collins English Dictionary* (1983), p.255 (fifth meaning)) Saint Paul emphasized "...faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." A more modern translation substitutes the word "love" for the word "charity." (*Holy Bible*, 1 Corinthians XIII, v.13; (cf. the 'King James' and the 'New Standard Revised' versions.)) Faith, hope and *love* have been called the "...*theological virtues* because they have been bestowed on us by God (*theos*) and because they have God as their goal." (*The Church's Confession of Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Ignatius Press, 1987), p.206.) In *Beelzebub*, Gurdjieff writes of "Faith", "Hope" and "Love", speaking of them as "...sacred being-functions..." which are "...proper to [human] beings..." (*Beelzebub*, I, p.355.) Gurdjieff encapsulates his doctrine of faith, love and hope in the formula attributed to Ashiata Shiemash:

Faith of consciousness is freedom

Faith of feeling is weakness

Faith of body is stupidity.

Love of consciousness evokes the same in response

Love of feeling evokes the opposite

Love of body depends only on type and polarity.

Hope of consciousness is strength

Hope of feeling is slavery

Hope of body is disease.

(*Beelzebub*, I, p.361).

<sup>115</sup>I.e., into matters of history and psychology.

<sup>116</sup>The “Pole Star” as a symbol of *the centre* occurs most strongly in Asiatic Shamanism, but is also to be found in Hinduism (see below) and in religious Taoism (*Tao Chiao*) in the form of the Grand Unity (*T'ai I*) idea. It could be said that the Pole Star is the celestial correlate of the terrestrial *holy mountain*. Eliade writes that: “In Indian cosmology Mount Meru rises at the “Centre of the World” and above it shines the Pole Star.” (*Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton, 1972), pp.266-7.) Of Siberian shamans he writes: “...in his mystical journey the Yakut shaman...climbs a mountain with seven storeys. Its summit is in the Pole Star, in the “Navel of the Sky.” The Buryat say that the Pole Star is fastened to its summit.” (*ibid.*, p.266.) It may well be that, in referring to the “Pole Star” and also to the terrestrial “north pole” (see below), Gurdjieff was deliberately drawing on and seeking to evoke these mythic motifs. Eliade's reference to the Yakut shaman is particularly interesting because it simultaneously suggests Gurdjieff's ‘concentric rings of humanity’ radiating from the esoteric centre and his seven categories of man culminating with “ManNo.7” (who occupies the innermost circle). Gurdjieff tantalizingly suggests a shamanistic input to his teaching in *Meetings With Remarkable Men* where he speaks, in passing, of “...our big expedition across Siberia for a certain purpose connected with the programme drawn up by [...the...] Seekers of Truth...” (p.226); and also, in the same chapter, where he says that among the many religions represented in a monastery of “the ‘World Brotherhood’” there was “even one Shamanist” (p.239).

<sup>117</sup>Ouspensky, *ISOM*, pp.202-4.

<sup>118</sup>*ibid.*, p.311.

<sup>119</sup>de Hartmann, *Our Life With Mr Gurdjieff*, p.239.

<sup>120</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.119.

<sup>121</sup>This ‘coded message’ of *Beelzebub* concurs with that which he explicitly states in *Herald of Coming Good* (p.59).

<sup>122</sup>See, e.g., René Guenon, *The Lord of the World*, p.19.

<sup>123</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, pp.250-1.

<sup>124</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.61-3.

<sup>125</sup>*Beelzebub*, III. pp.92-100.

<sup>126</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.100.

<sup>127</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.100-1.

<sup>128</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.102-4.

<sup>129</sup>*Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am”*, p.40.

<sup>130</sup>Peters, Fritz, *Gurdjieff*, p.74.

<sup>131</sup>*ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>132</sup>*ibid.*, p.100.

<sup>133</sup>Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.316.

<sup>134</sup>*ibid.*, p.316.

<sup>135</sup>In an afterword to his ‘The Material Question’ (appended to *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.298) Gurdjieff speaks of the expenses resulting from his wife's illness as a factor contributing to his financial difficulties during the period following his accident (July, 1924).

<sup>136</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.91.

<sup>137</sup>Replacing the *k* of *Deskaldino* with a *c* gives *Descaldino*. Moving the first *d* to the penultimate position gives *escaldindo* which can be split into *escal[e]* (=“destination”, or “port of call”) *dindo[n]* (=“turkey (cock)”). (Both of the missing letters are silent in spoken French.)

<sup>138</sup>See *Beelzebub*, II, p.303.

<sup>139</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, 194-5.

<sup>140</sup>In this context the ‘physical difficulties’ encountered in making a journey to “Deskaldino” could, as suggested, symbolize the problem of negotiating such a rugged region. (And the fact that Beelzebub's conversation with the captain indicates that previously he had approached this place from a different direction might suggest an approach from Russia rather than from Afghanistan, or via Peshawar.) However, it may be that these ‘physical difficulties’ are equally symbolic of ‘psycho-political’ factors: The exact nature of the difficulty is given as connected with the absorption of the harmful substance “zilnotrago” (akin to “cyanic gas”). The only other reference to this substance speaks of it being left by a comet which is “sometimes called ‘*Madcap*’” (my italics); moreover, this substance “...on entering the planetary body of a being disorganizes most of its functions until all [of it] is volatilized out of it.” (See *Beelzebub*, II, p.251; and cf. I, p.56-7.) From the point of view of Gurdjieff's teachings about the causes of wars and revolutions, this would seem to be an apt metaphor for the ‘mass psychoses’ which temporarily affect regions of the Earth. Hence the difficulty of reaching “Deskaldino” might represent the long term political consequences of the Russian Revolution.

<sup>141</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.173.

<sup>142</sup>*ibid.*, p.181.

<sup>143</sup>*ibid.*, p.216. This seems to be a date which Bennett himself particularly favours: see also *ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>144</sup>*Herald of Coming Good*, p.52.

<sup>145</sup>“*hadja*” might have been Gurdjieff's own attempt at transliteration before he knew the standard.

<sup>146</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, pp.302-3.

<sup>147</sup>However, Gurdjieff speaks of the possibility of “exchange-of-the-former-being-body-Kesdjan” which allows a partially formed higher being body to occupy a vacated *kesdjan* body when their own dissolves, allowing continued development. (*Beelzebub*, II, p.359.)

<sup>148</sup>See Chapter Five.

<sup>149</sup>See Chapter Three, Part 2, section ‘Cosmic hazard *versus* local hazard’.

<sup>150</sup>Again, this idea will be more fully developed in Chapter Five where it is argued that the development of the fourth, or Divine, body (as described in *ISOM* – see p.44) is equivalent to the Purgatory idea.

<sup>151</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.315.

<sup>152</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.339.

<sup>153</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.311.

<sup>154</sup>See section ‘Christ and the other Sacred Messengers’.

<sup>155</sup>*Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p.243. If this was ever written it was not published.

<sup>156</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.281.

<sup>157</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.58.

<sup>158</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.70ff.

<sup>159</sup>Paul Anderson, a senior personal pupil of Gurdjieff, in addressing the context of the apparently disappointing incompleteness of his ‘third series’ of writings, has written that:

It became evident to us all that *Beelzebub* was the one significant document. All his secrets—or at least all those that he felt free to reveal—were preserved in *Beelzebub's Tales*....  
(Quoted in Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making A New World*, p.180.)

The present context suggests that this is the case with regard to Gurdjieff’s ‘autobiographical secrets’.

<sup>160</sup>It is to be noted that, with the exception of the Bogga-Eddin/Bahauddin transliteration, this conclusion has been reached independently of Bennett’s ideas.

<sup>161</sup>That ‘man as he should be’ transforms energies consciously – according to the “*foolasnitamnian*” principle – is fundamental to Gurdjieff’s doctrine (see, e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.130). With regard to the transformation of energies by the inner circle of humanity, Gurdjieff says that the Earth requires subtle energies to evolve (*ISOM*, p.305), producing these energies is a task of humanity (*ISOM*, p.306) and that this evolutionary task is only undertaken by the inner circles (*ISOM*, p.309). It is to be noted that all of this is given in the pages leading up to the definition of the inner circles.)

<sup>162</sup>C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.31. This refers to some time in the early 1930s.

<sup>163</sup>John Pentland’s reply to Elwell-Sutton in *Encounter*, July 1975, p.91.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# Spiritual Psychology

### *Abstract*

In this chapter I endeavour to establish a coherent developmental model of the levels of being that, according to Gurdjieff, are possible for the human being. Special attention is given to the nature of, and qualifications for, the transitions between these levels. It is argued throughout that *help* and *submission* are, at all levels, complementary to effort. The final section evaluates the validity of Bennett's emphasis on the complementarity of "receptive lines of work" in the light of the independently generated developmental model.

## Introduction

In this chapter I address the questions: What, according to Gurdjieff's teaching, is the nature of the perfected human being and through what stages and transitions can this be achieved? This enquiry will serve three main purposes. Firstly, as with the previous two chapters, it will enable us to establish a firm basis for comparison with the doctrines of Subud. Secondly, the model thus established can be utilized, in the chapters which follow, to make a reliably 'Gurdjieffian' evaluation of Bennett's statements concerning his personal development and experiences. With regard to both of these purposes it is particularly important to elucidate understandings of the *higher* phases of development concerning which little systematic information is given.

A third strand of this chapter relates to Bennett's emphases on help, grace and service to the Great Work as having an immediate bearing on "work on oneself". I shall seek to demonstrate that Gurdjieff's teaching, which is most obviously characterized as a way of *struggle* and *effort*, embodies a complementary dimension of *help* and *grace* which is of equal significance. This reciprocal relationship between the dimensions of effort and grace will be shown to exist – in changing forms – at all levels of the path. In the final section of this chapter, having established the Gurdjieffian developmental model, I turn to an evaluation of Bennett's ideas concerning balanced Work.

Gurdjieff provided several interconnected schemes which, taken together, can be seen as constituting his teaching concerning the potential levels of human spiritual evolution and the natures of the transitions between these levels. However, it will be recalled that these schemes were originally given out as "fragments" in relation to practical work; they were not given as a ready made system, or with a view to the (re-)construction of a system from the perspective of an

ordinary level of consciousness. Consequently, any serious attempt at such a synthesis requires the exercise of sensitivity and caution. In practice this necessitates thorough explication of the meanings of the schemes themselves together with careful treatment of the interrelationships between them. By this procedure a functional ‘model’ of the territory can be developed.

The main schemes to be considered – which have, to varying degrees, been introduced and described in the previous chapters – are:

- the doctrine of higher centres;
- the sevenfold typology of human beings (‘man numbers’);
- the doctrine of higher bodies;
- the four levels of consciousness;
- the scale of sacred degrees of reason; and
- the circles of humanity/stairway ideas.

Additionally, two ‘developmental allegories’ – the “two rivers” idea (see Chapter 3) and the “household” analogy – will be utilized as means to gain additional and corroborating perspectives on the relationships between the different levels that can be distinguished.

Although the main concern here is Gurdjieff’s spiritual psychology, it is necessary to bring in a little of his cosmology. As has been stated previously, the two subjects are intimately linked to the extent that it is possible to speak of one discipline called psychocosmology: man’s state and possibilities are inextricably related to the nature of the universe of which, as I will show, he is a microcosmic homologue. Nevertheless, it is, within the teaching, possible to speak in terms of a scheme of spiritual psychology (and physiology) without making excessive reference to cosmology. However, in the present situation it will be useful to preface the psychological discussions with a description of the single octave scheme of the ray of creation (one of Gurdjieff’s simplest and most primary cosmological representations). This will serve as a



‘standard scale’ which will assist in the establishment of comparisons between the different psychological schemes.

With regard to the psychophysiological schemes themselves, I shall first explore the idea that the human essence has the structural capacity for spiritual development. – The main focus of this section will be on the doctrine of higher centres; the idea of four levels of consciousness will also be utilized. – This exploration will serve as a foundation for the subsequent discussions by clarifying the nature of the relationship between the human potential for higher evolution (essence) and higher evolution itself (growth of essence). In particular it will serve: (i) to define the meaning of the term “crystallization” as applied to human development; and (ii) to prepare the way for an understanding of the relationship between the idea of connection to the higher centres and other aspects of development (especially the construction of higher bodies).

I shall then turn to Gurdjieff’s sevenfold vertical typology of man (“man numbers”) which is found in *ISOM*. This, while initially lacking detail, will be taken as the ‘central pillar’ of the model because it embodies the best balance between clarity and comprehensiveness. Having set out the ‘bare bones’ of this particular scheme as given in *ISOM*, I shall then proceed to clarify the characteristics of its levels and, perhaps more importantly, *the transitions between them* through discussion of and cross reference between the other schemes. Finally, with the aid of the “two rivers” allegory, I shall examine the various statements that Gurdjieff has made pertaining to ‘death in life’ and, relating these to the major transitions of the model, demonstrate their parallelism with the possible stages that can follow physical death.

## The Fundamental Octave of Creation.

According to Gurdjieff the totality of creation is made up of seven distinct Worlds<sup>1</sup> (–i.e., “cosmoses”<sup>2</sup>). This totality is the primary expression of the “law of the octave”<sup>3</sup> which enters into all complete transformations.<sup>4</sup> – It is the intentional discontinuities, or hiatuses, embodied in the law of octaves that gives creation the possibility of cyclical completeness (–i.e., the trogoautoegocratic process of involution and evolution).<sup>5</sup> – The seven Worlds which are the distinct notes of the sol-fa scale are designated:

Absolute	(do)
All Worlds	(si)
All Suns	(la)
Sun	(sol)
All Planets	(fa)
Earth	(mi)
Moon	(re)

(Gurdjieff stated that “Beyond the Moon there is *nothing*. This is also the Absolute – do.”<sup>6</sup>) It is not necessary here to discuss the nature of the relationship between these Worlds and the astrophysical structures to which their names correspond. The important fact is that these terms designate distinct levels of being and organizational power (–i.e., degrees of creativity) in creation. Gurdjieff gives these ideas a precise numerical formulation in terms of the *number of laws to which each world level is subject*. The Absolute is assigned the number 1 which signifies that it is a unity subject only to the law of its own will. In the next cosmos – All Worlds – the “law of three”<sup>7</sup> has divided the unity of the Absolute into affirming, denying and reconciling roles (“holy affirming”, “holy denying” and “holy reconciling”<sup>8</sup>). This level is

deemed to be subject to 3 laws. In each world of the next lower level – All Suns – the totality, or unity, of the All Worlds level is divided again according to the law of three. This is said to give it three new laws of its own in addition to those of All Worlds: hence it is deemed to be subject  $3+3=6$  laws.<sup>9</sup> This accumulation of laws continues down through the cosmoses thus:

Absolute	subject only to the ‘unitary law of its own Will’
All Worlds	3 laws
All Suns	$3+3=6$ laws
Sun	$3+6+3=12$ laws
All Planets	$3+6+12+3=24$ laws
Earth	$3+6+12+24+3=48$ laws
Moon	$3+6+12+24+48+3=96$ laws <sup>10 11</sup>

This accumulation of laws means that the lower worlds are *less free* than the higher worlds.

Gurdjieff stated that:

The fewer laws there are in a given world, the nearer it is to the will of the Absolute. We live in a world subject to forty-eight orders of laws, that is to say, very far from the will of the Absolute and in a very remote and dark corner of the universe.<sup>12</sup>

The sequence 1, 3, 6, 12, 24, 48, 96 also expresses progressive degrees of *materiality* or density. From this point of view the numbers are spoken of as “hydrogens” (e.g., “hydrogen 12” or “H.12”) rather than laws, but the two schemes are directly equivalent to each other. This provides another perspective on the idea of the higher worlds being freer: H.12, for instance, is more vibrant and conscious than H.24 (the substance of the next lower world) which is, relatively, less vibrant, less conscious, denser and *more mechanical*.<sup>13</sup>

The cosmological dimension of human awakening and liberation is expressed in terms of these worlds and their laws. Gurdjieff said:

On the earth we are very far removed from the will of the Absolute; we are separated from it by forty-eight orders of mechanical laws. If we could free ourselves from one half of these laws, we would find ourselves subject to only twenty-four orders of laws, that is, to the laws of the planetary world, and then we should be one stage nearer to the Absolute and its will. If we could then free ourselves from one half of these laws, we should be subject to the laws of the sun (twelve laws) and consequently one stage nearer still to the absolute. If, again, we could free ourselves from half of these laws, we should be subject to the laws of the starry world and separated by only one stage from the immediate will of the Absolute.

And the possibility for man thus gradually to free himself from mechanical laws exists.<sup>14</sup>

Hence, the evolution of the individual can be understood as an ascent to higher levels of being corresponding to the notes on the fundamental octave of the ray of creation. Moreover, the successive liberation from laws which Gurdjieff describes suggests four distinct stages of development corresponding to states of being under 48, 24, 12 and 6 laws.<sup>15</sup> By virtue of this precise correlation of the numbers of laws (and hydrogen numbers) with discrete levels of creation it is possible to use this cosmological model as a basis for comparison between statements about different aspects of man's possible evolution.

### **Faculties of Essence.**

In Chapter Three I have written of essence in terms of that which is innate in people as distinct from everything which has been acquired through processes of conditioning (“personality”). Gurdjieff relates essence to the idea of “fate”, and, just as essence is contrasted with personality, so the idea of fate is juxtaposed against the mechanical operation of the law of accident.<sup>16</sup> By “fate” Gurdjieff seems to mean a person's natural pattern of potential. He has been cited as saying that “A man's real I, his individuality...is his essence, grown up, mature.” And on these bases I have likened essence to a ‘seed’ from which the ‘flower’ of inner development can grow. To extend this analogy a little further, a seed may be thought of as having two aspects: firstly, it

has a structural integrity of its own, a material starting point; and, secondly, it contains the pattern of the plant form which it can realize if material conditions allow. The analogy is limited because it refers to ‘horizontal’ transformations within a specific level whereas the Gurdjieffian description of human development refers to ‘vertical’ transformations *between levels*. (And, of course, it is also flawed on the basis that, the necessary conditions being provided, the plants development is inevitable whereas, according to Gurdjieff, human spiritual growth is not.) Nevertheless, it serves to suggest the idea of essence having two major aspects or levels. I wish here to distinguish a higher and a lower aspect of essence. It has already been argued that all of the seven centres may be thought of as essence because they are all, in their different ways, part of the human's structure *as given*. (Although the specific programming of the moving, emotional and thinking centres is acquired, and therefore personality, their individual structure and three-fold structural potential is *essence*.) On this basis, it is suggested that: (i) the five lower centres constitute the lower aspect of the human essence and may, together, be thought of as *identical with the ‘retort containing a mixture of powders’ idea*; and (ii) the two higher centres constitute different levels of a higher aspect of essence. The two higher centres may be thought of as representing pre-existent potentials for spiritual development to which the lower aspect of essence must become connected if the potentials are to be realized. It is to a more detailed discussion of the related roles of the lower and higher aspects of essence that I now turn.

To summarize the retort analogy: The mixture of powders represents the raw, or base, material of the essence (the totality of its lower aspect). Through the application of heat – i.e., work on oneself – the mechanical mixture can be fused into an ‘alloy’ which has entirely new qualities. This ‘alloy’ represents the *kesdjan* body. (Note that the use of the word *fused* (or *fusion*), to describe the development of the *kesdjan* body is to be taken as equivalent to the word “crystallization” which is used elsewhere in *ISOM*.<sup>17</sup>) Subsequent, more sophisticated, qualities equivalent to the “higher being” and “fourth” bodies can then be developed. (The nature of the

relationship between the higher bodies and the higher centres is discussed in a later section.) This process of psycho-spiritual alchemy is given a more technical representation in Gurdjieff's description of the 'human factory' and its transmutations of substances according to the laws of octaves and threefoldness (see Chapter Three). This is described here in terms of the crystallization of the *kesdjan* body and the subsequent development of the still higher bodies.<sup>18</sup> In this scheme the effort at "self remembering" is understood as providing a (conscious) shock which enables the "air" and "impressions" octaves to develop up to the substance H.12.<sup>19</sup> However, it is only with *subsequent*, more advanced, work that a second conscious shock is produced enabling the production of the still higher substance H.6 and raising overall productivity to a threshold at which *crystallization* (of the *kesdjan* body) begins to occur. Gurdjieff does not define the nature of this second conscious shock as clearly as that of the first, but three definite facts may be usefully stated:

- (i) "The practice of not expressing unpleasant emotions, of not 'identifying,' of not 'considering inwardly,' [-i.e., not indulging in thoughts about other peoples' attitudes to oneself] is the preparation..." for the second conscious shock.<sup>20</sup>
- (ii) "The effort which creates this 'shock' must consist in work on the emotions, in the transformation and transmutation of emotions."<sup>21</sup> This is probably related to the idea of conscious labour and intentional suffering.<sup>22</sup>
- (iii) This shock acts on the substance "mi 12" of the "impressions octave". It enables this octave to pass its first hiatus point to "fa 6" and the food octave to pass its second hiatus point to "do 6". Gurdjieff states that "Real, objective results can be obtained only after the transmutation of mi 12 has begun"<sup>23</sup> and also that "In order to understand the nature of this 'shock' it is necessary to understand the meaning of si 12 [-i.e., the energy of the sex centre, the highest produced in the body through the evolution of the food octave without conscious shocks] and mi 12."<sup>24</sup>

A connection between the theme of work on emotions in (i) and (ii) and the question of the nature of “mi 12” in (iii) will be suggested below. The salient conclusion to draw at this stage is that through work on the raw material of essence – i.e., the ‘human factory’ – it is possible: (a) by the first conscious shock, to produce a supply of the substance H.12 which is independent of the sex centre; and (b), by the second conscious shock, to generate a supply of the still higher substance H.6.

Gurdjieff's analysis of the possibility of human development in terms of the availability of higher substances, or energies, does not confine itself to describing the means of their production: he also emphasizes the necessity of economizing and conserving the energies that are available at any given stage of development by the avoidance of constant drainage through unnecessary tensions – either psychological or physical – and of large losses through “explosions” (e.g., uncontrolled anger).<sup>25</sup> It seems fairly obvious that these two efforts, to produce and to conserve, would develop in parallel as the discipline of self observation, which is included in the effort at self remembering, will engender awareness of unnecessary tensions<sup>26</sup> and that of the non-expression of negative emotions would decrease the likelihood of losses through “explosions”.<sup>27</sup> However, we have previously met with this question of wastage in the context of one centre's misappropriation of the energy of another. This, as was described, exacerbates and perpetuates the overall dysfunctionality because the centres are all starved of their appropriate energy. (Taking the five lower centres as the lower aspect of essence, it can be said that the ‘seed’ cannot begin to grow because its nutritive mechanism has been damaged.)

Gurdjieff specifies the quality of energy (‘hydrogen number’) with which each centre is designed to work. The thinking centre ‘burns fuel’ of the grade H.48, the moving and emotional centres use the faster H.24 and the sex centre burns the still more vibrant energy H.12. He also specifies the ‘fuels’ of the higher emotional centre (HEC) and the higher thinking centre (HTC) as H.12 and H.6 respectively.<sup>28</sup> The reader will recall that, according to Gurdjieff, the two

higher centres are fully formed in man, but that he does not, in his normal state have access to them – they are, from a practical point of view, dormant. This dormancy can, in one aspect, be construed as resulting from *a lack of the necessary fuel*. When in the ‘habitual’ state of existence people simply do not have the necessary energies for contact to be made (because of low production and wastage).<sup>29</sup> But it is to be noted that, as a result of the first conscious shock, supplies of H.12 evolve in the “air” and “impressions” octaves and that, as a result of the second, supplies of H.6 are produced. These are, respectively, precisely the energies required to fuel the HEC and the HTC. Consequently, it would be expected that one result of these shocks is to bring about a degree of connection between the lower centres and the higher ones – i.e., between the lower and higher aspects of essence. This idea finds corroboration in the statement by Gurdjieff that it is only by an ‘accelerated functioning’ of the emotional centre, using H.12<sup>30</sup> instead of H.24, that connection to the HEC can be achieved<sup>31</sup>; and this, in turn, connects with the idea that the higher energy H.12 has to be ‘brought’ to the point at which the first conscious shock has to occur in order to allow the H.48 of the incoming impressions to transmute into H.24.<sup>32</sup> This seems to suggest that the effort of self remembering, if it is intense enough and after some preparation, would be sufficient to bring about some, if only sporadic, connection to the HEC. This connection of the lower aspect of essence to the higher aspect of essence, which is in some sense the image of its potential, can be seen as providing an inner wisdom which will assist in the further development and regulation of work on oneself.

At this point it is necessary to examine more closely the ways in which Gurdjieff defines the two higher centres. The higher emotional and higher thinking centres can be related to the higher bodies, and this correlation will be explored below; but in order not to short circuit the descriptive process, it is first appropriate to see what independent definitions can be gleaned. However, it is not possible, on the basis of the information that exists, to give substance to the ideas of the higher centres without reference to Gurdjieff's levels of consciousness. He states



that there are four main levels of consciousness possible to the human being. The first is the state of sleep (dreamless and dreaming). The second is the dysfunctional and habitual state of mechanicalness, or ‘waking sleep’ which is taken for consciousness but which is, in reality, closer to dreaming sleep than it is to the third state of “self-consciousness”. The fourth state is called “objective consciousness”. It is self-consciousness and objective consciousness with which we are concerned here.

Gurdjieff states:

The two higher states of consciousness—‘self-consciousness’ and ‘objective consciousness’—are connected with the functioning of the *higher centers* [sic] in man.

...These centers are in us; they are fully developed and are working all the time, but their work fails to reach our ordinary consciousness.<sup>33</sup>

Self-consciousness is defined as being the state proper to man – of *man as he should be*, or “man not in quotation marks”. It is the state of *true* wakefulness and, as its name implies, it is a state of self remembering.<sup>34</sup> From the above quotation it is not unreasonable to assume that the HEC correlates with self-consciousness and the HTC with objective consciousness. In the first case, this view finds support from consideration of the previously noted cyclical connection between self remembering (or, initially, the *effort* to do so), a higher level of functioning of the ordinary emotional centre, the evolution of the ‘fuel’ necessary for the HEC and the subsequent greater ease of self remembering. Thus the awakening HEC can be seen as being intimately related to self remembering and, hence, to self-consciousness. It is also, as its name and the necessity of mediation through the ordinary emotional centre indicate, related to *emotions*. Of temporary connection to the HEC, Gurdjieff says that

...a man experiences new emotions, new impressions hitherto entirely unknown to him...<sup>35</sup>

I suggest that these two aspects (the connection to self remembering and the experience of higher emotions) together serve to define the HEC as being the organ through which connection to one's true pattern of essence development – i.e., that which one truly *is* – is perceived in the state of self remembering. From this point of view it may be thought of as an ‘organ of right feeling’ by means of which a person can know his or her true purpose and obligations.

The above way of understanding the HEC converges with the idea of *conscience* which is emphasized in the Ashiata Shiemash chapters of *Beelzebub* (Vol. I). Gurdjieff does not, in *Beelzebub*, use the term “higher emotional centre”. However, he writes of conscience as a “sacred being-impulse” which is buried in the “unconscious” of human beings.<sup>36</sup> This indicates that the idea of conscience should be included as part of the ‘higher aspect of essence’. Self-consciousness (and hence the HEC) is spoken of as “the natural right of man *as he is*” of which he is deprived by the aberrant functioning of the lower centres.<sup>37</sup> It is the true starting point without which individual evolution cannot commence. In *Beelzebub* the faculty of *conscience* is similarly defined: it is a natural birth right of human beings of which they are deprived by the collective and individual processes of dysfunctionality (specifically “self calming”<sup>38</sup> which is equivalent to the idea of “buffers” in *ISOM*); and the *awakening of conscience* is the starting point for the evolutionary development proper to human beings.<sup>39</sup> It appears that the sacred faculty of conscience, if not fully equivalent to the HEC, is at the least an important aspect of it.

This connection between conscience and the HEC finds support in *ISOM* where Gurdjieff states that

..conscience is the fire which alone can fuse all the powders in..[the retort]..and create the unity which a man lacks in that state in which a man begins to study himself.<sup>40</sup>

In attempting to define the nature of the second conscious shock Gurdjieff has been cited as saying that “Real, objective results can be obtained only after the transmutation of mi 12 has

begun”. – “Real, objective results” refers to crystallization (fusion). – There can be little doubt that these two quotations refer to the same stage. Consequently, it is highly likely that the ‘fire of conscience’ is coterminous with the second conscious shock. This also sheds light on the significance of the substance “mi 12” as the locus of the second conscious shock and its relationship to the idea of transmutation of emotions. Hydrogen 12 is the energy of the ordinary emotional centre *in an intensified, or awakened, state* and of the HEC. If conscience is an aspect of the HEC, then it will be awakened as a result of the supply of H.12 (from the effort at self remembering). This awakening of conscience would cause a person to be confronted with unpleasant emotions relating to perception of the distance between what s/he is and what s/he should be. This Gurdjieff calls “remorse of conscience”<sup>41</sup>; and, I suggest, it is to be seen as, of necessity in the first instance, a ‘wrathful aspect’ of the HEC. However, the actual *work* at this stage, which constitutes the shock, is the “intentional suffering” in relation to these uncomfortable confrontations with reality. Presumably, it is such intentional suffering that creates a degree of internal friction sufficient to bring about crystallization and the further evolution of mi 12. Without this affirming response of intentional suffering to the experiences which arise from the earlier efforts at self remembering and self observation – i.e., if the challenge is not met – the “buffers” (or strategies of “self calming”) will be reinstated and the mi 12 will involute.<sup>42</sup>

The HEC, then, is the organ of self-consciousness which, when contacted through the availability of H.12, makes self remembering possible. The wisdom of the HEC, manifesting as conscience, shows a person what s/he *should be*; and struggle with one's deficiencies in relation to such perceptions can bring about crystallization and *unity*. One aspect of this is the consolidation of connection to the HEC. To summarize concerning the role of the HEC in development: work on the ‘lower aspect of essence’ brings about contact with part of the ‘higher aspect of essence’ (*conscience*, guidance) which has an accelerating and enabling effect on the

work; this can result in the transmutation of the substance of the ‘lower essence’ and permanent connection to the ‘higher aspect’ is an integral dimension of this transformed situation.

If the HEC is the organ of self-consciousness, the HTC can, similarly, be seen as the organ of *objective* consciousness. Of objective consciousness Gurdjieff says:

In this state a man can see things as they are...In the religions of all nations there are indications of the possibility of a state of consciousness of this kind which is called ‘enlightenment’ and various other names but which cannot be described in words.

This serves to define the general nature of objective consciousness. He goes on to make two specific points.

..[1(a)] the only right way to objective consciousness is through the development of self-consciousness. [2] If an ordinary man is artificially brought into a state of objective consciousness and afterwards brought back to his usual state he will remember nothing and he will think that for a time he had lost consciousness. But [1(b)] in the state of self-consciousness a man can have flashes of objective consciousness and remember them.<sup>43</sup>

These two points have direct corollaries in Gurdjieff's statements about the HTC. He states that “Connection with [the HTC] is possible only through the higher emotional centre”<sup>44</sup> (and hence through self-consciousness). Of “accidental” connection to the HTC – i.e., connection without preparation – he says:

...a man becomes unconscious. The mind refuses to take in the flood of thoughts emotions images and ideas which suddenly burst into it. And instead of a vivid thought, or a vivid emotion, there results, on the contrary, a complete blank, a state of unconsciousness.<sup>45</sup>

Again, this is strikingly similar to what is said about the state of objective consciousness. These two parallels serve to indicate that the HTC and objective consciousness correspond to each other in a way equivalent to that of the HEC and self-consciousness. That is to say, *the HTC is the organ of objective consciousness.*

The purpose of the HTC can, therefore, be defined as to enable a person to “see things as they are.” The use of the word ‘enlightenment’ to describe this experience, and the

unpredictability which is ascribed to it, serve to show that this *seeing things as they are* of objective consciousness and the HTC refers to fundamental ontological perceptions concerning the nature of reality. Gurdjieff states that “One of the most central of the ideas of objective knowledge...is the idea of the unity of everything, of unity in diversity.”<sup>46</sup> – Objective knowledge is represented as being the province of those in a state of objective consciousness.<sup>47</sup> – He further states that “With objective consciousness it is possible to see and feel the unity of everything.”<sup>48</sup> The fundamental laws of creation – i.e., octaves and threefoldness – are represented as subsidiary aspects of the fundamental truth of “unity in diversity” which are directly perceptible in the state of objective consciousness<sup>49</sup>, that is, when there is connection to the HTC.

Gurdjieff emphasizes the aspect of unpredictability of these perceptions, saying “The forms which express this knowledge when perceived by subjective [ordinary] consciousness are inevitably distorted and, instead of truth, they create more and more delusions.”<sup>50</sup> However, despite this fundamental incommensurability of objective and subjective knowledge, it has, in Gurdjieff’s view, always been the obligation of those with objective consciousness to find means by which the fundamental truths can be transmitted to other people.<sup>51</sup> Representations which have been adopted “...included diagrams of the fundamental laws of the universe and they not only transmitted the knowledge itself but showed also the way to it.”<sup>52</sup> (Clearly, this is closely related to the ideas of “schools”, “C. influences” and the general question of the necessity of help.) – This seems to describe an aspect of Gurdjieff’s own approach to teaching. – He also describes another strategy of transmission in which the higher ideas are embodied in “...religious teachings which endeavour to create an element of faith and to evoke a wave of emotion carrying people up to the level of ‘objective consciousness.’”<sup>53</sup> This idea of creating a wave of emotion can be seen as relating to the necessity of reaching the HTC *through* the HEC; but, on its own, it lacks the virtue of the balancing of the lower centres such that the connection with the higher centres can be consolidated.<sup>54</sup> Gurdjieff states that, for the purpose of transmitting higher

knowledge in such a way as to directly reach the higher centres in people, this knowledge was given the form of myths and symbols: “‘Myths’ were destined for the higher emotional centre; symbols for the higher thinking centre.”<sup>55</sup> He himself can be seen as having utilized both media: *Beelzebub* and *Meetings With Remarkable Men* aim, in their different ways, teach by transporting the reader into ‘mythic’ realms in which a fundamental sense of ‘rightness and wrongness’ about things (*conscience*) is awakened<sup>56 57</sup>; and his doctrines of threefoldness, the octave and their synthesis in his unique symbol the enneagram are, in the context of discussion of the transmission of objective knowledge, explicitly spoken of as being in the symbolic language designed to address the HTC.<sup>58</sup>

The role of the HEC, the organ of self-consciousness, may be thought of as functioning in *man as he should be* to give awareness of the true nature and obligations of his humanness. Without the consolidation of this starting point further development is not possible. It is to be thought of as the internal teacher, the director of his higher evolution. What, then, is the role of the HTC? Why is man given the potentiality of connection to an organ by means of which to perceive the fundamental nature of reality? Obviously these questions relate to the nature and purpose of higher evolution itself. As has been described in Chapter Three, throughout the Universe some animals (tetartocosmoses) were given the possibility of forming higher bodies—this aspect is not at present under consideration – and of acquiring ‘individual being-Reason’ such that they could serve the Divine purposes. It seems likely that the idea of acquiring being-Reason may be legitimately equated with the ideas of objective knowledge and objective consciousness and, hence, that the functioning of the HTC is related to a high level of being-reason. Were it not for the consequences of the organ kundabuffer, man, Gurdjieff writes, would have

the same possibilities for perfecting the functions for the acquisition of being-Reason as have all other forms of “Tetartocosmoses” arising throughout the whole Universe.<sup>59</sup>

The “perfecting” spoken of here can be taken as equivalent to the accomplishment of connection to the HTC. Gurdjieff writes (in *Beelzebub*) that when such a high level of perfection of “objective Reason” is reached that beings become united with the “Most Most Holy Sun Absolute”, then such beings serve a function equivalent to that of ““cells-of-the-head-brain””.<sup>60</sup> That is to say, they fulfil the purpose preordained for them by becoming an active part of the intelligence which maintains creation. This perspective from *Beelzebub* sheds light on the reason for the, apparently, inapt naming of the higher *thinking* centre: it is the super-individual ‘thinking brain’ of creation, to which connection is possible for the human being.

The view of the HTC which has emerged reveals an element of paradox at the heart of Gurdjieff's idea of ‘enlightenment’. From the perspective of the development of higher bodies, this enlightenment is something which is to be *attained by struggle*; but from the perspective of the HTC as a super-individual intelligence which is already, theoretically speaking, available it is more a matter of union and realization.

To summarize this section: The human essence may be thought of as having two levels consisting, respectively, of the five lower centres and the two higher centres. From one point of view, the fulfilment of man's essence potential for spiritual development consists in the uniting of the lower part with the higher part. The ‘base material’ of the lower centres has to be brought into harmony in order that permanent self-consciousness becomes possible. This state is associated with the activity of the HEC. Moreover, it has been argued that the initially gradual and sporadic awakening of the HEC plays a vital role in the process of further awakening. The HEC is to be thought of as an internal teacher or guide – it is a faculty of *man as he should be*, a kind of inner compass, which allows one to follow an objective path appropriate to one's specific essence pattern and to the human status in general. It is probable that the HEC includes the ‘higher essence faculty’ of *conscience* and also those of faith, hope and love. Through consolidated connection to the HEC (and its corollary self-consciousness) it is possible for a

person to become connected to the still higher aspect of essence, the HTC. It is through becoming connected to this faculty of universal wisdom that people can fulfil their appointed purpose as the 'head brain' of creation: in individuating the highest aspect of their essence they realize their destiny as 'assistants to the Divine'.

### **Gurdjieff's Sevenfold Typology of Man.**

As stated in the introduction, this scheme will form the central pillar of the overall model of human potentiality and developmental stages. However, the definitions of the different 'man numbers' which are given in *ISOM* are far from comprehensive and, consequently, the initial presentation of this scheme will be somewhat skeletal. The following basic definitions are derived from pp.71-3 of *ISOM*:

"Man No.1", "Man No.2" and "Man No.3" refer to ordinary, mechanical "man in quotation marks." The levels of being of these three are equivalent to each other and they differ only with regard to the person's dominant imbalance: Man No.1 is likely to be dominated by the moving centre and his response to life is predominantly imitative; Man No.2 lives mainly from his emotional centre and his experience is based on reactions of like and dislike; and Man No.3 lives mainly from his thinking centre, his responses being predominantly based on processes of 'intellectual criticism'. It must be emphasized that, from Gurdjieff's point of view, the situation of Man No.3 is no less mechanical than that of Man No.1 or Man No.2. Moreover, it will be recalled that the approach of the "fourth way" requires the integration and balancing of the moving, emotional and intellectual functions. The unbalanced states of Man No.1, Man No.2 and Man No.3 together constitute a dysfunctional lowest level: in beginning to become balanced a person raises his or her level of being to that designated by the term "Man No.4".



Man No.4 is also known as “transitional man”. Such a person has attained a provisional balance and a degree of self knowledge such that he or she is no longer so easily swayed by circumstances. Man No.4 is said to possess an inner “centre of gravity” which stands above the multiplicity of subpersonalities and remaining tendencies towards imbalance. This inner centre of gravity is the new experiential focus of work on oneself and it can exist by virtue of connection to a school through a teacher.

The designation “Man No.5” refers to a person who has attained *inner unity*. He has “crystallized his essence”. His levels of being and understanding are of an utterly different order to that possessed ordinary people.

“Man No.7”, or “perfected man”, is defined as possessing *will*, a permanent and immortal I and all understanding possible for a created being. “Man No.6” is said to have all the attributes of “Man No.7” except that of immortality – there is understood to be a volatility about his attainments such that they can still be lost.

If Man No.6 is deemed to refer to a distinct level of development then its sole definition in terms of an ‘unstable Man No.7’ seems particularly inadequate. However, it can be anticipated that the distinction between these two levels will become much clearer in the context of discussion of the development of higher bodies and a review of the arguments that have already been presented in Chapter Four concerning the relationship between the state Purgatory and the development of the “fourth body.”

By contrast with the diffuseness of the definition of Man No.6, the transition from Man No.1, 2 or 3 through Man No.4 to Man No.5 receives further clarification in *ISOM* in terms which the previous section has equipped us to understand. Gurdjieff refers to the pre- work on oneself state as the “first stage”, the situation with the first conscious shock as the “second stage” and that with the second conscious shock as the “third stage”. He states:

The second stage and the beginning of the third stage refer to the life and functions of man number four. A fairly considerable period of transmutation and crystallization is needed for the transition of man number four to the level of man number five.<sup>61</sup>

Hence, it can be said that a person reaches the status of Man No.4 when the effort of self remembering becomes an established practice. The progressive awakening brought about by this effort opens the opportunity for a more advanced work of inner confrontation (transmutation of negative emotions) which can, eventually, lead to the crystallization of the inwardly unified Man No.5.<sup>62</sup> This crystallization, or fusion, refers to the formation of the *kesdjan* body. Moreover, it is with this stage that full connection to the HEC has been associated: consequently Man No.5 may be thought of as *fully awakened to self-consciousness*. Finally, it is to be noted (from the above quotation) that the work associated with creating the second conscious shock continues after the status of Man No.5 has been reached.

### **The Formation of Higher Bodies.**

Much of the material pertaining to the higher bodies and their development has already been introduced (in Chapters 3 and 4). The task here is to draw together the different strands in order to further elucidate the characteristics of Gurdjieff's major levels of man and *the nature of the transitions between them*. With regard to the higher transitions – to Man No.6 and Man No.7 – it will be necessary to review the doctrines of the Holy Planet Purgatory and of the ‘tainting’ of the *theomertmalogos*.

Through the crystallization, or fusion, of the ‘lower aspects of essence’ by intensive work on oneself, the psycho-physiological *prima materia* becomes unified: the ‘vehicle’ of this unified

state and the product of the transmutative process of crystallization is the *kesdjan* body. It follows that the possession of a *kesdjan* body is a key defining attribute of Man No.5. The unified state associated with the presence of the *kesdjan* body makes possible a more advanced stage of work which, in the terms of the analogy of the ‘retort’, is said to bestow higher properties on the transformed essence. The consolidation of such higher properties is equivalent to the attainment of the higher being body. The nature of the work of Man No.5 which brings about such further development is far less clearly defined than is that relating to the lower levels. However, it has been noted above that the *intentional suffering* (inner confrontation) associated with the transmutation of negative emotions continues after the status of Man No.5, and hence the *kesdjan* body, has been attained.

### ***Higher bodies and higher centres.***

Before going any further it is necessary here to explore and clarify the relationship between the formation of the higher bodies and connection to the higher centres. Gurdjieff said:

What is called according to one terminology the ‘astral [*kesdjan*] body,’ is called in another terminology the ‘higher emotional center,’ although the difference here does not lie in the terminology alone. These are, to speak more correctly, different aspects of the next stage of man's evolution. *It can be said that the ‘astral body’ is necessary for the complete and proper functioning of the ‘higher emotional center’ in unison with the lower.* Or it can be said that the ‘higher emotional center’ is necessary for the work of the ‘astral body.’

(My italics.)

Similarly, he stated:

The ‘mental [higher being] body’ corresponds to the ‘higher thinking center.’ It would be wrong to say that they are one and the same thing. But one requires the other, one cannot exist without the other, one is the expression of certain sides. and functions of the other.

And that:

The fourth body requires the complete and harmonious working of all centers; and it implies, or is the expression of, complete control over this working.<sup>63</sup>

A comparison between the hydrogen numbers associated with the different “materials” of bodies and the “fuels” associated with the higher centres will point towards a clearer definition of their relationship. Placing the bodies at different levels on the octave of creation, Gurdjieff gives the following associations:

Absolute

All Worlds

All Suns	Fourth Body	6 Laws	[H.6]
Sun	Higher Being Body	12 Laws	[H.12]
All Planets	<i>Kesdjan</i> Body	24 Laws	[H.24]
Earth	Physical Body	48 Laws	[H.48]

Moon<sup>64</sup>

This scheme ascribes H.24 to the *kesdjan* body and H.12 to the higher being body. However, the fuels associated with the HEC and the HTC are H.12 and H.6 respectively. A direct concurrence between these designations might be expected, but the two sequences are ‘out of phase’ with each other. What, then, is the significance of this disparity? It might simply be taken as indicating that the numbers ascribed to the bodies indicate a kind of ‘centre of gravity’ of consciousness as it is possible for it to manifest in that body.<sup>65</sup> However, I suggest that, while this may express a dimension of the situation, the main significance is to be discovered through thinking in terms of bodies as *connecting vehicles*. In the first part of the above quotation Gurdjieff states that “It can be said that the ‘astral [*kesdjan*] body’ is necessary for the complete and proper functioning of the ‘higher emotional center’ in unison with the lower.” Here the *kesdjan* body is spoken of as a connection between higher and lower aspects of the human totality. In terms of the ideas elaborated above, the *kesdjan* body can be understood as that which links the lower part of essence with the higher part (HEC). It can be seen as constituting a

permanent bridge between the lower centres and the HEC. From this point of view, the idea that the *kesdjan* body is constructed from – or, at least, has as its centre of gravity – H.24, rather than H.12, is perfectly intelligible.

A quotation from Thomas A. de Hartmann (1885-1956), a senior and unimpeachably orthodox pupil of Gurdjieff, referring to early 1918 (i.e., contemporary with the material in *ISOM*) will help to elucidate the situation further. de Hartmann writes:

...Mr Gurdjieff once said that the soul, which has to be awakened in us, will be connected with the physical body by a magnetic bond. Through his work with us he temporarily took the place of our soul and so a magnetic bond had to be formed with him...<sup>66</sup>

“Soul” here, since it has to be *awakened*, clearly refers to the HEC and the “magnetic bond” must be taken as a way of describing the *kesdjan* body. Also from this period de Hartmann records the following:

...he told us: “I can lift you up to Heaven in a moment, but as quickly as I lifted you up you would fall back down, because you would be unable to hold on’, and added, ‘If water does not reach 100 degrees [C], it is not boiling.’ So in our development, by our own understanding, we had to reach the boiling point or nothing would be crystallized in us...<sup>67</sup>

(“Heaven” here may be taken as a generalized way of speaking about the higher possibilities of man.) The idea of a necessity to be able to *hold on* serves to point towards a two-fold understanding of the nature of the *kesdjan* body and of its relationship to the HEC. – That it is the *kesdjan* body which gives this ability is shown by the close juxtaposition with an analogy for crystallization. – Whether or not there is the ability to “hold on” is determined by the existence or non-existence of the “magnetic bond” spoken of in the previous quotation: this illustrates the sense of the *kesdjan* body as a ‘bridge.’ However, this talk of holding on and falling back etc. also points to the idea of the *kesdjan* body as a *vehicle which gives the person the ability to exist at that level*. (Much as, by analogy, special apparatus is required to live under the sea or in outer space.)

These two quotations from de Hartmann also serve to emphasize the vital importance of the teacher during the stages prior to crystallization – i.e., before the level of Man No.5 is reached. As has been stated above, the HEC, and particularly the attribute of conscience, can be understood as the guide or teacher within. It was also suggested that connection to the HEC can come increasingly with work on oneself and, indeed that such connection is a vital aspect of the continuing success of such work. The present perspective is not denying this: it is simply emphasizing that until *full* crystallization has been achieved such connection to the ‘inner teacher’ remains tenuous, sporadic and volatile and that it can be lost. Hence it can be concluded that the teaching states that the teacher is vital at least up to the point designated by the ideas crystallization of the *kesdjan* body, permanent connection to the HEC and attainment of the level Man No.5.

Returning now to the broader question of the relationship between the higher bodies and the higher centres, we must not lose sight of the fact that Gurdjieff emphasized the reciprocity of these two aspects of man's higher evolution. Thus far the HEC has been taken as, in a sense, primary and the *kesdjan* body as a ‘mediating structure.’ But Gurdjieff also stated that “...it can be said that the ‘higher emotional center’ is necessary for the work of the ‘astral body.’” However, this statement can be seen as a complementary perspective which may be accommodated within the above description simply by saying that without the HEC there would be nothing for the *kesdjan* body to connect to and, hence, no higher knowledge for it to conduct.

Gurdjieff's statement about the relationship between the HTC and the higher being body indicates that they are reciprocal to each other in a way which is directly comparable to the reciprocity between the HEC and the *kesdjan* body. Hence it may be reliably inferred that a higher being body constitutes stable connection to the HTC and, thereby, allows its possessor to maintain a state of objective consciousness.

Man No.6 (like Man No.7) has been defined as possessing all understanding possible for a created being. Hence he can be deemed to have objective knowledge (e.g., of unity in multiplicity) and therefore objective consciousness. If he has objective consciousness, it means that he has full connection to the HTC (which, by implication, must be another way of expressing the idea of ‘all knowledge possible for a created being’). And, if he has full connection to the HTC, then he must have a higher being body. Consequently, it can be said that all of these attributes – objective consciousness, connection to the HTC and possession of a higher being body – are defining characteristics of Man No.6. These definitions of Man No.6 describe aspects of the attainment, but they do not cast any light on the path by which they are attained. The nature of this transition (from Man No.5 to Man No.6) will receive clarification below via consideration of the difference between Man No.6 and Man No.7 and reviews of the roles of the Holy Planet Purgatory and of the emanations of the Sun Absolute (*theomertma-logos*).

### **The Work of Man No.5 and Man No. 6**

It is said that Man No.7 has basically the same attributes as Man No.6 except that they are fully consolidated; a corollary of this is the idea that Man No.7 has achieved immortality. An investigation in terms of the higher bodies will help to elucidate this matter. It has been shown that Man No.6 possesses the higher being body, and it is reasonable to presume that the type defined as Man No.7 (the highest of this scheme) would have the fourth body. Gurdjieff has been cited as saying that “The fourth body requires the complete and harmonious working of all centers...” Similarly, but entirely in terms of bodies, he said:

By means of *a special kind of work for all three bodies* the acquired properties may be made the permanent and inalienable possession of the third body.

The process of fixing these acquired properties corresponds to the process of the formation of the fourth body.

(my italics)<sup>68</sup>

It is safe to say that this “special kind of work for all three bodies” is equivalent to the effort to achieve “complete and harmonious working of all centers”. This serves to re-emphasize the idea of the bodies as ‘bridges’ connecting different levels of functioning. Presumably, this *mastery* of the totality of the higher and lower functions – which is the fourth body – stands in relation to something pre-existent in a way comparable to that between the *kesdjan* body and the HEC or between the higher being body and the HTC.

The fourth body is also (in *ISOM*) referred to as the “Divine body”. This may be taken as indicating that the being of Man No.7 has become unified with the divine purpose for which it was originally created. That is to say, through the complete interconnection of *all* centres the being can fulfil its predestined role of ‘assisting in the administration’ of the Universe. – It is to be noted that, while still in an incarnate state, this fully connected ‘vertical structure’ of the perfected human being can be seen as constituting an integrated theomorphic organism capable of conducting the highest intelligence down to the lower levels of creation. – From this point of view, the *real will* of Man No.7 is not to be understood as his own will, in any limited sense, but as the Will of the Divine in whose unity he participates by virtue of his fourth body.

As I have described in Chapter Four, in *Beelzebub* there is no term directly equivalent to the “fourth body” of *ISOM*. However, it has been argued that the (inherently ambiguous) presentation of the Holy Planet Purgatory as a state for higher being bodies, but also as a physical place that could be visited in the ordinary body serves to indicate an idea equivalent to “a special kind of work for all three bodies.” Hence, Purgatory represents the state and work of Man No.6 who has attained the higher being body: through purification such a being can qualify



to be “taken onto” the Sun Absolute. This is undoubtedly equivalent to the attainment of the fourth, or Divine, body and to the perfected status of Man No.7. It can be concluded that it is the “Sun Absolute” to which the fourth body is connected in a relationship homologous to the connection between the HTC and the higher being body or between the HEC and the *kesdjan* body.

A review of some of the ideas connected with Purgatory will help to further elucidate the natures of the transitions between Man No.5 and Man No.6 and between Man No.6 and Man No.7.

The following descending series of sacred degrees of Reason has been extracted from *Beelzebub*: Anklad (the highest possible for a created being and “third in degree from the Absolute Reason of His Endlessness Himself”); Podkoolad (the degree associated with Beelzebub and Ashiata Shiemash); Ternoond; Degindad; Ischmetch – *qualifying a being for entry to Purgatory*; and Martfotai, or “self-individuality”.

The degrees Anklad and Podkoolad are both associated with direct service “on” the Sun Absolute and for this reason must be understood as sub-divisions of Man No.7.

At the lower end of the sequence, the degree Martfotai can be understood as the true starting point of man's higher evolution: its attribute of self-individuality and association with the fully awakened conscience indicate that it is equivalent to Man No.5. The next higher degree, Ischmetch, as the level associated with ‘entry to Purgatory’ must be understood as equivalent to Man No.6. Very little is said about the degrees Ternoond and Degindad. These degrees are above Ischmetch, but they are not spoken of as qualifying for service on the Sun Absolute. It must, therefore, be concluded that they indicate gradations of the Purgatorial work of Man No.6.

The transition between Martfotai (Man No.5) and Ischmetch (Man No.6) involves the attainment of the higher being body. An examination of the specific attributes associated with the degree Ischmetch will provide some clues as to the nature of this transition and attainment.

Two things stand out as characterizing this stage. These may be provisionally formulated as: (i) a highly developed capacity for compassion; and (ii) a shift in the centre of gravity of being such that it is sustained exclusively by higher forces.

(i) Gurdjieff writes in *Beelzebub* that “our COMMON FATHER” has caused the following words to appear over the entrance to the holy planet Purgatory:

‘ONLY - HE - MAY - ENTER - HERE - WHO - PUTS - HIMSELF - IN -THE  
- POSITION - OF - THE - OTHER - RESULTS - OF - MY -LABORS.’<sup>69</sup>

He explains that such an attitude of compassion is a foundational aspect of the higher degrees of reason. In so far as that one of the dimensions of the attainment of Man No.6 is full connection to the HTC and hence to objective knowledge, this emphasis on compassion for other beings can be understood as a necessary corollary of the realization of unity in multiplicity. Hence, Gurdjieff appears to be saying that such full realization of, and connection to, this higher wisdom is not possible unless the being of the person is founded in compassion. It is not overstretching the material to suggest that this development of the compassionate capacity to put oneself in the position of other beings signifies that the transition between Man No.5 and Man No.6 involves the *transcendence of individual selfhood*. The term Man No.5 represents the attainment of a real self; this may be understood as the prerequisite of self transcendence. Such a view indicates that that which is signified by the term Man No.6 is *beyond* selfhood. Consideration of the second characteristic of the degree Ischmetch will serve to confirm and amplify this idea.

(ii) In addition to the ‘qualification for Purgatory’ attribute, Gurdjieff defines the degree Ischmetch as

that being state when the existence of a being already becomes dependent...only on those substances which arise directly from the manifestations of the Most Most Holy Prime Source Itself...<sup>70</sup>

This is represented as being in contrast to the situation of other beings whose existence is dependent on the general exchange of substances at the lower levels of creations. Given that the

degree Ischmetch is equivalent to the attainment of the higher being body, the above definition may not seem to add anything new since – as was described in Chapter Four – a primary characteristic of the higher being body is that it bestows a level of immortality beyond both the physical body *and* the *kesdjan* body. Nevertheless, it serves to focus attention on the idea of connection to higher laws and forces and the liberation from lower ones. The higher forces/laws are, by definition, wholly transcendent to the limitations of individual (lower) selfhood. Consequently, this shift in being such that the person is dependent only on that which is higher must be considered as a transcendence of selfhood even if the self remains as a focus of activity in the lower world. But, from the point of view of the fulfilment of cosmic obligations, this transcendence can also be understood in terms of *submission*. From this perspective selfhood is relinquished in order to come under the emanations of the *theomertmalogos* – i.e., the self-will of Man No.5 is sacrificed to the Divine Will; (although, as we have seen above, the being cannot fully attain real Will, or become unified with the Divine Will, until the fourth body has been developed).

It has been noted that it is implied in *ISOM* that that which Gurdjieff calls the “third stage” – work on the second conscious shock, characterizable as the transmutation of emotions – continues after the *kesdjan* body has been crystallized and full connection to the HEC attained. This can be construed as an effort of conscious labour and intentional suffering to become that which one now clearly sees one has an obligation to be. Whereas the inner struggle *up to* the stage of crystallization has been against specific aspects of dysfunctionality and inner negativity, I suggest that the effort *beyond* this point focuses on a more fundamental problem concerned with the very nature of selfhood. In terms of the transformation of emotions, the focus of the work changes to an effort to align oneself with the higher purpose and to inwardly submit to a higher power. It can be said that the emphasis of the work of Man No.5 is on purification – in the sense of cleansing oneself of egoism – and submission.

The explicit emphasis of the Gurdjieff teaching is on *effort*. However, I have sought to show that, for those below the level Man No.5, the dimensions of *grace* and *help* are of equally fundamental importance to the possibility of a person escaping from mechanicalness and that these dimensions are focused in the person of the teacher. It seems probable that, when an individual reaches the level of Man No.5, these dimensions become a wholly internal and immediate focus of the work on oneself.

Turning now to the situation of the being who has consolidated the higher being body with all that this implies (i.e., Man No.6), the reader will recall (from Chapter Four) that Gurdjieff states that in the ‘early universe’ there was no Purgatory stage: fully formed higher being bodies could blend directly with the Sun Absolute. He says that the first beings who were thus directly absorbed took with them a ‘taint of existence’ which then contaminated the emanations of the *theomertmalogos* such that subsequently forming higher being bodies were not sufficiently pure for direct blending with the Sun Absolute: for this reason the ‘extra-stage’ of Purgatory had to be introduced for these unfortunate beings who were already reliant only on the higher but who could not be taken onto the Sun Absolute. – This is equivalent to saying that in the ‘early universe’ Man No.6 was the highest stage of completeness; moreover, it serves to explain why, in *ISOM*, Man No.6 is almost entirely defined as an unconsolidated version of Man No.7. – Such beings, with fully developed higher being bodies, now have to undergo an additional period of purification before they can fulfil their role as direct servants of the Sun Absolute. Moreover, it seems that there are sub-stages which have to be attained as signified by the sacred degrees of being Reason Degindad and Ternoonald. The idea that there are definite stages of worthiness (for absorption to the Sun Absolute) within Purgatory is also indicated in *Beelzebub* by the description of certain of the inhabitants as being “candidates to be taken on to the Most Most Holy Sun Absolute” and of the first among such candidates as “pending saint[s]”.<sup>71</sup> (However,

while recognizing the general nature of the struggle of the ‘purgatorial being’ – Man No.6 – to become worthy of the Sun Absolute, it is neither possible nor is it necessary to give precise definitions to the degrees of being Reason called Degindad and Ternoonald.<sup>72)</sup>

*A viable interpretation of the work of Man No.6 has to accommodate both the idea of ‘purification from the taint of existence’ and that of ‘perfection of objective understanding’ within an understanding in terms of ‘development of the fourth, or Divine, body’.*

The ascending scale of the degrees of Reason may be understood as a progressive approach to the Absolute Reason of the Divine Source. From this point of view, the higher stages of evolution are to be seen as stages in the perfection of the individual intelligence towards compatibility with the Divine intelligence. Such perfection of higher intelligence can readily be seen as connected with the idea of purification in so far as that it must involve the transcendence of *lower* understandings of the nature of reality in favour of higher ones. In order to approach a state of, if one may express it so, being able to ‘think the thoughts of God’ – and, thereby, to fulfil the predestined role of participating in the ‘administration’ of creation – a being must become free of all ‘secondary thought forms’ which have arisen within the creation itself. In this way the connection between purification (from the ‘taints of existence’) and perfection of Reason is comprehensible; but how does this fit in with an understanding in terms of the fourth, or Divine, body?

It has been argued above that the Divine body can be understood as a connecting vehicle to the Sun Absolute and the Divine Will. From this point of view the idea of the ‘construction’ of such a body can be seen as fully compatible with the dual notion of purification from lower influences and the perfection of higher Reason: it is only through such perfection/purification that a being can become fully connected to the Sun Absolute (Divine Will), so such activity may be seen as equivalent to the forming of this connection.

How, then, is this to be related to the ideas (from *ISOM*) of “a special kind of work for all three bodies” and the attainment of “the complete and harmonious working of all [*seven*] centers”? I propose that the significance of these ideas may be understood through consideration of the idea that the perfected man is ‘in the image of God’. Gurdjieff says, in *Beelzebub*, that the true meaning of the well known saying – that man is made in the image of God – is that he has a structure which is equivalent to that of “our common Megalocosmos” – i.e., to the totality of creation. He states that:

Each [person] to the smallest detail is exactly similar, but of course in miniature, to the whole of our Megalocosmos, and in each of them there are all of those separate functionings, which in our common Megalocosmos actualize the cosmic harmonious Iraniranumange or ‘exchange of substances,’ maintaining the existence of everything existing in the Megalocosmos as one whole.<sup>73</sup>

(Moreover, he goes on, over the following pages, to directly connect this ‘man as microcosm of the whole of creation’ idea to the idea that it is his destiny to fulfil the role of “‘cells-of-the-head-brain’” in creation.<sup>74</sup> However, I would argue that the above statement needs to be understood in the context of the idea, previously developed, of a distinction between man's ‘pre-evolutionary’ structure (of centres and higher centres) as *essence potential* and his fully developed and realized structure (–i.e., with higher bodies). The way in which the perfected Man No.7 exemplifies an image of the Megalocosmos must, I suggest, be significantly different to the situation of the undeveloped human being. Since man *is a created being* he must – notwithstanding his status as a microcosm of the *totality* of creation, i.e., a similitude of its involutory and evolutionary possibilities – nevertheless partake of its imperfection relative to the Source. In order to be absorbed into that Source he must exemplify the ‘pre-creative thought of creation in the mind of God’ which is prior to the extensions of time and space. – In this eternal pre-creative thought the entirety of creation as a soteriological device is envisaged. – He must be a *perfected microcosm* of the Megalocosmos in which the totality of the involutory-evolutionary process is fully

realized. Concomitant to this is a level of consciousness which embraces the vertical coherence of the entire microcosmic system. This brings us back to the idea of the fourth body as having complete control over, or *mastery of*, the whole seven-centred structure. (In terms of the microcosmic similitude of the Megalocosmos, the total of seven higher and lower centres may be thought of as broadly speaking equivalent to the seven levels of the ray of creation.) Gurdjieff has previously been cited as saying that the primary truth that is revealed in objective consciousness is that “of the unity of everything, of unity in diversity” and, further, that the laws of sevenfoldness and threefoldness express aspects of this fundamental revelation. From one point of view the work of Man No.6 may be understood as the perfection of understanding of the fundamental truth of the unity of everything such that union with the source of everything becomes possible. And this may be seen as shedding light on the idea of the unitary control over all seven bodies which is a corollary of possession of the fourth body: Such unitary control of, and perfection of, the microcosmic creation is synonymous with a level of consciousness, or Reason, compatible with that behind the creation itself.

The ideas set out above express the way in which the ‘sevenfold aspect of unity’ enters into the highest stage of man's evolution; the situation with regard to the ‘threefold aspect of unity’ can be expressed more straightforwardly. Gurdjieff says that the fourth body is formed as the result of “a special kind of work for all three bodies”. As I have shown, that which is described in terms of a ‘fourth body’ is that which makes it possible for the created being to become ‘connected to’ the pre-creative unity of the Sun Absolute. The special kind of work for all three bodies may be understood as referring to an aspect of Gurdjieff's law of threefoldness called *djartklom*. This is the principle by means of which representatives of the affirming, denying and reconciling forces can (re-)combine to form a higher totality. In the macrocosmic creation (megalocosmos) this potential for recombination is given by the vertical threefoldness expressed in the three-octave diagram.<sup>75</sup> In the microcosmic creation (man) the potential for

individual evolution is ascribed to the presence of *three* “brains” and we have seen how the three food octaves associated with this three-brained (or three storied) nature can together generate the higher energies necessary for crystallization. In Man No.6, who has in developed form the elements homologous to the structure of the megalocosmos, the three-fold essence potential has become the physical body, the *kesdjan* body and the higher being body. These stand to each other in the relationship denying-reconciling-affirming. Hence it can be seen that the special work for all three bodies can be described as an effort of bringing them into a sufficient intensity of relationship such that *djartklom* can occur. From one point of view this effort can be seen as bringing about the ‘return to unity’ of the fourth, Divine, body; and from another point of view the effort is a consecration of the fully developed system of three bodies (and fully awakened centres) to the Will of the Absolute.

The major findings of this chapter can now be summarized as follows:

Gurdjieff teaches that the human is a microcosmic homologue of the ray of creation and all its potentials; and the higher centres may be thought of as pre-existent features of this homologous structure. The higher *bodies* may be seen as ‘bridges’, ‘vehicles’ or ‘conductors’ which complete and awaken the latent potential of this *essential* totality. The foregoing study of the function and construction of the higher bodies has served to illuminate the nature of the transitions between the major categories of man (and, hence, of the general nature of the inner work which characterizes these transitions.) The spiritual cartography of the transitions through Man No.4 to Man No.5 has been reasonably well elucidated in the previous sections. – The attainment of the *kesdjan* body is what is meant by “crystallization”; it bestows an over all coherence on the five lower centres and gives permanent connection to the HEC; this gives rise to the experience of unitary selfhood or “self-consciousness” which is the level of being



associated with the HEC. – The last section has served to elucidate the, hitherto largely opaque, natures of the transitions Man No.5 to Man No.6 and Man No.6 to Man No.7.

The **work of Man No.5** can be defined as aiming to ‘construct’ a higher being body by means of which to gain full connection to the HTC and to establish his being at the level *objective consciousness* which is associated with the HTC. Through connection to the HTC, and the associated experience of objective consciousness, the person gains direct access to the *objective knowledge* which is the level of understanding associated with the ‘head brain of creation’ in which he has the potential to play his part as a ‘cell’. What, then, is actually involved in such a transformation of Man No.5 to Man No.6? The phase of work characterized as the transmutation of emotions extends beyond the attainment of Man No.5. In the context of a fully connected and awakened HEC such transmutation has been associated with fully aligning oneself with the higher obligations as they are now revealed. Two specific attributes which can be associated (via the idea of Purgatory) with the attainment of Man No.6 – the embodiment of *compassion* and the exclusive reliance on the direct emanations of the Sun Absolute – can be seen as related to the idea of higher emotional functioning. Moreover, these two aspects of Man No.6 can both be understood as implying the *transcendence of selfhood*.

The opening to compassion can be seen as a correlate of the ascent to the wisdom associated with connection to the HTC: the primary revelation of objective consciousness is the oneness of everything (and unity in multiplicity); hence the experience of this level of consciousness could be expected to lead to a realization of one's unity with and connectedness to other beings. Such realizations would lead to transcendence of selfhood and to the replacement of ego-centred motivations by compassionate ones as the focus for action in the world. According to Gurdjieff, such a stage cannot be reached without having attained the stable self-consciousness of Man No.5: it is only through the intermediary of the HEC that proper connection to the HTC can be achieved. I have characterized the HEC as the function of ‘right

feeling' and hence with the *sacred being impulse (or essence faculties)* of faith, hope, love and conscience. The place, in the work of Man No.5, occupied by the higher faculty *love (caritas)* can, from one point of view, be seen as expressing the necessity to develop compassion.

The higher faculty *conscience* has, at this level, been clearly associated with the sense of obligation to fulfil one's predestined role in creation. The cultivation of the faculties *hope* and *faith* can be understood as concerned with a kind of work to become reliant only on the higher powers (direct emanations of the Sun Absolute). *Hope*, in Gurdjieff's terms, may be to do with the necessity to believe that, despite the perceived distance from the Divine, higher evolution and eventual union are possible. *Faith* can be seen as much more directly concerned with the necessity to place one's trust in God. In order to become Man No.6 the person must become reliant only on the higher powers and must cease to be influenced by cause and effect in the lower worlds. From this point of view the work of Man No.5 can be described as learning to *submit* to higher powers; complementary to this is the transcendence of the limitations of selfhood.

The transformative work of Man No.5 is truly *religious*. Gurdjieff is unequivocal concerning the inability of ordinary people to understand what is signified by the religious teachings that they follow.<sup>76</sup> Men numbers one, two and three will understand according to their own particular bias; and Man No.4 will begin to see the meaning of his religion. But only the person who is awake and has inner constancy – i.e., Man No.5 – can truly begin to live according to the teachings.<sup>77</sup> In terms of the Christian religion, it is only at this level that the true significance of the theological virtues *faith, hope* and *love* can be understood. Religious aims – the realization of the unity of everything, the cultivation of compassion, the transcendence of the limitations of selfhood and submission to the direct emanations of the source of creation – constitute the spiritual work of Man No.5 in his effort to become Man No.6.

The **work of Man No.6** is to bring into existence the fourth, or Divine, body. The fourth body can be understood as standing to the Sun Absolute in a relationship comparable to that between the higher being body and the HTC: it is the means by which the totality, of seven centres and three bodies, becomes connected to, aligned with, or, more accurately, *unified with* the Creative Will of the Absolute. Whereas Man No.6 is fully *connected to* objective knowledge (through the HTC), Man No.7 may be said to have *become one* with that knowledge.<sup>78</sup> The work by means of which a being makes the leap from understanding higher knowledge to being one with it is described in the dual terms of *purification* and *perfection of wisdom*. These are different ways of expressing the requirements of the path to oneness with the Source: it is a way of purification in the sense of becoming one with the Will of God; and it is through the perfection of wisdom (Reason) that the being attains oneness with the understanding of God.

These lines of work suggest a continuation or intensification of the path which led to the status of Man No.6. The being's relationship to higher knowledge has to be consolidated and perfected through stages until there is no division between the being and the understanding. Similarly, it can be argued that the development of compassion must continue to parallel the development of wisdom. This may be thought of as an aspect of purification. Gurdjieff speaks of the Christian religion as being based on “resplendent Love”<sup>79</sup> and states that

...the Divine Teacher Jesus Christ...revealed the power of the All-lovingness and All-forgivingness of our CREATOR, suffering for beings.<sup>80</sup>

Gurdjieff's use of the word “revealed” is a clear indication that he considered this divine attribute of compassion to be real. If the nature of the divine source is compassionate, then the path to union must lead through stages of becoming an embodiment of compassion.

The attainment of the fourth body, which can be thought of as the body of union, requires the “special...work for all three bodies”. The microcosmic creation – with its sevenfold

(essential) nature – is thereby perfected as an emissary of the Divine Will into creation; and, reciprocally, the experience of union is realized through *djartklom*.

### **The Circles of Humanity.**

This hierarchical model of the transmission of esoteric knowledge has been presented in some detail in Chapter Four, above: the idea of the three inner circles and the outer circle of humanity was combined with the idea of the “stairway” to make a comprehensive scheme of levels of initiation. This scheme has already been loosely connected to the ‘man numbers’. The present aim is, through summarizing this material, to demonstrate its correspondence with the scheme of levels and transitions which has been worked out above.

The circles of humanity/stairway model has the following basic structure: In the outer circle – of mechanical, rather than conscious, existence – a person can develop a “magnetic centre” (from ‘B influences’). This prepares a person to encounter a real teacher transmitting a teaching from a conscious source – i.e., originating in the inner circles of humanity. This encounter is known as the first threshold. By working under the teacher and by virtue of the teacher's influence a person can ascend the subgradations of the stairway until the final threshold is reached. This is the entrance to *the way* which is already “on a level much higher than the ordinary level of life”<sup>81</sup>: it is the exit from the world of mechanical existence and the entrance to that of conscious existence. *The way* commences on entry to the outermost – or *exoteric* – circle of the three inner circles of humanity. The differences between the three inner circles is described mainly in terms of levels of understanding and of connection to higher knowledge.

Clearly a person reaching the first threshold is still either man number one, two or three (because, however well formed the magnetic centre might be, it is only through a school and a

teacher that it is possible to become Man No.4). When a person passes the *final* threshold and enters *the way* and the inner circles of humanity he or she is leaving the domain of mechanicalness and the law of accident and passing into a truly conscious mode of life. Such a transition can only be seen as equivalent to the attainments of the *kesdjan* body (the vehicle of self-consciousness), of the degree “martfotai” (self-individuality) and, hence, of Man No.5. If the final threshold is equivalent to becoming Man No.5, the intermediate subgradations of the stairway must include the preparatory stage of becoming Man No.4 and thence the work of Man No.4.

Returning to the first threshold, it is said that when the teacher is encountered:

The influence of this man upon him goes through the magnetic center. And then, *at this point*, the man frees himself from the law of accident.<sup>82</sup>

This statement serves to express the necessity of the teacher until the final threshold is reached. The person is only free from the law of accident by virtue of the teacher's conscious influence – this is a form of grace which gives an ‘inner freedom of movement’ such that work on oneself is possible. Further, Gurdjieff said:

in ascending the stairway a man is not sure of anything, he may doubt everything, his own powers, whether what he is doing is right, *the guide*, his knowledge and his powers. *At the same time, what he attains is very unstable*; even if he has ascended fairly high on the stairway, he may fall down at any moment and have to begin again from the beginning. But when he has passed the last threshold and enters the way, all this changes. First of all, all doubts he may have about his guide disappear and at the same time the guide becomes far less necessary to him than before. In many respects he may even be independent and know where he is going. Secondly, he can no longer lose so easily the results of his work...

(Second italics mine.)<sup>83</sup>

All of this serves to corroborate the ideas: (i) that a “magnetic bond” with the teacher serves the function of connecting the person to true consciousness that will eventually be fulfilled by the *kesdjan* body; and (ii) that when the *kesdjan* body is fully crystallized, *and only then*, a stable, and to a relatively large extent self sufficient, connection to the ‘inner teacher’ is attained.

When the three inner circles were examined in Chapter Four from the point of view of a chain of transmission it was suggested that the exoteric, mesoteric and esoteric circles correspond respectively to Man No.5, Man No.6 and Man No.7. Given that the crossing of the final threshold has been equated with attaining the status of Man No.5, it follows that this status is also to be attributed to existence in the exoteric circle. It is, therefore, tempting to assume direct equivalence between the sequences exo-, meso-, esoteric and Man No.5, Man No.6, Man No.7. A review of the relative attributes of the three inner circles will serve to demonstrate the validity of such an equation and to corroborate certain aspects of the distinctions between man numbers five, six and seven.

The innermost, esoteric, circle is defined as the domain of

...people who have attained the highest development possible for man...an indivisible 'I,' all forms of consciousness possible for man, full control over all these states of consciousness, the whole knowledge possible for man, and a free and independent will.<sup>84</sup>

This definition constitutes a concise description of Man No.7 with his attributes of full control over the lower bodies and centres. Significantly, Gurdjieff adds that

They cannot perform actions opposed to their understanding or have an understanding which is not expressed by actions.<sup>85</sup>

This statement can be taken as corroboration of the idea that the being of Man No.7 has become fully unified with objective knowledge.

Gurdjieff says that the mesoteric circle

...possess all the qualities possessed by the members of the esoteric circle with the sole difference that their knowledge is of a more theoretical character. This refers, of course, to knowledge of a cosmic character. They know and understand many things which have not yet found expression in their actions.<sup>86</sup>

This comparison of the mesoteric and the esoteric circles is directly comparable to that between Man No.6 and Man No.7. The only difference lies in the emphasis on the directness of

connection to higher knowledge in the place of the description in terms of the construction of the fourth body (with its capacity to unify the higher and lower aspects of the totality). Again, this corroborates the idea of the work of Man No.6 as a perfection of understanding.

The significance of the final threshold has already served to demonstrate an equation between the exoteric circle and Man No.5. The understanding of those in the exoteric circle is said to be still less direct than that of the mesoteric circle

...their cosmic knowledge is of a more philosophical character, that is to say, it is more abstract than the knowledge of the mesoteric circle.<sup>87</sup>

This concurs with the definition of Man No.5 as having contact with the HTC through his full connection to the HEC, but as not yet having direct connection to it (as has Man No.6).

### **The Household Analogy.**

Further corroboration of the *basic* scheme of levels may be obtained from consideration of Gurdjieff's 'household analogy'.<sup>88</sup> Briefly stated, the unevolved human situation is compared to a 'household' in which there is no central control: as a result the servants have all forgotten their appropriate tasks and relationships and do as they want, each one seizing control whenever the opportunity arises. This is a dangerous situation. The only hope of salvation is for "...a group of the more sensible servants to meet together and elect a *temporary* steward, that is a *deputy steward*." The provisional order thus achieved prepares "...for the arrival of the real steward who will, in his turn, prepare for the arrival of the master."

Obviously the initial state of anarchy depicts the state of mechanical man with no central self. The provisional balance attained by the deputy steward allows the 'household' to *begin* to function as it should. The idea of the appointment of the deputy steward depicts the situation of

becoming and then being Man No.4; but the fact that the deputy steward is, in the final analysis, just one of the many servants emphasizes the instability of the situation prior to crystallization. The arrival of the *real* steward is – as is implied by the word “real” – the first stage at which a fundamentally stable self is experienced: this is a ‘real I’ in contrast to the unreality of the multiplicity of mechanically programmed ‘I’s. “Real” suggests the crystallized state of Man No.5 with all of its attributes. However, the ‘real I’ is not to be confused with the ‘unperishable I’ which is the possession of the perfected man: as we have seen the real self of Man No.5 has to make way for something of a higher order than selfhood. Presumably, the task of the real steward, prior to the arrival of the master, is to make the ‘household’ productive according to the original plan of its conception. This concurs with the idea of Man No.5 being fully connected to the HEC. The household analogy does not help to clarify the nature of the higher stages. However, consideration of its stages has served to reiterate the view that the “unperishable I”, and its correlate of “a free and independent will”<sup>89</sup>, is not, in any way, to be conceived in conventional terms of selfhood.

### **The Two Rivers.**

Finally, it will be useful to review Gurdjieff's allegory of the two ‘rivers’ in which human beings can exist. The present context does not demand consideration of the historico-cosmological aspects of this teaching – it is only the possibilities for the individual person in the ‘first river’ that are of interest here.

It will be recalled that the first, involutory, river and the second, evolutionary, river are respectively associated with *mechanical* and *conscious* modes of existence. This would seem to indicate that transference to the conscious river would be synonymous with becoming Man No.5.



Gurdjieff refers to this transference as “the first liberation of man”<sup>90</sup> and this might seem to indicate an early phase of the work. If this first *liberation* were equivalent to the first *threshold* – i.e., the vicarious liberation from the law of accident brought about by contact with the teacher – then it could not be equated with Man No.5. However, Gurdjieff makes it clear that this transfer is very difficult to attain, requiring long and hard work.<sup>91</sup> It seems, then, that the term “first liberation” may be taken as signifying a genuine liberation from mechanicalness *in one's own right* – the final, rather than the first, threshold.

The period, from the encounter with the teaching to the “first liberation”, during which the person remains in the mechanical river, can be thought of as equivalent to the stages of becoming and being Man No.4. Clearly the analogy of drops of water in a river is inadequate to directly symbolize the ideas associated with crystallization<sup>92</sup>, although the idea of learning to ‘navigate’ and utilize natural phenomena serves to highlight the importance of gaining an understanding of the specific features of one's mechanicalness.

However, in speaking of that which is involved in crossing to the second river, Gurdjieff emphasizes an aspect of the work of Man No.4 which has not, up to now, been included in the developmental model. This relates to the idea of ‘kundalini’, the ‘hypnotism of life’ or the power by which we are kept asleep.<sup>93</sup> People, Gurdjieff holds, are maintained in a state of slavery by their belief in the illusory hopes, fears and values which are endemic to the mechanical river.<sup>94</sup> In order to leave the mechanical river a person has to *die* to, or relinquish attachment to, such empty motivations: he or she must *die* to personality (in the sense of everything which is not essence). This, Gurdjieff suggests, is the hardest thing of all.<sup>95</sup> Gurdjieff emphasizes the universality of this idea:

It is just this death that is spoken of in all religions.

...Even Jesus Christ and all the other prophets sent from Above spoke of the death which might occur even during life, that is to say, of the death of that

“Tyrant” from whom proceeds our slavery in this life and solely on the liberation from which depends the first chief liberation of man.<sup>96</sup>

In his own terms this death can be understood as related to the destruction of the buffers which prevent contact with reality (essence). Hence, it can be seen as another way of understanding the ideas of intentional suffering and the transmutation of emotions through contact with the sacred faculty conscience. Only through a certainty of the illusoriness and objective *nothingness* of the values and strategies of the personality will the person be willing to die to them; and it is only through this death process that reality can be reached. These ideas are succinctly encapsulated when Gurdjieff says:

‘A man may be born, but in order to be born he must first die, and in order to die he must first awake.’<sup>97</sup>

If to this we were to add ‘*and in order to awake he must first realize that he is not awake*’, then we would have a complete description of the stages from encountering the teaching to becoming Man No.5. Only when a person truly realizes the mechanical nature of his situation can he begin to struggle against it – i.e., try to wake up. Gurdjieff says:

It is impossible to awaken completely all at once. One must first begin to awaken for short moments.<sup>98</sup>

This describes the stage of working on the first conscious shock, the effort at self remembering. Subsequently, it may be interpolated, with the introduction of the ‘second conscious shock’ and the production of more abundant quantities of the necessary fuel, the capacity for wakefulness increases. But [then]

..one must die all at once and forever after having made a certain effort, having surmounted a certain obstacle, having taken a certain decision from which there is no going back. This would be difficult, even impossible, for a man, were it not for the slow and gradual awakening that precedes it.<sup>99</sup>

This serves to emphasize the extent to which the state of Man No.5 is fundamentally different to that of people below this level. There is no point at which one can be ‘partly in one river and

partly in the other' – eventually the radical transition has to be made: in order to be 'reborn' in the conscious river one has to 'die' in the mechanical one. Further consideration of Gurdjieff's (separate) analogy of water being raised to boiling point will serve to provide additional confirmation of this point: The raising of water to 100°C is a gradual process of increase; but then, when this temperature is reached, a final input of energy (latent heat) is required to overcome the bonding energy of the liquid state and bring about the transition to the freer gaseous state. This is a fundamental transition in which there is *no half way state*. In terms of this analogy, the input of 'latent heat' can be seen as equivalent to the surmounting "of a certain obstacle" spoken of above. This obstacle is attachment to the addictions of the personality which must, at this point, be relinquished. Moreover, this stage is only possible because the 'boiling point' has already been reached through the effort at self remembering and the more advanced preparation of intentional suffering. Furthermore, it can be said that it is in this final and irrevocable act of Man No.4 that the focus of grace shifts from the teacher to a direct connection. The teacher leads the pupils towards the final threshold, guiding him in his effort to awaken and accumulate the higher substances necessary for crystallization, and enabling him to work effectively by virtue of his own – i.e., the teacher's – connection to levels above the law of accident; however, when the final threshold is reached the pupil must have the confidence to cross it, and this involves dying to his 'lower self' trusting that (only in this way) he will be reborn with a conscious and stable connection to the higher levels *in his own right*.

What, then, of the person who has made the transition to the second river? Gurdjieff says that in the second river a person must navigate consciously.

The drop must float on the surface as long as possible in order to prepare itself, to earn the possibility of passing into another current, and so on.<sup>100</sup>

Eventually, the drop can reach the ocean where it is possible for it to "evolve, as it is to the next higher concentration."<sup>101</sup> (The analogy of a cyclone, lifting water from the ocean, is used here.)

The expression “next higher concentration” can, without doubt, be taken as referring to the next ‘note’ on the octave of creation.<sup>102</sup> A correspondence between the notes of the ray of creation and the different bodies, and hence the man numbers, has already been established. Consequently, this individuated evolution of the drop must be taken as referring to attainment of the status of Man No.6. This metaphor of the drop being ‘taken up’ serves to strengthen the idea that the transition from Man No.5 to Man No.6 is characterized by submission to higher powers. As with the transition from Man No.4 to Man No.5 a developmental process followed by a radical transition is suggested. The first transition is from the mechanical river to the conscious river and, as I have shown, involves a radical disjuncture with that which has characterized the previous state of being; the second transition takes a being out of ‘river life’ altogether: if the mechanical river is the river of *false* selfhood and the conscious river that of *real* selfhood, then the idea of an ascent from the conscious river suggests a *transcendence of selfhood* (as has been suggested from other perspectives).

Thus the transitions Man No.4 to Man No.5 and Man No.5 to Man No.6 both have a radical ‘all or nothing’ character. Gurdjieff describes the first of these in terms of dying to the personality. And the rebirth which this makes possible can be understood as being into the realm of self-consciousness (and the HEC). This rebirth can also be understood as being into the *kesdjan* body which is the vehicle of existence in the self conscious state. *The kesdjan body also bestows a degree of immortality beyond the death of the physical body.* I have argued that the second transition – to the level of objective consciousness (and the HTC) – must be understood as a transcendence of selfhood. This too may be thought of as a death (to separate selfhood) and a subsequent rebirth in a realm sustained directly by divine emanations. The body into which a being is reborn in the realm of objective consciousness is the higher being body. *This (third) body bestows a further degree of immortality beyond the dissolution of the kesdjan body which inevitably follows physical death.* It can be seen that there is a correspondence between these two

evolutionary deaths that can take place during life and the actual death of the physical body and the subsequent dissolution of the *kesdjan* body (either fully or partially formed) in the after death state. The two ‘spiritual deaths’ can be seen as anticipating, and thereby avoiding the absoluteness of, physical and ‘kesdjanian’ mortality: Man No.5 can exist without his physical body and Man No.6 can even continue without his individual self-consciousness.

The developmental model of levels and transitions is now complete and the major characteristics and correspondences which have been discerned are summarized in the diagram on the next page.

(\* = two rivers analogy; † = stairway/circles of humanity scheme; ‡ = household analogy)

The Ray of Creation	‘Man is a microcosmic similitude of the Megalocosmos’		Sevenfold Typology of Man
	ESSENCE POTENTIAL	REALIZATION	
1 law (do) Absolute	SUN ABSOLUTE  (Theomertmalogos)	<b>Higher Bodies</b>	<b>Transitions and Work</b>
3 laws (si) ‘All Worlds’		FOURTH (DIVINE) Body: vehicle connecting being to the Will of the Absolute; incarnation of perfected understanding	
6 laws (la) ‘Galaxy’	HTC — Organ of OBJECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS. (Faculty of universal wisdom.) Knowledge of: <i>oneness</i> ; unity in diversity; cosmic laws.	HIGHER BEING Body: vehicle of objective consciousness; gives connection to the HTC	6 Unconsolidated Man No.7. (Mesoteric circle of humanity.† Arrival of Master.‡) <i>Ischmetch - Degindad - Ternoonald</i>
12 laws (sol) ‘Sun’	HEC — Organ of SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS. Awareness of sacred being-impulses: Faith, Hope, Love and <i>Conscience</i> . Knowledge of <i>what one should be</i> — the inner guide/teacher.	KESDJAN Body: vehicle of self-consciousness. Gives connection to the HEC.  (‘magnetic’ connection to higher source through the teacher)	
24 laws (fa) ‘All Planets’	Lower Centres ( <i>prima materia</i> ); potential to connect to the higher centres — requiring balance.	(formation of magnetic centre from ‘B influences’)	4 Transitional Man. <i>Work</i> constitutes inner centre of gravity by virtue of connection to school. (Higher stages of <i>stairway</i> : Dependence on teacher.† Temporary/deputy steward in provisional control.‡)
48 laws (mi) ‘Earth’			
96 laws (re) ‘Moon’ ↓ Chaos (do)			

## Concluding Remarks.

This chapter has established criteria against which Bennett's statements relating to the phases, experiences and attainments of his inner life can be measured. Importantly, it has established ways of understanding the respective statuses and tasks of Man No.5 and Man No.6 (concerning which little systematic information is given in the texts). In particular, it has served to emphasise the coequality of effort and grace at all levels of the Gurdjieffian path. Before crystallization the effort is to liberate oneself from mechanicalness through self observation and self-remembering, but this would be useless without the umbilical connection to reality supplied by the teacher. After crystallization the individual is awake to reality in his own right and can clearly see his religious obligations. Effort now consists in fulfilling these obligations which involves inner purification culminating in the transcendence of selfhood; the corollary in terms of grace is the progressive opening to direct sustenance from the emanations of the *theomertmalogos* and to the higher wisdom of the HTC. At this stage the motives of selfhood are replaced by transcendental motives. When the purgatorial stage is reached the task is to become, as a microcosm of creation as a whole, a direct vehicle of the Divine Will. This requires the effort to purify one's being of all traces of elements arising from the lower worlds; and this effort is attended and encouraged by the grace of the immediate proximity of God.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the attempt to interpret Bennett's activities after Gurdjieff's death and especially his subsequent adoption of Subud (which will engage our attention in Chapter Four), it is understanding of the nature of the work of Man No.5 which will be crucial. Gurdjieff said that when a person passes the final threshold (cryst-

allization) the teacher “...becomes far less necessary to him than before. In many respects he may even be independent and know where he is going.”<sup>2</sup> Beyond the final threshold the teacher is no longer crucial as a conduit of help and grace. Nevertheless, the dimension of grace cannot be said to manifest itself for such a person in an entirely unmediated way.<sup>3</sup> In terms of the hierarchy of lineage, the person who has achieved crystallization and passed the final threshold (Man No.5) takes his place as a member of the exoteric inner circle of humanity. As such he is subordinate to the mesoteric inner circle. Until his own connection to the HTC is consolidated the fulfilment of his position in the chain of transmission is dependent on his connection through the perspective and understanding of Man No.6. Man No.5 can, and, in terms of the idea of reciprocal evolution, *must*, be the teacher of those on the stairway (Man No.4); but his perspective on the situation is limited. As shown in Chapter One, it can be argued that authentic fourth way schools exist only when there is some kind of larger scale reason for their existence. It seems that this larger perspective can only come from Man No.6 in whom the HTC is fully awakened. Hence it must be concluded that although a person who has achieved the attributes of Man No.5 has genuine qualifications to guide others, the viability of the situation depends on his connection to a higher source of authority and understanding.

### **Bennett’s Emphasis on Balance Between Effort and Grace.**

In Chapter Two, I referred to Bennett’s emphasis on the *receptive* lines of work – *help*, *submission* and *grace* – as dimensions of the developmental path which are complementary to *effort* and *discipline*. It was pointed out that these *receptive* aspects



of practical work on oneself are centrally connected to the basis of Bennett's (inferred) 'lineage claim' in terms of connection to the Higher Powers and the Great Work. In this last section of the present chapter I set out Bennett's ideas concerning the necessity for balance between the ways of *effort* and the ways of *grace*. Through reference to Bennett's discipline Systematics,<sup>4</sup> I highlight the way in which his schemes serve to emphasize the necessity for practical work on oneself to be rooted in the higher context of the Work. In the light of the earlier sections of this chapter I argue that Bennett's position, with regard to the necessity for "receptive lines of work" is *theoretically* valid.

There are two formalized presentations of Bennett's views concerning balanced spiritual development. These are: 'The Four Sources' in *Transformation*; and *The Sevenfold Work*. The former was discovered and published after Bennett's death and was probably written c.1967; the latter was posthumously compiled from Academy lectures given in 1974. Both, therefore, represent mature expositions of his position. I am making use of both to provide coherent structures from which to relate his ideas to Gurdjieff's teaching.

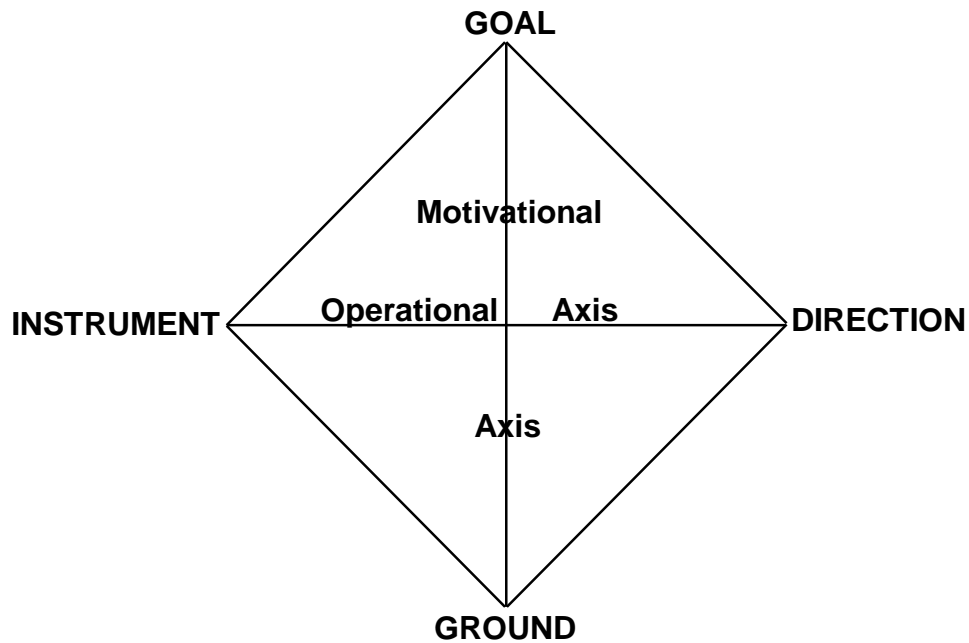
### ***The Four Sources***

Bennett writes:

Transformation is a process that must be started and kept going by various means. These means are of four kinds, each of which makes a necessary contribution to the right balance of the whole. If we neglect any of them or if we exaggerate or rely on one to the exclusion of others, the process will be thrown out of balance and we shall run into difficulties; we may even lose our way altogether.<sup>5</sup>

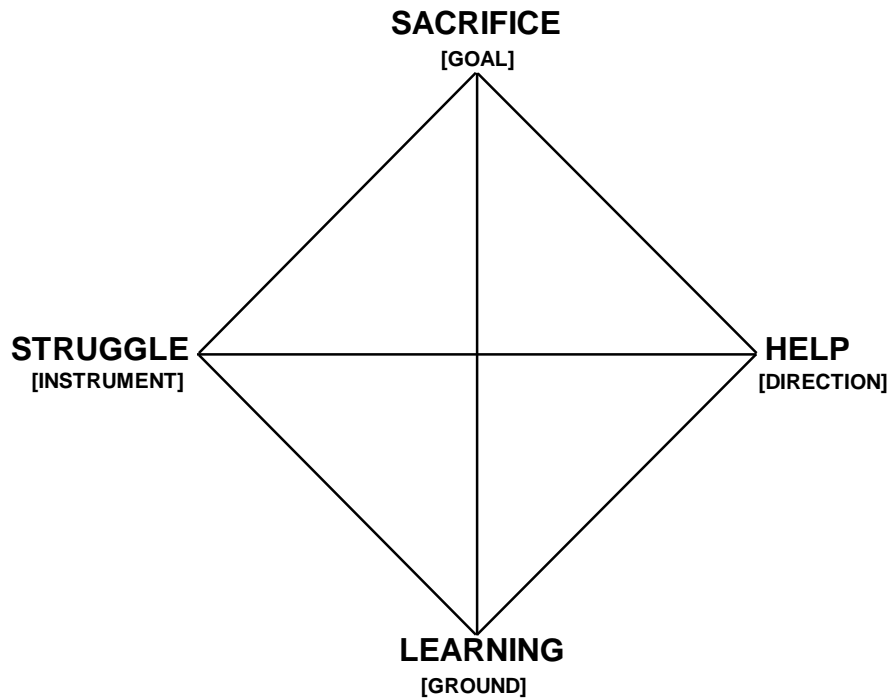
The four sources are: Learning, Struggle, Sacrifice and Help. Learning is largely to do with assimilating the knowledge of necessary methods, techniques and perspectives.<sup>6</sup> The term struggle relates to a separation between the higher and the lower, or conscious and mechanical, aspects of ourselves: it is necessary to become aware of and oppose habitual patterns.<sup>7</sup> Sacrifice refers to letting go of aspects of ourselves which are superfluous to our real aim. He emphasizes that true sacrifice must be instantaneous – i.e., that it must be a non-causal and timeless leap. As such it can create a “channel” through which higher influences from “outside [our] present moment” can flow.<sup>8</sup> Under “help” Bennett includes various forms of transformative help which are available to people through teachers, lineages and traditions. (He makes specific reference to the “substance of work”, *baraka*, or “higher emotional energy” which he believes Gurdjieff provided.) He also includes higher and more universal forms of help – i.e., Grace.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of this chapter Bennett alludes to the fact that these four sources may be understood – in terms of his discipline Systematics – as a tetrad.<sup>10</sup> Of tetrads in general he writes: “The tetrad is the form of all activities that lead to a change in order.”<sup>11</sup> By this he means that a complete transformative action requires four elements and can only be fully described as such. These elements of the archetypal or generalized tetrad he calls sources. His main diagrammatic representation of the tetrad is depicted below.<sup>12</sup>



*Figure 1*

For a successful transformative action (of whatever kind and on whatever scale) all four sources must be simultaneously present in balanced juxtaposition. There is, nevertheless, a definite distinction between higher and lower: The “motivational axis” joins the ground (lowest) to the goal (highest). And on the “operational” axis the direction is clearly superior (in the sense of more intelligent than) the instrument. There is also a sense of temporal development – the ground representing the starting point of an action and the goal its aim and culmination.<sup>13</sup> The tetrad representing Bennett’s four sources for spiritual transformation is as follows:



*Figure 2*

I have placed “learning”, or the assimilation of necessary knowledge, in the position of ground because (in Gurdjieff-Bennett terms) it constitutes the starting point of an encounter with a teaching. (‘B-influences’ create ‘magnetic centre’ and prepare for encounter with ‘C-influences’.) I justify placing “sacrifice” in the position of goal on the basis that of the four sources it is the one which most explicitly embodies the transformative goal of the tetrad. As described above, sacrifice involves going beyond the limitations of one’s present state and opening a channel through which higher influences can enter. It might seem more justifiable to see “help” as the highest term of this tetrad as it embodies the authority of higher influences. However, within the context of a book addressed mainly to people aspiring to enter a path of transformation, the main significance of the term “help” seems to be a directive one. That is to say, it provides the conditions and informs work on oneself. The focus, or

cutting edge, of this latter is “struggle” which finds its appropriate place as instrument.

### ***Sevenfold Work.***

I will now move on to a discussion of Bennett’s “seven lines of work” as set out in *The Sevenfold Work*. He states that “Gurdjieff had said that there were three lines of work”<sup>14</sup> (see below), but that

...on one occasion he hinted that one could apply the concept of sevenfoldness to the problem and speak of seven lines of work.<sup>15</sup>

*From this it can be seen that Bennett wished to contextualize this material as an explication of Gurdjieff’s teachings.*

### **Gurdjieff’s *three lines of work*.**

For the purpose of later discussion a brief detour is necessary in order to elucidate Gurdjieff’s three lines of work. He is recorded as saying (c.1916):

The work of every man can proceed in three directions. It can be useful to the *work*. It can be useful to *me*. And it can be useful to *himself*.<sup>16</sup>

The last of these is clear; but what did Gurdjieff mean by “the *work*” and “*me*”? He went on to speak of a person who has been useful to “the *work*” ceasing to be thus useful when the work moves on if he has not changed himself. From this it can be inferred that “the *work*” refers to the activity of the group to which the person belongs. Gurdjieff’s “useful to *me*” can be understood in the context of the somewhat earlier statement:

...this aim towards which without knowing it they [a group] are going, and which they are serving is the necessary balancing principle in their own work.<sup>17</sup>

In this light, it would seem that “useful to *me*” refers to a higher context of the work.

To summarize, Gurdjieff’s three lines of work can be said to be:

1. work which is directly for oneself;
2. work for the immediate ‘work context’ – i.e., the group; and
3. work for the larger context of the Work.

It will be shown that Bennett’s sevenfold structure can be seen as: adding ‘dimensionality’ to lines 1 and 2; and, more significantly in relation to the deep continuity idea, elucidating meaning for the third (“balancing”) line in terms of the Great Work context.

**Bennett’s *seven lines*.**

Bennett’s presentation of the “seven lines of work” is similar to that for the four sources in that he emphasizes the necessity for all seven lines to be present in the individual in order for his or her work to be successful. He speaks of the seven lines as aspects of “the Whole Work” which – (as with the four sources) – must be brought into balanced juxtaposition if transformation is to be successfully achieved.<sup>18</sup> The seven lines of work, together with their main characteristics, are set out below.<sup>19</sup>

Line	‘Mode’	‘Orientation’	Context
1 Assimilation	Active	Outside→Inside	World
2 Struggle		Inside→Inside	Myself
3 Service		Inside→Outside	Community
4 Manifestation	Neutral	Reconciling in..	Action
5 Receptivity	Receptive	Outside→Inside	Community
6 Submission		Inside→Inside	Myself
7 Purity		Inside→Outside	World

There is a close correspondence between lines 1, 2, 5 and 6 and the four sources. The meaning that Bennett gives for the *line* “assimilation”<sup>20</sup> is very similar to that of the *source* “learning” – the basic idea in both cases being the effort to absorb necessary knowledge from the outside world. The *line* “struggle”<sup>21</sup> is, not unexpectedly, very similar to the *source* “struggle” – in both accounts the central idea is that effort is required to counter mechanicalness. The *line* “receptivity”<sup>22</sup> is equivalent to the *source* “help” – both accounts speak of specific sources of help such as lineages, initiations and *baraka*. However, it must be noted that the idea of ultimate Grace, which Bennett speaks of as an aspect of the *source* “help” is, in the *seventh* line (“purity”). (The word “receptivity” emphasizes the inner attitude necessary to participate in these sources.) Lastly, the *line* “submission”<sup>23</sup> signifies the same kind of work as does the *source* “sacrifice” – both refer to ‘letting go’ of aspects of selfhood and the possibility that this gives for becoming connected to an inner source which is beyond causality. These correspondences are summarized in the following table.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Line</b>
Learning/Knowledge	1. Assimilation
Struggle	2. Struggle
Help	5. Receptivity
Sacrifice	6. Submission

Lines 3, 4 and 7 – “service”, “manifestation” and “purity” – are clearly additional ideas which are not found in the four sources. Via reference to Bennett’s fundamental Systematic understandings of ‘fourfoldness’ and ‘sevenfoldness’, I shall argue towards the idea that the ‘additional’ terms which occur in the sevenfold exposition function to root work on oneself in the Great Work.

### **Archetypal sevenfoldness.**

In his description of the seven lines of work Bennett does not make any explicit reference to the archetypal qualities of the number seven according to his Systematics. However, a strong case can be made that the “seven lines of work” idea was constructed in terms of his more general understanding of ‘sevenfoldness’. An investigation of this underlying thought structure will also serve to address the question of why, if a fourfold scheme is adequate to express a complete transformative action, a sevenfold scheme should be required at all. In fact this question serves as a good starting point. Bennett gives the main defining characteristic of sevenfoldness as “transformation”.<sup>24</sup> How then does this differ from the transformative action of a complete and balanced tetrad? Bennett writes that, in progressing from the hexad to the heptad, “We have reached the point at which we can no longer separate the structure which we study from the context in which it exists.”<sup>25</sup> Further, he defines three main aspects of heptadic transformation:

An entity becomes or realizes itself.

The entity in realizing itself acquires new properties that were not potential or even possible in its non-realized state.

The entity while retaining its identity is integrated into a structure as a part into a whole.<sup>26</sup>

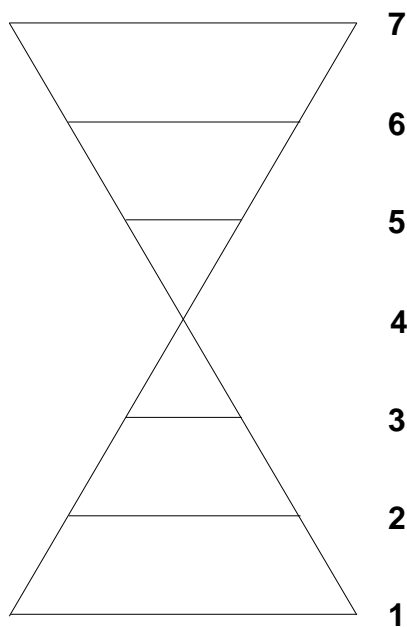
Thus it can be seen that sevenfoldness addresses the wider context of the transformation. The tetrad embodies everything necessary for a transformative action to commence; but the heptad expresses wider contexts in terms of higher levels which can be attained (process) and an environment within which the transformation is integrated. (I elaborate this more specifically below.)

Bennett lists the seven “terms” of the archetypal heptad as:

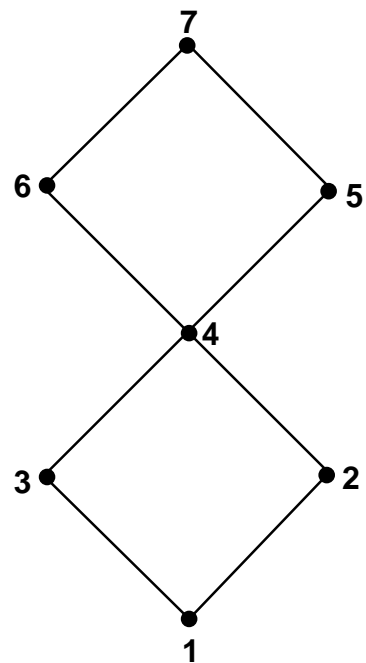


1. Initiation
2. Involvement
3. Separation
4. Harmonization
5. Insight
6. Renunciation
7. Completion<sup>27</sup>

He utilizes three main diagrams to express the relationships between these heptadic terms. I reproduce two of these below.<sup>28</sup>



*Figure 3*



*Figure 4*

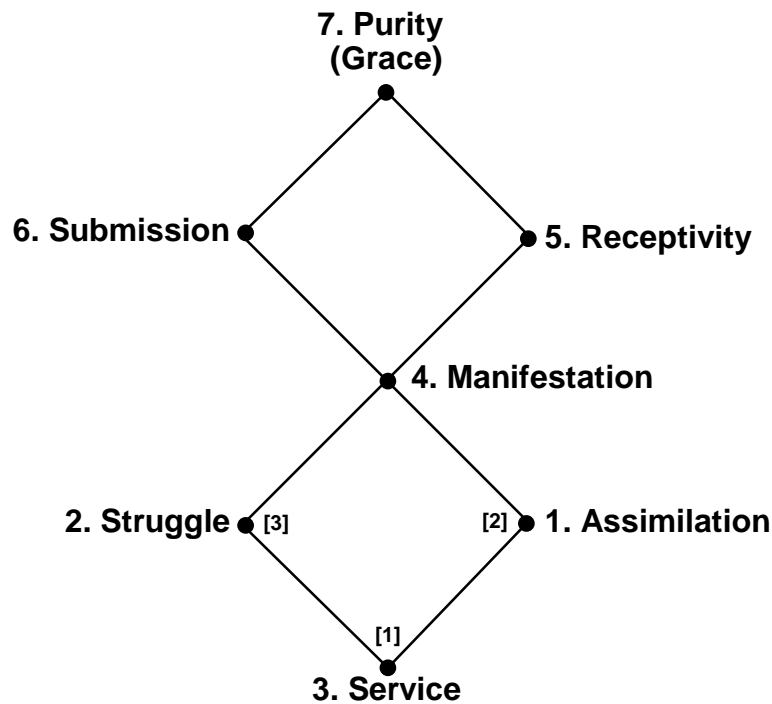
Figure 3 represents two cones which intersect and harmonize. Specifically, it symbolizes the intersection of the “domain of fact” (or matter) and the “domain of value” (or spirit) in the “domain of harmony” (or realization, wherein spirit/value is actualized and matter/fact is spiritualized).<sup>29</sup> This representation is a central motif of

Bennett's *A Spiritual Psychology* (1962).<sup>30</sup> However, Bennett says that this symbol has the weakness of "suggesting too strongly that the heptad is constructed in seven 'levels' or seven 'stages.'" <sup>31</sup> Further on, he states that:

The terms are not exactly qualities, nor exactly stages; but rather states, in which the various qualities and stages are made possible.<sup>32</sup>

There can be no doubt that both the seven "terms" of the archetypal heptad and the list of "lines of work" have a definite hierarchical aspect. And the heptad is closely related to Gurdjieff's law of seven which embodies understanding of evolutionary and involutionary – i.e., sequentially hierarchical – transformations. However, Bennett points out that Gurdjieff, in his official exposition of the "heptaparaparshinokh" (in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*), also indicates that the seven 'notes' can be thought of as seven aspects of a totality.<sup>33</sup> (E.g., seven spectral colours in white light.<sup>34</sup>) As described above, Bennett emphasizes this seven dimensions of a totality aspect of "seven lines of work". Bearing this in mind, and without ignoring the extent to which the seven lines have a hierarchical-sequential aspect, it seems preferable to use the second of the two heptadic diagrams in which the idea of higher and lower is less strongly emphasized.

The seven lines of work can be arranged on this diagram as shown below.



*Figure 5*

It seems reasonable to say that there is a plausible correspondence between the archetypal heptadic terms 4-7 and lines of work 4-7.<sup>35</sup> However, I have found it necessary to break the numerical correspondence between heptadic terms and lines of work 1-3. The second line, “struggle”, is not in the position of the second heptadic term, “involvement”, but in that of “separation”: this is the inner separation (between ‘I’ and ‘it’) which is involved in the struggle of work on oneself. The first line, “assimilation”, corresponds to the second heptadic term “involvement”: this is so in so far as that the effort to assimilate (necessary knowledge) is the first point of involvement with the teaching. This necessitates the third line, “service”, corresponding to the first heptadic term “initiation”. This would have to signify initiation into work which has a context beyond individual development. – The significance of these placings to the overall sevenfold structure and its relationship to the fourfold structure is discussed below.

### **Sevenfoldness ‘versus’ fourfoldness.**

It is now possible to return to the question of seven lines ‘versus’ four sources. Bennett writes that one key to understanding the heptad “is to regard it as an additive combination of triad and tetrad...” But he issues the caution that:

The combination of systems is not obtained by addition alone, for this cannot bring out the unique attribute of which the higher system is the bearer. We must be able to recognize the higher structure before we can see how lower structures enter into it.<sup>36</sup>

I have pointed out above that the difference between the tetrad and the heptad as descriptions of transformation lies in the sense of integration with broader contexts which is included in the latter. It is arguable that this satisfies Bennett’s precondition with regard to understanding the relationship of the higher and lower structures in terms of the unique attribute of the higher system.

Applying this to the specific situation of the seven lines of work might, then, be expected to reveal the tetradic structure of the four sources together with three additional terms which give a sense of wider context. The four “*lines*” which correspond to the sources (see page 407) can be seen, in *Figure 5* above, to stand in the correct tetradic relationship to each other. The three remaining lines – Service, Manifestation and Purity/Grace – are plausible candidates to represent aspects of the broader context of the work. These form a central vertical axis, occupying the heptadic positions of initiation, harmonization and completion. (The meanings of these three lines is further explored below in the subsection ‘The Great Work Context.’) Putting all of this together, the four sources and the seven lines can be represented together with the two dimensional categorization in the (final) diagram:

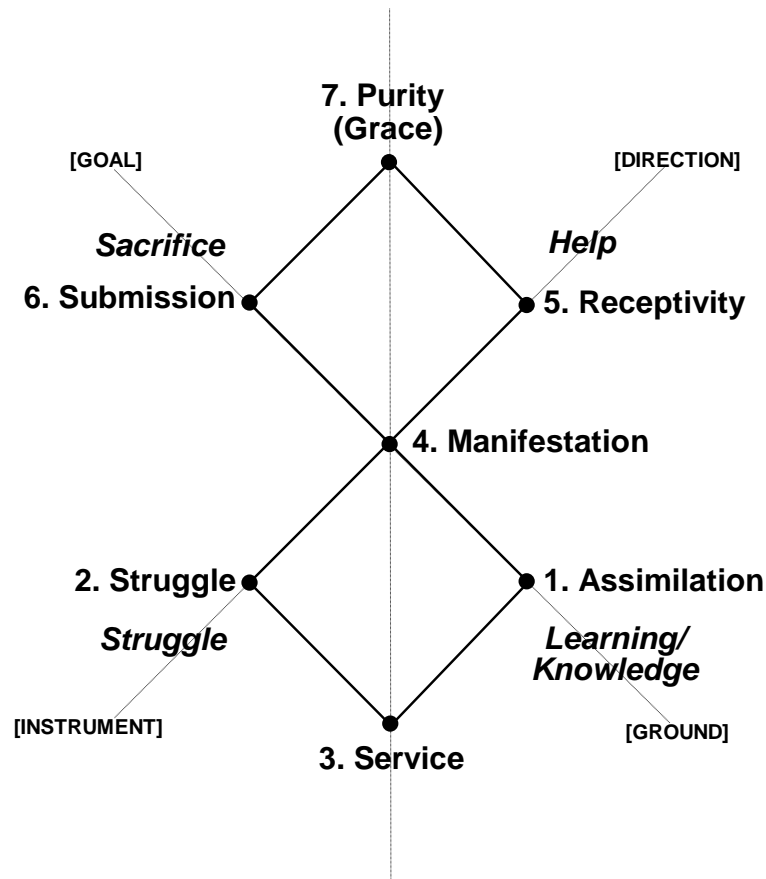


Figure 6

***Bennett's lines of work in the context of Gurdjieff's teachings.***

It is now possible to evaluate Bennett's ideas on balanced spiritual development in terms of the Gurdjieff teaching. Leaving the three 'contextual' lines (3, 4 and 7) until last, I first discuss *active* lines 1 and 2 and then *receptive* lines 5 and 6.

**Active lines of work.**

"Learning"/"assimilation" and "struggle" are straightforward. In Bennett's terms these are both *active* lines; and they can be seen as referring to Gurdjieff's first line of work (see page 405).

In the first case the ‘orientation’ (see the table on page 406) is outside→inside, depicting the effort to take in knowledge of how to work on oneself. Additionally, Bennett cites the third “being-obligolnian-striving”<sup>37</sup>

...the conscious striving to know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance.<sup>38</sup>

The idea of inner struggle (orientation: inside→inside) to remember oneself against habitual patterns of mechanicalness is unarguably important to the Gurdjieffian way.<sup>39</sup>

### **Receptive lines of work.**

By contrast the receptive lines of work are problematic. It is as a way of *effort* and *struggle*, and definitely not as any kind of ‘receptive path’ that the Gurdjieff teaching is known.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, James Moore assures us that, at least during Bennett’s lifetime, the orthodoxy’s touchstone was Gurdjieff’s statement (summer, 1916) that “Only super-efforts count... it is better to die making efforts than to live in sleep.”<sup>41</sup> The emphasis was entirely on struggle.<sup>42</sup> Bennett did not, of course, deny Gurdjieff’s analysis of the human situation of mechanicalness; and neither did he deny the necessity for ruthless efforts to oppose this. Rather, his view was that effort conjoined with method is not of itself sufficient to bring about transformation. As I will show in Chapter Six, his cessation from the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy (1955) and his subsequent involvement with Subud can be largely understood in terms of the development of this view.

Bennett’s “help”/“receptivity” has the orientation outside→inside and as such is the receptive corollary of “learning”/“assimilation”. Bennett states that at the lower

levels of the path help comes through the teacher. He writes of a “magnetic link” that exists between teacher and pupil:

Especially at the beginning, we need something that *enables* us to do what is needed. This enablement is sometimes called *magnetisation*.<sup>43</sup>

As we have seen, according to the de Hartmanns, Gurdjieff specifically stated that this was the case (see page 373): until crystallization of the *kesdjan* body is reached the pupil is reliant on a “magnetic bond” to the teacher – s/he is sustained by the strength of the teacher’s *kesdjan* body, which is also known as hanbledzoin or higher emotional energy. These latter, which Bennett equates with the Sufic *baraka*,<sup>44</sup> are central to Bennett’s description of this receptive aspect of work on oneself. With regard to the work of Man No.5, it seems reasonable to state that such people, who are in touch with their own source of inner guidance, would be less dependent on one teacher and able to place themselves under beneficent influences as appropriate.<sup>45</sup>

“Sacrifice”/“submission” has the orientation inside→inside and is therefore the receptive corollary of “struggle”. Fundamentally, this line of work is to do with inner ‘dying’ or letting go. The developmental model has suggested that the Gurdjieffian path is a succession of these ‘deaths’, from the realization of ones basic multiplicity and mechanicalness, through realization of ones nothingness, to transcendence of (real) selfhood itself in order to become dependent on the emanations of the Absolute. Hence, it can be said that Bennett’s “sacrifice”/“submission” describes a deepening theme running through all levels of the work.

It might be argued that it is mere sophistry to attempt to apply this idea at the lower levels of the path and that all that really counts is the effort to be awake. However, as was suggested in the first part of Chapter Three, the idea of

‘mechanicalness working on itself to transcend mechanicalness’ is, in itself, a no-win situation. Clearly, the idea of the teacher’s ‘magnetic help’ changes this situation: under the teacher’s guidance something real – the beginnings of the *kesdjan* body – can emerge and grow towards autonomy. However, Gurdjieff’s emphasis of the complementarity between the *kesdjan* body and the HEC suggests that this temporal growth is accompanied by an increasing possibility of being open to one’s *inner* source of guidance. Bennett associates the “sacrifice”/“submission” line with opening to the sacred being functions (faith, hope and love) which links to the Gurdjieffian idea of conscience<sup>46</sup> – all of which, I have suggested, are associated with the HEC. The experience of immediate, non-temporal, insight might then be understood as an inner equivalent to the outer teacher. However this may be, Gurdjieff states that when the final stage of crystallization is reached the final death (to the “tyrant”) has to be total and instantaneous (see page 394). This undoubtedly has the flavour of Bennett’s sixth line of work.

It can be concluded that Bennett’s receptive lines are vitally inherent in the overall structure of Gurdjieffian work on oneself. Help/receptivity has been shown to be necessary from the beginning. Sacrifice/submission is indisputably important at and after the “final threshold” and is arguably significant from the beginning.

### **The Great Work Context.**

The third of Bennett’s characteristics distinguishing a sevenfold entity was that “The entity while retaining its identity is integrated into a structure as a part into a whole.”<sup>47</sup> He also says (while issuing the caution that a higher system cannot be comprehended *solely* by reference to lower systems) that the heptad can be understood as tetrad plus triad (see page 412). Whereas Bennett associates the tetrad with concrete



transformation of order, his *triad* is associated with *acts of will*. The triadic component of the heptad can be seen as supplying the element of context (or authority). With specific regard to Bennett's four sources and seven lines, Figure 6 on page 413 demonstrates that the tetrad of the former can be accommodated within one of the diagrams of the latter. The 'non-tetradic' terms form the central axis of the diagram, in the heptadic positions of initiation, harmonization and completion.<sup>48</sup>

That the vertical axis constitutes, within the heptad, a semi-autonomous triadic structure is amplified by the presence of affirming (active), denying (receptive) and reconciling (neutral) terms. Consideration of the terms themselves will show that this vertical axis embodies an appreciation of the Gurdjieffian theomorphic structure of human potential (see page 376).

Line 3, Service, is an active line and its orientation is inside→outside suggesting connection to a broader context. It embodies aspects of Gurdjieff's second and third lines of work. Bennett states that this line includes the fulfilment of our familial and wider social duties which it is an error to see as conflicting with involvement with the Work.<sup>49</sup> This relates to the idea that the follower of the fourth way remains in the world. He also connects this line to Gurdjieff's emphasis in *Beelzebub* on the necessity for people to prepare something useful for future generations.<sup>50</sup> Fundamentally, this line is understood as relating to Gurdjieff's ethical imperative that people must fulfil, through "conscious labour and intentional suffering",<sup>51</sup> the cosmic obligations for which they were created. Most specifically, it can be seen as relating to the fourth being-obligolnian-striving:

...the striving...to pay for their arising and their individuality as quickly as possible, in order afterwards to be free to lighten as much as possible the Sorrow of our COMMON FATHER.<sup>52</sup>

This form of service is expressed as active. However, in the context of the role that the human has the potential to play in creation (i.e., to become the ‘head brain’ of creation in submission to the Divine Will – see pages 368 and 385), this ‘vertical’ aspect of service also involves Bennett’s seventh line “purity”/“grace”.

Bennett’s seventh line can be understood as absolute and unmediated *Grace* - (unlike “help” it does not require a particular channel, but simply *is*. He describes it as the nature of the highest reality which can manifest in peoples’ lives in a completely gratuitous way. He writes:

The really extraordinary thing about the seventh line is that in it every part of us however deep is *outside*. It is the action of God in the soul. The seventh line – if we can really grasp this – is the complete reverse of the first line. We are no longer the inside but the outside. The action comes from inside to the outside – but we are the outside. In the seventh line, even our higher selves are without.<sup>53</sup>

There is a sense in which this Grace, from beyond “even our higher selves”, is the foundation of all other types of work: Bennett writes that “Without this grace, nothing would be possible for us.”<sup>54</sup> And that he views grace as the ultimate authority and supplier of context is shown by his describing it as “...an intelligence that is totally incredible governing the hidden part of the Work.”<sup>55</sup>

As a particular kind of ‘work on oneself’ “purity”/“grace” can be seen, in terms of the Gurdjieffian developmental model, as being appropriate to Man No.5 and Man No.6. It has been shown that the former is working to transcend selfhood and *come directly under the influence of the emanations of the Absolute*. Man No.6., in the state of purgatory, is already directly under the influence of the emanations of the Absolute; and the work of such a being is *purification*, the purpose of which can be understood as becoming more and more able to directly embody the Divine Will.

However, it is necessary to ask what relevance Bennett's seventh line has as a type of 'work on oneself' at the lower levels. Bennett seems to have understood the intervention of Grace as being necessary to account for the incommensurable transition from mechanical sleep to a moment of wakefulness.<sup>56</sup> He is emphatic that this 'type of work' is relevant from the first moment when a person encounters the Work. He says that the first encounter with the Work is itself an example of the unearned gift of Grace because it is unaccountable in causal terms.<sup>57</sup> – It might be argued that this is so on the basis that the fifth line "help" refers to the spiritual *mechanics* of the situation, but that something *deeper* than this is required in order to interrupt the chain of causality. – That Gurdjieff spoke of

...the teaching of the Divine Teacher Jesus Christ, in which among other things was revealed the power of the All-lovingness and All-forgiveness of our CREATOR...<sup>58</sup>

serves to indicate that he believed that Ultimate Grace *could* have relevance to ordinary people. However, unlike the cases of the other two receptive lines, there is little ground for establishing this as an aspect of work on oneself.

Line 4, Manifestation occupies the heptadic position of Harmony. (And it is at the point of balance of the diagram.) It can be seen as relating to the idea that human beings occupy a pivotal position in the hierarchy of cosmoses. – Standing between Spirit and Matter we are the conductor of the neutralizing force in the triad of the totality of creation. – The involutory and the evolutionary currents of creation meet and harmonize in a unique way in the human. It is because of this that individuated, and accelerated, participation in the overall process is possible. There can be no doubt about the authenticity of this as a Gurdjieffian idea.

Bennett says that people express or *conduct*, this line of work without ‘participation’ of either an active or a receptive character.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, it is the case that the capacity of a particular person to ‘conduct’ the neutralizing force is dependent on their stage of inner development and hence on all of the other lines of work.<sup>60</sup>

The other two ‘central axis’ lines, Service and Purity/Grace, stand in a special relationship to Manifestation with regard to the fulfilment of the total involutory-evolutionary purpose. Service expresses the individual aim to work, from below, for the fulfilment of the higher purpose. And this entails acceptance of the obligation to evolve. Purity/Grace expresses the place in work on oneself of receptivity to the higher intelligence, emanating and involving into creation from above; it also anticipates the goal of becoming accelerated evolutionary results and fulfilling the preordained role as the ‘head brain of creation’. From this point of view Bennett’s sevenfold structure can be seen as accommodating the highest soteriological aim of the Gurdjieff teaching.

## Notes and References to Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup>*ISOM*, p.82.

<sup>2</sup>See *ISOM*, p.205.

<sup>3</sup>*ISOM*, p.137 – see note 34 to Chapter Three.

<sup>4</sup>*ISOM*, pp.129-135.

<sup>5</sup>See esp. *Beelzebub*, II, pp.341-2.

<sup>6</sup>*ISOM*, p.137.

<sup>7</sup>See note 76 to Chapter Three.

<sup>8</sup>See *Beelzebub*, I, pp.146-7. This primal division of the Divine Source might be thought of as equivalent to the coequality of the Christian Trinity

<sup>9</sup>*ISOM*, pp.79-80.

<sup>10</sup>See *ISOM*, p.137.

<sup>11</sup>The way in which the laws are understood to accumulate might at first sight seem rather strange. Why, for instance, is the “Sun” level subject to the 3 laws of “All Worlds” even though these are already, apparently, included in the 6 laws of “All Suns”? The answer must be that the 6 laws to which “All Suns” is subject are all *conditioned at that level*. Hence, a world at the “Sun” level is subject to the 3 laws of “All Worlds” plus the 3 laws arising through the creation of “All Suns” *and the operation of the 3 laws of “All Worlds” at the “All Suns” level plus the three laws arising through its own creation.*

<sup>12</sup>*ISOM*, p.81.

<sup>13</sup>It is necessary at this stage to issue the caution that, in the sense that they indicate degrees of freedom at the different levels, these numbers are not to be taken as representing an arithmetic, geometric, or even an exponential, progression. Gurdjieff states that the different cosmoses are related to each other in the ‘proportion’ zero to infinity (*ISOM*, p.206). However, from the point of view of the different *hydrogens*, representing different grades of substance with differing degrees of vibrancy, which, because they have to interact in a particular cosmos (e.g., man) must be in some sense commensurable, Ouspensky's geometrical scaling factor of 28,800 may be relevant (*ISOM*, p.351)

<sup>14</sup>*ISOM*, p.84.

<sup>15</sup>Additionally, there is the sub-normal condition of being subject to the unreality resulting from the “organ kundabuffer”. This, as the idea of being “food for the moon” implies, places the individual under the 96 laws of the lunar realm. Clearly it is necessary to awaken from this illusory mode of existence – i.e., liberate oneself from the additional 48 laws – before the evolutionary path can be entered.

<sup>16</sup>*ISOM*, p.161.

<sup>17</sup>See especially *ISOM*, p.193 and p.256.

<sup>18</sup>*ISOM*, p.180.

<sup>19</sup>See *ISOM*, pp.191-3.

<sup>20</sup>*ISOM*, p.191.

<sup>21</sup>*ISOM*, p.192.

<sup>22</sup>See *ISOM*, p.274 where it is explained that a special kind of suffering is vital to development, but that this does not apply at an elementary stage of the path.

<sup>23</sup>*ISOM*, p.193.

<sup>24</sup>*ISOM*, p.192.

<sup>25</sup>*ISOM*, pp.196-7.

<sup>26</sup>See, e.g., *Views From the Real World*, pp.160-3.

<sup>27</sup>Gurdjieff's 'non-expression of negative emotions' is not to be equated with a *repression of negative emotions* which might be expected to lead to explosions. The Gurdjieffian practice involves the transformation of negativity through awareness.

<sup>28</sup>*ISOM*, p.194.

<sup>29</sup>Exceptions to this general rule exist to the extent that strong and unaccustomed stimuli can, presumably by causing a sudden evolution of energies and availability of fuel, cause temporary connection to the higher centres. However, without preparation, these occurrences are generally unfruitful. (*ISOM*, p.195.) It should also be noted that the H.12 of the sex centre cannot, according to Gurdjieff, be utilized in this connection. Although he, elsewhere, states that a strong sex centre is vital for development (*ISOM*, pp.258-9), this natural organismic energy will produce "wrong results" if used as the focus for what should be the second conscious shock. (*ISOM*, p.193.)

<sup>30</sup>Although not, of course, the H.12 of the sex centre which only causes aberrant functioning – e.g., fanaticism – when used in the emotional centre.

<sup>31</sup>*ISOM*, p.194.

<sup>32</sup>This is in accordance with Gurdjieff's expression of the law of three as "The higher blends with the lower to actualize the middle..." (*Beelzebub*, II, p.343).

<sup>33</sup>*ISOM*, p.142.

<sup>34</sup>*ISOM*, p.141.

<sup>35</sup>*ISOM*, p.194.

<sup>36</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.359.

<sup>37</sup>*ISOM*, p.142.

<sup>38</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, p.382 and p.385.

<sup>39</sup>Moreover, the state called “martfotai” (self individuality), which can result from the awakening of conscience, is equivalent to that of self-consciousness (or constant self remembering).

<sup>40</sup>*ISOM*, p.156.

<sup>41</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, pp.381-2.

<sup>42</sup>*ISOM*, p.129-30.

<sup>43</sup>*ISOM*, pp.141-2.

<sup>44</sup>*ISOM*, p.195.

<sup>45</sup>*ISOM*, p.195.

<sup>46</sup>*ISOM*, p.278.

<sup>47</sup>*ISOM*, p.279.

<sup>48</sup>*ISOM*, p.279.

<sup>49</sup>*ISOM*, p.280.

<sup>50</sup>*ISOM*, p.279.

<sup>51</sup>*ISOM*, p.278.

<sup>52</sup>*ISOM*, p.280.

<sup>53</sup>*ISOM*, p.279.

<sup>54</sup>This point about the use of “faith” to engender a wave of emotion serves to suggest that faith, like conscience, is a faculty or aspect of the HEC. Such a view finds support from *Beelzebub* in which the three theological virtues – Gurdjieff’s “sacred being-impulses” – faith, hope and love are placed on the same level as the sacred being impulse *conscience*. The *difference* is that whereas the former three have become “atrophied” in the collective essence of humanity, *conscience* is merely ‘asleep’ and therefore provides a more fruitful *starting point*. (*Beelzebub*, I, p.359.)

<sup>55</sup>Clearly it is the case that myths and symbols are often integrated into the same situation. Indeed, it is difficult to think of myths as being independent of symbolic language. Nevertheless, maintaining Gurdjieff’s distinction, a good example of the integration of the two would be the Christian ritual of the *Eucharist*. This might be understood as following the ‘faith creating an upward wave of emotion’ pattern spoken of above. In Gurdjieffian terms faith (a ‘higher essence’ faculty of the HEC) in the myth of the death and resurrection of Christ might be seen as focusing on the cross as a symbolic gateway to the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation (and hence the relationship between God and creation).

<sup>56</sup>See *Herald of Coming Good*, p.47.

<sup>57</sup>The importance of the mythic dimension of transmission to Gurdjieff’s teaching is something that would be missed by a person relying on the relatively dry presentation of *ISOM*. Gurdjieff’s father was an *Ashokh* (the name given to bards in Asia Minor) and it was, at least partly, through the stories that he heard as a child that his interest and belief in higher wisdom was awakened. (See the chapter ‘My Father’ in *Meetings*

*With Remarkable Men*; and for discussions of the significance of this early influence see Moore, *Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth*, Chapter 1 and Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, Chapter 1.) Gurdjieff's 'mythic legacy' includes, but extends beyond, his major literary works: he seems to have acted in such a way that, for his pupils and latter day-followers, a mythic dimension enters into their perception of him.

<sup>58</sup>*ISOM*, p.280.

<sup>59</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.86.

<sup>60</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.370.

<sup>61</sup>*ISOM*, p.193.

<sup>62</sup>It is interesting to note that Gurdjieff has provided an account of a crisis in his own development which might be taken as describing the inception of a strategy of conscious labour and intentional suffering necessary to surmount the final stage in becoming Man No.5. (See, *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I am"*, pp.19-5.)

<sup>63</sup>*ISOM*, p.197.

<sup>64</sup>Adapted from *ISOM*, p.94.

<sup>65</sup>For instance, in the case of the physical body (of an ordinary person), the emotional and instinctive centres, when working properly, use H.24 and the thinking centre uses H.48; but under dysfunctional conditions there is a strong tendency to fall under the 96 laws of the moon level: hence, between the higher and the lower limits of its normal experience, the physical body can be said to fall under 48 laws.

<sup>66</sup>Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, *Our Life With Mr Gurdjieff* (definitive edition), p.41.

<sup>67</sup>*ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>68</sup>*ISOM*, p.44.

<sup>69</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.354.

<sup>70</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.338.

<sup>71</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.317 and 327.

<sup>72</sup>Gurdjieff simply does not provide any specific information about the degrees Degindad and Ternoond to which further interpretation could be connected. (For instance, it is not possible to say whether, before Purgatory existed, these degrees referred to evolution on or outside the Sun Absolute.) However, it is sufficient from the point of view of the present investigation to recognize that, because these degrees come above Ischmetch and below Podkoolad, they indicate gradations of the perfection of Reason *within* Purgatory.)

<sup>73</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.367.

<sup>74</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.370.)

<sup>75</sup>See, *ISOM*, p.169 and p.293.



<sup>76</sup>See, *Beelzebub*, II, 'Religion', pp.286-335.

<sup>77</sup>See, *ISOM*, p.299.

<sup>78</sup>This may be seen as indicated by the fact that the fourth body is associated with H.6 which is the energy used by the HTC.

<sup>79</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.294.

<sup>80</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.295.

<sup>81</sup>*ISOM*, p.201.

<sup>82</sup>*ISOM*, p.201.

<sup>83</sup>*ISOM*, p.201.

<sup>84</sup>*ISOM*, p.310.

<sup>85</sup>*ISOM*, p.310.

<sup>86</sup>*ISOM*, p.311.

<sup>87</sup>*ISOM*, p.311.

<sup>88</sup>*ISOM*, p.60.

<sup>89</sup>*ISOM*, p.310.

<sup>90</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.422.

<sup>91</sup>*Views from the Real World*, p.239.

<sup>92</sup>It might be possible to extend the analogy by hypothesising the development of a 'magnetic resonance' which orientates and attracts the person to the substance of the second river such that when the strength of this resonance reaches a certain threshold 'transference occurs.

<sup>93</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.423.

<sup>94</sup>*Views from the Real World*, p.238.

<sup>95</sup>*ibid.*, pp.238-9.

<sup>96</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, pp.422-3.

<sup>97</sup>*ISOM*, p.217.

<sup>98</sup>*ISOM*, p.219.

<sup>99</sup>*ISOM*, p.219.

<sup>100</sup>*Views from the Real World*, p.238.

<sup>101</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.420.

<sup>102</sup>Earlier in the same paragraph Gurdjieff speaks of the ocean into which the second river empties as "that sphere of general Nature which often has what is called repeated "reciprocal exchanges of substance between various *great cosmic concentrations...*" (my italics). This may be taken as a reference to the trogoautoegocratic process between the different levels of the ray of creation.

<sup>1</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.337.

<sup>2</sup>*ISOM*, p.201.

<sup>3</sup>Only at the purgatorial stage (Man No.6) can the connection to grace be said to become completely direct and even then there is an extent to which he is a willing receptor of spiritual guidance from 'higher Man No.6' (*Degindad* and *Ternoonald*) and Man No.7.

<sup>4</sup>In the present context "Systematics" can be understood as referring to the study of, and deductions from, the radical qualitative differences between systems with different numbers of terms. (See *The Dramatic Universe*, III, Chapter 37, 'The Structure of the World'.)

<sup>5</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.27

<sup>6</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.27-33.

<sup>7</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.33-39.

<sup>8</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.39-47.

<sup>9</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.47-57.

<sup>10</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.58.

<sup>11</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.29.

<sup>12</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.30 and p.32.

<sup>13</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.30.

<sup>14</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.87.

<sup>15</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.35.

<sup>16</sup>*ISOM*, p.232.

<sup>17</sup>*ISOM*, p.222. – See also *ISOM*, p.99.

<sup>18</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.39.

<sup>19</sup>This table is derived from Bennett's *The Sevenfold Work*, pp.35-7.

<sup>20</sup>See *The Sevenfold Work*, p.42.

<sup>21</sup>See *The Sevenfold Work*, p.58.

<sup>22</sup>See *The Sevenfold Work*, pp.95-6.

<sup>23</sup>See *The Sevenfold Work*, pp.104-5.

<sup>24</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.51.

<sup>25</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.50.

<sup>26</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.51.

<sup>27</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.56.

<sup>28</sup>See *The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.52 and p.53. The third, which is not discussed here, is a spiral form.

<sup>29</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.52.

<sup>30</sup>See *A Spiritual Psychology*, e.g., p.151.

<sup>31</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.53.

<sup>32</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.56.

<sup>33</sup>*Beelzebub*, III, p.34.

<sup>34</sup>A.G.E.Blake uses the spectral analogy in his 'Preface to the Second Edition', *The Sevenfold Work*, p.5.

<sup>35</sup>I.e.: 4, Manifestation and Harmonization (for Bennett the domain of *Harmony* unites the spiritual (value) and the existential (fact), and it is here that the work *manifests* in order to realize the purpose of creation – see, e.g., *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol.II, p.260); 5, Receptivity and Insight; 6, Submission and Renunciation; and 7, Purity and Completion.

<sup>36</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.53

<sup>37</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.46.

<sup>38</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.386.

<sup>39</sup>See, e.g., *ISOM*, p.188 and p.230.

<sup>40</sup>James Moore concisely cites the book titles *War Against Sleep* (Colin Wilson) and *Batailles pour la présent* (Thomasson) to epitomize this characterization. (*Religion Today*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1994), p.12.)

<sup>41</sup>*ISOM*, p.232. Cited in Moore, *ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>42</sup>Moore, *ibid.*, pp.11-13.

<sup>43</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.94.

<sup>44</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.95.

<sup>45</sup>This concurs with the analogy of conscious navigation to remain on the surface in the second river.

<sup>46</sup>Bennett, *Sevenfold Work*, p.105.

<sup>47</sup>*The Dramatic Universe*, III, p.51.

<sup>48</sup>However, it must be remembered that this works because of the ordering of the lines of work with the archetypal heptadic terms which was argued in terms of corresponding meaning.

<sup>49</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.76.

<sup>50</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.79.

<sup>51</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.79.

<sup>52</sup>*Beelzebub*, I, p.386.

<sup>53</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.112.

<sup>54</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.109.

<sup>55</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.111.

<sup>56</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.109.

<sup>57</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.117.

<sup>58</sup>*Beelzebub*, II, p.295.

<sup>59</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.83.

<sup>60</sup>Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*, p.89.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Bennett as Pupil and Teacher

### *Abstract*

In this chapter I present biographical information relating to Bennett's stages of inner development and his emergence as a group leader and eventually as a teacher in his own right. The chapter is divided into three main parts: Part 1 deals with the period from the emergence of Bennett's search (c.1920) and his first meeting with Gurdjieff (1921) to the time of Gurdjieff's death in October 1949; Part 2 traces Bennett's development, sense of responsibility and search from the early 1950s, through his involvement with Subud, to the time of his contact with the Shivapuri Baba and conversion to Roman Catholicism; and Part 3 continues the account up to the period immediately prior to the founding of the International Academy for Continuous Education and briefly examines the situation of Bennett's pupil after his death. In all three parts, I apply the 'developmental spiritual psychology' with particular reference to criteria of valid lineage in terms of connection to the esoteric centre.

## **Part 1: 1920-1949**

The sections which follow describe Bennett's contacts with Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and his own emergence as a work leader. As was described in Chapter Two, part of the orthodoxy's critique of Bennett rests on the brevity of his actual contacts with Gurdjieff and the long period between them (during which he was a pupil of Ouspensky and then, for a few years, independent). Through consideration of the whole period, I will argue towards the conclusion that, despite these facts, Bennett is to be seen as having attained, by the time of Gurdjieff's death, the position of a senior follower in whom Gurdjieff invested responsibility for the future development of his work. Additionally, I will identify the emergence of the Great Work and 'millenarian responsibility' themes, the emphasis on which seems to distinguish Bennett from other Gurdjieffians. An understanding of Bennett's situation whilst a pupil of Ouspensky will necessitate a discussion of *Ouspensky's* position in relation to Gurdjieffian lineage in terms of his own view, the Gurdjieffian view and criteria of inner development and of valid connection to the esoteric centre.

### **Early Contact With Gurdjieff**

In this section I consider Bennett's early contacts with Gurdjieff. I show that, despite the facts of their brevity and of his failure to immediately capitalize on them, these experiences were (i) of profound significance to Bennett's life and (ii) suggest that Gurdjieff saw him as being a person of unusual potentiality. The description of

Bennett's experience at the Prieuré will also serve to show a common basis for Bennett's emphases on *baraka* and the "inner circles of humanity" ("hidden directorate").

### ***Constantinople***

Bennett indicates that by the time of his first meeting with Gurdjieff – some time around late 1920 or early 1921 in Constantinople (see chronology, Appendix 1) – he already had a sense of 'spiritual search'. There is not space here to discuss his antecedent experiences, nor to go into detail concerning his first encounter with Gurdjieff. It will be sufficient to summarize the main elements of Bennett's experience at this time and then to show how he suggests that they were 'answered' by his encounter with Gurdjieff.

Bennett had become interested in Islam in general and Sufism in particular. He had visited *tekkes* of the Mevlevi and Rufa'i orders where he had been impressed by profoundly peaceful (Mevlevi)<sup>1</sup> and miraculous (Rufa'i)<sup>2</sup> spectacles. He had seen a connection between the former and an 'out of body experience'<sup>3</sup> that he had when injured during WW1.<sup>4</sup>

Largely through experiences afforded as an officer in British Intelligence he had arrived at a very bleak view of human frailty<sup>5</sup>; moreover, he came to the conclusion that he could not assume himself to be any different.<sup>6</sup> He says that he saw the world as being in great need of some kind of transformative force, but felt that conventional religion did not hold the answer.<sup>7</sup> He felt that Sufism had something important, but that it was ceasing to be applicable because "the dervishes belonged to the dying world."<sup>8</sup> However, he thought

Might there not be someone, somewhere, who could help? For the first time in my life, the idea of search entered my consciousness. There was something that must be found, before there was anything to be done.<sup>9</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Bennett came under the spiritual mentorship of Prince Sabaheddin who educated him concerning Anthroposophy, Theosophy and occult matters in general.<sup>10</sup> (It was Sabaheddin who introduced Bennett to Gurdjieff whom, apparently he had first met in 1908.<sup>11</sup>) One result of Bennett's association with Sabaheddin was experimentation with hypnotism.<sup>12</sup> These experiments contributed to a philosophical conversion from Cartesian dualism to an understanding in terms of interpenetrating energies.<sup>13</sup> It was also around this time that Bennett had his first experience of seeing the fifth dimension, "eternity", of non-deterministic freedom.<sup>14</sup>

Bennett's account of his first meeting with Gurdjieff suggests that, for him, Gurdjieff synthesized much of the above. With regard to his general impression, he records that he was struck by Gurdjieff's presence<sup>15</sup> and says "I had never before had the same feeling of being understood better than I understood myself."<sup>16</sup> More specifically, Bennett was very struck by Gurdjieff's authority on the subject of hypnotism and the fine psycho-physical energies involved.<sup>17</sup> Gurdjieff also confirmed Bennett's thoughts concerning "eternity" as the dimension of freedom.<sup>18</sup> However, Bennett indicates that he was most impressed by the way in which Gurdjieff focused both of these subjects on the question of, and the necessity for, *human transformation*.<sup>19</sup> Of his impression of Gurdjieff's knowledge, Bennett later said that

It was, above all, astonishing to meet a man, almost unacquainted with any Western European language, possessing a working knowledge of physics, chemistry, biology and modern astronomy, and able to make searching comments on the then new and



fashionable theory of relativity, and also on the psychology of Sigmund Freud.<sup>20</sup>

This serves to suggest that, for Bennett, Gurdjieff was eligible as a potential source of the transformative knowledge for which he had seen the necessity, because he was fully in touch with the modern world – i.e., not, like the dervishes, part of the “dying world”.

In conclusion I wish to highlight three factors relating to Bennett’s degree of preparedness for the teaching and his first contact with Gurdjieff:

1. Bennett can be understood as having formed a magnetic centre from ‘B. Influences’ through which Gurdjieff could communicate with him concerning transformation.
2. He had gone at least some of the way towards realizing the need for a transformative teaching from beyond the conditions of ordinary life.<sup>21</sup>
3. The context that he gives for his search suggests that, from the beginning, he saw the relevance of Gurdjieff’s transformative teaching in *collective* as well as personal terms.

### ***Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.***

From mid-1922 Bennett attended Ouspensky’s meetings in London.<sup>22</sup> However, he had no further contact with Gurdjieff until 1923. In this year he visited Gurdjieff’s Institute twice: the first occasion, in January or February, was for just a weekend<sup>23</sup>; the second was for around a month in August<sup>24</sup> (however, it must be noted that he spent a few days in Paris towards the end of this period<sup>25</sup>).

Bennett’s contact with Gurdjieff during this period brought about a profound experience which can be seen as having sustained his faith in the efficacy of the

teaching until he met Gurdjieff again in 1948. Moreover, his record of his interactions with Gurdjieff indicate that Gurdjieff saw him as someone with a high capacity in relation to the Work. Before turning to the experiences and interactions themselves it is necessary to consider the comments which his detractors have made concerning this early contact.

As I have shown elsewhere, a large part of the case, made by the ‘orthodox lineal descendants’, that Bennett's position and interpretation of Gurdjieff's transmission does not have to be taken seriously, rests on the fact that his total contact with him was relatively brief. C.S.Nott – who, as has been previously noted, was one of the few English people to maintain fairly continuous contact with Gurdjieff – writes in his biographical *Teachings of Gurdjieff* that

Among the Ouspensky pupils [who visited the Prieuré during 1923] was a Mr J.G.Bennett who was there for a few odd days; he did not meet Gurdjieff again until shortly before his death in 1949.<sup>26</sup>

Due to his long term contact with Gurdjieff, Nott held a respected position in the, post-1949, English orthodoxy.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, his books read as sober and rational accounts of his encounters with Gurdjieff and his understanding of the teaching. However, the above statement is inaccurate. Clearly Bennett's time at the Prieuré cannot be dismissed as “a few odd days”. It is to be noted that Nott himself was not a witness to Bennett's visits which took place in 1923 – he did not visit the Prieuré until April 1924.<sup>28</sup> (Moreover, the second part of the statement is a travesty of the truth in that Bennett enjoyed fourteen months of fairly frequent and intensive contact with Gurdjieff from August 1948 to October 1949.) However, it is not so much the inaccuracy and misleading nature of this statement to which I want to draw attention, but the *pointedness* with which he inserts it into his account.

James Moore, in his *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, also shows an agenda to belittle Bennett's early contact with Gurdjieff. This seems to be part of a more general agenda to present Bennett as (a) a dubious character and (b) as being of very little significance to the Gurdjieff lineage. Under the general endnote heading 'Gurdjieff's subsidiary pupils' he includes a substantial piece titled 'J.G.Bennett's youthful adventurism'<sup>29</sup> in which he engages in a character assassination on the basis of the so-called 'affair of the forged deeds' (relating to Bennett's financial activities in the late 1920s)<sup>30</sup>. On the basis of Foreign Office papers Moore suggests that despite his acquittal, Bennett was guilty. Bennett himself admits that he had sailed dangerously close to the wind and exercised poor judgement (characteristics which may, in themselves, be relevant to his general character), but insists that he had done nothing illegal.<sup>31</sup> It would be neither fruitful nor relevant to attempt to get to the bottom of this affair. It is my view that the Foreign Office documents to which Moore refers (which I have seen)<sup>32</sup> prove nothing conclusive and to refer to them as though authoritative simply dignifies innuendo. In the main text of his book he qualifies Bennett's impressions of the Prieuré as those of a "fringe figure" and "weekend guest"<sup>33</sup>. This is blatantly unfair as the specific impressions he cites refer to Bennett's month at the Prieuré.<sup>34</sup> Where he *does* refer to this longer visit it is to say that it was on the day after Gurdjieff gave a talk titled 'For one section of the people here, their stay has become completely useless' (21 August 1923)<sup>35</sup> that he departed from the Prieuré "and did not see Gurdjieff again for twenty-five years."<sup>36</sup> The last part is, of course, incontrovertible. However, the context in which it is presented, which implies that Bennett 'left with his tail between his legs', *is* disputable. Moore does not give a source for this being the date on which Bennett left for good; and in the absence of any contrary evidence it seems reasonable to believe Bennett's own account which

states that it was not until early September that he left (and then because he had pressing engagements). It may well be that 22 August was the date when he went to Paris.<sup>37</sup> However, his account states that before he *did* leave finally Gurdjieff explicitly invited him to be a full-time personal pupil.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Higher Emotional Energy.***

In this subsection I wish to make the point that, while the brevity of Bennett's early contact with Gurdjieff cannot be denied, *the contact itself was of a highly significant quality.* The subject matter relates closely to Bennett's emphasis on the importance for work on oneself of *baraka* or "substance of work", as set out in Chapter Two.<sup>39</sup>

### **The experience**

Bennett participated in the intensive daily programme of the Prieuré (which I have, to some extent, described in Chapter Two). This involved long days of arduous physical work<sup>40</sup> juxtaposed with psychological exercises<sup>41</sup> and intensive work on the sacred dances and movements<sup>42</sup>. All of this took place in "an extraordinary state of tension."<sup>43</sup> Bennett records that the food was barely adequate (except on Sundays)<sup>44</sup> and that fasting was sometimes used.<sup>45</sup> After, perhaps, two weeks of this regime Bennett fell ill with dysentery and became progressively weaker. In accord with the 'only super-efforts count' ethos of the situation he forced himself on until a morning came when "shaking with fever and very wretched in myself"<sup>46</sup> he felt that he had failed. Then

Just as I was saying to myself: "I will stay in bed today," I felt my body rising. I dressed and went to work as usual, but this time with a queer sense of being held together by a superior Will that was not my own.<sup>47</sup>

However, he still felt weak and ill. Later that day a movements class, directed by Gurdjieff, was held out of doors in the heat of the early afternoon sun. The exercise being taught was unusually difficult and many, more experienced pupils were giving up. Of his own experience he writes:

I felt very ill and weak. A deadly lassitude took possession of me, so that every movement became a supreme effort of will...

...There was no past and future, only the present agony of making my body move. Gradually, I became aware that Gurdjieff was putting all his attention on me. There was an unspoken demand that was at the same time an encouragement and a promise. I must not give up—if it killed me.

Suddenly, I was filled with the influx of an immense power. My body seemed to have turned into light...There was no effort, no pain, no weariness, not even any sense of weight...My...state was blissful beyond anything I had ever known....It was exultation in the faith that can move mountains.<sup>48</sup>

Bennett remained in an altered state of consciousness for the rest of the day. I will quote two further passages that give a sense of the profundity of the experience. He writes:

The great trees, the grey rocks, the cloudless sky and the murmur of evening insects all blended with my inner life. There was no distinction of outside and inside: everything was where it was, and so was neither inside nor outside of anything else.<sup>49</sup>

Further on, he says:

Love was everywhere and in everything. It was infinitely adaptable to every shade of need. After a time, it became too much for me, it seemed that if I plunged any more deeply into the mystery of love, I would cease to exist...

...I knew that the world I had entered is one where there is no loneliness, because all who enter into that Eternal Source meet there as brothers....I had...the...awareness that it would not in the least matter if my body were destroyed.<sup>50</sup>

I will refer to some of these statements below. In general terms, they can be seen as describing an experience of transcendence of the limitations of egoism and the realization of the (non-dual) identity of the 'true self' with Reality.

Mention must also be made of Bennett's understanding of this experience in terms of his emerging time-eternity idea. He writes:

As my state of consciousness changed, 'I' and 'my pattern' grew closer together or separated and lost touch. Time and eternity were the conditions of our experience, and the Harmonious Development of Man towards which Gurdjieff was leading us was the secret of true freedom...  
...Now I was living in Eternity and yet I had not lost my hold on time.<sup>51</sup>

### **A Gurdjieffian interpretation.**

The specific need is to explore this experience with reference to Gurdjieffian spiritual psychology. I will take Bennett's time-eternity perception as a convenient starting point.

Gurdjieff, having told Bennett at their first meeting that it was necessary to *actually enter* the higher reality which he understood in terms of the eternity dimension (rather than merely thinking about it),<sup>52</sup> now precipitated just such an experience. (I will come to Gurdjieff's role in this below.) I suggest that Bennett's eternity-time (potential-actualization) dichotomy is in some respects equivalent to Gurdjieff's idea of essence and personality.<sup>53</sup>

How, then, does this fit in with the scheme worked out in Chapter Five? Consideration of the equivalence between the eternity-time and essence-personality dichotomies indicates that one aspect of the experience was *being fully awake in essence*. – The idea that he was *awake* in essence, rather than merely in contact with it, is suggested by his saying that he was aware of his pattern in eternity but had not lost contact with time. Eternity-essence as potentiality requires time-personality for

its realization and actualization. – This state of realization of essence is itself equivalent to total self-remembering. The ability to *maintain* this state of being is a characteristic of Man No.5 who has a fully developed *kesdjan* body. (See Chapter Five.)

So how was it possible for Bennett, as a neophyte, to have a fairly prolonged experience of this state? Bennett says that he felt himself “held together by a superior Will that was not [his] own” and that, immediately prior to the break-through, he felt Gurdjieff concentrating on him with “an unspoken demand that was [also] an encouragement and a promise.” Gurdjieff explicitly corroborated this impression by indicating to Bennett that he had lent him the “Higher Emotional Energy” necessary to ‘fuel’ this state.<sup>54</sup> I discuss the nature and implications of this special kind of help below. Here it is necessary to point out the identity between “higher emotional energy” (i.e., the energy of the HEC) and “H.12” – the energy which both *evolves from* the “first conscious shock” (of self-remembering) and which is *necessary for self-remembering to be possible*. The situation appears to be that Gurdjieff ‘charged’ Bennett with this “higher emotional energy” which normally a person without a *kesdjan* body could not contain.<sup>55</sup>

It seems from the above that with the help of Gurdjieff’s energy Bennett experienced a kind of ‘preview’ of having a fully developed *kesdjan* body. I will now point out three further characteristics of his experience that relate to this.

Firstly, it is only when the higher control associated with the *kesdjan* body exists that the power of attention can be fully mobilized to direct and harmonize the actions of the lower centres.<sup>56</sup> Bennett’s experience undoubtedly exemplified this aspect.<sup>57</sup>

Secondly, it is implicit in much of the foregoing that the experience would have been one of connection to the HEC. I have associated Gurdjieff's "sacred being functions" of faith, hope, love and conscience with this level of experience. Bennett speaks of experiencing "the faith that can move mountains"<sup>58</sup> and emphasizes his perception of the universal nature of love. The faculty of conscience is represented in so far as that contact with one's essential pattern can be seen as equivalent to inner guidance towards one's true purpose and obligation.

Thirdly, he had the experience of having entered a level of reality beyond the physical, such that he would not cease to exist if his body were to die. In Gurdjieffian terms this implies the presence of a *kesdjan* body.<sup>59</sup>

Taken together the different aspects of the situation serve to indicate that Bennett received a foretaste of a level of experience which would normally only be accessible to "Man No.5".

### **The 'Great Reservoir'.**

I turn now to consideration of Gurdjieff's role as the 'provider' of the experience. An understanding of this issue and the importance which Bennett placed upon it will prove to be of great significance with regard to his post-1949 position on the continued transmission of the teaching. I have, in the section on the formation of higher bodies in Chapter Five, established a frame of reference which anticipates the idea of such a special kind of help. The idea that Gurdjieff filled Bennett with his own "higher emotional energy" which then acted as a temporary substitute for a fully crystallized *kesdjan* body is fully in line with the ideas developed in Chapter Five (based on Gurdjieff's 1917 statements recorded by the de Hartmanns). Analysis of these statements makes it clear that, through the "magnetic bond" which exists



between teacher and pupil (which is a ‘surrogate *kesdjan* body’), Gurdjieff could, *if he wished*, bring about a temporary and unstable state of ecstasy.<sup>60</sup>

Bennett records that Gurdjieff spoke to him of this matter *explicitly*. After emphasizing that effective work on oneself requires the ‘fuel’ of “Higher Emotional Energy” and that, in the early stages, people are unable to produce a sufficient supply, he said:

“There are some people in the world, but they are very rare, who are connected to a Great Reservoir or Accumulator of this energy. This Reservoir has no limits. Those who can draw on it can be means of helping others. Suppose that a man needs a hundred units of this energy for his own transformation, but he only has ten units and cannot make more for himself. He is helpless. But with the help of someone who can draw upon the Great Accumulator, he can borrow ninety more. Then his work can be effective.”

He let all this sink in, and then stopped, and looking into my eyes said: “Those who have this quality belong to a special part of the highest caste of humanity. It may be that one day you will become such, but you will have to wait for many years. What you have received today is a taste of what is possible for you...When a man has had experience of Reality, he is responsible for what he does with his life.”<sup>61</sup>

There are three main elements here: (i) the statement that there are people who can draw on a high spiritual source to transmit helping energy to others, and the description of these people in terms akin to the “inner circle of humanity” (cf. Bennett’s own perception that “all who enter into that Eternal Source meet there as brothers”); (ii) the (contextually indubitable) message that Gurdjieff himself was such a person; and (iii) the message to Bennett that he had the potential to fulfil this role himself (and the implicit exhortation that he should aspire to do so.)

The three elements of Gurdjieff’s statement and Bennett’s understanding in terms of *baraka*, as set out in Chapter Two, refer most obviously to the relationship between a teacher and a pupil or a circle of pupils. However, the following quotation

– which refers to a lecture which Gurdjieff gave on the evening of Bennett's experience – will serve to illuminate his response to the possibility and obligation that was set before him and to highlight a fourth, *and more far reaching* aspect.

...Gurdjieff was showing how our capacity for work depends on the way we are connected with the sources of energy inside us and beyond us. All that he said illuminated my own experience. Gurdjieff's explanations reached me in a direct way as if they came from inside myself, rather than through his words and my hearing. The significance of what he said went far beyond my own situation. *I saw a picture of all humanity thirsting for the energy that was flowing through me. Gurdjieff spoke of the Great Eternal Reservoirs which are connected with Sacred Beings who have come to earth to help mankind. He then passed to another diagram showing how the Will of God in creation acts through energies of different densities and fineness. I could see that such sources of help are really present...*

(my italics)<sup>62</sup>

This indicates that Bennett understood the obligation of a person with the potential to become a channel for this energy as being to *humanity as a whole*. Taken together Bennett's perception of Gurdjieff's lecture and his experience of the universality of love can be seen as constituting a prototype for his later understanding of the “Unitive Energy” as the ultimate authority behind human and planetary evolution. This is probably the true beginning of Bennett's understanding of ‘the Gurdjieff work’ in terms of ‘the Great Work’.

It is especially significant in so far as that a close connection can be seen to exist between the ‘Gurdjieff work in the context of the Great Work’ idea and the ‘Gurdjieff as channel for *baraka*’ idea: both of these are emphasized by Bennett and played down by the ‘orthodox lineal descendants’.

As was described in Chapter Two, Bennett emphasized that, not only are there specific channels of *baraka* through individual teachers, but that there are “...*other and more important reserves of this substance than any one man can produce.*”<sup>63</sup> This

undoubtedly refers to the “Great Eternal Reservoirs...connected with the Sacred Beings who have come to earth to help mankind” of Gurdjieff’s lecture. It seems that Bennett believed that connection to these larger scale resources of enabling energy was a necessary aspect of the Work stemming from Gurdjieff. – This can be seen as a basis for his understanding of the role of true fourth way schools in concentrating, storing, releasing and putting to work psychic and spiritual energies.<sup>64</sup> (See Chapter One.) – In addition to his own experience and Gurdjieff’s statements of 1923, this belief can be seen as justified in terms of an inner exercise which Gurdjieff taught known as “Conscious Stealing”. As far as I know this has not been written about publicly; Bennett alludes to it in *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* saying that it is “one of his most remarkable spiritual exercises”.<sup>65</sup> This exercise, which requires considerable preparation, involves the ‘inner visualization’ of connections between the subject and each of several sacred places associated with Sacred Individuals sent from above (e.g., Mecca); the person then draws on the spiritual energies which are stored at these places.

To sum up, it is clear that Bennett’s experience in the Summer of 1923 had a powerful influence on his subsequent understanding of the Work and his relationship to it. There are three main aspects to this:

- (i) he had, as Gurdjieff told him, received a foretaste of what he might attain through the Work. Moreover,
- (ii) he had perceived that Gurdjieff’s work had a context and significance beyond the individual salvation of his personal pupils – i.e., a ‘Great Work context’. In this context, Gurdjieff had told him that a person who has glimpsed Reality becomes “responsible for what he does with his life.”

This is to say that he was to see his potentiality in terms of a collective obligation. Gurdjieff's lecture provoked him to a direct perception of this.

And

(iii) the experience itself and Gurdjieff's explanation of it was seminally formative to the development of his belief that fourth way transmission requires a teacher who is capable of supplying higher emotional energy.

It seems to be self-evidently true that Gurdjieff had perceived Bennett to be a person with a high potential in relation to the Work. (The only possible objections to this would be either to doubt the reliability of his account – it might, e.g., be suggested that, while not a fabrication, it is vastly overinflated<sup>66</sup> – or to doubt that Gurdjieff was working in an intentional way – e.g., Bennett was simply susceptible rather than promising.) While it must be acknowledged that other people might have been reticent to speak of such profound matters, it has to be pointed out that there is no other record to compare with this.<sup>67</sup>

Before Bennett left the Prieuré Gurdjieff spoke to him again about his possibilities. (It is to be noted that on this occasion Bennett was in a more normal state of consciousness.) Bennett records that, referring to his experience Gurdjieff told him:

“You have the possibility of learning to work. The truth is that very few people in the contemporary world have this possibility; for most people there are barriers that they cannot pass....You have seen that it is possible to be directly connected with the Great Accumulator of Energy that is the source of all miracles. But you do not know how it is done, and you are not ready to be shown....It may take twenty, thirty or even forty years before you will be able to enter into the power that was lent to you for a day...”

Gurdjieff emphasized that Bennett's experience was a gift, but that in order to realize the possibilities it had shown him he would have to work and learn to *steal*<sup>68</sup>; and, in

inviting him to become a full time pupil and trainee assistant (lecturer and translator), he said:

“If you will devote all your energies to the task, it may take two years before you can work alone. Until then you will need me—for you cannot create the conditions for yourself....for those two years you must be ready for anything.”<sup>69</sup>

### **Conclusion.**

As we know Bennett did not accept this offer. For his part Gurdjieff did not press the matter.<sup>70</sup> The commitment has to come from the pupil and it seems clear that Bennett, for all his potential, was not ready for this. Much as he believed he wanted to follow Gurdjieff, he felt that his worldly obligations did not permit him to become a full time pupil.<sup>71</sup> He subsequently mediated his inner conflict through the belief that by making money he could help Gurdjieff's work by providing funds for research facilities. In this connection, it must be pointed out that, while (ironically) Gurdjieff may have contributed to the formation of this grandiose but, arguably, irrelevant idea,<sup>72</sup> he explicitly reassured Bennett that it was his *work* not his money that was required.<sup>73</sup>

In Bennett's defence it must be pointed out that: (a) he was, at that time, very entangled in worldly matters; and (b) he could not know how quickly the opportunity of an individual pupil-teacher relationship with Gurdjieff would disappear.<sup>74</sup> However, it has to be said that his failure to grasp this opportunity is to be seen as a function of his lack of maturity (in relation to the teaching). Specifically, it can be inferred that the ‘criteria of preparedness’ (as set out on page 433), while present, were not sufficiently established. And this is precisely the view that he himself indicates in describing the much more urgent necessity to work on himself that he experienced six years later.<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, his contact with Gurdjieff over this period is not, in itself, to be seen as a failure or insignificant. On the contrary, it gave him a profound insight into the nature and possibilities of the Work; and it demonstrated that Gurdjieff viewed him as a person of remarkable potential.

### Ouspensky

When, in early 1924, Ouspensky's issued an ultimatum to his pupils that they must decide categorically and irrevocably whether to follow him or Gurdjieff, Bennett chose Ouspensky. (See Chapter One for a brief summary of Ouspensky's relationship to the 'Gurdjieff tradition'— his schism with Gurdjieff and his encapsulation of the ideas he had learned from him in the 'System'.) He remained a pupil of Ouspensky until 1940. In order to understand the degree of Bennett's own connection to the Gurdjieff teaching during this period it is necessary to determine *Ouspensky's* status in terms of the transmission of the teaching. A further reason for exploring Ouspensky's situation is the extent to which it may be seen as, in some respects, equivalent to Bennett's own situation after Gurdjieff's death. Ouspensky's separation from Gurdjieff is to some degree equivalent to Bennett's separation from the Foundation in 1955 (six years after Gurdjieff's death). In these different situations, both men were trying to maintain the proper trajectory of the teaching as they saw it; and, crucially, both were concerned with contacting the Source of the System (Ouspensky's phrase). Against this, it has to be said that Ouspensky was conservative (preserving the purity of the 'System') compared to Bennett (seeking new inputs); and in this respect the former is more like the Foundation and the latter, I shall argue,

more in tune with Gurdjieff himself. Nevertheless, there may be some extent to which Bennett's inclination to take seriously the idea of the necessity of connection to the esoteric centre is related to his time under Ouspensky's influence.

The relationship between Gurdjieff and Ouspensky is a complex issue in its own right and beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I shall summarize the main elements of the situation.

### ***Ouspensky's reasons for leaving Gurdjieff.***

Ouspensky's statements concerning his schism from Gurdjieff can be divided into four categories:

1. The form of the work changed. This is the main reason given in *ISOM* – i.e., it is his public account. Of the reason for his first separation<sup>76</sup> from Gurdjieff (c.1918), he writes:

In regard to my relations with G. I saw clearly at that time that I had been mistaken about many things that I had ascribed to G. and that by staying with him now I should not be going in the same direction I went at the beginning.<sup>77</sup>

He says that, when Gurdjieff first introduced the sacred dances into the work (c.1917)

“Gurdjieff did not explain his aims and intentions...”<sup>78</sup> And that in 1919 (when he was in Russia and Gurdjieff was in Georgia) he heard that the work was going “in a new direction, based principally on art, that is on music, dances and rhythmic exercises.”<sup>79</sup> In this connection he speaks of there being in “school work” “*obligatory*” and “*auxiliary*” subjects, the latter of which are only a means to study the former.<sup>80</sup> (I shall return to this distinction below.) In conclusion, Ouspensky

appears to be saying that either he had misunderstood what Gurdjieff's "specialism"<sup>81</sup> was or that it had changed.

2. The nature of the teacher-pupil relationship changed. This is not explicit in *ISOM*.

In 1935 he told his own pupils:

In 1918 I parted with G. because something changed. He changed the first principles and demanded that people must believe, and must do what he tells them even if they don't understand.<sup>82</sup>

The "first principles" to which Ouspensky is referring are that one should not take the teacher's statements on trust, but should seek to verify everything for oneself, and that one should not attempt to apply the ideas until personal understanding is gained.<sup>83</sup> This can be seen as related to 'reason 1' in that Gurdjieff, apparently, did not explain his intentions in introducing the dances. It may also refer to the more intense and disciplined phase of work which Gurdjieff initiated in 1917.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, Ouspensky's gives a hint of his 'rebellion' against Gurdjieff's authority with reference to an event in 1916 – again a period when Gurdjieff was accelerating the work.<sup>85</sup> Referring to something that arose during a 'telepathic transmission' from Gurdjieff, Ouspensky says: "The matter was concerned with certain conditions that I had either to accept or leave the work."<sup>86</sup> With regard to the same event, he mentions an important insight – he does not say what – which he kept from Gurdjieff and adding "...for myself it was indubitable and what happened later showed that I was right."<sup>87</sup>

3. Gurdjieff became dangerous, unreliable, ruthless or mad. Again, this strand is suggested in *ISOM*, but it developed in subsequent years. With regard to the 1917 period Ouspensky writes of the, in his view needless and irresponsible, practical difficulties which Gurdjieff made for some members of his group in the already



hazardous conditions of revolutionary Russia. He says: "...I have to confess that my confidence in G. began to waver from this moment."<sup>88</sup> On the occasion when he told his pupils that he was separating from Gurdjieff, he suggested that Gurdjieff had reached a critical and dangerous stage of development and that it was possible that "He could go mad. Or else he could attract to himself some disaster in which all those around him would be involved."<sup>89</sup> In later years he seems to have told his pupils that Gurdjieff *had* gone mad.<sup>90</sup>

4. Gurdjieff's enterprise was unstable. On the final page of *ISOM*, Ouspensky writing of Gurdjieff's Institute at Fontainebleau, states:

...I could not fail to see, as I had seen in Essentuki in 1918, that there were destructive elements in the organization of the affair itself and that it had to fall to pieces.<sup>91</sup>

Clearly, this is closely connected to 'reason 3'. It may be that Ouspensky sensed danger in the 'do or die' attitude which characterized Gurdjieff's efforts to establish his Institute as well as the atmosphere at the Prieuré itself. He seems to have felt that Gurdjieff was not attracting, or preparing, students of sufficient quality.<sup>92</sup> However, this may simply reflect his own feeling of being undervalued by Gurdjieff (see below).

There is no space to engage in discussion of the authenticity of or the true balance between these reasons. The 'composite result' was his separation of the teaching from the teacher and its complement in seeking to attract the attention of the original source. Reasons 1 and 2 will be further discussed below in relation to the Gurdjieffian critique. Reasons 3 and 4 do not relate directly to Ouspensky's stage of development and they are only of direct relevance in that Ouspensky thought that

Gurdjieff had either (a) only ever had a partial contact with the Source and/or (b) had lost contact with the Source after 1917.<sup>93</sup>

***The Gurdjieffian critique.***

To very briefly summarize the views of some other Gurdjieffians of the period: Ouspensky's understanding of Gurdjieff's teaching was overly intellectual, and he did not understand it as well as he thought he did.<sup>94</sup> Having derived a 'philosophy of self development' ("the System") from Gurdjieff's teachings he then sought to establish his own school even though he was not qualified to do so.<sup>95</sup> He did not understand Gurdjieff's aim (which was more than speculative philosophy).<sup>96</sup> Although intellectually very strong, he was emotionally weak and, in general, lazy.<sup>97</sup> He could not be bothered to learn the movements (sacred dances).<sup>98</sup> He could not submit to the more exacting discipline which became appropriate after a few years in the work<sup>99</sup>; neither could he accept Gurdjieff's authority when he publicly pointed out that Ouspensky was not qualified to lead work on the scale that he thought he could. Nott cites F.S.Pinder's report of Gurdjieff's visit to London in February 1922 (when Pinder acted as his interpreter):

Gurdjieff had been concerned about the approach to the work of some of Ouspensky's pupils and about Ouspensky's own lack of understanding of the real purpose of the work...Gurdjieff told Ouspensky that he was working on the wrong lines; he was too intellectual. If he wished to *understand* he must stop and begin again to work with Gurdjieff. But Ouspensky could not take it and got angry.

...On the way back [to France] Gurdjieff said to Pinder, 'now they will *have* to choose a teacher.'<sup>100 101</sup>

Ouspensky is deemed to have disconnected himself and those who followed him from (connection to) the true source of the teaching, and hence from any real possibility of change.<sup>102</sup>

Hence, the Gurdjieffian view is that Ouspensky was not qualified to separate the teaching from the teacher because he did not understand it. The Gurdjieffian critique may be seen as converging with Ouspensky's own reasons on the point that he did not understand the overall direction of Gurdjieff's work and especially the place of the movements. The difference lies in the fact that Ouspensky seems to have thought that the ideas that he had derived from the early phase of his work with Gurdjieff was the *real thing* and that it was Gurdjieff himself that had deviated; whereas the Gurdjieffian view was that he had failed to make the transition from a fairly theoretical level to more intensive work on himself. Ouspensky's talk of having misunderstood Gurdjieff's specialism is of interest here. Obviously, he was within his rights to decide that Gurdjieff's specialist line of work was not for him – it seems that he had thought that this was 'esoteric philosophy' whereas it turned out to be sacred dancing. However, I suggest that his "obligatory" and "auxiliary" distinction is, in terms of the teaching, problematic. Ouspensky is implying that he believed himself qualified to distinguish between the core teachings and the things which were 'just a means' by which to approach the core teachings. His attitude suggests that he thought that Gurdjieff's specialism (dancing) was auxiliary in relation to the philosophical ideas. However, the idea of the necessity to find a teacher with a suitable specialism<sup>103</sup> indicates that it is only through engagement in the specialism that the higher ideas can be genuinely understood (in a practical, rather than purely intellectual, way).

***Criteria of connection.***

Ouspensky represented himself as maintaining the true System from which Gurdjieff had deviated, whereas the Gurdjieffian position is that his 'System' was a, technically

accurate, but ultimately superficial understanding of Gurdjieff's teaching. Where does the truth lie? Brief consideration of the developmental criteria in relation to the idea of connection to the esoteric centre will support the Gurdjieffian view that Ouspensky cut himself and his pupils off from the possibilities of Gurdjieff's teaching.

Ouspensky's statements concerning the way in which he saw his school as being connected to the esoteric centre are revealing. He told his pupils:

We have will of No.5 man in school ideas, originally. These ideas could not come from people like ourselves.<sup>104</sup>

This can be seen as corresponding to the idea of (live) 'C. influences'. However, he only appears to be saying that these ideas get the school started and this idea is amplified by the reference to another occasion when Ouspensky was asked whether schools "contain people of higher consciousness".

Not contain, we cannot expect that, but a school cannot get started without knowledge coming from a man of higher mind.<sup>105</sup>

(He uses "higher mind" as a synonym for the "Source" or "esoteric centre".) This statement can be taken as a fairly unequivocal indication that he himself was not directly connected – i.e., that he was not man number five. However, consideration of the idea of the inner circles of humanity, the stairway and the idea of 'reciprocal ascent' has shown that a fourth way school cannot function unless it is directed by a person with the inner stability – and hence *personal connection to the esoteric centre* – associated with man number five. Ouspensky's few statements concerning his own level of development in no way suggest that he was man number five.<sup>106</sup> In this view, Ouspensky's situation after cutting himself off from Gurdjieff was entirely untenable.

### ***Ouspensky's 'school'.***

Ouspensky's own view was that Gurdjieff was not a valid source of the teaching.<sup>107</sup> As has been mentioned above he believed that Gurdjieff had only ever had a *partial connection* to the Source – hence the System was incomplete – and that he had lost the connection which he did have after 1917 – hence the ‘incompleteness of the System’ was a serious problem. He spoke in terms of his own school being a “preparatory school”<sup>108</sup> which was working according to the methods of the System in the hope of attracting the attention of the Source from which it had originated. In October 1930, on the brink of an expansionary phase, he said to Bennett:

I waited for all these years because I wanted to see what Mr. Gurdjieff would do. His work has not given the results he hoped for. I am still as certain as ever that there is a Great Source from which our system has come. Mr. Gurdjieff must have had contact with that source, but I do not believe that it was a complete contact. Something is missing and he has not been able to find it. If we cannot find it through him, then our only hope is to have a direct contact with the Source...our only hope is that the Source will seek us out. That is why I am giving these lectures in London. If those who have the real knowledge see that we can be useful to them, then they may send someone.<sup>109</sup>

It seems that he realized the untenability of the situation.

In terms of the Gurdjieffian critique and the criteria of connection, the situation for those such as Bennett who followed Ouspensky was bleak. However, with regard to the actual situation, it is also necessary to take into account the role of Ouspensky's wife Madame Ouspensky (see the subsection ‘Gurdjieff's pupils’ in Chapter One). She had spent a much longer period working with Gurdjieff than her husband had and, it is believed, that when she finally joined Ouspensky's work in England (in 1931) she remained in contact with Gurdjieff.<sup>110</sup> It is generally thought that she introduced a more intense and practical kind of psychological work than Ouspensky's,

in ‘work terms’, rather abstract approach.<sup>111</sup> It is probable that it was through her, rather than her husband, that Gurdjieff movements classes were introduced in the 1930s.<sup>112</sup>

### ***Bennett as a pupil of Ouspensky.***

As has been described in Chapter Two, Bennett’s decision to follow Ouspensky has been a basis of the orthodoxy’s argument that Bennett cannot be taken seriously in terms of lineage from Gurdjieff. There is no doubt that the situation is difficult to understand. In Chapter Ten of *Witness* Bennett tells us of his momentous experience at the Prieuré and of Gurdjieff’s offer that he should become a pupil; then in the next chapter he relates that when Ouspensky delivered his ultimatum it was him that he decided to follow. There can be no probability that he ‘could not tell the difference’ – i.e., that he believed that Ouspensky had as much to offer as Gurdjieff. His initial impression of the work (in Constantinople), as gained respectively from Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, was qualitatively very different.<sup>113</sup> And there is never any suggestion that Bennett perceived Ouspensky as having the same degree of wisdom and power as he had perceived in Gurdjieff. However, there is no doubt that he held Ouspensky in great respect for his intellect.<sup>114</sup>

Bennett himself offers two explanations: (i) that his personal circumstances did not make it practical for him to go and live at the Prieuré – i.e., that he was better off choosing Ouspensky to whom he had easy access; and (ii) that he felt that Gurdjieff had in some way withdrawn from him (thus implying that he was one of those whom Gurdjieff sent away, as discussed in Chapter Two).<sup>115</sup> He records that he was not influenced by Ouspensky’s talk of Gurdjieff as unstable and dangerous. *Nevertheless, there seems to be something incomplete about his explanation.* James Webb writes of

the rumours, that were current at that time, of a suicide having resulted from the intensity of the work at the Prieuré and of the ‘near rape’ by Gurdjieff of the wife of a member of Ouspensky’s London group; Webb suggests that it may have been this latter matter that was the breaking point for Ouspensky.<sup>116</sup> As we have seen above, Gurdjieff’s ‘do or die extremism’ was one of the foci of Ouspensky’s criticisms. Bennett, having witnessed Gurdjieff’s power at first hand, may have felt very unsettled by these rumours. Moreover, his wife felt a considerable distrust of Gurdjieff.<sup>117</sup> It seems that, rather than Gurdjieff ‘withdrawing’ from Bennett (although we cannot know that this was not the case), it is probably truer to say that Bennett ‘fell away’ from the moment of opportunity that Gurdjieff offered him. He fell back towards the *relative* normality of Ouspensky’s intellectualism and the inertial effect of his life circumstances. While the role and justification of any beliefs about Gurdjieff being dangerous are not clear, it is easy to see how such beliefs could have allied themselves with Bennett’s fear of the change that Gurdjieff could precipitate in him.

Ouspensky had told Bennett’s wife that he “...was right to come away [from the Prieuré]: he is not yet ready for that work.”<sup>118</sup> It has to be conceded that Ouspensky could have been right about this. It could also be that Gurdjieff himself, in offering Bennett the opportunity to be a serious pupil was fully aware of his immediate inability to act on it and simply wished to impress upon him the significance of his experience. As has already been suggested, Bennett did not achieve the necessary maturity to commence serious work on himself for a further six years. It is to be noted that he records that at this time he made an abortive effort to find Gurdjieff.<sup>119</sup>

Where, then, does Bennett’s decision not to follow Gurdjieff leave him with regard to possibilities of inner development? In terms of the conclusions reached

above concerning the untenability of Ouspensky's transmission, the situation is bleak. In these terms he would have been in a position to gain a very thorough knowledge of the System and to make efforts at self remembering<sup>120</sup>; but without the guidance of a wakeful teacher, rather than someone perhaps slightly more advanced on the 'stairway', this work could not have been directed in a balanced way and could not, therefore, have led anywhere. However, as has been suggested above, the input of Madame Ouspensky may have contributed a genuinely 'live' element. Bennett records that he participated in the work that she organized which was "the nearest approach to...the Prieuré: hard physical effort and disturbing psychological conditions."<sup>121</sup> He also says that he was one of those permitted to learn the movements.<sup>122</sup> Of Madame Ouspensky herself he says "...I received immense help from her during these years."<sup>123</sup> It is also necessary to take into account that Bennett had experienced a profound interaction with Gurdjieff on his own account. This is not to say that he was less than wholehearted in his following of Ouspensky.<sup>124</sup> However, it may be that his own start with Gurdjieff made it possible for him to gain more from the work conditions than would otherwise have been the case. A belief in the efficacy of the work, going beyond anything that Ouspensky himself felt,<sup>125</sup> appears to have given Bennett an unflagging energy and enthusiasm for the work. An important example of this is the inner repetition of prayer which Ouspensky initiated as a practice in the 1930s and which Bennett took up with a vengeance. He writes:

After three years it united with my breathing and went on continuously even when I was unaware of it.<sup>126</sup>

It seems that Bennett's efforts did produce some results in terms of profound insights<sup>127</sup> and mystical experience<sup>128</sup> (which, in terms of the Gurdjieff ideas, indicate connection to the higher centres). However, as I shall argue more fully below, while



his efforts could have produced *some form* of “crystallization” in the absence of proper guidance the results would have been a lacking in certainty and balance.

### **Bennett as Teacher.**

In this section I describe Bennett’s history as a teacher of the work from his first small semi-independent group to his large scale independent activity immediately prior to the return to Gurdjieff. I then draw out the extent to which Bennett’s motivation as a transmitter of the Gurdjieff teaching can be understood in terms of the Great Work, human evolution, a present change of epoch and the role of the higher powers. Lastly, I consider the question of whether there is any extent to which Bennett’s transmission can be said to have been authentic.

#### ***Basic history.***

Bennett assembled his first elementary group of six people early in 1930.<sup>129</sup> (I shall discuss his motives below.) This was during the period of ‘estrangement’ from Ouspensky and was not authorized by him. Aware of the impropriety of this action and not wishing to create further barriers between himself and Ouspensky, he sought conciliation by sending him regular reports of his group’s meetings. He assured Ouspensky that if he disapproved of the venture then it would be discontinued immediately.<sup>130</sup> However, the situation continued for about nine months without any communication from Ouspensky at all. Eventually, in October 1930, Bennett received a message inviting him and some of his group to attend a lecture called ‘The Search for Objective Consciousness’<sup>131</sup> which marked the beginning of his own

‘expansionary phase’ (see the quotation on page 453). Bennett does not relate the arrangement, if any, that was then made with Ouspensky concerning the status of his own teaching situation. Given Bennett's explicit willingness to obey Ouspensky<sup>132</sup> it seems probable that the group continued with his blessing. This group – which became known as “Bennett's group”<sup>133</sup> – was within Ouspensky's ‘school’, but had a *semi*-autonomous status. He continued regular meeting (throughout the nineteen thirties) and inaugurated a practice of intensive summer seminars.<sup>134</sup> However, the more senior members of his group had access to the Work at Lyne.<sup>135</sup>

Bennett estimates that by early 1941, when the Ouspenskys left for the U.S.A., he “had thirty or forty pupils”.<sup>136</sup> He writes that even before Ouspensky left he had resolved to work more independently.<sup>137</sup> For his part, Ouspensky dictated that the English Work in his name (mainly at Lyne) “should be maintained on the ‘highest possible level’,” but, at the same time, he forbade any new initiatives. Such a ruling was unacceptable to Bennett who appears to have regarded it as a betrayal of responsibility.<sup>138</sup> (I will explore this further below.) In May of 1941 Coombe Springs was acquired as the wartime headquarters of the British Coal Utilization Research Association (B.C.U.R.A.), of which Bennett was Research Director.<sup>139</sup> This served as an opportune venue for weekend Work with his group.<sup>140</sup> Around this time he also started to write a book about the System.<sup>141</sup> In the autumn of 1943 he gave a lecture series in London called ‘Man and His World’ of which he says “The lectures went well and our group was growing stronger from month to month.”<sup>142</sup> Subsequent series in 1944 and 1945 were also successful in attracting new people<sup>143</sup> such that by the middle of 1945 he had more than a hundred pupils.<sup>144</sup> Ouspensky, who had been receiving reports of Bennett's activities from other of his pupils since 1942,<sup>145</sup> had taken an increasingly dim view. In 1943 he had written to Bennett forbidding him to

propagate any of the ideas of the System.<sup>146</sup> In mid-1945 Ouspensky decreed that Bennett was ‘excommunicated’ and that, reminiscent of the manner of his separation from Gurdjieff, none of his pupils were ever again allowed to communicate with him.<sup>147</sup> Bennett gave his own pupils the choice of whether to remain with him or go to Ouspensky (or his representatives in England) – he indicates that an overwhelming majority, if not all of them, remained with him.<sup>148</sup>

For the next three years Bennett was an independent teacher of that which he understood to be the Gurdjieff teaching. In May of 1946 the Institute for the Comparative Study of History Philosophy and the Sciences was inaugurated as an external form for Bennett's now much expanded operation and, in June, Coombe Springs became its official base.<sup>149</sup> Bennett established a very intense form of Work at Coombe Springs based on his experience at the Prieuré: this included hard physical work, confrontation, fasting, long days and learning of Gurdjieff's movements.<sup>150</sup> However, he also records that participants at the second summer seminar (1947) experienced some kind of collective ‘guidance from higher powers’<sup>151</sup>; this was connected to his teaching of this time that their task was to prepare for some momentous event. Over this period he continued to give public lectures which attracted serious students<sup>152</sup> such that by August 1948 (when he returned to Gurdjieff) he had more than two hundred people working with him.<sup>153</sup>

It is useful to give brief consideration to the junctures at which he made specific moves towards independence. The origin of Bennett's first group of six people in 1930 can be explained in terms of his sense of urgency for a ‘work situation’ in relation to (i) his feeling of a need to work on himself and (ii) his perception that the Work was significant to the evolution of humanity.<sup>154</sup> These two elements embody the basic ideas of (i) the necessity to maintain progress in work on oneself under adverse

conditions and (ii) the importance of the Great Work context. These two basic themes can be seen as having recurred, in more developed forms, as, first, a reason for his unauthorized war time activity, and, later for his secession from the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy and subsequent embracing of Subud.

### ***Human evolution.***

Under this heading I discuss the significance of 'Great Work' type ideas to the development of Bennett's career as a spiritual teacher (1929-1948). Mention has already been made of the sense of inner crisis which motivated him to intensify his Work efforts at the end of the 1920s, of the concurrent unavailability of Ouspensky and of the role played by these factors in provoking him to start a group of his own. There is little doubt that his sense of personal urgency was a major factor in precipitating this move. However, the context of the actual decision to do so embodied a more far reaching and transpersonal dimension.

He records that whilst in Albania in the autumn of 1929 he watched – over a period of several days – many thousands of storks gathering in a swamp. One morning, as though – to his perception – as *one entity*, they all took to the air to fly south: this sight caused him to experience a state of sublime awe. He writes:

As I stood in the deep silence left by the great birds, I caught a glimpse of the future of mankind. One day we shall become aware of the collective consciousness of humanity. It may take millions of years, but when it comes, it will be a power incomparably greater than that of any living species. In this vision there was also a promise that the time was not so far distant when the human race would make a step forward, and begin to look beyond the narrow loyalties of nation, race and religion, towards the distant goal of human unity.<sup>155</sup>

Bennett's perception of the collective need for higher emotional energy during his experience at the Prieuré can be seen as having given him a fundamental awareness of

a large scale context of Gurdjieff's Work. The vision triggered by the storks may be seen as a *specific* focus for the idea that the Work serves the wider evolution of humanity.

He records that he felt strongly motivated to share this vision with others<sup>156</sup> and adds:

It was a verification of much that I had learned from Gurdjieff and Ouspensky; and if I could no longer work with them, I must begin to work with others. I was convinced that it is useless to attempt to work alone.<sup>157</sup>

He emphasizes that he was aware of being unqualified to function as a spiritual teacher,<sup>158</sup> but it seems that he felt that the vision with which he felt himself to have been blessed placed him under some kind of obligation. With regard to developments later in his teaching career it is important to notice that its inception was closely connected to the germination of Great Work ideas and the obligations associated with them.

Although his motivation for wishing to share the Work with others was closely connected to his vision of the potentiality of humanity, the actual impression that he gives of work with his early groups during the 1930s is more modest. This is understandable in terms of: (i) the fact that this work took place under the overall umbrella of Ouspensky whom Bennett was intent on obeying; and (ii) Bennett's own more immediate focus on attempting to transform his acutely felt inner deficiencies. However, all of this took place within the atmosphere of Ouspensky's strategy of attempting to attract the attention of the Source by proving that they could be useful to it. Moreover, Bennett's *own* commitment to this was developing and appears, by the end of the decade, to have outstripped Ouspensky's. He relates that early in 1939 Ouspensky spoke of his "*fading* hope of making contact with the Source of

Gurdjieff's ideas.”<sup>159</sup> (my italics) His own response was to write to “Bash Chelebi, the hereditary chief of the Mevlevi Dervish order” from whom he received a warm reply. This, apparently, delighted Ouspensky, whom it is implied had not himself considered such an active form of search.<sup>160</sup>

Bennett's intentness, throughout the war years, on expanding and intensifying Work activities can be seen as reflecting a conviction that the war itself, as a symptom of deeper human crisis, added poignancy to the collective obligation incumbent on those connected to the Work. However, it was not until the end of the war and his official independence from Ouspensky that Great Work aspects began to be emphasized. Bennett represented the work at Coombe Springs as a preparation for a major manifestation from the Source of which their activity was a small manifestation.<sup>161</sup> Reference to Bennett's *The Crisis In Human Affairs* – which is constructed from his lectures at the first Coombe Springs seminar in 1946 – shows that he had formulated and was teaching his idea of *epochs*. This includes the view that humanity is at present at a major evolutionary threshold between the “megalanthropic epoch” (characterized by high valuation of the human individual) and the next epoch with a new “master idea”<sup>162,163</sup> This is the underlying explanation of the ‘value crisis’ through which he saw humanity as passing<sup>164</sup> and the context for psychokinetic activity, i.e., work on oneself<sup>165</sup>. During the mid to late 1940s Bennett encouraged his pupils at Coombe Springs to see their work as a kind of “Ark” in which Gurdjieff's ideas would survive impending collective upheavals to play a role in the inauguration of the new epoch.<sup>166</sup> For a while Bennett considered establishing a Work-based community in a remote region of South Africa in which he and his pupils could practise and preserve their ideas in isolation from the crisis which he saw

as imminent for Western civilization. However, he came to the view that to withdraw the psychokinetic activity would be an abnegation of responsibility.<sup>167</sup>

The idea of the Great Work as a planetary evolution in which humanity has a key role was referred to more explicitly at the 1947 seminar. Bennett records an experience, shared by many participants, in which it was revealed that the Earth and humanity – which are collectively female – are passing through a cyclical phase during which they are fertilized by a higher cosmic intelligence.<sup>168</sup> Bennett does not claim to have in any way directly *caused* this experience – he indicates the sense that the experience had been bestowed by the higher (angelic) powers themselves. However, he can be seen as responsible for it to the extent that it was he who had established the ‘Work situation’ and the general belief structure within which it took place.

It must be seen as significant that the ‘Great Work’ dimension, which played a prominent role in the birth of his teaching career, emerged again as an important element when it ‘came of age’. Moreover, we can see in the ‘Great Work ideas’ prevalent during Bennett's period of ‘phoney independence’ – i.e., prior to his return to Gurdjieff – a kind of ‘raw prototype’ of the ideas which surfaced strongly when he realized his full independence two decades later. These include:

- the general idea of the Great Work;
- human evolution and the present transition understood in terms of “epochs”;
- the involvement of higher powers (angels); and
- the idea of founding a ‘new age community’.

It can be stated that at this time, as again later, Bennett was operating outside the ‘mainstream’ of his tradition. He understood his position as maintaining the sense

and purpose of the work in terms of a Great Work context of answering the needs of the world.

***Was it an authentic transmission?***

At first sight Bennett's position, during the years 1945 to 1948, as an unauthorized off-shoot of a teacher who was himself unqualified seems *entirely* untenable. However, as has already been suggested with regard to the untenability of his situation as a *pupil* of Ouspensky, there is an extent to which his lineage during this period can be seen as directly from Gurdjieff. I shall show below that this can be seen as having surfaced as a convergence back towards Gurdjieff, as the effective source of the teaching, during the period following his break with Ouspensky.

At this point it is useful to be able to refer to the recollections of Cecil Lewis who became a pupil of Bennett in 1945. Lewis's perspective is particularly valuable because he did not meet with Bennett after 1948 and subsequently, in the early 1950s, became a pupil of Madame H.H.Lannes (the leader of the orthodox English Gurdjieffians). His view is thus internal, but not unduly coloured by a personal investment in Bennett. I therefore quote from him at some length. He writes:

All Bennett had remembered of [Gurdjieff's] Teaching was contained in a slim hand-bound volume of double-spaced typescript. Not much. Beyond this there were only rumours and mysterious hints of meetings with Gurdjieff in Constantinople and Berlin [?], of the mystical powers held by this extraordinary (and rather intimidating) Greek, who was the source of it all. But all this was misty, vague and out of reach. Bennett had met Gurdjieff, believed in him, and everything he told us about him and taught us of his work was more than enough to make us eager to understand it better and learn how to prepare ourselves to receive it.

The sense of sharing in the foundation of a hidden Teaching which could bring renewed hope to the world led me to a whirl of questions and speculations at the weekly groups which I was allowed to attend. I found it all immensely exciting and stimulating. It seemed the answer to all the world's ills and the



solution to all its problems. At the same time, Bennett confessed that he himself faced an awesome responsibility. P.D.Ouspensky...had died. Gurdjieff himself had also disappeared and was believed to be dead. He, Bennett, alone remained as the custodian of these tremendous possibilities, which were Gurdjieff's legacy to the world. How could we preserve them for posterity?<sup>169</sup>

Lewis's statement can be summarized as making four main points:

1. That there was, in Bennett's transmission, the sense of custodianship of something uniquely important; and that this carried an "awesome responsibility".
2. The emphasis that the teaching originated from Gurdjieff.
3. The idea that they were linked to the teaching by a tenuous thread.
4. That Bennett was strongly committed to the teaching and that his enthusiasm inspired his pupils.

Point 1 can be seen as summarizing ideas that have been dealt with in the previous section. However, in the context of point 2 it is relevant to emphasize here that although Bennett had opted to follow Ouspensky, he had never himself broken with Gurdjieff. And, in connection to point 4, it has been indicated that he was altogether less dogmatic and more enthusiastic and prospective than Ouspensky. He had had a direct experience of the power of higher emotional energy, which is closely connected with the idea of the esoteric centre and which, it seems, were things that Ouspensky only thought about.<sup>170</sup>

Point 3 serves to emphasize the idea that, as an unauthorized descendent of a teacher who himself was only very tenuously connected, Bennett's situation was not viable. Lewis highlights the fact that Bennett was working without any direct connection to the Source and with only limited knowledge. As a former follower of Ouspensky, apart from lacking actual connection to Gurdjieff, he was unaware of two

important areas of Gurdjieff's teaching: He had no access to Gurdjieff's books and he had no knowledge of the powerful inner exercises such as sensing and feeling. Additionally, although he had some knowledge of the movements, his repertoire would have been very limited and there was no qualified teacher available.

However, set against this there is the strength of Bennett's commitment to the teaching and the fact that even whilst aware of the untenability of the situation he found himself able to inspire confidence.<sup>171</sup> With regard to the work conditions that he sought to engender he says: "With memories of the Prieuré, I was consumed with zeal to encourage effort and more effort – mental, physical and emotional."<sup>172</sup> As has been suggested above in the case of Bennett's personal possibilities of growth, such extremes of effort would produce *some* kind of result; but not necessarily certain and balanced ones. Gurdjieff taught that very precise knowledge is required on the fourth way<sup>173</sup>; and this links to the necessity for a teacher with a 'wakeful perspective'. Extremes of effort on the basis of a little knowledge – even while purportedly working on all three centres – can be seen, in Gurdjieff's terms, as being somewhat 'faquiristic'.<sup>174</sup> Bennett himself refers to this issue in the following

...years passed during which I made sincere efforts to keep this struggle going...but the fusion did not take place and I was as volatile and unstable at fifty [i.e., 1947] as I had been at twenty. I began to ask myself if I had been barking up the wrong tree. Then various things happened and I found out for myself that not only heat but a 'flux' was needed.<sup>175</sup>

The change presumably corresponds to the 'rediscovery' of Gurdjieff; and the flux, which he says is help from outside,<sup>176</sup> undoubtedly corresponds to that which he, elsewhere, refers to as "substance of work" which is provided by the teacher. Gurdjieff can also be seen as having been referring to this general issue of unbalanced work when, in 1948, he told Bennett that, whereas Ouspensky's pupils were

“spoiled”, his own were “lunatic”: “With lunatic I can do something, not with spoiled.”<sup>177</sup> I suggest that “spoiled” refers to Ouspensky’s overly intellectual approach to the work – the System. By contrast Bennett and his pupils were relatively healthy: “lunatic” refers to somewhat habitual and undirected super efforts.

### **Final Contact With Gurdjieff.**

In their criticism of Bennett the orthodox make much of his twenty five year absence from Gurdjieff. Similarly, they consider his final fourteen month period with the teacher to be of very little significance as compared to the years of intensive contact of the senior French pupils.<sup>178</sup> Lewis says that Bennett “...had only received a limited part of the teaching he brought to us...”<sup>179</sup>; and as has been pointed out there were whole areas of Gurdjieff’s teaching concerning which he knew nothing. How, it is reasonable to ask, could he possibly have attained a state where he can be considered as a senior pupil? Much as C.S.Nott pointedly belittles Bennett’s early contact, he records Gurdjieff saying to him in 1948 (i.e., the time of Bennett’s return to Gurdjieff) that “Bennett is small thing.”<sup>180</sup> I do not wish to question whether or not Gurdjieff said this. However, I will show that – unless Bennett’s own testimony is to be regarded as untruthful – this statement is not an adequate representation of Bennett’s status with Gurdjieff.

### ***Bennett's stage of development.***

When Bennett returned to Gurdjieff in 1948 he did so humbly and did not seek to deny that he was in terms of the work a 'small thing'. Lewis cites a letter that Bennett wrote to him at this time:

Today, I feel like a new boy creeping timidly into the Great Hall of some ancient school – where even the other boys seem to be supermen and all about is mystery. Somehow I cannot bring myself to realize that, at last, I have come to the possibility of real guidance and help...<sup>181</sup>

Bennett records that it was in these terms of having finally come back to a place of real possibility that he asked Gurdjieff to teach him how to work for "Being"<sup>182</sup> and that, on his return to England, he spoke to his own pupils of the radical change of work prospects that the availability of Gurdjieff represented.<sup>183</sup>

What then was his level of development on the Gurdjieffian path at this time? I have, in the previous section, cited Gurdjieff's statement that Bennett's pupils were "lunatic" (rather than "spoiled") and I have interpreted this as indicating a somewhat fanatical reliance on effort. I suggest that the situation with Bennett and his pupils in relation to Gurdjieff was to some extent equivalent to that of A.R.Orage and his Chicago group in 1930 which, according to Gurdjieff, had been stuck for several years at an introductory level of the work due to a lack of qualified guidance, but which nevertheless remained open to proper direction.<sup>184</sup> On his return to Gurdjieff, Bennett was amazed at the power of the inner exercises that Gurdjieff taught. He told his pupils:

...he can show us the way to work effectively so as to get results from our work. He has shown me an exercise that has completely transformed my understanding of self-remembering...I am now sure that it can be attained, and moreover by the very simple means of invoking the powers latent in our own bodies.<sup>185</sup>

And he records that:

We were learning something new and altogether extraordinary: that is, the deep significance of the physical body of man and its latent powers, Gurdjieff showed us exercises so new and unexpected in their effects that we all felt that a new world was opening for us.<sup>186</sup>

Bennett's own situation can be understood as one of making a break through for which he was long overdue (and I will explore this further below). However, in order to further contextualize his inner situation at this time it will be useful to look further at the interpretation of "lunatic" in relation to the matter of "effort" and "flux". He states that under Ouspensky's guidance he had "gained a wrong notion of what is meant by 'super-effort'."<sup>187</sup> There are two aspects to consider. First, it is to be noted that even after a year with Gurdjieff he was still having difficulty in relying on the exercises and in accepting that 'brute' effort was not required.<sup>188</sup> More importantly, it is necessary to ask what influence the undirected efforts would have had on Bennett's development. Bennett records Gurdjieff saying in 1949 that he already had a *kesdjan* body.<sup>189</sup> And he himself records that on one occasion he had the experience of leaving his body "without the special conditions of previous occasions."<sup>190</sup> The *kesdjan* body, I have argued, is only fully formed in Man No.5 and is a corollary of having attained permanent stability (rather than the temporary and volatile stability of Man No.4). Yet Gurdjieff was clear that he *had not* attained this kind of stability<sup>191</sup>; and Bennett himself testifies to his own lack of inner stability.<sup>192</sup> How can the supposed presence of a *kesdjan* body and a state of instability be reconciled? The key to understanding this is indicated by Bennett in a (published) diary from 1953 where he writes:

...I have seen for myself the truth of the saying that all single minded work leads to crystallization, but the further possibilities

depend entirely upon the extent to which the work has been consciously directed.<sup>193</sup>

Gurdjieff himself is on record as speaking of “wrong...crystallization”. He states that “Crystallization is possible on any foundation”; however when the foundation is *wrong*, although “people can generate in themselves an enormous inner strength”, they cannot attain freedom – “Such a man will not possess the possibility of further development.”<sup>194</sup> In this light, it seems probable that the ‘contradiction’ of Bennett possessing a *kesdjan* body while remaining inwardly unstable can be explained in terms of his ‘lunatic’ attitude to effort.

This is not, of course, to say that Bennett’s state was merely aberrant – Gurdjieff said that he could work with the ‘lunatic’ condition. Moreover, the affirmations that Bennett had attained the *kesdjan* body refers to the summer of 1949 when Bennett had been working under Gurdjieff’s supervision for about a year; hence, the necessity to qualify this attainment should not be seen as removing its significance as a landmark on the path.

It appears to be the case that Gurdjieff saw Bennett as one of his most promising pupils. (I will consider Bennett’s position as a pupil-teacher below.) When Bennett asked Gurdjieff to show him how to work for *being* he promised his support, stating that this was the right aim; and Bennett indicates that their interaction seemed like a continuation of that which had taken place at the Prieuré twenty five years before.<sup>195</sup> From Bennett’s account it would appear that, of his fourteen months with Gurdjieff, the first six were preparatory and the final eight were intensive. The final period commenced with Gurdjieff telling Bennett:

“What I have done for you up to now is nothing...I will show you how to work. If you do what I tell, I will show you how to become

unmortal. Now you have nothing, but if you will work you can soon have soul.”<sup>196</sup>

Soon afterwards Gurdjieff “gave me two pills<sup>197</sup> which I was to take, adding that after half an hour I was to do an exercise that he showed me.”<sup>198</sup> Bennett says that during the ensuing eight months Gurdjieff taught him a “sequence of exercises for the control and transformation of the psychic energies in man.”<sup>199</sup> He also refers to this as the “hardest and most painful” period of his life during which Gurdjieff put him under intense psychological pressure.<sup>200</sup> This period appears to have reached a culmination during August 1949 with “an avalanche of amazing experiences that lasted for four weeks”<sup>201</sup> starting with the out of body experience mentioned above. This, he says, included the control over his emotions that had occurred as part of his experience at the Prieuré.<sup>202</sup> He is undoubtedly referring to this period when he writes (in *Transformation*):

...the concentration of conscious energy can be so great and it may be so well fused together by blending with sensitivity, that one finds that one is complete master of oneself...this first happened to me in 1949, when I was working closely with Gurdjieff. After a night of struggle and sacrifice, I found ‘myself’ completely free from ‘myself’ able to be and do whatever I chose. I could be astonished, love, fear, control my mind, and what is more, I knew that this was because something was present in me that had all the characteristic of the ‘soul’ I was in search of.<sup>203</sup>

This description of ‘control of state’ is strikingly similar to the 1923 experience. And as was argued in that case, it suggests a level of being consonant with “Man No.5”. With regard to the 1923 experience it was suggested that some kind of very temporary crystallization may have taken place enabling Gurdjieff to ‘charge’ Bennett with higher emotional energy. However, in the case of the 1949 experience – although Bennett emphasizes that such a level of work was made possible by Gurdjieff’s ‘field

of *baraka*' (see Chapter Two) – the crystallization and the generation of energy were to a far greater extent his own attainment.

Nevertheless, this definitely cannot be seen as the full and final crystallization which would signify the attainment of “Man No.5”. As has been pointed out, Bennett’s state was, by his own explicit admission, still most of the time unstable. And as I will demonstrate in consideration of Bennett’s difficulties during the early 1950s, while he could with great effort achieve the “collected state”, he definitely did not understand himself to have achieved the status of “Man No.5”. It appears that Bennett had come close to his goal. He records Gurdjieff saying to him: “You continue to do the task I give you and I promise you will not have passenger, but Real ‘I’ on your motor car.”<sup>204</sup> It is clear that he still needed Gurdjieff. With regard to Gurdjieff’s death, he says “...I had lost him when I most needed his help in order to make the next step.”<sup>205</sup> The indications are that the next step *would* have been full and final crystallization.

To summarize Bennett’s development during the fourteen months of his contact with Gurdjieff: He returned to Gurdjieff after many years of inadequately guided effort which, while they had produced some, on occasions dramatic, results, could not in terms of the teaching have led to a wholesome crystallization. It seems likely that during his first few months with Gurdjieff he consolidated his position as “Man No.4” – i.e., someone with a provisional balance in their practices of inner work under the guidance of a teacher. Gurdjieff apparently saw him as an individual of unusually high potential capable of making a fairly rapid break through to full crystallization. Moreover, he had already, in a somewhat ‘aberrant’ way, had experience of more advanced levels and had probably attained a degree of crystallization. This in itself constitutes a special circumstance which needs to be taken into account in relation to



Gurdjieff's statement that he already had a *kesdjan* body. Bennett's reports of his own inner life and of Gurdjieff's comments (especially from the late-summer of 1949) serve to indicate that he was engaged in the final stages of becoming "Man No.5".

### ***Bennett's status.***

In this subsection I examine Bennett's status as a pupil of Gurdjieff. Following from the above discussion, I discuss Gurdjieff's indications concerning Bennett's inner possibilities. I then look at Bennett's position as a 'pupil-teacher', his position in the 'hierarchy' of Gurdjieff's pupils, the amount and level of responsibility that Gurdjieff gave to him and, lastly, Gurdjieff's indications concerning his future relationship to the work.

It will be recalled that in 1923 Gurdjieff suggested to Bennett that he had the potential to become one of "the highest caste of humanity". There is every indication in Bennett's own account that Gurdjieff also held this belief during the 1948 to 1949 period. The foregoing describes Bennett's work, with Gurdjieff's supervision and help, towards the "final threshold" (to use the stairway and inner circles terminology). However, Gurdjieff seems to have emphasized to Bennett that this was only the first real stage and that he had the potential to go much further. On one occasion he told him that the *kesdjan* body could only lead to paradise and that it was necessary to aspire to attain the "*Soleil Absolu*".<sup>206</sup> And of another occasion Bennett states that Gurdjieff

...looking directly at me, he said, "Unmortal; that is big thing. And that is not all, for you can become one of those beings who are significant even for our God."<sup>207</sup>

Taken together, these statements can be seen as indicating that Gurdjieff saw him as someone with the potential to attain the highest evolution possible to the human – i.e., the attainment of the “Divine Body” or “Man No.7”.

With regard to his status as a pupil-teacher it can be seen that Bennett was in a difficult position. Immediately prior to his renewal of contact with Gurdjieff (summer, 1948) he had responsibility for two hundred people who were associated with the work at Coombe Springs; but as has been pointed out, *and as he was aware*, he had only a partial knowledge of Gurdjieff’s transmission. He writes:

I...had during the spring and early summer of 1949, to make the transition from the conditions of work so laboriously established over the years since I had parted from Ouspensky, and which depended on my leadership, to the new condition where I was a pupil like others...<sup>208</sup>

However, while it is the case that Gurdjieff expected the work at Coombe Springs to be transformed under his own influence, and although he utilized the tensions in the situation to help Bennett to see himself,<sup>209</sup> he seems to have trusted and valued Bennett in his role as a leader. This is shown by Bennett’s account that, when he asked Gurdjieff what he should be doing he said:

“What you already do. Change nothing. You can be most useful to my work by what you do now in England.”<sup>210</sup>

This suggests that Gurdjieff did not see the inherently untenable nature of Bennett’s earlier leadership at Coombe Springs as an impediment to the proper development of the work<sup>211</sup> and that he saw Bennett as having the capacity to make an important contribution. It should be noted that, if he had wished, Gurdjieff could have sent one of his senior French pupils to direct the work at Coombe Springs.

Indeed, Gurdjieff seems to have envisaged Bennett as playing an important role in the development of his work beyond the specific teaching situation of Coombe

Springs. Bennett records that George Cornelius (a friend of his and a pupil of Gurdjieff) told him that Gurdjieff had referred to him as his “best pupil” whom he needed for work in America.<sup>212</sup> Previously, Gurdjieff had asked Bennett not to commit himself professionally for more than a year because he would need him for work in “Europe and America”.<sup>213</sup> There is evidence that Gurdjieff saw Bennett as a person with an, in some respect, unique capacity to transmit the work. Elizabeth Bennett recorded in her diary that, on hearing Bennett reading the ‘Introduction’ from *Beelzebub* to a group, Gurdjieff told Madame de Salzmänn that he had never heard it read so well and

He said to Mr. B., “What happens with you?” and to Mme. de S., if only they had such a reader in America. He was much pleased...<sup>214</sup>

This has the additional significance of showing that Gurdjieff explicitly indicated his approval and valuation of Bennett to Madame de Salzmänn. In his own diary Bennett records an occasion (late August 1949) when at one of Gurdjieff’s ritual meals – at which many pupils were present – he had a “sense of a changed inner relationship between Mr. G., Mme. de S and myself. He spoke a good deal in Russian, evidently bringing us closer together.”<sup>215</sup> To the extent that a personal impression of this kind can be taken as evidence, it suggests that Bennett was given Gurdjieff’s imprimatur as a person responsible for the development of his work.

Bennett writes that Gurdjieff “frequently turned to me to go and start a new group or meet some important personage.”<sup>216</sup> In particular, he mentions giving a lecture to inaugurate a Dutch group in The Hague.<sup>217</sup> (Bennett subsequently understood this as significant in relation to the coming of Subud – see page 508.) He also refers to speaking about the Gurdjieff teaching on Italian radio.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, he gave a series of four lectures in London titled ‘Gurdjieff – the making of a new

world'.<sup>219</sup> And his second book *What Are We Living For?*, which contained a postscript 'Who is Gurdjieff?', was published during the month prior to Gurdjieff's death. Given the closeness of his personal work with Gurdjieff, it can be reasonably assumed that all of these activities were either under Gurdjieff's direction, or at least with his blessing. The closest that Gurdjieff can be seen as having come to giving Bennett an official position in the hierarchy of the work was in January 1949 when he named him as his representative in England. This was in the specific context of organization of the publication of *Beelzebub* and hence the job may be thought of, in the first instance at least, as 'literary executor'.<sup>220</sup> (He named René Zuber for France and Lord Pentland, a former pupil of Ouspensky, for the U.S.A.)

Clearly there is a good case for saying that Gurdjieff *did* place a high value on Bennett's capacity to serve the work. However, as has been pointed out in earlier chapters, Bennett did not – either immediately after Gurdjieff's death or at any subsequent time – seek to make any claim that Gurdjieff had 'appointed' him. His attitude in this matter is better described as one of believing that Gurdjieff had placed on him an obligation to fulfil his potential and serve the work. This might be taken as a general injunction – an expression of the second and fourth being obligolnian strivings – applicable to anyone on the Gurdjieffian path. However, there are two particular factors to be taken into account. Firstly, as has been described above, Gurdjieff seems to have seen Bennett as someone with a very high potential for inner development. Secondly, it appears that Bennett felt that Gurdjieff gave him categorical indications that he would have an important role to play in the development of the work. Bennett writes that:

Taken together, Gurdjieff's references to me during the summer of 1949 all conveyed the impression that, at some time in the future, I would have a special role to play.<sup>221</sup>

Bennett gives one very dramatic example of this. He writes:

On several occasions he said that my relationship with him was the same as that between Judas and Jesus. Once he pointed to me and to an old friend of mine sitting next to me, saying: “Mr. Bennett is like Judas; he is responsible that my work is not destroyed. You are like Paul; you must spread my ideas.”<sup>222</sup>

It needs to be explained that Gurdjieff professed an unusual view of the role of Judas, saying that he was the best friend of Jesus without whose “really conscious self-sacrificing” act Christianity could not have become a major religion.<sup>223</sup> Moreover, Bennett records that Gurdjieff was at pains to make sure that he understood this idea.<sup>224</sup> Whether or not Bennett’s subsequent actions can be understood as really conscious self-sacrificing acts to ensure the continuation of Gurdjieff’s ideas will be discussed in Part 2 of this chapter.

In summary it is fair to say that Gurdjieff, for whatever reason, gave Bennett consistent indications that he was a person with a high inner potentiality who had much to offer to the development of the work and who, moreover, would serve its development in some unique way. In practice, Gurdjieff affirmed his established position as a teacher of the work (at Coombe Springs) and gave him additional responsibilities as an organizer and communicator.

## **Part 2: Continuity, *Impasse* and Search.**

In this second part of Chapter Six, I consider the development of Bennett's career as a spiritual teacher during the period from Gurdjieff's death to his contact with the Shivapuri Baba. I focus on the motivations for his search from non-Gurdjieffian sources and I relate this to his own developmental stages, his sense of obligation as a leader of the work and his beliefs concerning the purpose and trajectory of the Gurdjieff teaching. In particular, I address the significance of Bennett's period in Subud. I argue that it resulted from a sense that there was an important extent to which the Gurdjieff teaching was not viable without Gurdjieff and that, despite his eventual withdrawal from Subud and return to a more Gurdjieffian approach, Subud played an important transitional role in his development.

### **Gurdjieff's Intentions.**

Setting aside, for the moment, the issue of 'fourth way context' it is necessary to ask what can be discerned about Gurdjieff's specific intentions regarding (i) the purpose and dissemination of his teaching after his death and (ii) the authority structure within which this was to take place.

#### ***Dissemination and purpose***

It is well documented that from 1924 to 1935 Gurdjieff devoted most of his energy to his writings.<sup>225</sup> In his booklet *Herald of Coming Good* (privately circulated, 1932)

Gurdjieff indicates his intention that his writings should reach “the whole of contemporary humanity.”<sup>226</sup> This intention for his ideas to be widely disseminated through his writings remained primary to the end of his life. In a circular letter to all of his pupils concerning the imminent publication of *Beelzebub* (in 1949), he says:

By this publication I shall begin to actualize the plans I have prepared for the transmission of my ideas to the whole of contemporary and future humanity.<sup>227</sup>

According to *Herald of Coming Good*, the stages of initiation into his teaching were to be structured by his three books. His plan was: to make *Beelzebub* generally available; to make *Meetings With Remarkable Men* available through group readings to people who had read *Beelzebub*; and that the *Third Series* should only be made available to those who were considered to be inwardly ready for it.<sup>228</sup> In *Herald of Coming Good* he also speaks of the necessity for there to be sufficient numbers of trained disciples for each of the two levels of conducting readings from *Meetings With Remarkable Men* and selecting candidates for the *Third Series*.<sup>229</sup> At the end of *Herald of Coming Good* he refers to his intention to restart his teaching activities<sup>230</sup>; and it is generally held that the remaining years of his life were devoted to the training of just such a core of pupils.<sup>231</sup> *Beelzebub* finally reached publication in 1950, shortly after his death. (And Bennett, in recording that Gurdjieff had seen the final proofs of *Beelzebub* immediately before he succumbed to his final brief illness, suggests that he felt that his work was complete.<sup>232</sup>) Although, on the last page of the published version of *Beelzebub*, Gurdjieff still speaks of an intention to make *Meetings With Remarkable Men* available through public readings,<sup>233</sup> de Salzmán asserts that at their final meeting he told her that she should publish it as and when seemed appropriate.<sup>234</sup> With regard to the *Third Series*, de Salzmán is completely clear that

Gurdjieff had said that it had not been written for public consumption, but that if she ever thought that it should be published then she was free to do so.<sup>235</sup> However, although Gurdjieff revised the details of his plan concerning the role of his books (and, it seems, left a degree of flexibility or even ambiguity in this regard<sup>236</sup>), he still appears to have seen them as fundamental to the dissemination of his ideas.

Moreover, responsibility for supporting this dissemination and the interest that he hoped it would attract constitutes the only publicly known ‘work context’ which he left his pupils. Bennett writes that, six days before his death, Gurdjieff told him

...that when *Beelzebub* was published he wanted all his pupils to make a task of getting it spread through the world.<sup>237</sup>

de Salzmänn records that, over and above the question of precisely *when* the books should be published, Gurdjieff emphasized that

“...the essential thing, the first thing, is to prepare a nucleus of people capable of responding to the demand that will arise.

“So long as there is no responsible nucleus, the action of the ideas will not go beyond a certain threshold. That will take time...a lot of time, even.”<sup>238</sup>

### ***Authority structure.***

The certainty of Madame de Salzmänn’s position as Gurdjieff’s most senior pupil has been set out in Chapter One. Her position is usefully summarized by the (unidentified) author of the ‘Introduction’ to the collection of Gurdjieff’s early lectures titled *Views From the Real World* who writes that

Jeanne de Salzmänn...spent thirty years with Gurdjieff from 1919 in Tiflis until his death, and participated in all stages of his work, even carrying responsibility for his groups in the last ten years of his life...<sup>239</sup>



It was she whom Gurdjieff sent for immediately prior to his death “to tell me how he saw the state of affairs and to give me certain instructions.”<sup>240</sup> All that is publicly known of these instructions concerns the matters of the publication of his books and the related necessity to develop a “responsible nucleus” as described above. Exactly how, and to what extent, he envisaged the organization of this nucleus in terms of authority structure is not known. In order to attempt to understand the situation it is necessary to gain a picture of the authority structure during the final year of his life.

The overall picture is far from tidy. In France the organizational structure of Gurdjieff’s groups with Madame de Salzman as his deputy seems to have been fairly coherent. (Although even here there is the hint of some dissension.<sup>241</sup>) In the other two main foci of interest – Britain and the U.S.A. – the ‘lineage situation’ was far less straightforward. In both cases this was partly due to the Ouspensky factor and partly due to the loss of communication during the war years. Concentrating on Britain at the time of Gurdjieff’s death (and not counting Maurice Nicoll and Francis Roles<sup>242</sup>) there were three main groups: the small Gurdjieffian group led by Jane Heap; the former Ouspenskians led by Kenneth Walker; and Bennett’s people. All three of these groupings had converged on Paris in 1948.<sup>243</sup>

However, there is no record of Gurdjieff making any attempt to unite these three groups under a single authority (apart from his own), preferring it would seem to leave these disparate structures intact. His motivation for this can only be guessed. It is altogether probable that he felt that unity among his disciples would emerge more effectively as a function of shared understanding of the work than through any kind of authority structure imposed from above. Within this it also seems likely that he would have engineered situations in which interpersonal friction could be a spur to personal development.<sup>244</sup> All of this can be seen as expressed by Bennett who,

referring to the three disparate groups and the fact that Gurdjieff did not attempt to harmonize them, states that

...his very method of working required that people should needlessly be set in conflict. Again and again, he would give two or more people, without telling the others, authority to act for him in a particular matter. They would all set to work, and find the others in the field. Each was sure that he alone was the one that Gurdjieff had intended to do the job. This led to endless friction and misunderstanding, which we accepted as a stimulus that would make us search within ourselves for deeper understanding.<sup>245</sup>

As has been described at the end of Part 1, Gurdjieff gave Bennett considerable responsibility – including making him his literary executive in Britain – and accepted his position as a work leader at Coombe Springs, but never in any way ‘appointed’ him. Moreover, beyond the overall responsibility that he seems to have vested in Madame de Salzmänn, there is no evidence that he established any *formal* authority structure. Rather, the evidence suggests that, in accordance with his aim of preparing *conscious* assistants capable of furthering his work,<sup>246</sup> he deliberately allowed an element of diversity within the constituency of his followers such that individual responsibility and creativity would be possible. This is not, of course, to say that he did not wish for unity among his followers; but only that he thought that a worthwhile form of unity could only arise through genuine individuated understanding.

### **Organization After Gurdjieff’s Death.**

In this section I describe the authority structures that came into being under Madame de Salzmänn’s leadership in the period immediately after Gurdjieff’s death with

particular reference to the English groups. I then discuss Bennett's initial attitude to the situation.

### *Authority and Groups.*

In accordance with Gurdjieff's final instructions, Madame de Salzmänn saw her task as being to guide the development of a "nucleus capable...of sustaining the current that had been created."<sup>247</sup> She represented her position of leadership in modest terms as is shown by her words to a gathering of (mainly) French pupils on the day of Gurdjieff's funeral:

"When a teacher like Mr. Gurdjieff goes, he cannot be replaced. Those who remain cannot create the same conditions. We have only one hope, to make something together. What no one of us could do, perhaps a group can. We no longer have a teacher, but we have the possibility of a group. Let us make this our chief aim in the future."<sup>248</sup>

In France, where Madame de Salzmänn's responsibility for Gurdjieff's groups was already established, the possibility of a unified following can be seen as having been relatively good; however, in Britain the situation was far from coherent.

Bennett records that Madame de Salzmänn formally took responsibility for the Work in England during 1950.<sup>249</sup> Madame de Salzmänn deputized Madame H.H.Lannes, who had been "a member of Gurdjieff's closest Paris group"<sup>250</sup> to lead the English Work.<sup>251</sup> – It seems probable that it was deemed necessary to send an outsider because of the somewhat factional nature of the English scene. – *Madame Lannes herself led three groups.*<sup>252</sup> "Group 1" was constituted from Gurdjieff's most senior English pupils (I return to this immediately below); "Group 2" contained mainly serious former Ouspenskians; and "Group 3" was made up of senior Bennett pupils together with some direct pupils of Gurdjieff. The membership of "Group 1"

included the leaders of the three Gurdjieffian groupings: Bennett, Kenneth Walker, and Jane Heap. It is useful to note at this point that the six other members of “Group 1” included the former Ouspenskians Reginald Hoare and Aubrey Wolton both of whom went into Subud and the former of whom was later responsible for introducing Bennett to Idries Shah.<sup>253</sup> Below the three groups that Madame Lannes led were gradations of groups under each of Bennett, Walker and Heap.

***Bennett initial attitude.***

With reference to the period immediately following Gurdjieff’s death, Bennett records that he found himself in agreement with Madame de Salzmänn that “in unity lay our only hope”<sup>254</sup> and that he made efforts to help to harmonize the discord between different factions.<sup>255</sup> However, he also records that the differences of perspective between groups were, in his perception, so problematic as to make unity an unlikely outcome.<sup>256</sup> With regard to his own ‘lineal’ position he only says that

Although [Gurdjieff] had named me in his circular letter as his representative for England, I knew that I was unacceptable to many.<sup>257</sup>

This might be interpreted as allusion to a belief that Gurdjieff *may* have intended him to take the reins of the Work in England. But he also emphasizes that – aside from his unacceptability – he did not feel that he had the inner qualifications to undertake such a task of spiritual leadership and, crucially, that he considered that something more than spiritual exercises would be necessary to achieve this. (I shall discuss these matters of qualification, preparation and transformation in greater depth below.) He saw his proper role as limited to leading the Work at Coombe Springs where his creativity could be balanced by appropriate structure.<sup>258</sup> He states that he was grateful

for Madame de Salzmänn's decision to take responsibility for the English Work, and specifically that

...it was evident that she commanded the respect and confidence of nearly all the factions, and in her leadership lay the best hope of unity.<sup>259</sup>

He also indicates that he sought to cooperate with Madame de Salzmänn's structures. He says that he encouraged members of his own group to enter the "new groups she was forming in London" (presumably "Group 3"), and that he encouraged "all pupils at Coombe Springs who were able to do so to take part in the classes at which Gurdjieff movements were taught by members of the French class."<sup>260</sup> Despite these statements, it is somewhat remarkable that he nowhere refers directly to his own involvement in "Group 1".<sup>261</sup> This *might* be explicable in terms of an agreement, explicit or otherwise, between members of this group that their interactions should not be spoken of outside.<sup>262</sup> Nevertheless, it must be accorded as strange that he does not make even a single reference to the role of Madame Lannes as Madame de Salzmänn's appointed representative.<sup>263</sup>

### **Impasse**

The above discussion has shown that Bennett represented himself as having commenced the 'post-Gurdjieffian era' with a high valuation on integration between groups and an active willingness to cooperate with Madame de Salzmänn's leadership. However, despite this positive attitude to integration and in the context of his subsequent secession, it is useful to highlight three 'warning notes':

1. There is an equivocacy concerning Madame H.H.Lannes and his involvement in “Group 1”.
2. He had doubts concerning the sole efficacy of the spiritual exercises for bringing about the inner break through he was seeking. (I shall further address this matter below in relation to the viability of the teaching in the absence of the teacher.)
3. He indicates that being able to pursue his own creative role was important to him.

This last point – individual creativity – can be seen as standing in a dynamic tension (but not necessarily conflict) with the ideal of integration. He indicates that, in 1950, the impulse towards integration was the dominant aspect. However, by 1953 the tension between the two aspects was becoming more acute. He writes:

I believed that unity was all-important, and was ready to form part of whatever whole might take shape, but I was also quite sure that unity does not mean uniformity. It seemed that I could play my part best by strengthening the life at Coombe Springs...

I set myself the difficult task of subordinating myself to the whole and yet preserving the integrity of my own part.<sup>264</sup>

As I will describe in this section, during the next two years the balance progressively shifted towards the ‘individual creative contribution’ pole (although integration remained an aspect of the expressed aim), *culminating in 1955 with Bennett’s secession from Madame de Salzmann’s authority*. I will show that this shift can be explained in terms of his developing perception of, and urgent need to resolve, a sense of chronic impasse in the Work.

More specifically, I will explicate Bennett’s sense of impasse in terms of Gurdjieff’s “three lines of work”.<sup>265</sup> His own formulation of these three dimensions (which also well expresses Gurdjieff’s second, fifth and fourth “being obligolnian strivings”<sup>266</sup>) is as follows:

1. To perfect ourselves as far as possible.

2. To help others.
3. To serve the purpose of our existence.<sup>267</sup>

In the present case, the first of these will be taken as referring to the stages and necessities of Bennett's own inner work, the second as referring to his role as a Work leader and the third as relating to the higher context of the work – i.e., fourth way context. This third aspect can also be seen as associated with the matter of higher authority and, by extension, the 'Source of the teaching'.

I shall also relate Bennett's perception of the impasse in the Work to journeys to the Middle East that he undertook in 1953 and 1955. These can be seen to coincide with shifts in the balance between integration and creativity.

The first three subsections address the three 'dimensions' of impasse; in the fourth and fifth subsections I focus on the significance of the two journeys.

***First Line of Work<sup>268</sup>: Bennett's own state.***

As I have described on page 472 Bennett believed that he had lost Gurdjieff before he had received a crucial impetus. This, I have argued, left him in the unstable state of an advanced Man No.4: able to reach, in a temporary way, the state of consciousness associated with Man No.5 (the "collected state") through exercises and efforts; but neither fully crystallized nor free from external influences. Bennett provides a graphic description of the state of his own inner work in the published diaries from his 1953 journey.<sup>269</sup> These diaries record a sustained current of inner struggle; and towards the end of Volume 2 he observes that in the special conditions of work which he had been able to create for himself

...the ups and downs of fortune on this journey do not affect me and...my inner state remains unmoved by the pleasant and unpleasant events and by the successes and failures.<sup>270</sup>

This serves to underline the idea that he could, through sustained inner efforts, cease being – to use Gurdjieff’s term – a “taxi”. However, that this was not a state which he could maintain is shown by his statement to some of his pupils (from c.1955), that “...I have not my own ‘I’.”<sup>271</sup> And Husein Rofé, who initiated Bennett into Subud (1956), records him saying “...for some time now my own spiritual life has been at a standstill.”<sup>272</sup> Clearly, he felt that his own inner development had reached a state of impasse.

As will be described below, the orthodoxy’s public position appears to have been that Gurdjieff had left the necessary methods for dedicated individuals to achieve liberation<sup>273</sup> and that at least one person (Madame de Salzmann) had sufficient experience to oversee their application. Why, then, did Bennett come to a state of impasse? He indicates that from the time immediately following Gurdjieff’s death he considered that, while the inner exercises were immensely valuable and that he could continue to benefit from them, the stage that he had reached required something more than exercises. He says:

I was even clear just what that something should be: it was an action so profound that it would enable me to be die to the old man and be born again. All that I had done up to that time might enable me to die awake, but it could not give me the secret of death and resurrection.<sup>274</sup>

This perspective can be seen as concurring with the analogy between “crystallization” and the phase transition between water and steam that was set out in Chapter Five: the use of methods can bring about the ‘gradual raising of temperature’; but the final change of state is a radical transition requiring an extra input of energy. Bennett’s statements indicate a belief that the profound action that he sought would have been transmitted to him by Gurdjieff (had he lived). As I have explored in previous



chapters, it was Bennett's view – based on his experiences in 1924 and 1949 – that Gurdjieff's personal teaching involved something more than 'methods guided by a wakeful perspective'. This is the idea of *baraka*, "hanbledzoin" or "substance of work". In the posthumously published *Transformation*<sup>275</sup> he stated that

Gurdjieff's method depended for its effectiveness upon his presence, so that when he died the driving force went out of it. It is probably truer to say that it depended upon the transmission of a particular energy or substance which Gurdjieff had in limited quantity, whereas it should be drawn from an inexhaustible source.<sup>276</sup>

The first part of the quotation makes the main point; the second part gives an explanation in terms of the *baraka* idea. It has to be noted that, despite Bennett's conviction that Gurdjieff was connected to an esoteric source, the idea that he had only a *limited* connection to the "Great Accumulator" is reminiscent of Ouspensky's belief that Gurdjieff's contact with the source had been in some way partial. However this may be, the main significance to be drawn in the present context is that in Bennett's view Gurdjieff's connection was *personal* and was not therefore transmissible into a lineage.

### ***Second Line of Work: Bennett as teacher.***

In the following statement, which refers to 1953, Bennett highlights the extent to which an impasse had been reached in his work with his pupils.

I asked myself whether I could find, either in myself or in the group with which I was then working,<sup>277</sup> the resources to give real help to the three hundred pupils who were then attending groups. I could take them a certain distance. For two or three years the majority gained very much from the teaching, the exercises and especially the practical work that we did together at Coombe Springs. *But I saw that those who had been working in this way for many years were beginning to move at an even pace.* I put it in this way because I had no sense of decline. We had been endowed by Gurdjieff with such a wealth of ideas and methods that it was

possible constantly to devise new exercises, and create new conditions, that kept everything alive. Nor was it my nature scrupulously to adhere to the letter of the teaching. I was ready to experiment with new ideas and methods provided they conformed to the fundamental principles of Gurdjieff's work.  
(My italics.)<sup>278</sup>

In this context it is useful to remind the reader of the Gurdjieffian idea of the “Stairway” up which pupils and teacher must travel in reciprocal ascent. As has been shown above, Bennett understood himself to have reached a developmental impasse; and he felt that he could only truly become a teacher when he had passed the threshold at which Gurdjieff's death had left him.<sup>279</sup> If this threshold is considered to be the “final threshold”, at the top of the “Stairway”, then it can be deduced that, while he would be able to establish people in the work<sup>280</sup> he would not be able to lead them any further<sup>281</sup> because he himself was stuck and also because he lacked the necessary qualities of being. Moreover, as the above quotation shows, not only was he coming to consider himself to be inadequate to the situation, but he doubted the ultimate adequacy of both the overall lineage (“the group with which I was then working”<sup>282</sup>) and the inner exercises. As in the case of his own inner work, he gives the sense of there being *some important element missing*.<sup>283</sup>

Bennett records that his sense of there being a problem concerning his direction of the Work reached a crisis point at the time of the 1953 summer seminar at Coombe Springs during which the intensity of the work went beyond his control and some people passed through traumatic experiences.<sup>284</sup> He indicates that it was this sense of a crisis in his leadership of the Work at Coombe Springs which led to his journey to the Middle East and Asia Minor in the autumn of 1953. In his record of this journey there are frequent references to a problem with the Work.<sup>285</sup> He recognized that the “increasing task...is to keep the work alive in ourselves so that it can be alive in

others.”<sup>286</sup> Specifically, he identified the “problem of our work” as a necessity to find the correct balance between, on the one hand, continuity, tradition and repetition and, on the other, innovation and creativity.<sup>287</sup> It is clear that at this time his sense of an individual responsibility to find means – either within himself or from an ‘outside’ source – to revivify the work became urgent.

In the introduction to *Views From the Real World* Madame de Salzman puts on record a statement which can be considered as an antithesis to Bennett’s position. She writes:

...the transformation of the human being...can only be achieved if there is a meeting between the conscious force which descends and the total commitment that answers it. This brings about fusion.

A new life can then appear in a new set of conditions which only someone with objective consciousness can create and develop.

But to understand this one must have passed through all the stages of this development. Without such experiences and understanding the work will lose its effectiveness and conditions will be wrongly interpreted; they will not be brought at the right moment and situations and efforts will remain on the level of ordinary life, uselessly repeating themselves.<sup>288</sup>

This statement, which can be understood as describing development up to crystallization (or “fusion” – i.e., Man No.5), would tend to refute the impasse idea. It does not seem clear whether de Salzman is saying that it is necessary to have a person with “objective consciousness” – which is an attribute of *Man No.6* – or whether it is only necessary that the methods should have been initially provided by such a person.<sup>289</sup> The third paragraph of the quotation can be taken as implying that she at least of Gurdjieff’s pupils had completed the whole programme of experiences and emerged as Man No.5. It can be read as saying that she was qualified to effectively guide the implementation of conditions and situations. Hence from the orthodoxy’s point of view Bennett’s sense of impasse would have to be seen as a

function of his own self-will and impatience in relation to the conditions that Madame de Salzman was working to establish.

***Third Line of Work: search for context and source.***

As I have shown in chapters one and two, Bennett's emphasis on the fourth way context of the Work can be seen as central to the idea of a 'deep continuity' connection to Gurdjieff. And as I have described in Part 1 of the present chapter, the contextualization of the Work in terms of the evolutionary needs of humanity is represented as an important factor in Bennett's commitment to the work both for his own development and as a leader.<sup>290</sup>

Immediately before writing (in Witness) of the sense of impasse with regard to his pupils about which he became aware in 1953, Bennett speaks of his beliefs, of that period, concerning the long term purpose of Gurdjieff's work. He writes that Gurdjieff

had seen in 1924 that his ideas could not be made to serve mankind *in practice* during his lifetime, and he had therefore set himself to ensure that they would enter human life *in theory* after his death. Since he had also said that theory has no value unless it opens the door to practice, it must follow that *his work was a preparation for a further stage in the Manifestation of that Providence that guides mankind from epoch to epoch.*  
(Final italics mine.)<sup>291</sup>

This theme of the work being concerned with a transition between epochs had first emerge during the period immediately prior to Bennett's return to Gurdjieff when, he records, he had spoken to his pupils of his "belief that within ten or twelve years...there would be an external manifestation of the work of which we had seen only a small fragment."<sup>292</sup> As I will describe later this theme gathered considerable momentum in relation to the contacts that Bennett made during his two journeys to

the Middle East. However, the extent to which the ‘great event’ theme remained an important factor during the period 1948 to 1952 is not clear.

Earlier in the paragraph where Bennett speaks of his (1953) perception of the trajectory of the Work he also makes reference to the matter of the source of Gurdjieff’s teaching. He writes that he

could not forget that Gurdjieff had said at a very serious moment near the end of his life: “After I go another will come. You will not be left alone.”<sup>293</sup>

The fact that he juxtaposes the ideas of ‘the purpose of the Work’ and ‘help from the source’ cannot but suggest that he saw the two matters as closely connected. Hence Bennett’s understanding of the necessity to fulfil the third line of work can be seen as having been closely related to his own need for help in terms of initiation and the possibility of helping his own pupils – i.e., the first and second lines of work.

It is relevant to notice at this point that, as anticipated in Part 1, Bennett’s juxtaposition of these two ideas bears a considerable similarity to Ouspensky’s idea of attracting help from the Source by demonstrating that they could be useful to its purposes. It therefore seems likely that there is some extent to which Bennett’s readiness to interpret the post-Gurdjieff situation in this way relates to Ouspensky’s influence. In this light, although the two elements (‘search for the purpose of the work’ and ‘need for *baraka*’) can be understood as distinct, their juxtaposition may be seen as reflecting a belief that Gurdjieff’s own connection to the esoteric source was in some way incomplete.

The orthodoxy’s response to Bennett’s ‘third line impasse’ might well be to say that it was nothing more than a grandiose distraction from the real tasks that lay before the leaders of the work at that time. Gurdjieff’s view (as cited by Bennett) that

“theory has no value unless it opens the door to practice” does not in itself necessarily imply that his teaching was a preparation for something else that was not already contained in it. The idea can be more straightforwardly understood as relating to the formation of the “nucleus of people capable of responding to the demand which will arise” (to cite Gurdjieff’s words to Madame de Salzmänn). Why then was Bennett not content to engage with the explicit work context that Gurdjieff had given? There are two points. Firstly, and as will be described at the end of the next subsection, Bennett *was* very concerned to address the task of propagating Gurdjieff’s books and drawing people into the Work. Secondly, it is *possible* that Gurdjieff did envisage a more ‘esoteric’ aspect to the continuation of his teaching which he may or may not have talked about explicitly to Madame de Salzmänn.

### ***1953 Journey.***

The primary motivation for this journey has been referred to above in terms of Bennett’s sense of responsibility for keeping the work alive in himself and others (see page 490) – i.e., first and second line. He was seeking for the necessary impetus both within himself and from ‘outer’ sources of initiation. However, quite early in the journey he recorded in his diary that

The possibility of meeting a real murshid has become much less important to me. I know that my murshid is within and that I only need to learn to listen.<sup>294</sup>

This attitude was reiterated at the end of the journey in the context of reflection on the main fruits of the experience (see page 499). Nevertheless, he did meet a number of Sufis of the Mevlevi and Naq’shbändi orders, the most significant of whom, Emin Chikhöu – a Naq’shbändi Sheikh resident in Damascus – I discuss below.

### **Emin Chikhou and Naq'shbandi Sufis**

Although, as asserted above, Bennett's primary concern during this journey can be understood to have been matters relating to the first and second lines of Work, the interaction with Emin Chikhou concerned mainly the relationship between the first and third lines. I shall discuss this interaction first in terms of the question of *baraka* and Bennett's search for means to revitalize his own inner work and second in terms of the stirring effect which Chikhou's millenarian ideas had on his 'third line perspective' in terms of evolutionary epochs.

Bennett records that his contact with Emin Chikhou and his group had an enlivening effect on his own inner work. He says: "I was able to work with all the force that one receives from the presence of a group, and I felt very happy."<sup>295</sup> He is more specific with regard to another Naq'shbandi group – under a Sheikh called Sami Effendi – with which he worked, saying: "When I am with them my work is unmistakably strengthened, for there is present a concentration of Hanbledzoin [*baraka*] that I cannot fail to recognize."<sup>296</sup> However, despite these contacts with the "substance of work", he did not consider that any of these interactions were of the same order as those he had experienced with Gurdjieff.<sup>297</sup> With regard to Sami Effendi's group, he says (despite his detection of *baraka*) that they gave "no indication of having wrestled with any of the very real problems that our system shows us how to resolve"<sup>298</sup>; and he goes so far as to suggest that the crystallization that he sensed some of them had achieved was without further possibilities, thereby implying a lack of the sophisticated spiritual knowledge (which is characteristic of the fourth way).<sup>299</sup> Bennett records being deeply impressed with Chikhou's psychospiritual knowledge;<sup>300</sup> but he nevertheless says that

...after three weeks I became convinced that he lacked the profound insight that distinguished Gurdjieff from all other teachers I had met. It seemed probable, if I had time and were patient enough, that I could learn much from Emin Chikhov, but that I could not, through him alone, *find that ancient Sufi tradition that has undoubtedly been preserved in South-west and Central Asia.* (My italics.)<sup>301</sup>

This passage makes it fairly clear that Bennett had hoped to make direct contact with the source of Gurdjieff's teaching in order to receive an additional impetus to the Gurdjieff work. It is to be concluded that, although his contacts with Emin Chikhov and other Sufi teachers were in themselves revitalizing to his own inner work, neither the 'baraka' nor the knowledge were of the potent order that he was seeking in order to nourish the work at Coombe Springs.

However, while he did not find connection to the source in terms of a 'soteriological key', he did find, from Emin Chikhov, considerable support for his belief that an event heralding the dawn of a new evolutionary epoch was imminent – a belief which for him was closely connected to the fulfilment of Gurdjieff's work. (Chikhov's belief in the imminent Second coming of Christ has already been discussed at the end of Chapter Three in relation to Bennett's Parousia idea.)

Bennett recorded in his diary that Chikhov

accepted without hesitation when I said that my task is to prepare for the new epoch which is to come and not to follow the old ways.<sup>302</sup>

In *Witness* Bennett indicates that Chikhov was very impressed when he related to him some of his inner experiences saying:

"Be quite sure that such things do not happen to everyone. There are certain people in whom God discerns a pattern for response, and he teaches them in a special way...you have been chosen by God to serve a special purpose, and therefore He has directly undertaken your training."<sup>303</sup>



More specifically he told Bennett that he would “witness the coming of the Power of the Lord” and that he (Bennett) “had a special part to play in preparing the Western peoples for this Power”.<sup>304</sup> Bennett writes (in *Witness*) that, although he felt reticence concerning Chikhou’s view of his own role,<sup>305</sup> he “could not disregard his glowing faith in the coming of a New Dispensation, and hence I had to take seriously his affirmation that I would have a special part to play.”<sup>306</sup> However, in his diary Bennett proposed a kind of test of Chikhou’s authenticity by means of which to determine whether or not to take seriously the ideas concerning the Second Coming, the new dispensation and, by extension, the assertions relating to his own role. He wrote:

If he succeeds in establishing with me the telepathic communication that he claims to be possible, that will go a long way to convincing me that he may also have had a true revelation of the way in which the Great Event is to occur.<sup>307</sup>

There is evidence to indicate that the result of this test was affirmative. In *Transformation* (which was most probably written in 1968) – in discussion of different kinds of initiation – Bennett states that fifteen years before the time of writing (i.e., c.1953) he had received an initiation intended to establish telepathic contact. This almost certainly refers to Emin Chikhou. He writes that

despite the fact that I have not had any external exchange during all this time, I can always renew the inner link with the source.<sup>308</sup>

It would appear then that Bennett did confirm the validity of Chikhou’s claim and hence that he was, in his own terms, likely to have given credence to the ideas concerning the “New Dispensation” and also his personal role in relation to it. (It is worth noting in passing that neither of the books from which this evidence is drawn – *Journeys In Islamic Countries* and *Transformation* – were published during Bennett’s lifetime.)

## **Return to England**

It is not known to what extent the ‘third line’ aspects of his journey had an immediate effect; but, as I will describe in the next subsection, he received a powerful corroborating message during his next journey to the Middle East in 1955. The fruits of the 1953 journey are represented more in ‘second line’ terms (see immediately below). Anthony Bright-Paul, one of Bennett’s pupils of that period, relates that

The return from Turkey marked the beginning of a new phase. There was a renewed feeling of the urgency and seriousness of our endeavours...It was clear that Mr. Bennett was preparing for something, but none of us knew what it was.<sup>309</sup>

To the extent that this impression can be taken as an indicator of Bennett’s state, it suggests that, over and above the ‘second line’ intentions there was also an increased sense of something impending in terms of the ‘third line’ dimension.

Towards the end of Bennett’s diary of the 1953 journey there is a strong sense of focusing the realizations on the ‘second line’ purpose. He anticipates giving a series of public lectures in London early in 1954<sup>310</sup> and transmitting to his groups his “plans and hopes.”<sup>311</sup> He expresses his feeling that if he

could transmit one tenth part of what I have learned on this journey [*mainly* inner learning I suggest], the Work would take such a stride forward as would change all our lives.<sup>312</sup>

And his sense of responsibility is well illustrated in saying that

the task before me is to teach people how to work. And, God help me, I must work more when I return than I have worked during these journeys.<sup>313</sup>

In summary of his journey Bennett formulated: “I have not found what I hoped for, but I have been shown much that I could not have hoped for.”<sup>314</sup> This refers to the ideas, which have been anticipated above, that his hope of contacting the source of

Gurdjieff's teaching had not been fulfilled, but that he had realized important things in his own inner work. He further recorded:

...I asked myself what is the chief lesson I have learned in these eleven weeks. Rather to my surprise, I found myself saying that the most important of all is the realization that Work means being in the Presence of the Higher Consciousness: and the respect of that presence is what we must cultivate chiefly and most urgently. Without that feeling of reverence, the work can have no momentum to carry it over inevitable lapses of consciousness. I think that my main task in the next year will be to bring people to a right feeling of reverence for the Consciousness which is present in them.<sup>315</sup>

This passage is important because it expresses a relationship between the higher context of the Work in the sense of submission to higher reality and the needs of the first and second lines. It suggests a link between Emin Chikhov's 'third line' input in terms of a sense of preparation for a momentous event and the renewed urgency with which Bennett approached the work at Coombe Springs on his return. In this context it is also relevant to note the profound respect for the submission to the Divine Will in the Islamic world which pervades Bennett's account of his journey.<sup>316</sup>

I have argued that Bennett undertook the journey in response to a strong sense of his responsibility to find a means to resolve the 'work impasse'. His own account in *Witness* indicates that he returned with a renewed resolve to exercise creative freedom in relation to the obstacles that he perceived. With regard to his attitude at this time to the balance between integration and creativity he says:

Either our work must expand and attract more people, or it will collapse for lack of support. I had held back for as long as I dared, in the hope of achieving unity of purpose and of action with the other groups following Gurdjieff's ideas.<sup>317</sup>

Apparently, his attitude led to an increasing tension with the other Gurdjieff followers. Specifically, he says that

...there were considerable divergences of opinion as to the desirability of lectures or indeed of any action that might arouse a wider interest in Gurdjieff's teaching. I could not understand this attitude, for he himself had repeatedly insisted that when *All and Everything* was published, it should be made known all over the world by any and every kind of publicity.<sup>318</sup>

This shows that Bennett *was* engaged in the basic work task even though he thought that there was a more 'esoteric' dimension beyond it. His frustration at the orthodoxy's reticence about this is understandable. One can only guess precisely *why* his efforts met with disapproval. It may be that Madame de Salzmänn felt that (further) consolidation of the 'responsible nucleus' had to precede the attraction of new people on a large scale. However, it is also possible that Bennett's mode of lecturing was already perceived by de Salzmänn *et. al.* as 'tainted with millenarian fervour'. Whatever the reason, the relationship was becoming progressively more untenable, such that by the summer of 1954 "it became increasingly clear that we were not going to achieve unity with the groups directed by Madame de Salzmänn."<sup>319</sup>

### ***1955 journey.***

In May 1955 Bennett made another, briefer journey to the Middle East. The motivation for this journey can be understood as stemming mainly from the increasing sense of untenability of his relationship with the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy.<sup>320</sup> Bennett made two interesting contacts on this journey. That which is of immediate concern to the development of the 'response to impasse' strand is his meeting with the Naq'shbandi Sheikh Abdullah Daghestani in Damascus. Bennett did not previously know of Daghestani and the occurrence itself of their outwardly unplanned meeting seemed to involve some kind of supernatural action.<sup>321</sup> Daghestani said that a few

nights previously an angel had revealed a threefold message to him concerning a person whom he now identified as Bennett:<sup>322</sup>

1. That his wife is in God's hands.
2. That he should not fear to go his own way.
3. "It was shown to me that you are one of those chosen to prepare the way.

You have a duty in the West. People will listen to you, and you will recognize the time to speak. The Messenger will come to your country and even to your house. You have now to return to your country and prepare your house to receive him."<sup>323</sup>

The first point addressed a matter of painful personal concern to Bennett<sup>324</sup>; and the second can be seen as having addressed the decision it would seem that he was facing with regard to Madame de Salzman.<sup>325</sup> The salience of these points would undoubtedly have captured his attention. Although Bennett points out that Daghestani's eschatology differed in some respects from that of Emin Chikhou,<sup>326</sup> the basic message concerning Bennett's role and the idea that he should recognize himself as having been 'appointed by God'<sup>327</sup> must have seemed to corroborate and amplify what he had heard from Chikhou: it differed only in its greater immediacy, urgency and specificity.

The second important meeting was with Ahmad Tabrizi,<sup>328</sup> an apparently solitary dervish living in north-west Persia. Bennett was struck by Tabrizi's emphasis that, over and above the help and methods that can be obtained from spiritual organizations ("*tarikah*"), the most important thing is the attitude of inner surrender to God's Will which leads to direct illumination ("*marifat*").<sup>329</sup> From Bennett's point of view, Tabrizi's teaching can be seen as amplifying Daghestani's advice that he should frequently repeat the fundamental Moslem prayer "*la ilahe il*

*Allah*''.<sup>330</sup> Of the effect of his contact with Ahmad Tabrizi he writes (in *Concerning Subud*):

...I knew that I had received a lesson that I must never forget...I must find the way to leave my self-will behind. In some way Hadji Ahmad had reinforced the feeling that when I returned to England many things would begin to change.<sup>331</sup>

Again, he returned to Coombe Springs with a renewed vigour and, this time, with a determination to lay foundations to receive the next phase of Gurdjieff's work which he understood as coinciding with his own 'millenarian beliefs' which had been further kindled by Chikhov and Daghestani. He writes:

Two decisions had to be taken. I would propose to the Council of the Institute that we should go forward with the building of a great hall at Coombe Springs, and I would give a series of public lectures in London in the autumn. I was aware that these decisions must inevitably lead to the parting of the ways with Madame de Salzmann and her groups, but I hoped that the separation would be temporary and that we should come together again in a freer association, which would be open enough and flexible enough to take in *the new influences which I now expected in a couple of years*.  
(My italics.)<sup>332</sup>

The balance of emphasis between integration and creativity had now shifted decisively towards the latter and he was prepared for the consequences:

It was clear that Madame de Salzmann could not and should not share in the responsibility for what I was doing at Coombe Springs.

In October 1955, she came to London and arranged for the complete separation of our activities.<sup>333</sup>

However, it seems that the separation did not have any immediate beneficial result<sup>334</sup> in so far as that in 1956, according to Bennett, the senses of 'first and second line impasse' that he had first identified in 1953 had become even more problematic:

I was inwardly very restless, as if something necessary were missing from my life.

The work at Coombe Springs confirmed this feeling. The new groups were going well, *but those which had started before 1950 were passing through a kind of crisis...I could see that the entire situation turned upon my own condition.* (My italics.)<sup>335</sup>

### ***Summary***

I have explained the cause of Bennett's secession from Madame de Salzman's authority in terms of his developing sense of impasse and of his own responsibility to find means to overcome the obstacles to the fulfilment of Gurdjieff's teaching. This idea has been explicated in terms of Gurdjieff's three lines of work, interpreting the third line as relating to the broader purpose of the Work and hence also to higher authority in terms of the 'source of the teaching'. Building on the analysis of Bennett's level of development (see pages 468 to 473), I have suggested that his personal impasse consisted in being 'stranded' in front of the "final threshold" (to use the stairway and inner circles terminology). He perceived that his more advanced pupils were also reaching an impasse and felt that it was his responsibility to provide conditions such that they could proceed. In terms of 'reciprocal progress' his own impasse as a teacher would mean that he could not help his more advanced pupils; and in terms of the developmental criteria it can be argued that he simply did not have the perspective to do so.

His developing sense of the untenability and urgency of the post-Gurdjieff situation resulted in a shifting of the balance of emphasis away from the aim of achieving integration between the different Gurdjieff groups and towards a conviction that he had to give free rein to his own intuitions and creativity. His autobiographical writings suggest that the two journeys that he made to the Middle East were both decisive with regard to his attitude. His primary motive for the 1953 journey is to be

understood in terms of seeking material to help resolve the ‘second line’ dimension of impasse. However, this can be seen as having converged with ‘third line’ matters in so far as there is evidence that he was hoping to contact the source of Gurdjieff’s teaching. Although he had no obvious success with this aim, his contact with Emin Chikhou seems to have fuelled his own belief – originally formulated in the nineteen forties – that a major event to do with a new epoch in human evolution would occur in the mid nineteen fifties. Bennett’s own propensity was to understand this as being closely connected with Gurdjieff’s purpose. Hence, he understood the insistence of Chikhou and Daghestani, that he had an important role to play in the imminent events, as relating to his situation as a transmitter of the Gurdjieff teaching and therefore as, in some sense, an answer to the impasse.

### **Subud.**

As has already been discussed in chapters one and two, Bennett’s four year detour away from the Gurdjieff teaching into Subud is one of the main bases on which the orthodox Gurdjieffians seek to discredit him as an exponent of Gurdjieff’s ideas. Subud and the Gurdjieff Work are apparently very different kinds of spiritual path – the former most obviously emphasizing receptivity and grace, whereas the latter emphasizes effort and method. However, during his involvement with Subud, Bennett wrote in his book *Concerning Subud* that

Whether or not the coming of Subud was foreseen and predicted by Gurdjieff is irrelevant to the fact that *the psychological contents and methods of his system and Subud are mutually complementary.* (My italics.)<sup>336</sup>



Building on the impasse ideas, I will argue that *Subud did make sense as a stage of his individual development* and, to some extent, in terms of his obligations as a teacher. I will show that, while it is probably pushing the case too far to speak of Subud and the Gurdjieff teaching as, in the long term, complementary (as Bennett himself would subsequently have agreed), there are more points of contact than might be obvious at first sight. In particular, I will argue (in this and the next section) that through Subud Bennett was able to gain necessary experience of a source of inner grace to replace the ‘outer’ source which had been removed with Gurdjieff’s death.

## ***Background***

### **Subud: origin and basic doctrine**

The word “Subud” is an acronym of the Sanskrit words “*susila*,” (right or moral action) “*budhi*” (higher self) and “*dharma*” (truth), signifying ‘right action according to the wisdom that is received from connection to the higher self’.<sup>337</sup> It had its origin in Java in 1925 when its ‘founder’ – Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901-1987), generally known as Pak Subuh – experienced a ball of brilliant light descending into his body.<sup>338</sup> Thus began a process of inner transformation which he subsequently found could be transmitted to others.<sup>339</sup> (Although Pak Subuh remained authoritative, he asserted the irrelevance of his individuality.<sup>340</sup>) Transmission involves the opening of a person to the “Great Life Force” – a spiritual energy of a high origin – by someone who has already been opened to it; (in practice only people with some experience are permitted to open others).<sup>341</sup> According to Subud doctrine the Great Life Force acts on the individual *jiwa* (soul) thereby awakening it and purifying it of *nafsu* (lower forces) such that it can become a vehicle for the Will of God.<sup>342</sup> This action, which can exhibit a wide variety of outward forms depending on the level of

development and specific impurities of the individual, takes place in the *latihan* (Indonesian for “exercise”) which is generally a group situation.<sup>343</sup>

### **Bennett, Coombe Springs and Subud**

Subud did not spread much beyond Indonesia until the early 1950s, and even then its dissemination was on quite a small scale and confined to the Far East. It did not begin to become a truly international movement until 1957 when rapid expansion was catalysed by the interest of Bennett and a few other English Gurdjieffians.<sup>344</sup> Bennett was optimistic that Subud was the key to surmounting the spiritual impasse (I expand on this below) and sought, without success, to interest Madame de Salzmänn.<sup>345</sup> Bennett himself received the “opening” from Husein Rofé in late November of 1956.<sup>346</sup> However, wishing first to further verify the benefits of Subud, he did not involve any but his very closest pupils<sup>347</sup> in the experiment intending to await Pak Subuh’s arrival in May.<sup>348</sup> But it appears that events had a momentum of their own. Bennett writes that Pak Subuh “insisted that there should be no selection...In one month more than four hundred men and women, nearly all my own pupils, received the contact and began to come for the *latihan*.”<sup>349</sup> Momentum was further increased by reports in the British popular press concerning the healing by Pak Subuh of the film actress Eva Bartok (who had been one of Bennett’s pupils).<sup>350</sup> However, not all of Bennett’s pupils were impressed with the idea that Subud was the ‘next stage’: some people left, including “some of Mr Bennett’s closest lieutenants”, to join other Gurdjieff groups.<sup>351</sup> Bennett had wished Subud to be an important “adjunct” to the Gurdjieff teaching (see below); however, it rapidly became the predominant practice at Coombe Springs and Bennett’s position as a teacher became ambiguous and invidious in relation to Subud within which each person is deemed to have their own

*inner contact* through the *latihan*.<sup>352</sup> Nevertheless, he found creative employment as an exponent of Subud: Pak Subuh founded the British Subud Committee under Bennett's leadership during 1957<sup>353</sup>; Bennett participated actively in the international spread of Subud, undertaking major trips to Australia, the U.S.A. and Mexico<sup>354</sup>; he also published the first English language book on Subud – *Concerning Subud* – in 1958. In June 1959 he “opened” some of the monks at a Benedictine monastery (St. Wandrille) in northern France<sup>355</sup>; and his own experiences of inner submission whilst at the monastery seem to have been of profound developmental significance.<sup>356</sup> (I deal with the role of Christianity in the next section.) In the summer of 1960 he gave a seminar on the relationship between Christian Mysticism and Subud<sup>357</sup> emphasizing the necessity for a continued balance between the dimensions of effort and grace. In the autumn of 1960 he, together with some friends and pupils, reinstated practise of the Gurdjieff methods and this led to his ‘excommunication’ from Subud.<sup>358</sup>

### ***Prophecy and Impasse***

#### **Prophecy**

Not surprisingly Bennett cites the prophetic eschatologies of Emin Chikhou and Abdullah Daghestani as major antecedent factors for his belief that the arrival of Subud was an event of great historical significance. At a more personal level he also mentions Ahmad Tabrizi who (together with Daghestani) had focused his attention on the idea that submission to the Will of God is fundamental. As I have suggested previously, the predictions of Chikhou and Daghestani served to amplify his own belief that a major event was imminent which was (a) connected with the transition between epochs and (b) the ‘meta-context’ of the Gurdjieff work. His own beliefs with regard to Subud are expressed by:

...I believe that a new light has appeared on the horizon. In this light we can see the outlines of a great plan, or Purpose.<sup>359</sup>

Bennett's assertion that, whether or not Gurdjieff anticipated Subud, the two teachings are complementary has been cited above. However, it appears that Bennett *did* see a definite connection between Subud and statements attributed to Gurdjieff at the end of his life. In *Concerning Subud* he says

...[Gurdjieff] led us to expect the advent of a man who would hold the key to [the awakening of higher consciousness]...<sup>360</sup>

More specifically, Elizabeth Howard<sup>361</sup> told Anthony Bright-Paul that, with regard to the person who would come with this key, Gurdjieff had said: "'Even now he is preparing himself.'"<sup>362</sup> And such beliefs were not restricted to Bennett and his direct associates. Bennett records Madame Ouspensky saying: "'Ever since Mr. Gurdjieff went, I have been expecting someone to come...'"<sup>363</sup>

The question of *why* Bennett believed that Subud supplied the missing element, the arrival of which Gurdjieff had anticipated, will be explored in later subsections. However, Bennett also identifies, from Gurdjieff's writings and statements, two strands which he sees as constituting more specific indications of Subud. Firstly, as had been mentioned on page 475, Gurdjieff had charged Bennett with the task of establishing a group in Holland. Apparently, Gurdjieff had stated:

"I have need of contact with Dutch because of India. Not your English India which not have interest for me, but with their India. I need Dutch group for contact with Dutch India"<sup>364</sup>

Not unreasonably, since there was no obvious antecedent connection between Gurdjieff's teaching and Indonesia, Bennett took this strange 'loose end' to be additional corroboration of his belief that Subud was the 'missing element'.

The second strand is Gurdjieff's Ashiata Shiemash 'myth' which I have introduced in chapters two and three. Bennett understood Subud as involving the awakening of what Gurdjieff calls – in the context of Ashiata Shiemash's mission – “the sacred being-impulse conscience”<sup>365,366</sup> He saw Subud as having the potential to propagate this awakening throughout humanity at the ‘exponential rate’ described by Gurdjieff in his Ashiata Shiemash chapters<sup>367, 368</sup> In Chapter Two I cited Bennett's assertion that Gurdjieff spoke of his Ashiata Shiemash myth as (i) historical, (ii) prophetic and (iii) as referring to himself – i.e., as describing his own work. At the time when he wrote *Concerning Subud* Bennett can be understood as having seen the new teaching as fulfilling a combination of the second and third aspects. That is to say, he saw it as the fulfilment of the Ashiata Shiemash *prophecy* in a way which was continuous with the purpose of Gurdjieff's own work. The Ashiata Shiemash myth can be seen as a description of Gurdjieff's *own* work in so far as (as described on page 478ff.) he appears to have wished his writings to function as a structure by means of which very large numbers of people would commence work on themselves under the guidance of his teachings. As I have pointed out above, Bennett took seriously Gurdjieff's intention that his teaching should be propagated through the dissemination of his books (and felt frustrated at de Salzmann's apparent reticence); but he *also* saw this as an ‘exoteric’ and preparatory aspect in relation to the larger context of Gurdjieff's work. Hence we can see, in general outline, the reason why Bennett was willing to see the possibilities of Subud as corresponding to the Ashiata Shiemash scenario in which ever larger numbers of people are awakened to conscience by, to use Bennett's metaphor, a “nuclear chain reaction”<sup>369</sup>.

However, two factors stand out against Bennett's identification of Subud with Ashiata Shiemash. Firstly, his embracing of Subud led to the abandonment of the

‘exoteric task’ (although, as I will describe below, Bennett did not intend this degree of discontinuity): it seems strange to conclude that this should have been superseded when it had hardly begun. Secondly, Gurdjieff’s Ashiata Shiemash myth is framed in terms of *effort*, but Subud emphasizes submission; and, although (as I will show below) the experience of the Subud *latihan* and its effect on individuals can be understood in Gurdjieffian terms of “conscious labour and intentional suffering”, there remains an incongruity about seeing Subud as the fulfilment of the ‘Ashiata Shiemash prophecy’.

### **Impasse**

In terms of the ‘three dimensions of impasse’ idea the antecedents to Subud in terms of prophecies relates most obviously, but not exclusively, to the third line (context and purpose). However, although Bennett had become ever more strongly predisposed to believe that a major event relating to the context of the Gurdjieff work was imminent, the central driving force of his search remained the sense of impasse with regard to his own personal work and the leadership of his pupils. Apparently, he was neither alone in this striving nor in the willingness to see Subud as the resolution; however, it is a notable fact that those who shared this perspective with Bennett all appear to have been (although senior Gurdjieffians) former Ouspenskians. For instance, Bennett records that Ronimund von Bissing, who was probably the first Gurdjieffian to be initiated into Subud, “believed that Subud might be the key to solving all our spiritual problems.”<sup>370</sup> And he says that Reginald Hoare and Aubrey Wolton, who had seceded from their membership of ‘Group 1’,<sup>371</sup>

...had even become doubtful whether it was possible to follow Gurdjieff’s system without his personal help and guidance.<sup>372</sup>

Bennett's own perspective only seems to differ in so far as that he was responsible for several hundred pupils who relied on him as an exponent of the Gurdjieff teaching<sup>373</sup> – I have argued above that his own sense of impasse was in precisely the terms that he ascribes to Hoare and Wolton. He also says that some Gurdjieffians

were convinced that [the Gurdjieff method] was not complete unless a way could be found to achieve the awakening of the higher centres of consciousness through direct contact with a higher Source.<sup>374</sup>

This view – which is quintessentially Ouspenskian – was cited at Coombe Springs as a context for the arrival of Subud.<sup>375</sup> It is also notable that Francis Roles the leader of the 'orthodox Ouspenskians' (i.e., those who had refused to return to Gurdjieff) was similarly on the look out for a "direct method" by means of which the attainment of "Man No.5" might become possible and that

Hearing that Pak Subuh had a 'direct method' of some sort that he was imparting to Bennett's followers at Coombe Springs, Francis Roles resolved to meet him privately.<sup>376</sup>

(Roles allowed twenty trusted disciples to experiment with Subud, but decided that it was too dangerous.<sup>377</sup> However, some of his pupils subsequently defected to Subud.<sup>378</sup>) From the Subud point of view, Husein Rofé, Pak Subuh's first emissary to Britain, perceived the Gurdjieff groups as ripe for Subud in so far as that they were struggling to continue the Work in the "vacuum" left by the death of Gurdjieff.<sup>379</sup>

As I shall describe further in the next subsection, the sense of continuity with the Gurdjieff teaching was important for Bennett who states "Much that I had learned and taught of Gurdjieff's psychology over so many years came to life in the *latihan*."<sup>380</sup> With regard to the period immediately prior to the arrival of Pak Subuh and the mass initiations at Coombe Springs Bennett says

Subud was still for me only an important adjunct to what we had received from Gurdjieff...<sup>381</sup>

This is corroborated by Anthony Bright-Paul who says, of the early period of Subud, that

At the same time the work of the groups continued, and the working parties on Sundays also. Subud was simply added on to the already heavy routine.<sup>382</sup>

Although Bennett became very enthusiastic about Subud in its own right and events apparently gained a momentum that he was unable to control, I will argue that there is evidence that he always maintained something of his Gurdjieffian perspective and never fully accepted the Subud belief that there is no place for spiritual exercises involving effort. He claims that initially he received indications from Pak Subuh to corroborate the complementarity and continuity perspective: Pak Subuh told him to change nothing – i.e., continue with the Gurdjieff methods – “Gurdjieff is your teacher.”<sup>383</sup> However, Husein Rofé says that: (i) Pak Subuh did nothing to encourage beliefs about a special line of continuity from Gurdjieff<sup>384</sup>; (ii) that Pak Subuh’s own perspective on the Gurdjieffians was that he was making an “attempt to graft a new branch onto an old tree”<sup>385</sup>; and (iii) that “...prophecies of Gurdjieff only have meaning for Gurdjieff’s own pupils...”<sup>386</sup>

### ***Experience***

At the experiential level there seem to have been two main aspects which served to indicate that Subud was the ‘key to the higher consciousness of Man No.5’. Firstly, there was the experience of wakefulness in which all of the lower centres participate. Bennett says of his first *latihan*:



...I entered a state of consciousness that I had supposed to be attainable only by a long well-directed effort.<sup>387</sup>

I suggest that he is talking about the state of inner freedom which he first learned to achieve whilst with Gurdjieff in 1949.<sup>388</sup> Similarly, Anthony Bright-Paul, who had by 1957 been ‘in the work’ for seven years, writes of his first *latihan*:

The taste of this state was similar to what I had experienced on several occasions after making great efforts either at movements or some psychological exercise. If there was any difference it was only in intensity and in the effortlessness with which this remained with me. But, of course, the main difference was in origin...<sup>389</sup>

Again this is reminiscent of Bennett’s descriptions of his experiences of ‘breakthrough after super-efforts’ which, I have already argued, gave the taste of the state of Man No.5. Hence, it would appear that the Subud *latihan* could bring about a state which can be seen as associated with the attainment of Man No.5. With regard to self remembering, Bennett says that “many trainees” (presumably his own former pupils) found that the *latihan* enabled them to be

...more fully conscious of themselves, for a longer time and in more continuous state, than is possible by any effort of attention that they are capable of making.<sup>390</sup>

The second dimension of the *latihan* experience which suggested, to Bennett and others, continuity from the Gurdjieff teaching and resolution of impasse was the awakening of “the sacred being-impulse conscience”. Bennett says that when he compared notes with the other Gurdjieffians who had received early initiation into Subud, it was discovered that

...each of us had independently concluded that the action of the *latihan* is to awaken Conscience, and also that we were all convinced that it was producing results more rapidly and effectively than the exercises we had learned from Gurdjieff. We were all anxious that the opportunity of trying Subud should be given to the former pupils of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky.<sup>391</sup>

With regard to his own inner life Bennett describes a truly purgatorial ‘healing of the soul’ in the early months of his Subud experience during which “A vivid inner light began pitilessly to shine upon my own past.”<sup>392</sup> This is reminiscent of the purgatorial aspect of his experience with Gurdjieff in 1949 <sup>393</sup> which he refers to as “...the bitter disillusionments of our own gradual self-revelation.”<sup>394</sup> Again there is the implication of an experience associated with the threshold of the inner advance that Bennett had been seeking. In more general terms the awakening of this “pitiless” conscience associated with the Subud *latihan* can be understood in Gurdjieffian terms as the stripping away of the buffers that maintain the human being in a state of relatively comfortable illusion.<sup>395</sup> And, as I have argued in Chapter Five, the “the sacred being-impulse conscience” is to be understood as a dimension of the HEC with which Man No.5 is in unimpeded contact.

### ***Comparative Doctrine***

On the one hand Subud’s emphasis on the receptive dimensions of submission and grace suggests a radical discontinuity with the Gurdjieff teaching; but on the other there is the suggestion that the experiences of the Subud *latihan* provided that resolution of a spiritual impasse which Bennett and others saw as having resulted from Gurdjieff’s departure from the scene. Where does the truth lie? In this subsection I will argue on grounds of comparative doctrine that Subud has a greater degree of compatibility with the Gurdjieff teaching than simple consideration of the effort-submission dichotomy would appear to suggest. However, I will also argue that this dichotomy reflects a fundamental difference of soteriological orientation which must be seen as circumscribing the compatibility. At the end of the subsection I synthesize these two aspects (compatibility and soteriological difference) in order to

suggest that – for people with experience of the Gurdjieff Work – Subud had the potential to be useful as a temporary expedient.

### ***Jiwa* and essence**

A basic similarity can be observed between the *Jiwa-nafsu* relationship in Subud and the essence-personality relationship in the Gurdjieff teaching. Pak Subuh has said:

“Plainly, then, when first born into the world, brothers and sisters, you were closer to your *Jiwa*, though far from observing your earthly environment.”<sup>396</sup>

This is comparable to the Gurdjieffian idea that at birth we are fully in essence. The Gurdjieff teaching goes on to say that, as a child develops, personality comes into play and that this obscures essence. However, the Gurdjieff teaching does not represent personality – which is necessary for dealing with the world – as being bad *per se*: it is only a problem to the extent that it becomes autonomous and obscures essence – which is the seed of development – rather than being the servant of essence. Similarly, in Subud the *nafsu* are the “lower force which...are part of man’s being” and which are only problematic in so far as that they work autonomously, distracting people from their proper development, rather than being under the control of the *jiwa*.<sup>397</sup> That Bennett saw this parallel is indicated by his saying that the Subud *latihan* must, inherently, lead to right crystallization – the idea of crystallization being presented as an explicitly Gurdjieffian term – because it works directly through the “essential pattern”.<sup>398</sup>

### **Purification and conscience**

As I have described above Bennett and other senior Gurdjieffians experienced purgatorial ‘moral awakenings’ as a result of the Subud *latihan*. In Subud terms this

experience was purification of the *nafsu* through the awakening of the *jiwa*. Bennett *et. al.* understood this experience, in Gurdjieffian terms, as being the destruction of the buffers which prevent the “sacred being-impulse conscience” from functioning. In *Concerning Subud* Bennett refers to this as a characteristic Subud experience<sup>399</sup> and connects the ‘purgatorial process’ to Gurdjieff’s doctrine of “self-perfecting by way of conscious labour and intentional suffering”.<sup>400</sup> This seems to be an entirely reasonable interpretation of Gurdjieff’s doctrine which can be understood as meaning deliberately seeking to confront that which is uncomfortable within oneself. The only difference in the Subud situation (as reported) seems to have been that the experience of inner confrontation was precipitated and accelerated by the *latihan*. A further indicator that the Subud *latihan* can precipitate experiences of that which Gurdjieff calls “conscience” is given by Bennett’s assertion that Gurdjieff’s ‘remembrance of one’s own death’ – which he prescribes as a valuable inner touch stone of reality<sup>401</sup> – is a “characteristic condition of the latihan.”<sup>402</sup>

### **Grace and effort**

The foregoing discussion indicates that, from both doctrinal and experiential points of view, the Subud *latihan* can be understood in Gurdjieffian terminology as awakening the essence and in particular the ‘essence faculty’ of conscience. However, despite this correspondence, there remains the basic difference that Subud is a ‘way of grace’ and the Gurdjieff Work is a ‘way of effort’. From this point of view, and notwithstanding the resolution of impasse aspect, it seems strange that Subud could be seen as in any way a continuation of the Gurdjieff teaching. As Anthony Bright-Paul says of his initial reaction to Subud:

...all Gurdjieff's methods and his movements had a character of control, of decision, of deliberation. Whereas the Subud latihan seemed the very antithesis of this.<sup>403</sup>

In Subud it is held that higher guidance enables the purification and balancing of the lower aspects of selfhood. This guidance proceeds from the spiritual level of the *Roh Rohani* (literally "spiritual spirit"<sup>404</sup>) and Pak Subuh was unequivocal that any form of effort in relation to this process is misguided.<sup>405</sup> By contrast the Gurdjieff teaching emphasizes establishing balance of the lower centres *in order that* the guidance of the higher centres can become possible. One of the ways in which Bennett and others understood Subud as providing the resolution to their spiritual impasse was that it provided direct contact with the HEC.<sup>406</sup> (Bennett writes: "It was Gurdjieff who first taught me and others to look for the awakening of higher consciousness, or higher centres, that cannot be reached by the way of thought."<sup>407</sup>) However, simply aligning the HEC with the guidance from the level of the *Roh Rohani* does not alter the fact that the emphasis in the Gurdjieffian case is on effort from below and, in the Subud case, on submission to guidance from above.

However, the difference may not be as extreme as is indicated by the primary emphases of the teachings. As I have argued in Chapter Five, Bennett was correct in asserting that "receptive lines of work" are an appropriate and necessary dimension of the Gurdjieffian path at all its levels. With reference to the relationship between Gurdjieffian ideas and Subud Bright-Paul points out that Gurdjieff's spoke of the necessity to place oneself under higher influences.<sup>408</sup> And even the orthodoxy speak of the commitment from below which meets the conscious force that descends. Similarly in Subud there is a necessary place for the "active lines of work". Although effort is deemed to be superfluous in the *latihan*, Pak Subuh emphasizes the active development of the possibilities and talents which emerge as a result of practising the

*latihan* as an obligation.<sup>409</sup> Similarly in *Concerning Subud* Bennett writes that in life (rather than in the *latihan*)

Work on oneself, struggle with our own lower forces, is not merely a duty, it is an inner necessity if the work of the spirit is to develop freely within us.<sup>410</sup>

Moreover, as has already been described, the *latihan* can give rise to periods of inner confrontation which necessitate work on oneself (“conscious labour and intentional suffering”).

### **Contact with higher centres and building of higher bodies**

In Chapter Five I have emphasized the importance to understanding the Gurdjieffian path of the complementarity of Gurdjieff’s presentations in terms of higher centres and higher bodies. As I have described above Bennett saw Subud as giving contact with the higher centres. However, there does not seem in Subud to be anything equivalent to the idea of the construction of higher bodies.<sup>411</sup> Certainly there is an evolution of the *jiwa*, under the influence of the Great Life Force, through levels called the “mineral”, “vegetable”, “animal” and “human” souls and beyond these to the *Roh Rohani*;<sup>412</sup> and if the *jiwa* is seen as equivalent to the essence then this evolution might be seen as equivalent to the successive qualities (higher bodies) which can be developed from the essence. But there is, in Subud, no idea of any kind of ‘construction from below’ to meet and thereby individualize the pre-existent higher intelligence. *In terms of a ‘Gurdjieffian logic’* the progressive awakening to higher centres without the parallel construction of higher bodies would lead to a situation of the *jiwa* (essence) being conscious *but impotent*.

### **Submission and gnosis**

This idea of ‘impotence in the absence of higher bodies’ approaches what I consider to be the fundamental difference between Subud and the Gurdjieff Work. It is only a problem in terms of the Gurdjieff teaching which emphasizes the development of individuated will. The main point is that the two teachings have different perspectives on the human task of becoming a vehicle for the Divine Will. In the Subud situation the emphasis is on allowing God to make us into obedient receptacles for his Will. Whereas in the Gurdjieff teaching it is emphasized that the Divine Source requires to be ‘nourished’ by individuated intelligences from below. For Subud, then, the ‘impotence’ is not a problem: awakening to, and ever greater identification with, the wisdom of the higher levels of creation is the whole task. The situation can be summed up by saying that the Gurdjieff teaching is a way of *gnosis* whereas Subud is a way of submission. In Gurdjieffian terms the spiritual attainments of Subud might be seen as merging with progressively higher levels of the *downflow* of creation. Bennett suggests an equivalence between the “man on the fifth level” (at the level of *Roh Rohani*) in Subud and Man No.6 of the Gurdjieff scheme.<sup>413</sup> I have argued that Gurdjieff’s Man No.6 is at a level of being equivalent to that of angels but that he remains utterly distinct from them by virtue of the special potential stemming from his ‘creation from below’. I suggest that this distinction does not apply to the Subud’s “man on the fifth level” (or at least not to the same degree): from the Gurdjieffian point of view, those of advanced spiritual attainment in Subud remain part of the ‘natural history’ of the involutory downflow of creation.

## Subud and the Gurdjieff path

It would appear that Subud can have an action that *relates to* the Gurdjieff teaching – engendering a state of self-remembering, awakening conscience and connecting to the HEC – but that its *own direction* is different. I wish to suggest that the Subud experience did address the impasse of more advanced Gurdjieffians, but that it was a *temporary expedient* rather than something which superseded the Gurdjieff teaching.

In this connection it is useful to cite Joyce Collin-Smith who writes:

It occurred to me that what we were tapping in the *Latihan* was a source of raw but absolutely neutral energy. It would therefore enhance and develop the tendencies or the intentions of the people who were open to it.<sup>414</sup>

In these terms, people such as Bennett whose primary motivation was inner development and who had already undergone, in Gurdjieffian terms, considerable concentration of energies and a degree of crystallization, would feel their inner lives enhanced and accelerated. More specifically, in terms of their being ‘on the threshold of Man No.5’, Subud might bring experiences associated with this level of being. Arguably, the ‘input of grace’ of Subud could actually help such people to cross the threshold. And if Bennett is correct concerning the *baraka* aspect of Gurdjieff’s transmission, then it may be that Subud supplied something equivalent. As I will show in the next subsection, despite his eventual reservations concerning Subud, Bennett *did* consider that it had helped him. (And I will argue in the next section that it can be seen as having played an important role in his development.) However, it must be emphasized that, because of its different soteriological orientation, Subud would only have been *temporarily* useful to Bennett and his peers; moreover, it may not have been useful at all to those who were less advanced. (It should be pointed out that this judgement refers entirely to an evaluation of Subud from a Gurdjieffian



perspective and is not intended to indicate a pejorative view of Subud in its own right.)

This raises the question of whether or not Subud could have been the ‘new dispensation available to everyone’ that Bennett thought it was. I have argued in Chapter Three that there is a degree of ambiguity in the Gurdjieff teaching as to the feasibility of ‘mass liberation’. The Ashiata Shiemash myth – which Bennett thought referred to Subud – constitutes the main evidence that Gurdjieff thought mass liberation possible. Even in Subud’s *own terms* the situation is somewhat unclear. On the face of things it seems that anyone who sincerely wishes can receive the “opening” and commence the process of purification.<sup>415</sup> Bennett writes that “Pak Subuh has said that the latihan is a frontier through which the stream of [hereditary] causality cannot pass.”<sup>416</sup> In Gurdjieffian terms this might be taken to mean that Subud can counteract the collective consequences of the organ kundabuffer. However, Husein Rofé takes issue with Bennett’s view, expressed in *Concerning Subud*, that Subud is for everyone. He claims Pak Subuh’s support for his own view that “only a small *élite* will derive full benefit from it”<sup>417</sup> and that there is an esoteric aspect of the transmission for which very few people could qualify.<sup>418</sup> According to Joyce Collin-Smith, Hoare and some other ex-Gurdjieffians also held the view that, while Subud would be beneficial to many, its true potential was only for those with some prior experience of spiritual discipline.<sup>419</sup> Either way, it remains the case that Subud cannot be seen as qualifying as a means of mass liberation in Gurdjieffian terms.

## *Disaffection*

Bennett's withdrawal from Subud in the autumn of 1960 can be understood in terms of three main reasons.

1. He came to consider that it did not have the universal character which he had originally attributed to it; and he decided that the force which is transmitted through the *latihan* was of a lower order than he had supposed.
2. He decided that Subud was not, on its own, a complete and balanced method and that, if pursued exclusively, it led to stagnation and even debilitation.
3. He was not permitted to remain a member of the Subud Brotherhood after he recommenced the practice of Gurdjieffian methods.<sup>420</sup>

However, it must be emphasized at the outset that, despite his much more critical view of Subud, he still considered it a valuable practice in its own right and believed that he had gained great and long term benefit from it.

The issues that are of primary concern here are those stemming from 'Reason 2' and their relationship to his continued valuation of the Subud experience. However, for the purpose of establishing the context in which he came to understand the Subud transmission, it will be useful to outline the background to 'Reason 1'. ('Reason 3' requires no further elaboration in its own right.)

Writing of his experience of "opening" people in 1957 Bennett gave the following 'confession of faith'

...I became convinced beyond all doubt that the power that works in Subud has nothing to do with me or with any other person. I could no longer questions its real—that is its objective—presence.<sup>421</sup>

However, his mature view (probably written c.1968) in the posthumously published *Transformation* is virtually opposite:

...I became convinced that the action [of Subud] was in fact due to a particular 'psychic energy' that could be transmitted from person to person and could not possibly be attributed to a supernatural action and still less to the intervention of the Divine Will, as Pak Subuh claimed.<sup>422</sup>

A cautious 'transition view' is to be found in *Christian Mysticism and Subud* from a few months before Bennett re-established the ways of effort:

Pak Subuh ascribes [the action of the latihan] to the Great Life Force; the Roh Ilofi which he is careful not to identify with the Roh Sutji, or the Holy Spirit. This leaves us open to regard Subud as a natural action, albeit superhuman...<sup>423</sup>

However, with regard to the status of the Great Life Force, in *Transformation* he states that Pak Subuh *did* assert that the action of the *latihan* is due to a "direct intervention of the Divine Will."<sup>424</sup> Husein Rofé, who had been with Pak Subuh since 1950, also writes of the action of the latihan in these terms<sup>425</sup> and specifically attributes to Pak Subuh identification of this action with the Holy Spirit.<sup>426</sup> Bennett himself, in *Concerning Subud*, had spoken of the action of the *latihan* in terms of "the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life."<sup>427</sup> He also suggested that Subud was integral with the Parousia.<sup>428</sup> Hence, it can be seen that he changed his mind radically, from seeing Subud as a supernatural action of the highest order – and therefore something of universal significance – to seeing it as based on a psychic energy.

Bennett's enthusiasm for Subud was such that in *Concerning Subud* he indicates the idea that submission is all that is required to place a person in the "second river".<sup>429</sup> Clearly this is not a view which he would have subscribed to after 1960. However, there is also evidence to indicate that Bennett maintained something of his

Gurdjieffian standpoint throughout (even though Subud had become much more than the “adjunct” that he originally intended).<sup>430</sup>

Bennett’s motivation for returning to the use of Gurdjieff’s methods was primarily experiential. He writes that, when he and some of his associates exchanged observations

...we became convinced that the *latihan*, though excellent as a means of opening the heart, did nothing for the will and that we must find a way to restore the balance.<sup>431</sup>

This in itself shows the extent to which he had remained essentially a Gurdjieffian: in terms of Subud the matter of individual will does not arise – it is simply a matter of opening to *God’s Will*. And his statement that he “could not agree with...the claim that the practice of the latihan without attempting to understand its action was sufficient for the attainment of human perfection”<sup>432</sup> serves to indicate his ‘gnostic predilections’. He records that, on restoring the balance by a resumption of the Gurdjieffian discipline his “state changed for the better” almost immediately.<sup>433</sup> However, although as I will describe below he was subsequently very condemnatory of Subud as an *unalloyed method*, he nevertheless attributed to it important personal benefits (and wished that he could have remained associated with it<sup>434</sup> – i.e., as an adjunct.) Most significantly, with regard to his disjunction from the Gurdjieffian mainstream, he says:

I could not doubt that the *latihan* had worked wonders for me and for Elizabeth. I could see many others who had changed for the better. We were freer, more open and above all more hopeful than we had been before Subud came. I could see clearly the harm done by the unnecessary pessimism and restrictiveness of the Gurdjieff groups.<sup>435</sup>

And with regard to the development of his own inner world:

It was impossible to doubt that I had changed and that I could communicate with a source of wisdom that was within myself but beyond my consciousness.<sup>436</sup>

This statement can be seen as an antecedent for the intensive interaction with the “higher powers” that took place during the final years of his life. (I will refer again to this statement in the next section in relation to an assessment of Bennett’s level of development.)

In *Transformation* Bennett sets out the range of long term responses to the *latihan*:

Some people benefited from the very beginning and after many years continue to benefit, others—and I am one of them—gained immensely from the latihan for two or three years and then began to suffer ill effects. *In my own case, these ill effects were loss of initiative, bad health and extreme fatigue, coupled with a sense of neglecting my real duty in life.* Others had very powerful experiences that captivated them, but soon got into trouble. Many became psychiatric cases and far too many committed suicide. Yet another group experienced little or nothing and soon abandoned the latihan. Finally, there have been a large number who gained positively, but after a few years ceased to experience anything and lost interest...  
(My italics.)<sup>437</sup>

He also says that, in addition to the weakening of will, Subud also had a debilitating effect on his intellectual capacities.<sup>438</sup> His conclusion seems to be that Subud can be an acceptable practice, but that (a) more care should have been taken concerning *who* did it, and (b) *he himself* should have done it for less time.<sup>439</sup> These points can be seen as concurring with my own conclusion, from the last subsection, that – in terms of the Gurdjieff teaching – Subud could be of *short term benefit to people at a certain stage on the path*. Similarly, the fact that Bennett considers that Subud had made him more open to inner wisdom, but had debilitated his will can be seen as supporting the conclusion that Subud can awaken people to the higher centres, but does nothing towards the construction of higher bodies.

## After Subud

In this section I briefly address Bennett's contact with the Shivapuri Baba and his conversion to Roman Catholicism. I argue that the contributions of these sources enabled Bennett to fully 'synthesize' the lessons of submission of the Subud experience with his Gurdjieffian path and that as a result of this he made the 'breakthrough to Man No.5'.

As explained above Bennett felt that Subud had been at once helpful and deleterious. He felt that – as previously cited – it had enabled him to “communicate with a source of wisdom that was within myself but beyond my consciousness”<sup>440</sup>; but at the same time it had weakened his will and his intelligence. The benefit may be understood in terms of Subud having provided a 'receptive dimension' which resolved the spiritual impasse of the Gurdjieff Work (and I continue to argue this point in the present section). The negative effects can be understood in terms of an *overemphasis* on the submission and grace aspects at the expense of the effort and *gnosis* aspects. More technically speaking the overall situation can be said to be one of connection to the higher centres without the corresponding construction of higher bodies.

In practical terms Bennett was in an unenviable position having become *persona non grata* with the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy<sup>441</sup> and then discovered that Subud, for which he had left the Gurdjieffian mainstream, was for him less complete as a way of liberation than the Gurdjieff teaching. However, he records:

The combined effect of my visit to the Shivapuri Baba and my experiences at St.Wandrille was to liberate me from the depression into which I had fallen and to give me fresh hope that I would find the spiritual reality that I had fail to find in Subud.<sup>442</sup>

His Christian experiences at St.Wandrille (see page 507), which had been an important factor in his life since his first visit in 1959, can be understood as a developing aspect of his personal spiritual understanding which started before and continued after his break with Subud. I will argue that a capacity for spiritual submission, which had emerged in the context of Subud, found a more fruitful expression in his experience of Roman Catholicism. In this context, the Shivapuri Baba, who helped him to understand the correct balance between the active and receptive lines of work, can be seen as having acted in the role of a catalyst.

Bennett records that on Good Friday of 1959 he received, during the *latihan*, a vision of the Crucifixion which gave him a profound understanding of the meaning of the Passion of Christ.<sup>443</sup> While he had previously had at least one other mystical experience of a specifically Christian character,<sup>444</sup> the 1959 experience is significant because it happened in the context of the *latihan* and because it was the first of a deepening series of experiences of the reality of the ‘Christian mystery’ which he experienced at St.Wandrille.<sup>445</sup> The depth of these experiences and the fact that he attributes his openness to them to Subud is exemplified in *Christian Mysticism and Subud* (lectures a few months before he reintroduced the Gurdjieff methods):

the latihan...will strengthen the religious convictions of those who practice it. For Christians, this can only mean belief in the Incarnation and in the Redemptive Sacrifice of Christ. The experience of four years has confirmed that this strengthening of religious convictions does in fact take place.<sup>446</sup>

The strengthening and deepening of Bennett faith can also be seen as having important significance in terms of the Gurdjieff teaching. It was Gurdjieff’s view that only a person with a stable individuality (i.e., Man No.5) has the capacity to really live according to a religion. – A further aspect of the situation might be that only a

person with connection to the HEC would be able to inwardly understand what a religion is saying. – With specific regard to Christianity, Gurdjieff says: “Only man number four strives to be a Christian and only man number five can actually be a Christian.”<sup>447</sup> Hence, the rapid and profound deepening of Bennett’s understanding of the Christian mysteries might be taken as indicative that he was close to the status of Man No.5.

There is neither the space nor the necessity to describe the Shivapuri Baba’s doctrines in any detail. The basic point here with regard to the personal dimension of Bennett’s contact with him is that

...he confirmed—at my second visit in 1962—my conviction that although ‘submission’ in the Subud sense is needed, it will not work without self-discipline.<sup>448</sup>

The significance of the Shivapuri Baba’s teaching of the necessity for a balance between ‘receptive’ and ‘active’ inner work will be emphasized by reference to Bennett’s outline of his soteriological perspective.

...though Mind and Intelligence cannot find God, they must be in the right condition if God is to be known.<sup>449</sup>

...it is useless for [a person] to go straight to God-Realization if he has a dull intellect and a weak mind. If he attaches himself to World-Realization he will have a happy and successful life, but death will end it all. If he attaches himself to Soul-Realization he will attain eternal bliss, but this will remain conditioned by existence. When the worlds pass away, his bliss will end and he will find that he has got nowhere. Therefore, only God-Realization is objectively and absolutely valid as the end and aim of existence.<sup>450</sup>

These ideas can be seen as having a close correspondence with Gurdjieff’s teachings in which those who are content to live in the world in a mechanical way have no after-death possibilities and those who develop a *kesdjan* body can experience “Paradise”<sup>451</sup>, but only those who develop beyond this have the possibility of reaching



the true immortality of the “Sun Absolute”.<sup>452</sup> I suggest that, in terms of the distinctions between Subud and the Gurdjieff teaching that I have already highlighted, the former in practice focuses on what the Shivapuri Baba calls “Soul-Realization”, leading to “eternal bliss”, whereas the latter aims towards “God-Realization”. The Shivapuri Baba’s emphasis on the necessity for the development of mind and intelligence is also important here. As mentioned previously, Bennett felt that these faculties had been debilitated by Subud. However, as described in Chapter Five, one of Gurdjieff’s main measures of spiritual evolution is in terms of the “degree of sacred being-Reason” which has been attained; and the idea that the Sun Absolute requires a return flow of intelligence from below is fundamental to Gurdjieffian soteriology. Thus it can be seen that the Shivapuri Baba’s confirmation that the dimension of submission is necessary, but that it has to be balanced by effort, is within the context of a soteriological perspective that is strikingly similar to Gurdjieff’s. This idea undoubtedly reflects the way in which Bennett himself understood his contact with the Shivapuri Baba. He writes:

The Shivapuri Baba planted in my mind the seeds of the belief that I might be destined for reaching ‘here in this very life,’ as the Buddha put it, the transformation of being that Gurdjieff had promised me in 1949 when he said: “Do not be satisfied with Paradise, but seek only to come to the Sun Absolute.” For the first time this audacious quest appeared to be something more than a distant vision.<sup>453</sup>

And he says that: “To be with him was to be given the assurance that liberation is possible.”<sup>454</sup> Moreover, the Shivapuri Baba gave Bennett specific spiritual counselling towards this attainment. When Bennett asked about his “growing conviction that [he] should join the Catholic Church” the Shivapuri Baba surprised him by replying with the unequivocal affirmation that he “would find...God-realization through Christ.”<sup>455</sup>

I suggest that Bennett reached the Gurdjieffian status of ‘Man No.5’ soon after his entry into the Roman Catholic Church and his second visit to the Shivapuri Baba (i.e., around 1962). I have argued that Subud supplied a ‘downflow of energy’ which helped him to open to a universal source of help – i.e., the Love of Christ.<sup>456</sup> (This is in line with his idea that the *latihan* is a natural form of help which can lead to a supernatural form of help.<sup>457</sup>) This, I suggest, supplied an impetus that can be seen as a resolution of the perceived spiritual impasse in the Gurdjieff teaching and brought him closer to the attainment of Man No.5 in terms of higher centres. However, as he had himself said (in the summer of 1960), genuine results can only be attained when submission is balanced by effort.<sup>458</sup> It was necessary for him to consolidate what he had realized in terms of ‘downflow’ and higher centres in terms of ‘backflow’ and *higher bodies*. He returned to a more ‘balanced’ form of spiritual practice and subsequently received corroborative assistance from the Shivapuri Baba in terms compatible with the Gurdjieff teaching. He had seen after Gurdjieff’s death that what he required was the “secret of death and resurrection.”<sup>459</sup> I suggest that the following passage from *Witness* constitutes an understated assertion that he had at last attained his goal.

Outwardly my life had been a recurrence of promises unfulfilled: inwardly it had been a step-by-step liberation from a false belief in the outer and a growing confidence in the inner. The Shivapuri Baba had tipped the balance in my favour.<sup>460</sup>

Gurdjieff had told him that until he had his own “I” he would remain a “taxi”. That the balance had now shifted decisively to the inner world suggests that he had achieved something constant. Hence, in Gurdjieffian terms, the genuinely religious aim of someone who had reached the status of Man No.5 – i.e., full, final and right crystallization – of attaining to the “Sun Absolute” now became a reality.

In Chapter Two I have argued that at the end of his life Bennett became a teacher in his own right not so much by virtue of having some lineal connection to Gurdjieff, but most crucially, by virtue of his own inner connection to a higher source of authority (i.e., *deep* continuity). In order for this to make sense it is, in terms of the developmental model established in Chapter Five, *necessary* that he should have been at least Man No.5. It is necessary in general terms because – as I have argued in earlier chapters – only a person of this level has the perspective to lead a school. However, it can also be seen as necessary from the point of view of his claim to be working in direct cooperation with the higher powers and their evolutionary plan for humanity. In Gurdjieffian terms this contact with a level of guidance beyond one’s individual pattern suggests connection to the higher *thinking* centre (rather than just the HEC). And such connection only becomes frequent for people who are on the path towards Man No.6.

In order to trace Bennett’s inner development up to the threshold of the final stage of his life (as discussed in Chapter Two) it is necessary to take into account one further influence – that of the Turkish Sufi and ‘latter day Khwajagan’ Hasan Shushud. However, in order to maintain continuity of historical narrative it will be necessary first to discuss his interactions with another Sufi influence, Idries Shah.

## **Part 3: The Final Phases and Beyond**

In parts one and two of this chapter I have traced Bennett's spiritual development – as a seeker, pupil and teacher – from his first contacts with Gurdjieff up to his situation after leaving Subud. In this last part I continue to trace his development and the main influences on it up to the threshold of the mature situation (described in chapters one and two) when he became a fully fledged teacher in his own right. This will involve consideration of two Sufic influences, Idries Shah and Hasan Shushud – the first of whom I have spoken of in Chapter One as a 'non-linear pretender'. Finally, I consider the schism that occurred among Bennett's pupils after his death as a result of the influence of another 'non-linear pretender', Gary Chicoine.

### **Idries Shah**

In June of 1962 Idries Shah<sup>461</sup> suddenly became an important factor in Bennett's life. According to Bennett, Shah claimed that he "had been sent to the West by an esoteric school in Afghanistan" and indicated that this was the school with which Gurdjieff had been associated.<sup>462</sup> He made available a document titled 'Declaration of the People of the Tradition' which seems to have had a particular message for Gurdjieffians. Its gist was the (fourth way) idea that true esoteric knowledge changes its form in accordance with its own laws, and the corollary that constancy of form implies lack of contact with the source. Of particular interest is the statement, regarding the possibility of (re-)alignment with the truth, that:

Conditions now exist in the community now being addressed in which a work of this kind can take place.<sup>463</sup>

And the emphasis that the “People of the Tradition”

have no special interest in the nominal background, seniority or superficial psychological tendencies of the people addressed <sup>464</sup>

serves to warn that continuity of the *form* of Gurdjieff’s teaching was not what was intended. Further, it must be pointed out that, while Shah was, with whatever motivation, seeking help from that which he implies was the ‘remnant of the Gurdjieff-impulse’, in his own terms his mission was to awaken influential people to the crisis facing humanity.<sup>465</sup> Shah succeeded in convincing Bennett that it was his duty to help him with this mission by giving him Coombe Springs (which was owned by Bennett’s Institute). The transfer of ownership eventually occurred in 1966; and Shah also assimilated about half of Bennett’s pupils.<sup>466</sup> However, there has never been any indication that Shah taught anything outwardly continuous with the Gurdjieff teaching; and it became clear to Bennett that he himself had no place in Shah’s work.<sup>467</sup> It appears that Bennett received no personal assurances from Shah and that the gift of Coombe Springs was expected to be unilateral.

### ***The Gurdjieffians’ attitude to Shah***

Shah’s authenticity as an exponent of Sufism has been challenged by academic specialists. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage with a debate concerning Shah’s grasp of Sufism at a scholarly level. And, as I have stated in Chapter One, it is not my intention to judge Shah *per se*, but only to explore his significance to Bennett’s interpretation of the Gurdjieff teaching. In this light it is relevant to refer to L.P. Elwell-Sutton’s critique of Shah (‘Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism’ in *Encounter*,

May 1975) in which he misrepresented the relationship between Shah and the orthodox Gurdjieff movement, thereby provoking the latter to join the debate.

Beyond criticisms of Shah's ability as a scholar and linguist,<sup>468</sup> Elwell-Sutton's main charges are that his 'Sufism' is (i) a personality cult and (ii) a humanistic approach, emphasizing psychology and metaphysics, and from which God and Islam have been expunged.<sup>469</sup> (Elwell-Sutton seems to represent *all* psychological and metaphysical tendencies in Sufism as symptoms of degeneracy.<sup>470</sup> This is an extreme view. Nasr provides a more balanced critique of Shah by pointing out that he *overemphasizes* the metaphysical and psychological aspects whilst disparaging the *Shari'ah*.<sup>471</sup>) Elwell-Sutton speaks of Shah as having conducted "a well planned build up, beginning in the early 1960s with discretely worded articles"<sup>472</sup> (I refer to two of these articles below – see page 539) and states that he became "heir to a movement started some sixty years ago by Gurdjieff and Ouspensky..."<sup>473</sup>

The Gurdjieffian orthodoxy took great exception to this propagation of misinformation to the extent of making the, for them, fairly exceptional move of entering a public debate. Subsequent issues of *Encounter* (August and September 1975) contained letters disagreeing with Elwell-Sutton. These included a letter from James Moore (writing under the auspices of the Royal Asiatic Society)<sup>474</sup> and 'official letters' from the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York (Lord Pentland)<sup>475</sup> and the London Gurdjieff Society (Michael Currer-Briggs, *Hon.Sec.*)<sup>476</sup>. All of these letters were at pains to point out Elwell-Sutton's many factual errors concerning the history of their movement (relating mainly to the roles of Ouspensky and Bennett). However, their main focus was on his statement that Shah had fallen heir to Gurdjieff movement.

Elwell-Sutton's reply to his critics (*Encounter*, September 1975), while striking a decidedly condescending note, is I think correct in its 'me thinks they do protest too much' implication. Of course it is fully understandable that the mainstream movement should wish to state that it did not have any involvement with Idries Shah and to correct the public misconception caused by the publications of Shah and his associates and by Bennett's involvement, and given further currency by Elwell-Sutton. However, they go further than this. I will focus on Moore's letter which is the most comprehensive. (Moore's writings can, at this time at least,<sup>477</sup> be seen as reflecting the 'official Gurdjieffian standpoint'.) Moore expresses strong agreement with Elwell-Sutton that Shah is a 'pseudo-Sufi' who will only be attractive to the immature. (He subsequently wrote a scholarly article in which he reiterated, expanded and corrected Elwell-Sutton's contribution.<sup>478</sup>) In attempting to distance the Gurdjieffians from Shah in particular and 'pseudo-Sufism' in general he suggests that the Gurdjieff teaching has *nothing* to do with Sufism. He writes:

His [Gurdjieff's] magnum opus *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* contains 1,238 pages—how often do the words "Sufi" or "Sufism" appear? One hundred times? Five hundred times? The answer is—not once.<sup>479</sup>

He then goes on to imply that the only reason anyone might *think* that there is a connection between the Gurdjieff teaching and Sufism is Rafael Lefort's book *The Teachers of Gurdjieff* (which he suggests was motivated, or even written, by Shah<sup>480</sup>). This seems a somewhat disingenuous move: it is perfectly true that Gurdjieff does not use the words "Sufi" or "Sufism"; but he makes many references to "dervishes", stating, among other things, that "Dervishism" is the true repository of the revelation of Mohammed.<sup>481</sup> As I have shown in Chapter Four, Gurdjieff left plentiful indications in his literature of some kind of connection to Sufism; and anyone who

had studied the material would be aware of this. Hence, to gloss over the matter is itself conspicuous. It is perfectly reasonable for Moore *et. al.* to argue that their teaching has no connection to Idries Shah; but why is Moore so dismissive of the possibility of there being a ‘Sufism connection’ at all? Admittedly, and as Pentland points out in his letter,<sup>482</sup> no one actually knows where Gurdjieff’s teaching came from; so it is in order to be very cautious. But this is no reason to deny a whole body of evidence.

Turning to the teaching itself, Moore begins: “Gurdjieff’s ideas...are essentially addressed to the western mind.”<sup>483</sup> This may provide a clue as to why the Gurdjieffians might wish to put a stop to the idea that Gurdjieff’s teaching is connected to Sufism. If one of Gurdjieff’s aims is construed as to provide shocks to modern (western) habitual belief systems,<sup>484</sup> it might reasonably be felt that it is better to discourage any tendency to categorize the teaching itself (i.e., because to do so would be inherently comfortable and thereby weaken the impact). But even if this is so, such a complete denial of the ‘connection to Sufism’ evidence suggests some kind of lineal insecurity. I would suggest that they recognize the problem of the ‘historical rootlessness’ of their teaching; and that they also recognize the inherent danger to lineal continuity of taking the ‘fourth way schools’ idea seriously. They believe that they are the vessel by means of which to bear an important message into the future<sup>485</sup> and that this vessel will have a better chance of survival purely on its own terms. (Moore writes: “The esoteric stream...is weakened not strengthened by the rash admixture of tributary influences.”<sup>486</sup>) It is clear that any attempt to establish lineage in terms of known branches of Sufism would be subject to a similar type of attack to that which Elwell-Sutton makes on Shah. And to admit any specific affinity with Shah (even if it were not to invite a share of ignominy) would be, from their point of



view, disastrous because it would blur the boundaries of the vessel. As I will show in the final section of this chapter, Bennett's emphasis on the 'vertical' aspect of lineage had the effect of weakening and destabilizing his own branch of 'horizontal' (historical) lineage.

Two facts are clear: (i) that Idries Shah's authenticity as an exponent of Sufism has been challenged and (ii) that the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy do not see him as having *anything* to do with their tradition. In these lights it is now necessary to inquire as to why Bennett believed Shah's claim to have been charged with an important spiritual mission by the people who had sent Gurdjieff?

### ***Bennett's perspective on Shah***

I have argued that the immediate sense of impasse in the Gurdjieff work had receded at the levels of the 'first', and by extension the 'second', lines of work. Moreover, Bennett does not speak of Shah as someone from whom he received spiritual help (as, for instance, the Shivapuri Baba). However, with regard to the 'third line impasse' he had not succeeded in connecting himself to the higher context (and hence authority) of the Gurdjieff teaching. Subud had *wholly* disappointed him in these terms. As I have described at the end Part 2, he decided that Subud was a much more limited action than he had first thought it to be and, moreover, that it was not spiritually compatible with the Gurdjieff teaching: hence he had to acknowledge that it was not the great event concerned with the transition to a new epoch of human evolution that he had been expecting, still less could it have been the 'meta-context' of the Gurdjieff Work. The Shivapuri Baba had helped him to synthesize effort and grace and to focus his attention on final liberation; but he had not offered any perspective on fulfilling

obligations in the historical dimension. – Bennett seems to have understood this as a kind of ‘blind spot’, typical of monistic Indian spirituality.<sup>487</sup> (However, the Shivapuri Baba did speak in terms of cycles of change and of impending disaster.<sup>488</sup>) – As we know Bennett continued to see the ‘evolutionary plan’ aspect as important. Hence, this remained an unresolved factor and bestowed an antecedent openness to any promise of connection to the ‘wider fourth way context’ that he believed had informed Gurdjieff’s teaching.

Clearly, the terms in which Shah presented his credentials and purpose would have aroused Bennett’s interest; but why, specifically, should he have believed Shah’s claim to be an emissary from the “esoteric centre”? There appear to be two main aspects to this: (i) ‘external evidence’ and (ii) Bennett’s direct spiritual perceptions.

### **External evidence**

Bennett was first introduced to Shah by his friend Reginald Hoare whom he represents as a trusted peer.<sup>489</sup> – Hoare, who was never a *pupil* of Bennett, joined Ouspensky’s group in 1924,<sup>490</sup> was among the first of Ouspensky’s former pupils to go to Gurdjieff in 1948,<sup>491</sup> had been a member of the English ‘Group 1’ after Gurdjieff’s death,<sup>492</sup> had been among the first former Gurdjieffians to be initiated into Subud in 1956<sup>493</sup> and had left Subud in 1960.<sup>494</sup> The similarity with Bennett’s biography is striking. – Bennett records that Hoare showed him a newspaper cutting

describing a visit made by the author to a sanctuary in central Asia in which he had found a teaching which was unmistakably of the same origin as much that we had learned from Gurdjieff.<sup>495</sup>

He gives no reference for this article, nor does he go into any detail as to what it contained. However, it is very likely that the article in question was Omar Burke’s

‘Solo to Mecca’ which had appeared in *Blackwood’s Magazine* about six months before.<sup>496</sup> The physical character of the “monastery of the Sufis”<sup>497</sup> described in this article has resonances with Gurdjieff’s “cave temple in the Hindu Kush” (see page 302) and the dwelling place of Hadji Asvatz Troov in Upper Bukhara (see page 324). In terms of practices, the most striking similarity with Gurdjieff’s teaching is the use of the “stop exercise” (see page 81).<sup>498</sup> The reference to the teaching of a form of healing using “hypnotic procedures” similar to that of “the old mesmerists”<sup>499</sup> correlates with Gurdjieff’s work as hypnotist-healer and his understanding of hypnotism in terms of the substance “*hanbledzoin*” (the ‘blood’ of the *kesdjan* body).<sup>500</sup> The statement that the monastery had “a shifting population and was something between a retreat and a training school”<sup>501</sup> is not incompatible with the Gurdjieffian idea that those following the fourth way are active in the world. Similarly, the assertion that above the level of *murshid* the hierarchy of Sufism is invisible is suggestive of Gurdjieff’s inner circles of humanity.<sup>502</sup> Perhaps most significantly, Burke’s article states that the name of the head of the hierarchy, “the Grand Sheikh of the Sufi Way”, is “Idries Shah”.<sup>503</sup> Several similar articles, of which Bennett and his associates would presumably have been aware, appeared in journals and newspapers over the next few years.<sup>504</sup> Most notably high-profile was the anonymous article ‘Elusive Guardians of the Ancient Secrets’ which appeared in the *Times* in 1964<sup>505</sup> and referred to a community in the Hindu Kush of which the “absent head” was “*Idd-rees Shaah*”. The occupants of this community were referred to as the “People of the Inner Court” (again reminiscent of Gurdjieff’s inner circle of humanity) and their purpose was explained in terms very similar to Gurdjieff’s ideas concerning the arising and disintegration of ‘fourth way operations’.<sup>506</sup>

Returning to Omar Burke's 1961 article, the question arises: did Bennett accept this as veridical and, if so, why? He indicates that in June of 1962 he was sceptical (despite his personal perceptions of Shah – see below), but that a few months later Hoare succeeded in convincing him that he had

most thoroughly 'verified [Shah's] credentials' and was convinced that he had been sent to the West by an esoteric school in Afghanistan, probably the very one which Gurdjieff describes in the last chapter of *Meetings With Remarkable Men* [i.e., the "World Brotherhood"].<sup>507</sup>

Bennett does not go into any further detail concerning Hoare's researches, but confines himself to emphasizing his respect for his capacity for "assessing information" which he had gained through "many years in the intelligence service".<sup>508</sup> The author, or authors, of *The People of the Secret*<sup>509</sup> (first published in 1983), who indicate considerable inside knowledge of the 'Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and Subud field'<sup>510</sup> and make substantial reference to Bennett's ideas, state that Burke's article

was read by chance by a member of one of the London Gurdjieff groups...

It is perhaps possible to imagine the excitement and the behind-the-scenes activity which this discovery produced. Contact was finally made with Akhund Mirza [Burke's initial contact]...and additional information asked for....The London group were told that it would be pointless to come to Baluchistan as the current focus of activity was not in the East at all, but in England.<sup>511</sup>

Whatever the motivations behind *The People of the Secret* (which may itself be a 'Shah-School'<sup>512</sup> production),<sup>513</sup> it seems plausible that the above quotation describes the outline of Hoare's research. This suggests that Bennett did have reason to believe Shah's claim. However, and as noted at the beginning of Chapter Four, despite his theories concerning the Khwajagan-Sarmoun-Gurdjieff connection and his personal claim of connection to higher powers he stopped short of asserting that he had achieved any personal connection to a *terrestrial* esoteric centre. Although there are

several possible explanations for his unwillingness to give information about Hoare's findings, this reticence tends to support the impression that at the time of writing (c.1973) he did not want to assert that he had found such connection through Shah. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that A.G.E.Blake – one of Bennett's senior pupils – has been willing to state unequivocally that this was the significance of the interaction (see page 294).

### **Direct spiritual perception**

Even though Bennett remained sceptical for several months concerning the authenticity of Shah's 'connection to the esoteric centre' claim, he records that at their first meeting he perceived that

...he was not only an unusually gifted man, but...he had the indefinable something that marks the man who has worked seriously upon himself.<sup>514</sup>

Obviously this did not, in itself, validate Shah's claim to be an emissary from the 'source of Gurdjieff's teaching'; but presumably it would have suggested that there was truth to his claim at some level. Bennett seems to have been unsure exactly where the truth lay and held back from full commitment to Shah's mission for four years. In *Witness* he gives the impression that the motivation for his final decision to accede to Shah's request for Coombe Springs was twofold: firstly, he felt that it was better to be wrong about giving it to him than to be wrong about not giving it to him; and secondly, he realized that to let go of Coombe Springs would be liberating.<sup>515</sup> However, he represented the matter to his pupils in a considerably more enthusiastic way, stating that Shah had brought the long searched for 'higher perspective' which would enable them to synthesize the comparatively fragmentary knowledge that they

had hitherto possessed.<sup>516</sup> Moreover, it must be pointed out that in 1973 he (publicly) expressed high regard for Shah's work of 'awakening influential people'.<sup>517</sup>

The question of whether or not Shah was authentic seems critical with respect to Bennett because if his judgement concerning Shah's level of attainment were deemed to be faulty it would cast doubt upon his own stage of inner development. However, it should be recognized that the question of Shah's 'authenticity' is more complex than it might appear at first sight. Between the two extremes of 'genuine emissary from the esoteric centre' (as has been suggested by, e.g., Blake) and 'total charlatan who made it all up' (the view implied by Moore and Elwell-Sutton) there is at least one intermediate possibility.<sup>518</sup> It is *possible* that he had undertaken serious inner work (as Bennett detected) and even that he had received direction in a Sufi school, but that he was not as advanced as he represented himself to be. Moreover, as T.H.Meyer has suggested in relation to the channelling of 'messages from the Masters' by Madame Blavatsky and other members of the Theosophical Society, it is possible for a 'transmission' of genuine Higher Wisdom to be distorted by the psyche of an 'underdeveloped receiver'.<sup>519</sup> Translated into Gurdjieffian terms this would refer to someone who had achieved a degree of premature connection to the higher centres. Hence, despite having the appearance of someone who had worked on himself, Shah might actually have been on a level similar to, or lower than, Bennett.<sup>520</sup> In this light it is interesting that in the third volume of the *Dramatic Universe*, writing of the role of "Initiates" who are the highest group of his "Psychokinetic" order and who may be thought of as "Man No.5", he says

there can be societies at whose origin there is a genuine Illumination, but not a link with the Psychoteleios Group. The leaders of such societies or founders of movements based upon authentic experience of Higher Wisdom or even Higher Powers are not always the products of the training and discipline of a Specialist

School. In consequence of the lack of training they can make mistakes that would not be made by men of far smaller spiritual attainments...*An Initiate who has not yet found his place in the Psychoteleios Group may be irresolute and easily influenced by men who are far inferior to himself.*  
(My italics.)<sup>521</sup>

This quotation presents an interesting perspective with regard to Bennett himself. As I have argued in the last chapter, Bennett had achieved the status of Man No.5, or in his own terminology “Initiate”. He had started with Gurdjieff, but he had subsequently worked on his own for many years and, although he had achieved degrees of “genuine Illumination” and connection to “Higher Wisdom” he *did not have connection to the Psychoteleios group*. Hence, the warning that he gives concerning falling under the influence of inferior people might be seen as an awareness of his own vulnerability.

### **Hasan Shushud**

In 1968 a further Sufic influence entered Bennett’s life in the person of the Turkish exponent of *Itlak Yolu* (way of Absolute Liberation)<sup>522</sup> Hasan Lutfi Shushud.<sup>523</sup> – 1968, it should be noted, was the year after his seventieth birthday at which time, his inner voice of 1921 had informed him, he would know his “true destiny” (see page 72). – In order to assess Shushud’s significance it will be useful first to compare and contrast his influence on Bennett with that of Idries Shah.

As I have described in the last section, Bennett does not speak of Idries Shah as his spiritual teacher, or as a source of knowledge concerning spiritual methods, but almost solely in ‘third line of work’ terms. The case of Hasan Shushud is somewhat different. As I have indicated in Chapter Four, Shushud must be seen as having

considerable ‘third line’ significance because of his connection with the “Khwajagan” and hence to the Naq’shbandi-Khwajagan-Sarmoun Brotherhood matrix to which Bennett understood Gurdjieff’s mission as having been connected. To this extent he can be seen as having had a similar significance to Shah.<sup>524</sup> And like Shah, Shushud did not come as Bennett’s ‘spiritual master’; but *unlike* Shah he was not, in any obviously personal way at least, seeking assistance for a mission of his own. Rather, as I have described in Chapter Two, the emphasis was on awakening Bennett to *his own* mission and responsibility as a spiritual teacher capable of conducting the will of the Higher Powers. In Bennett’s own terms Shushud’s exalted claims about him (e.g., that he “was the first European since Meister Eckhart who had grasped the secret of Absolute Liberation”<sup>525</sup>) must be seen as implying that he was making the transition from the psychokinetic order to the realized state of a psychoteleios being; and, as I will discuss further below, what is implied in Gurdjieff’s terminology is a transition towards the status of “Man Number 6”. In terms of spiritual authority this must be understood as meaning that he was becoming directly connected to the “inner circle of humanity” or the “esoteric centre” (to use Gurdjieff’s term). To be more specific, the implication of Bennett’s contacts with Hasan Shushud is that he had achieved direct connection to an esoteric tradition of which the Khwajagan Sufis (with whom he felt a special affinity<sup>526</sup>) were an historical manifestation and of which he believed Gurdjieff to have been a contemporary manifestation. However, even though Hasan Shushud did not represent himself as Bennett’s spiritual teacher, he did bring knowledge of methods of transformation to help him make the predicted transition (see below). In these lights he *appears* to have been much more significant to Bennett’s development than Idries Shah had been in so far that his influence spanned all three lines of work: ‘first line’ because it assisted Bennett’s own inner work;



‘second line’ because it related to his emergence as an independent fourth way teacher;<sup>527</sup> and ‘third line’ because it helped to connect him to the Great Work context. To the extent that he focused Bennett’s attention on “Absolute Liberation”<sup>528</sup> his influence has more affinity with that of the Shivapuri Baba (but, as has been noted, the Shivapuri Baba showed little interest in ‘third line’ matters).

Bennett records that in 1968 Hasan Shushud:

...taught me and others the *ziker-i-daim* or perpetual prayer of the heart, which has no words and spans all religions. Since then five years have passed and I have derived immense benefit from this exercise. It includes a method of breath control...[that] transfers the action of the *ziker* from the physical body to the Kesdjan or Astral body which becomes perceptibly stronger and more effectual.<sup>529</sup>

And, as I have quoted in a different investigative context in Chapter Three,<sup>530</sup> he also says that

...in the course of talks with Hasan Shushud and even more as a result of practicing the *ziker*, I began to see that the ‘Higher Powers’ cannot work except through man. They can do nothing without human instruments. Synergy is not cooperation with the Demiurgic Essence, but becoming oneself a demiurgic intelligence. I should have seen this long before, because as far back as 1960, I had, in *Dramatic Universe Vol.II*, equated the Demiurgic Essence with the ‘higher nature’ of man. Until I began to experience for myself the reality of what I had accepted in theory, I could not understand how the ‘inner circle’ works. I was still unconvinced that this ‘working’ could take place in me.<sup>531</sup>

I will now seek to contextualize these statements in terms of the stage of development which I have argued that Bennett reached after leaving Subud and in association with the Shivapuri Baba. The second quotation can be interpreted as equating the ‘higher powers’ with the higher centres to the extent that they are a higher intelligence that is already present but which requires realization through inner evolution.<sup>532</sup> As I have shown in Chapter Five, the inner evolution through which the intelligence of the higher centres is contacted is, in Gurdjieff’s teaching, presented in terms of the

development of higher bodies. The latter can be understood as bridges to, or conductors of, the former. The first quotation refers to the strengthening and making effectual of the *Kesdjan* body. Thus, putting the two statements together clearly suggests that the *ziker* practice made Bennett more able to ‘conduct’ the intelligence of the ‘higher powers’ (or higher centres) *and thereby to become, himself, directly connected to the ‘inner circle’ or psychoteleios order.* It will be noticed that this represents a very definite advance on the situation which I have, at the end of the last section, suggested pertained during the early to mid-1960s and in relation to his contact with Idries Shah. How, then, does this fit in with the view that Bennett reached the status of ‘Man No.5’ after his contact with the Shivapuri Baba? In order to answer this question it will be necessary to refer to the higher centres-higher bodies complementarity in more detail and to draw on the relationship between these ideas and the inner circles of humanity.

In Chapter Five I established the following basic correlations:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Higher Centres</b>	<b>Higher Bodies</b>	<b>Circles of Humanity</b>
‘Man No. 5’	Constant access to HEC; but only sporadic access to HTC.	<i>Kesdjan</i> body developed; ‘Higher Being body’ being formed.	Exoteric Circle of Humanity: “cosmic knowledge is [still] of a...philosophical character.” <sup>533</sup>
‘Man No. 6’	Constant access to <i>both</i> of the higher centres.	<i>Kesdjan</i> body and ‘Higher Being body’ both developed.	Mesoteric Circle of Humanity: knowledge of higher purposes (cosmic knowledge) is direct.

These correlations indicate that in order for Bennett to have had, as he claims, an increasingly direct and consistent connection to ‘Great Work purposes’ he must have been at least on the way to having a ‘Higher Being body’ such that he could conduct

the intelligence of the HTC. (It will be recalled that the HEC is more concerned with guidance at an individual level.) In fact his record of a ‘near death experience’ from 1969 (the year after he started the *zikr* practice) serves to indicate that he had attained, if not a fully formed ‘Higher Being body’, at least a degree of freedom at that level. In order to contextualize this event it will be useful to consider it along side an experience seventeen years before. In both cases Bennett experienced being outside his body during an illness. Of the earlier experience he writes:

This taught me something of what [Gurdjieff] meant by the need to build a different body for the “Real Unchangeable I.” While I was out of the body I had no “I,” only an awareness that was blissful and peaceful—but in which there was no power of action.<sup>534</sup>

This precisely describes the blissful but impotent character of the after-death fate of the person who only has a *kesdjan* body (or, in the Shivapuri Baba’s terms “Soul-Realization”). By contrast he says of the 1969 experience:

...I was fully and directly aware that “I”...would remain free...  
...I was filled with joy and confidence, for I knew for certain and forever that I could lose not only my ‘body,’ but also, my ‘mind,’ and still remain ‘myself.’<sup>535</sup>

In terms of Gurdjieffian spiritual psychology the clear implication is that at the time of the second experience he had developed, or at least partially developed, a “Higher Being body.” To summarize, it can be seen that Bennett’s claims concerning the final period of his life exemplify three related aspects suggesting that he was then closer to the status of “Man No.6” than to that of “Man No.5”. First, his claimed capacity to be directly connected to the ‘Great Work purposes’ (the will of the Higher Powers) points to his being of the “mesoteric” inner circle of humanity. Second, his emphasis on the idea of the Higher Powers as a higher part of the human being strongly suggests the idea of realizing the intelligence of the HTC. And third, the evidence

that he had, or was on the way to having, a “Higher Being body” is itself indicative of a transition towards “Man No.6” and, in terms of the developmental model, gives support to the claimed capacity to know higher purposes.

I have suggested previously that Bennett may have reached his goal of ‘full and final crystallization’ (“Man No.5”) after his contact with the Shivapuri Baba. However, consideration of his interaction with Idries Shah – in the light of his own comments concerning the possibility that the level of “Initiate” can be attained without establishing direct contact with the psychoteleios order – has suggested that he himself may have lacked the ‘connection to the inner circles’ aspect. If this was the case there is no doubt that the situation was, in his own terms, remedied at the time of his association with Hasan Shushud. However, it does not seem to be the case that this association merely added the ‘esoteric connection’ dimension to the “Man No.5” situation. Rather, his account indicates a radical change of level such that he attained something of the direct perception associated with the “mesoteric order”. And that this could be the case itself serves to support the view that the “Man No.5” level had been attained at an earlier time.

### **Gary Chicoine**

Almost three years after Bennett’s death<sup>536</sup> his former pupils experienced an encounter which can be seen as to some extent reminiscent of that with Idries Shah. In August of 1977 the Institute received a letter from the U.S.A., addressed to “Gurdjieff-Bennett Workers” from an individual calling himself Rishi Dada Narayana (Gary Chicoine<sup>537</sup>) which began:

I am the Real Man, the Gurdjieff, the Shivapuri Baba, that you all wish would show up and straighten things out, or which you are pretending to somehow be.<sup>538</sup>

He gave his credentials as

...a teacher of the Naqshabandi Sufis, a line of Hindu Rishis, and the Tibetan Kargyupta Sect, which are all one in a certain location in the Trans-Himalayas, or near there.<sup>539</sup>

(He subsequently referred to himself, among many other titles, as “Chief Sarmauni”.<sup>540</sup>) The letter speaks in unequivocally ‘vertical’ fourth way terms stating that

The entire Gurdjieff Path as a way in itself is truly defunct. The valid elements must be brought into a new valid context such as I can provide...<sup>541</sup>

Chicoine’s promise of a rescue mission is reminiscent of Shah’s message only far more direct. With regard to the status and possibilities inherent in Bennett’s legacy, he later said that

There is possible...a vertical transmission in which the original teaching and its vehicle is injected from the unseen potentials with higher potential and greater ableness to be.<sup>542</sup>

And, presumably alluding to himself,

The Messenger has come and connection with the domain of the Psychoteleios Order in the form of that Messenger is operative.<sup>543</sup>

Some senior members of the Institute and former pupils of Bennett were strongly attracted to Chicoine and appear, after interactions with him to have accepted his claims.<sup>544</sup> Others, most notably Elizabeth Bennett, met him but were not convinced by his claim that he should be given control of the Institute.<sup>545</sup> There no space to describe in any detail Chicoine’s interactions with the Institute or the internal politics that these engendered. It is sufficient to say that the ‘Chicoine faction’ eventually

came into the ascendancy,<sup>546</sup> taking the name of the Institute and Coombe Springs Press, and leaving the ‘anti-Chicoine’ faction as a ‘rump organization’.<sup>547</sup>

While there is a strong similarity between the encounters with Idries Shah and Gary Chicoine – to the extent that they were both, so to speak, ‘fourth way take-overs’ – there is also an obvious and crucial difference in that Bennett was alive in the former situation. As I have suggested above, it may be the case that, at the time of his encounter with Shah, Bennett had not – in his own terms – found his own position in relation to the “Psychoteleios”; (and it was an integral part of Chicoine’s position that he *never really did succeed in establishing such connection*<sup>548</sup>). However, he undoubtedly had his own sense of direction and inner guidance (even if it was erratic) and maintained his own momentum whilst helping Shah.

There is also an extent to which the situation after Bennett’s death can be seen as a recapitulation of that after Gurdjieff’s death. In the 1950s Bennett had taken the esoteric continuity dimensions seriously and, as a result, had ended up breaking from the orthodoxy. The group of Bennett’s own former pupils who opted to follow Chicoine can be seen as having been doing something equivalent. However, even if it is held that Bennett did, at the end of his life, achieve his own direct connection, its late accomplishment suggests that his legacy in terms of transmission through pupils would have been more tenuous than Gurdjieff’s had been. Hence, his own pupils would have lacked the kind of structure and reference points from which to explore other teachings that he had benefited from in his own search. To express the idea somewhat differently, it seems that Bennett’s own grasp in terms of “deep continuity” – integrating the ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ aspects – was eventually sufficient for his own spiritual needs but that he failed to establish this at the level of transmission. For

these reasons Bennett's pupils would have been susceptible to Chicoine's apparently erratic demands<sup>549</sup> and teaching which had very little continuity with the Gurdjieff-Bennett work.<sup>550</sup> The overall effect of the Chicoine intervention seems to have been to fragment and – from an external perspective at least – to dissipate Bennett's legacy.<sup>551</sup> However, this is not necessarily to conclude that the creative impetus of his work has been lost, but only that its exterior form has largely disappeared – a perspective which, it is to be noted, is in accord with 'fourth way principles'.

## Notes and References to Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup>*Witness*, p.30.

<sup>2</sup>*Witness*, p.32.

<sup>3</sup>*Witness*, p.30.

<sup>4</sup>*Witness*, pp.3-4.

<sup>5</sup>*Witness*, p.16.

<sup>6</sup>*Witness*, p.35.

<sup>7</sup>*Witness*, p.34.

<sup>8</sup>*Witness*, p.34.

<sup>9</sup>*Witness*, p.36.

<sup>10</sup>*Witness*, p.41.

<sup>11</sup>*Witness*, pp.54-5.

<sup>12</sup>*Witness*, pp.48-9.

<sup>13</sup>*Witness*, p.48.

<sup>14</sup>*Witness*, pp.46-7.

<sup>15</sup>*Witness*, p.55.

<sup>16</sup>*Witness*, p.56.

<sup>17</sup>*Witness*, pp.56-7.

<sup>18</sup>*Witness*, pp.57-8.

<sup>19</sup>*Witness*, p.56 and p.58.

<sup>20</sup>Bennett, *The Crisis in Human Affairs*, p.x.

<sup>21</sup>Gurdjieff said,

I take it that everyone who comes [to me] has realized the necessity of doing something, that he has already tried by himself, and that his attempts have led him to the conclusion that in the conditions of ordinary life it is impossible to achieve anything.

(*Views From The Real World*, p.107. – From: Prieuré, August 21, 1923.)

<sup>22</sup>*Witness*, p.95. Bennett had used his influence to help Ouspensky get his entry visa to Britain (*Witness*, p.61).

<sup>23</sup>Bennett was already embroiled in the Heirs of Abdul Hamid affair and fitted in a visit to the Prieuré between commitments in Paris and Lausanne. His commitments prevented him from accepting Gurdjieff's invitation to stay a further week and participate in the opening of the Study House. (*Witness*, p.103) It is also to be noted that Bennett had at this



time been working in Ouspensky's London group for about eight months. (*Witness*, pp.95-7); the second, and more significant, was in August. From arrival to departure this latter visit spanned thirty three days *Witness*, p.105.

<sup>24</sup>See *Witness*, p.105 and p.122.

<sup>25</sup>*Witness*, p.120

<sup>26</sup>Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.28.

<sup>27</sup>Interview with James Moore, June 1993.

<sup>28</sup>Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.43.

<sup>29</sup>Moore, *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, p.355.

<sup>30</sup>See *Witness*, esp. pp.139-46.

<sup>31</sup>*Witness*, p.145.

<sup>32</sup>Mainly, F.O. 371, pieces 12919 and 12920 (Public Records Office, Kew).

<sup>33</sup>Moore, *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, p.176.

<sup>34</sup>See *Witness*, p.113.

<sup>35</sup>See Gurdjieff, *Views From the Real World*, p.107.

<sup>36</sup>Moore, *ibid.*, p.193.

<sup>37</sup>*Witness*, p.120.

<sup>38</sup>*Witness*, pp.121-2.

<sup>39</sup>See the section “Substance of Work”.

<sup>40</sup>*Witness*, pp.107-9.

<sup>41</sup>*Witness*, p.110.

<sup>42</sup>*Witness*, pp.112-3.

<sup>43</sup>*Witness*, p.113.

<sup>44</sup>*Witness*, p.108.

<sup>45</sup>*Witness*, p.110.

<sup>46</sup>*Witness*, p.114.

<sup>47</sup>*Witness*, p.114.

<sup>48</sup>*Witness*, p.115.

<sup>49</sup>*Witness*, p.116.

<sup>50</sup>*Witness*, p.117-8.

<sup>51</sup>*Witness*, p.116

<sup>52</sup>*Witness*, p.58.

<sup>53</sup>This certainly seems to have been Bennett's own emerging view. – See *The Crisis in Human Affairs*, p.175 (from lectures, 1946).

<sup>54</sup>*Witness*, p.116.

<sup>55</sup>However, it should not be overlooked that his own state of effort, suffering and exhaustion seems to have constituted some kind of prerequisite for this to be possible. The teaching offers two models that may apply here. Firstly, the idea that connection to the “large accumulator” can sometimes occur in a state of exhaustion. (*ISOM*, pp.233-4.) It is possible that Gurdjieff could ‘feed’ energy to Bennett when he had ‘switched’ to his own “large accumulator.” Secondly, it might be that Bennett's ‘fakiristic’ efforts eventually resulted in some kind of temporary crystallization capable of containing the influx of higher energy. (Of course, it could be that the ‘effort factor’ is only relevant in so far as that it served as evidence of worthiness to receive such special attention.)

<sup>56</sup>See, e.g., Bennett, *Is There Life On Earth*, p.93.

<sup>57</sup>His first response to his changed state was to prove his power by digging “in the fierce afternoon heat for more than an hour at a rate that I ordinarily could not sustain for more than two minutes.” (*Witness*, p.115.) He also says that he “experienced a clarity of thought which [he] had only known involuntarily and at rare moments, but which now was at [his] command.” (*Witness*, p.115.) Similarly, he found himself able to experience different emotions at will. (*Witness*, p.117.) With regard to the coordination of the three faculties, he found, that evening, that he was able to effortlessly perform a horrendously complex movements exercise by using one of his three centres to control a particular aspect. He writes: “Because I was able to separate these different powers in myself, I could follow the whole pattern without effort.” (*Witness*, p.118.)

<sup>58</sup>*Witness*, p.115.

<sup>59</sup>In relation to this, the question arises: what of his ‘near death’ OBE of 1918; did not this imply that he *already* had a *kesdjan* body? Gurdjieff's spiritual psychology states that, prior to the *crystallization* of the *kesdjan* body, something of the same substance but of an inchoate and impermanent nature exists. At (or near) death this separates from the physical body, but in its undeveloped form it lacks the coherence and strength to sustain consciousness for more than a short time. (It must also be pointed out that true immortality requires the *third* body – i.e., the “higher being body” or “body of the ‘I’”)

<sup>60</sup>However, effort on the part of the pupil also seems to be a prerequisite. It is possible that Bennett's “super-efforts” brought about a degree of temporary “crystallization” such that he could ‘hold the charge’ the Gurdjieff gave him.

<sup>61</sup>*Witness*, p.117.

<sup>62</sup>*Witness*, p.118.

<sup>63</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: a Very Great Enigma*, p.85.

<sup>64</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.46

<sup>65</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.96.

<sup>66</sup>This is the viewpoint that James Moore has suggested to me, saying that many serious Gurdjieffians have had an experience of breaking through to large reserves of energy after being pushed to the limit by their group leader, but that they would not make so much of it. In general, Moore criticizes Bennett because he “puts everything

in italics”. (Interview, June 1993.) However, while I do not doubt that many Gurdjieffians have reached *an* experience of connecting to the “large accumulator” (see *ISOM*, pp.233-4), I am not convinced that this is the same experience as Bennett describes. Moore’s argument seems to run: Bennett exaggerates (premise); therefore if what he says is outside your experience assume he is exaggerating.

<sup>67</sup>However, it should be pointed out that C.S.Nott records an experience of tapping into a ‘well spring of energy’ that he eventually achieved on his own account after four years of work under Gurdjieff’s direction. (See, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.221.) To my knowledge, there is only one other publicly recorded instance of Gurdjieff ‘transmitting energy’ which in any way compares with Bennett’s account; and in this case the context was healing rather than ‘initiation’. When Fritz Peters visited Gurdjieff in 1945 he arrived in a chronically debilitated state. Peters says that Gurdjieff *also looked very weary*. He writes:

...it was as if a violent, electric blue light emanated from him and entered me. As this happened, I could feel the tiredness drain out of me, but at the same moment his body slumped and his face turned grey as if it was being drained of life.  
...I was convinced then—and am now—that he knew how to transmit energy from himself to others. I was also convinced *that it could only be done at great cost to himself*.  
(My italics. Fritz Peters, *Gurdjieff*, p.252.)

<sup>68</sup>“If you wish to acquire anything of your own, you must learn to steal. What I have to give cannot be paid for: it is priceless. Therefore, if you need it, you must steal it.” (*Witness*, p.121) Cf. *ISOM*, p.50.

<sup>69</sup>*Witness*, p.121.

<sup>70</sup>*Witness*, p.122.

<sup>71</sup>*Witness*, p.120 and p.121.

<sup>72</sup>Gurdjieff had spoken to Bennett of an intention to build an observatory in order to make observations of the planets (*Witness*, p.119). I would argue that this was an allegory for the study of human typology – much as Beelzebub’s observatory on Mars was used for studying the activities of human beings on Earth (see, e.g., *Beelzebub*, I, pp.90-1); Gurdjieff’s intention was not astronomical and only ‘astrological’ in so far as astrology is a system of human typology. Bennett seems to have taken him literally.

<sup>73</sup>*Witness*, pp.120-1.

<sup>74</sup>Setting aside the repercussions of the Ouspensky-Gurdjieff schism (see next section), Gurdjieff’s change of emphasis following his accident (8 July 1924) – from teaching to writing – greatly reduced the chances of a new pupil being accepted.

<sup>75</sup>*Witness*, p.138 and p.40.

<sup>76</sup>Ouspensky worked with Gurdjieff again when they met in Constantinople in 1921.

<sup>77</sup>*ISOM*, p.374.

<sup>78</sup>*ISOM*, p.372.

- <sup>79</sup>*ISOM*, p.376.
- <sup>80</sup>*ISOM*, p.374,
- <sup>81</sup>See *ISOM*, p.15. Gurdjieff said "...there are only *special* schools; there are no general schools. Every teacher, or *guru*, is a specialist in some one thing."
- <sup>82</sup>Ouspensky, *A Further Record*, p.125.
- <sup>83</sup>*ISOM*, p.49.
- <sup>84</sup>See *ISOM* 'Chapter 17', esp. p.338.
- <sup>85</sup>*ISOM*, p.260.
- <sup>86</sup>*ISOM*, p.262.
- <sup>87</sup>*ISOM*, p.263.
- <sup>88</sup>*ISOM*, p.368.
- <sup>89</sup>*Witness*, p.126.
- <sup>90</sup>See: James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.389; Robert S. deRopp, *The Warrior's Way*, p.191; and *Witness*, p.232.
- <sup>91</sup>*ISOM*, p.389.
- <sup>92</sup>See: Ouspensky, *A Further Record*, p.126; and *ISOM*, p.376.
- <sup>93</sup>Ouspensky quoted in C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.98.
- <sup>94</sup>E.g, Dr L. Stjoernvaal quoted in C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.38.
- <sup>95</sup>E.g., Professor Denis Saurat quoted in C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.47.
- <sup>96</sup>C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.38.
- <sup>97</sup>C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.104, p.107 and p.108.
- <sup>98</sup>C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.90.
- <sup>99</sup>C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.47.
- <sup>100</sup>C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, pp.98-9.
- <sup>101</sup>Nott points out a similarity between Gurdjieff's effort to re-establish Ouspensky's work on more wholesome lines and a similar 'shock' that he administered to A.R.Orage's American group in 1931. (C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, p.16. See also Gurdjieff, *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, pp.67-72, pp.91-101 and pp.117-27.)
- <sup>102</sup>C.S.Nott, *ibid.*, pp.99.
- <sup>103</sup>*ISOM*, p.374.
- <sup>104</sup>Ouspensky, *A Further Record*, p.85.
- <sup>105</sup>Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, pp.96-7.
- <sup>106</sup>Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, pp.96-7.
- <sup>107</sup>C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.105.

- <sup>108</sup>Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, pp.96-7.
- <sup>109</sup>*Witness*, p.154.
- <sup>110</sup>James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.390.
- <sup>111</sup>Webb, *ibid.*, p.390 and 394; *Witness*, p.158.
- <sup>112</sup>*Witness*, p.173.
- <sup>113</sup>Compare *Witness*, p.53 and pp.55-8.
- <sup>114</sup>*Witness*, p.60.
- <sup>115</sup>*Witness*, p.126.
- <sup>116</sup>Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.334-5.
- <sup>117</sup>*Witness*, p.55, p.120 and p.123.
- <sup>118</sup>*Witness*, p.123.
- <sup>119</sup>*Witness*, pp.149-50.
- <sup>120</sup>In his *Third Series* (pp.87-8) Gurdjieff speaks of the different distortions and imbalances which his teaching has taken on, in different places, when it had been divorced from his own direct guidance. With regard to the work in England he speaks of an obsession with self remembering.
- <sup>121</sup>*Witness*, p.159.
- <sup>122</sup>*Witness*, p.173.
- <sup>123</sup>*Witness*, p.173.
- <sup>124</sup>*Witness*, p.160.
- <sup>125</sup>*Witness*, p.129.
- <sup>126</sup>*Witness*, p.162.
- <sup>127</sup>*Witness*, p.187.
- <sup>128</sup>*Witness*, pp.198-9.
- <sup>129</sup>*Witness*, p.152.
- <sup>130</sup>*Witness*, p.153.
- <sup>131</sup>*Witness*, p.153.
- <sup>132</sup>*Witness*, p.159.
- <sup>133</sup>*Witness*, p.163.
- <sup>134</sup>*Witness*, p.163
- <sup>135</sup>*Witness*, p.164.
- <sup>136</sup>*Witness*, p.179.
- <sup>137</sup>*Witness*, p.164.
- <sup>138</sup>*Witness*, p.189.

<sup>139</sup>*Witness*, p.181.

<sup>140</sup>*Witness*, p.186.

<sup>141</sup>*Witness*, p.185.

<sup>142</sup>*Witness*, p.195.

<sup>143</sup>*Witness*, pp.199-200, p.201 and p.206

<sup>144</sup>*Witness*, p.207.

<sup>145</sup>*Witness*, p.190

<sup>146</sup>*Witness*, p.196.

<sup>147</sup>*Witness*, p.206.

<sup>148</sup>*Witness*, p.207.

<sup>149</sup>*Witness*, p.209.

<sup>150</sup>*Witness*, p.211-2.

<sup>151</sup>*Witness*, p.216-7.

<sup>152</sup>*Witness*, p.215.

<sup>153</sup>*Witness*, p.220.

<sup>154</sup>These high motivations may well have been mixed with a need to restore his self esteem and generally ‘make something of his life’ after the ‘forged deeds’ debacle (see *Witness*, p.146ff).

<sup>155</sup>*Witness*, p.151.

<sup>156</sup>*Witness*, p.151.

<sup>157</sup>*Witness*, p.151.

<sup>158</sup>*Witness*, p.151.

<sup>159</sup>*Witness*, p.177.

<sup>160</sup>*Witness*, p.177.

<sup>161</sup>*Witness*, p.209.

<sup>162</sup>He had not at that time ventured to predict the nature of the new master idea which he subsequently termed “synergic”.

<sup>163</sup>Bennett, *The Crisis in Human Affairs*, pp.113-27.

<sup>164</sup>Bennett, *The Crisis in Human Affairs*, pp.28-9.

<sup>165</sup>Bennett, *The Crisis in Human Affairs*, p.201.

<sup>166</sup>*Witness*, p.220; see also Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, p.137.

<sup>167</sup>*Witness*, pp.223-4.

<sup>168</sup>*Witness*, p.217.

<sup>169</sup>Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, pp.136-7.

- <sup>170</sup>Ouspensky, it seems, was denied any major inner experience in confirmation of his idea (see *Witness*, p.176).
- <sup>171</sup>*Witness*, p.207 and p.217.
- <sup>172</sup>*Witness*, p.211.
- <sup>173</sup>*ISOM*, p.49.
- <sup>174</sup>Gurdjieff said : “On the way of the faquir a man has no teacher in the true sense of the word. The teacher in this case does not teach but simply serves as an example. The pupil’s work consists in imitating the teacher.” (*ISOM*, p.46.)
- <sup>175</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.79-80.
- <sup>176</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.80 and cf. p.49.
- <sup>177</sup>*Witness*, p.252.
- <sup>178</sup>Interview with James Moore, June 1993.
- <sup>179</sup>Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, p.136.
- <sup>180</sup>C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.241.
- <sup>181</sup>Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, p.142.
- <sup>182</sup>*Witness*, p.239.
- <sup>183</sup>*Witness*, p.243.
- <sup>184</sup>Gurdjieff, *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am”*, pp.57-72.
- <sup>185</sup>*Witness*, p.244.
- <sup>186</sup>*Witness*, p.245.
- <sup>187</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.19.
- <sup>188</sup>Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.27 and p.29.
- <sup>189</sup>*Witness*, p.264; Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.50.
- <sup>190</sup>*Witness*, p.261.
- <sup>191</sup>*Witness*, pp.244-5.
- <sup>192</sup>*Witness*, p.244; Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.36.
- <sup>193</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, pp.112-3.
- <sup>194</sup>*ISOM*, p.32.
- <sup>195</sup>*Witness*, p.239.
- <sup>196</sup>*Witness*, p.255.
- <sup>197</sup>See *ISOM*, p.50 where Gurdjieff says that the person on the fourth way “...simply prepares and swallows a little pill which contains all the substances he wants...”
- <sup>198</sup>*Witness*, p.255.
- <sup>199</sup>*Witness*, p.255.

<sup>200</sup>Witness, pp.255-6.

<sup>201</sup>Witness, p.261.

<sup>202</sup>Witness, p.262.

<sup>203</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.83.

<sup>204</sup>Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, pp.44-5.

<sup>205</sup>Witness, p.273.

<sup>206</sup>Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.51.

<sup>207</sup>Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.45.

<sup>208</sup>Witness, p.256.

<sup>209</sup>Witness, p.256.

<sup>210</sup>Witness, p.255.

<sup>211</sup>Bennett records one exception to this:

I had made the mistake of showing to those of my pupils who could not go to Paris some of the simpler exercises that we had learned. When I told Gurdjieff this, he said: "This is very bad. You make it difficult for me to work with them." So when I returned I had to disentangle the skein I had ravelled.  
(*Witness*, p.267)

<sup>212</sup>Witness, pp.267-8.

<sup>213</sup>Witness, p.260.

<sup>214</sup>Elizabeth Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.71.

<sup>215</sup>Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.43.

<sup>216</sup>Witness, p.257.

<sup>217</sup>Witness, p.257.

<sup>218</sup>Witness, p.259.

<sup>219</sup>Witness, p.269. These lectures were subsequently published as *Is There "Life" On Earth*.

<sup>220</sup>Witness, p.254.

<sup>221</sup>Witness, p.262.

<sup>222</sup>Witness, p.262.

<sup>223</sup>Bennett, *Idiots In Paris*, p.46. See also *Witness*, p.262.

<sup>224</sup>Witness, p.262.

<sup>225</sup>See, e.g., James Moore, *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, pp.206-57.

<sup>226</sup>Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.11.

<sup>227</sup>Gurdjieff, quoted in, *Witness*, p.253.



<sup>228</sup>Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.56-7.

<sup>229</sup>Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, pp.57-61.

<sup>230</sup>Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.76.

<sup>231</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: making a new world*, p.214. See also Jeanne de Salzmann, 'Foreword' to *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.xi.

<sup>232</sup>*Witness*, p.270.

<sup>233</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.III, p.428.

<sup>234</sup>Jeanne de Salzmann, 'Foreword' to *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.xiii.

However, when *Meetings With Remarkable Men* was published in 1963 the orthodoxy gave the following explanation:

The influence [Gurdjieff] exerted – and still exerts – cannot, however, be separated from Gurdjieff the man. So it is legitimate to want to know about his life, at least in its main outlines.

For this reason his pupils have felt it right to publish this book, originally intended to be read aloud to a limited circle of pupils and guests.

(In 'Translator's Note' to English edition from the original French edition.)

<sup>235</sup>Jeanne de Salzmann, 'Foreword' to *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.xiii and p.xiv.

It is clear from her foreword that *she did not wish it to be published*, but that she had been forced into it by the Gurdjieff family (see 'Prefatory Note' by Valentin Anastasieff, Gurdjieff's nephew, in *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.ix.) with the help of J.G.Bennett (see *Witness*, p.379).

<sup>236</sup>However, it is to be noted that he remained unequivocal on the point that that people "...should never read anything written by me before [being] already well acquainted with the earlier works." – And it is to be noted in passing that far more people have read his (more accessible) *Meetings With Remarkable Men* than have read *Beelzebub*. Hence, the publication of *Meetings With Remarkable Men* inevitably meant that Gurdjieff's injunction – which presumably relates to issues of inner preparation and calculate literary impact – was bound to be violated.

<sup>237</sup>*Witness*, p.271.

<sup>238</sup>Gurdjieff quoted by Jeanne de Salzmann in her 'Foreword' to *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.xiv.

<sup>239</sup>In *Views From the Real World: early talks of Gurdjieff*, p.vii.

<sup>240</sup>Jeanne de Salzmann, 'Foreword' to *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.xii.

<sup>241</sup>*Witness*, p.274.

<sup>242</sup>See Chapter One.

<sup>243</sup>*Witness*, p.245.

<sup>244</sup>*Witness*, pp.274-5.

- <sup>245</sup>*Witness*, p.274.
- <sup>246</sup>Gurdjieff, *Herald of Coming Good*, p.12.
- <sup>247</sup>de Salzmann 'Foreword' in Gurdjieff, *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.xiv.
- <sup>248</sup>*Witness*, p.274.
- <sup>249</sup>*Witness*, p.274.
- <sup>250</sup>Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, p.163.
- <sup>251</sup>See Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, p.163; and James Moore, 'Moveable Feasts: the Gurdjieff Work' in *Religion Today*, Vol.9, No.2, March 1994, pp.12-13.
- <sup>252</sup>I am grateful to James Moore who kindly supplied the information which follows concerning Madame Lannes's three groups. (Postal communication, June 1993.)
- <sup>253</sup>The other members of "Group 1" were: Basil Tilley, George Adie, Cynthia Pearce and Alfred Etieron (a French movements teacher).
- <sup>254</sup>*Witness*, p.274.
- <sup>255</sup>*Witness*, p.275.
- <sup>256</sup>"I could not but marvel at [Madame de Salzmann's] optimism." (*Witness*, 274.)  
 "Everywhere I went, I found discord: groups were such only in name." (*Witness*, p.275.)
- <sup>257</sup>*Witness*, p.275.
- <sup>258</sup>*Witness*, p.175.
- <sup>259</sup>*Witness*, pp.175-6.
- <sup>260</sup>*Witness*, p.276.
- <sup>261</sup>The closest that he comes to speaking of his own 'peer' group is one, rather unclear, reference to "the group with which I was then working". (*Witness*, p.285 – I cite this quotation in context below.)
- <sup>262</sup>See *ISOM*, p223 where secrecy is given as a fundamental rule of group work.
- <sup>263</sup>There is evidence that the position of Madame Lannes was known among Bennett's pupils of the early 1950s – see, Anthony Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.137.
- <sup>264</sup>*Witness*, pp.284-5.
- <sup>265</sup>See the heading 'Gurdjieff's three lines of work' in Chapter Five.
- <sup>266</sup>See *Beelzebub*, Vol.I, p.386.
- <sup>267</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.116.
- <sup>268</sup>In this and subsequent cases reference to 'lines of work' refers to Gurdjieff's three lines of work as set out on page 349.
- <sup>269</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries* (2 Vols)
- <sup>270</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.143.

<sup>271</sup>Anthony Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.153.

<sup>272</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.163.

<sup>273</sup>I.e., “the first liberation” of the two rivers allegory.

<sup>274</sup>*Witness*, p.275.

<sup>275</sup>It should be noted in passing that there is no evidence that Bennett himself intended to publish *Transformation* (written some time in the mid-1960s) the manuscript of which was discovered after his death.

<sup>276</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.11,

<sup>277</sup>This is the closest that Bennett comes to a reference to his participation in “Group 1” under the leadership of Madame Lannes,

<sup>278</sup>*Witness*, p.285.

<sup>279</sup>*Witness*, p.275.

<sup>280</sup>Bennett’s own evidence and that of Bright-Paul (see note 271) can be taken as indicating that Bennett could help people as far as the level of “temporary steward” (to use Gurdjieff’s “household” analogy – see Chapter Five and *ISOM*, pp.60-1); i.e., to the stage at which the aims of the Work are the dominant factor in a person’s life.

<sup>281</sup>This does not include those of his pupils who had had their own individual contact with Gurdjieff. In terms of Bennett’s impasse perspective such people would probably have been stuck at a level somewhat below his own. (And, by virtue of their being his pupils, this could have been the case even if Bennett was mistaken in his conclusion that impasse was inevitable.)

<sup>282</sup>I.e., “Group 1” with the most senior English Gurdjieffians and under the authority of Madame de Salzmänn through Madame Lannes.

<sup>283</sup>A pupil of Bennett, who had entered the Work in 1950, retrospectively corroborates Bennett’s depiction of the state of impasse that had been reached by 1953:

The experiments we had done had given us ‘tastes’: tastes of self-remembering, tastes of self-observation, tastes of the ‘collected state’, tastes of decision, and tastes of our own denying forces. By this time we understood more or less that we could not remember ourselves with our thoughts, and we knew a variety of techniques by which we could become ‘present’ and more connected with our bodies. *Perhaps the change that was taking place was the gradual realisation that we could not keep these states.* We could no longer doubt their essential efficacy, and yet not only could we not keep these states, *we could not even wish to work for them.*  
(My italics. – Anthony Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, pp.142-3.)

<sup>284</sup>*Witness*, p.286.

<sup>285</sup>E.g., he refers to “certain deep questions of our work in England.” (Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.100.) And he says “I took the opportunity to think very deeply about our great problem of the Work and have now begun to see a

clear picture of what we have to achieve.” (Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.42.)

<sup>286</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.3.

<sup>287</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.15-16.

<sup>288</sup>Madame de Salzmann, cited in ‘Introduction’ to *Views From the Real World: early talks of Gurdjieff*, pp.vii-viii (from her foreword to the original French edition).

<sup>289</sup>The second possibility would converge to some extent with Ouspensky’s idea that, while people of “higher consciousness” are required to start a school, they are not necessarily present *in* a school (see page 390). However, Ouspensky was talking about Man No.5 whereas Madame de Salzmann can be interpreted as talking about Man No.6.

<sup>290</sup>See pages 399 and 401.

<sup>291</sup>*Witness*, p.284.

<sup>292</sup>*Witness*, p.209.

<sup>293</sup>*Witness*, p.284

<sup>294</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.18.

<sup>295</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.70.

<sup>296</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.112.

<sup>297</sup>See, e.g., Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.112.

<sup>298</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.112.

<sup>299</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.112-3; and cf. *ISOM*, p.32.

<sup>300</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.86.

<sup>301</sup>*Witness*, p.294.

<sup>302</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.78.

<sup>303</sup>*Witness*, p.294.

<sup>304</sup>*Witness*, p.294.

<sup>305</sup>*Witness*, p.294.

<sup>306</sup>*Witness*, p.294.

<sup>307</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, p.67 and cf. pp.63-4.

<sup>308</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, p.56.

<sup>309</sup>Anthony Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, pp.132-3.

<sup>310</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.61.

<sup>311</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.127.

<sup>312</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.61.

<sup>313</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.148.

<sup>314</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.173.

<sup>315</sup>Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.2, p.173.

<sup>316</sup>See, e.g., Bennett, *Journeys In Islamic Countries*, Vol.1, p.10.

<sup>317</sup>*Witness*, p.303.

<sup>318</sup>*Witness*, p.306.

<sup>319</sup>*Witness*, p.305.

<sup>320</sup>*Witness*, p.305-6.

<sup>321</sup>*Witness*, p.308.

<sup>322</sup>*Witness*, p.309.

<sup>323</sup>*Witness*, p.310.

<sup>324</sup>Bennett's second wife, 'Mrs B.', who was twenty three years older than himself, had nearly died after suffering a cerebral haemorrhage in 1954 (*Witness*, p.303). She lived on in a state of fluctuating lucidity, apparently experiencing some psychological remission due to the Subud *latihan* (*Witness*, p.330), for a further four years (*Witness*, p.333).

<sup>325</sup>Daghestani said:

You have asked God for guidance as to whether you should go your own way or follow others. You must trust yourself. You will be persecuted by the Armenians [Gurdjieffians?], but you must not be afraid.  
(*Witness*, p.309.)

<sup>326</sup>*Witness*, p.310.

<sup>327</sup>*Witness*, p.310.

<sup>328</sup>In *Gurdjieff: a very great enigma* (pp.34-6 – from lectures, 1963) Bennett refers to a spiritually advanced solitary recluse whom he had met in north-west Persia in 1955 who, whilst he purported to be independent of any organization (and this is how Bennett describes Ahmad Tabrizi in *Witness*, p.312), subsequently turned out to be a member of the Persian Shiite *Ahl-i-Haqq* ('The People of the Truth') sect which Bennett suggests may have been one of the inputs to Gurdjieff's development. (He does not reveal how he came to discover this.)

<sup>329</sup>See Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, pp.47-8; and *Witness*, p.313.

<sup>330</sup>*Witness*, p.310.

<sup>331</sup>*Concerning Subud*, p.48.

<sup>332</sup>*Witness*, p.315.

<sup>333</sup>*Witness*, p.316.

<sup>334</sup>The practical effect was that Bennett's pupils Madame de Salzman's movements groups (*Witness*, p.316).

<sup>335</sup>*Witness*, p.318.

- <sup>336</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.7.
- <sup>337</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.111.
- <sup>338</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.56.
- <sup>339</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, 58-9.
- <sup>340</sup>*Witness*, pp.342-3.
- <sup>341</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, 108.
- <sup>342</sup>Dominic Rieu, *A Life Within a Life*, p.131.
- <sup>343</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.108.
- <sup>344</sup>In fact the first Gurdjieff-Ouspensky follower to practise Subud (in 1956) was Ronimund von Bissing, an associate of Bennett who was living and had been running a Gurdjieff group in Cyprus (*Witness*, p.320).
- <sup>345</sup>*Witness*, p.326.
- <sup>346</sup>*Witness*, p.324.
- <sup>347</sup>E.g., Elizabeth Howard (later Elizabeth Bennett) and Pierre Elliot (Bennett's nephew by marriage – who became the director of the school at Claymont, U.S.A. after Bennett's death).
- <sup>348</sup>*Witness*, p.325.
- <sup>349</sup>*Witness*, p.329. See also, A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.172.
- <sup>350</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.200-1; see also Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.62.
- <sup>351</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.175.
- <sup>352</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.182.
- <sup>353</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.170.
- <sup>354</sup>See *Witness*, p.331, p.340 and p.341.
- <sup>355</sup>*Witness*, p.343.
- <sup>356</sup>*Witness*, p.347.
- <sup>357</sup>Subsequently published as *Christian Mysticism and Subud* in 1961.
- <sup>358</sup>*Witness*, p.350.
- <sup>359</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.20.
- <sup>360</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.43.
- <sup>361</sup>Senior pupil (and subsequently wife of Bennett) and personal pupil of Gurdjieff in her own right.
- <sup>362</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.156.
- <sup>363</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.39.
- <sup>364</sup>*Witness*, p.257.

- <sup>365</sup>See, e.g., *Beelzebub*, Vol.1, p.359.
- <sup>366</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.187.
- <sup>367</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.1, p.371.
- <sup>368</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.187.
- <sup>369</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.185.
- <sup>370</sup>*Witness*, p.320.
- <sup>371</sup>See page 424 and cf. *Witness*, p.321.
- <sup>372</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.172. See also *Witness*, p.321.
- <sup>373</sup>*Witness*, p.321.
- <sup>374</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, pp.63-4.
- <sup>375</sup>Anthony Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.163.
- <sup>376</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *Call No Man Master*, p.92.
- <sup>377</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *Call No Man Master*, p.92.
- <sup>378</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *Call No Man Master*, p.93.
- <sup>379</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.133 and p.138.
- <sup>380</sup>*Witness*, p.325.
- <sup>381</sup>*Witness*, p.327.
- <sup>382</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.173,
- <sup>383</sup>*Witness*, p.328.
- <sup>384</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.134.
- <sup>385</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.144.
- <sup>386</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.153.
- <sup>387</sup>*Witness*, p.324.
- <sup>388</sup>See, e.g., *Transformation*, p.83.
- <sup>389</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.177.
- <sup>390</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.103.
- <sup>391</sup>*Witness*, p.325.
- <sup>392</sup>*Witness*, p.326.
- <sup>393</sup>See *Witness*, p.256.
- <sup>394</sup>*Witness*, p.341.
- <sup>395</sup>See *ISOM*, pp.156-7.
- <sup>396</sup>Pak Subuh quoted in, Dominic Rieu, *A Life Within a Life*, p.16.
- <sup>397</sup>Dominic Rieu, *A Life Within a Life*, p.131.

- <sup>398</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.92.
- <sup>399</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.12.
- <sup>400</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.104.
- <sup>401</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.3, p.373.
- <sup>402</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.154.
- <sup>403</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.168.
- <sup>404</sup>Bennett, *A Spiritual Psychology*, p.178.
- <sup>405</sup>Dominic Rieu, *A Life Within a Life*, pp.124-31.
- <sup>406</sup>See: Anthony Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.163; and Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.149. Contact with the HEC can be understood as inherent in the idea of a 'direct method' to attain Man No.5. Moreover, as I have argued in Chapter Five, conscience is itself an aspect of the HEC.
- <sup>407</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.42.
- <sup>408</sup>A.Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, pp.250-1. In *ISOM* this idea is presented in terms of liberating oneself from the influence of lower laws such that one comes solely under the influence of the higher ones (*ISOM*, pp.84-5).
- <sup>409</sup>See, e.g., Dominic Rieu, *And Other Secret Things*, p.146.
- <sup>410</sup>Bennett *Concerning Subud*, p.150.
- <sup>411</sup>In *Concerning Subud* Bennett mentions the necessity for the development of the astral/kesdjan body, but he does not say where this fits in with Subud (*Concerning Subud*, p.163).
- <sup>412</sup>See, e.g., Bennett, *A Spiritual Psychology*, p.153.
- <sup>413</sup>Bennett, *A Spiritual Psychology*, p.179.
- <sup>414</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *Call No Man Master*, p.99.
- <sup>415</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.186.
- <sup>416</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.167.
- <sup>417</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.7.
- <sup>418</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.143.
- <sup>419</sup>Joyce Collin-Smith, *Call No Man Master*, p.96.
- <sup>420</sup>*Witness*, p.350.
- <sup>421</sup>*Witness*, p.332.
- <sup>422</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.14-15.
- <sup>423</sup>Bennett, *Christian Mysticism and Subud*, p.4.
- <sup>424</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.14.
- <sup>425</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.6.



<sup>426</sup>Husein Rofé, *The Path of Subud*, p.45.

<sup>427</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.20.

<sup>428</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.39.

<sup>429</sup>Bennett, *Concerning Subud*, p.140.

<sup>430</sup>Bright-Paul, who presumably was not surprised when Bennett gave up Subud, writes:

Mr. Bennett did not appear to accept the unequivocal attitude of the Indonesians over Submission, which he always tempered with his own belief in efforts.<sup>430</sup>

<sup>431</sup>*Witness*, p.350.

<sup>432</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.16.

<sup>433</sup>*Witness*, p.350.

<sup>434</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.16.

<sup>435</sup>*Witness*, p.350 (see also p.335).

<sup>436</sup>*Witness*, p.350.

<sup>437</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.153-4.

<sup>438</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.154.

<sup>439</sup>Bennett, *Transformation*, pp.155.

<sup>440</sup>*Witness*, p.350.

<sup>441</sup>*Witness*, p.378.

<sup>442</sup>*Witness*, p.354.

<sup>443</sup>*Witness*, p.341.

<sup>444</sup>*Witness*, p.198.

<sup>445</sup>*Witness*, p.344, p.347 and pp.347-8.

<sup>446</sup>Bennett, *Christian Mysticism and Subud*, pp.7-8.

<sup>447</sup>*ISOM*, p.74; see also p.102 and p.300.

<sup>448</sup>*Witness*, p.352. See also, Bennett, *Long Pilgrimage*, pp.51-2.

<sup>449</sup>Bennett, *Long Pilgrimage*, p.108.

<sup>450</sup>Bennett, *Long Pilgrimage*, p.109.

<sup>451</sup>Bennett in *Idiots In Paris*, p.51.

<sup>452</sup>Cf. also Gurdjieff's distinction between the "Learned", the "Saint" and the "Sage" (*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, p.132) – see Chapter Four.

<sup>453</sup>*Witness*, p.352.

<sup>454</sup>*Witness*, p.352.

<sup>455</sup>*Witness*, p.353. See also, Bennett, *Long Pilgrimage*, p.57.

<sup>456</sup>*Witness*, p.344 and 348.

<sup>457</sup>Bennett, *Christian Mysticism and Subud*, p.44.

<sup>458</sup>Bennett, *Christian Mysticism and Subud*, e.g., p.18.

<sup>459</sup>*Witness*, p.275.

<sup>460</sup>*Witness*, p.353.

<sup>461</sup>It will be useful at this point to establish a few basic biographical facts. Idries Shah was born in India (Simla) in 1924. His father's family were Afghani, had lived in India from 1841 after their support of the ill-fated British cause in the First Afghan War. However, Idries Shah's mother was Scottish. Whilst still a child he and his parents came to live in England and was educated at a minor public school (the City of Oxford High School). (L.P. Elwell-Sutton, 'Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism' in *Encounter*, May 1975, pp.14)

<sup>462</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>463</sup>Quoted in *Witness*, p.357.

<sup>464</sup>Quoted in *Witness*, p.358.

<sup>465</sup>*Witness*, p.359.

<sup>466</sup>*Witness*, pp.361-2.

<sup>467</sup>*Witness*, p.361.

<sup>468</sup>The most damning criticism that has been levelled at Shah concerns his view that the poetry of Omar Khayyam was Sufic. It was Shah's propagation of this thesis through Robert Graves (whom he seriously misled) that first attracted serious scholarly criticism to Shah's work. (See 'Neo-Sufism: The Case of Idries Shah' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No.3, April 1987, p.8, note 34.)

<sup>469</sup>L.P. Elwell-Sutton, 'Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism' in *Encounter*, May 1975, pp.9-17.

<sup>470</sup>L.P. Elwell-Sutton, 'Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism' in *Encounter*, May 1975, pp.9-11.

<sup>471</sup>Sayyed Hossen Nasr, review of Idries Shah's *The Sufis in Islamic Studies* (1964), p.532.

<sup>472</sup>L.P. Elwell-Sutton, 'Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism' in *Encounter*, May 1975, p.12.

<sup>473</sup>L.P. Elwell-Sutton, 'Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism' in *Encounter*, May 1975, p.14.

<sup>474</sup>James Moore in *Encounter*, August 1975, pp.94-5.

<sup>475</sup>John Pentland in *Encounter*, September 1975, p.91.

<sup>476</sup>Michael Currer-Briggs in *Encounter*, August 1975, p.95.

<sup>477</sup>It is relevant to note that following publication his article 'Moveable Feasts: The Gurdjieff Work' (*Religion Today: A Journal of Contemporary Religions*, Vol.9, No.2, March 1994, pp.11-16), in which he was critical of current spiritual trends in the Gurdjieff movement, Moore was 'excommunicated' by Michel de Salzmann (the

international leader of the Work). However, several previous articles and a major biography of Gurdjieff (see bibliography) had apparently not met with serious disapproval. This, in such a hierarchical organization, is noteworthy; and, I would suggest, the fact that such a reticent organization permitted him to publish at all is itself a sign of considerable trust.

<sup>478</sup>James Moore, 'Neo-Sufism: the Case of Idries Shah' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No.3, April 1987, pp.4-8.

<sup>479</sup>James Moore in *Encounter*, August 1975, p.95.

<sup>480</sup>See note 509 below.

<sup>481</sup>*Beelzebub*, Vol.II, p.302.

<sup>482</sup>John Pentland, in *Encounter*, September 1975, p.91.

<sup>483</sup>James Moore in *Encounter*, August 1975, p.95.

<sup>484</sup>See, e.g., Gurdjieff 'Ten Books in Three Series' (page facing publishing details) in any edition of *Beelzebub*.

<sup>485</sup>See, e.g., James Moore, 'Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No.2, p.3.

<sup>486</sup>James Moore, 'Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No.2, p.2.

<sup>487</sup>Bennett, *Long Pilgrimage*, pp.55-6.

<sup>488</sup>Bennett, *Long Pilgrimage*, pp.162.

<sup>489</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>490</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>491</sup>See *Witness*, p.321 and cf. Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.168.

<sup>492</sup>See page 424.

<sup>493</sup>See note 491.

<sup>494</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>495</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>496</sup>Omar M. Burke, 'Solo to Mecca' in *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1961, Vol. 290, No. 1754, pp.481-95. (Basic reference found in Ernest Scott, *People of the Secret*, p.162.)

<sup>497</sup>Kunji Zagh (Raven's Corner) in Baluchistan – see Burke *ibid.*, p.484 and p.485.

<sup>498</sup>Burke, *ibid.*, p.487.

<sup>499</sup>Burke, *ibid.*, p.487.

<sup>500</sup>See, e.g., Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.103.

<sup>501</sup>Burke, *ibid.*, pp.485-6.

<sup>502</sup>Burke, *ibid.*, p.486.

<sup>503</sup>Burke, *ibid.*, p.487.

<sup>504</sup>These are catalogued in Ernest Scott, *The People of the Secret*, Chapter 8.

<sup>505</sup>‘Elusive Guardians of the Ancient Secrets’ (‘From a correspondent’), the *Times*, 9.3.1964, p.12.

<sup>506</sup>The article states:

They...regard themselves...as the guardians and exponents of an ancient secret knowledge from which all human aspirations were ultimately derived in some unfamiliar way. They diffused this, it appeared at intervals throughout the world, watched its progress and maintained their end of the activity...

When pressed the Mir admitted to their organizing centres of study which often became usurped in course of time, becoming “mere philosophical grinding-mills”. Upon them, regrettably but without doubt, there was a curse.

(‘Elusive Guardians of the Ancient Secrets’ (‘From a correspondent’), the *Times*, 9.3.1964, p.12.)

<sup>507</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>508</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>509</sup>Authorship of *The People of the Secret* is attributed to ‘Ernest Scott’. However, it is claimed that the research behind this book was undertaken by a group of five people. I suggest that ‘Ernest Scott’ is a near-perfect anagram of “*not secrets*” which reasonably summarizes the thesis of the book – roughly, that the operations of the “Hidden Directorate” are becoming progressively more public and become visible in the historical dimension when one is educated to read the signs. (James Moore cites a rumour that the author is Edward Campbell, formerly literary editor of the *Evening News* – ‘Neo-Sufism: The Case of Idries Shah’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No.3, April 1987, p.8, note 19.) I was motivated to test for an anagram by the thematic connection between this book (especially the chapter ‘Gurdjieff and the Inner Circle of Humanity’) and *The Teacher’s of Gurdjieff* (1966) the author of which, Rafael Lefort, has frequently been held to be an near-perfect anagram of “*a real effort*”. This book, although it does not mention Shah, can be seen as the culmination of the series of press articles which appeared during the early to mid-1960s. Briefly, the book records a successful attempt by a disillusioned Gurdjieff follower to track down the people who taught Gurdjieff in the Middle East. The account culminates with the author meeting a representative of the “esoteric powerhouse” who informs him that his search has been a waste of time, that Gurdjieff’s school lost contact with the esoteric source after his death and that he can connect to a ‘live’ operation in England (he is given the address). – “*A real effort*” would refer to an effort connected to, and therefore sustained by, a live source. – The message is unmistakably similar to Shah’s. It has even been rumoured that the book was written by Shah or by a close associate under his direction (see James Moore, ‘Neo-Sufism: The Case of Idries Shah’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No.3, April 1987, p.8 – note 25).

<sup>510</sup>*The People of the Secret*, p.173.

<sup>511</sup>*The People of the Secret*, p.163.

<sup>512</sup>This term was coined by James Moore (see his ‘Neo-Sufism: the Case of Idries Shah’ in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No.3, April 1987, p.5 and note 19, p.8).

<sup>513</sup>It is curious that, although Idries Shah is mentioned in *The People of the Secret*, his name is *not* given as the focus for the affair presently under discussion. This is emphasis by omission, and I can only guess that the author(s) wish to maximize the ‘dramatic impact’ by encouraging readers to follow up some of the references and thereby to deduce Shah’s involvement themselves. The fact that the book is published by The Octagon Press certainly suggests Shah’s involvement at some level.

<sup>514</sup>*Witness*, p.355.

<sup>515</sup>*Witness*, p.362.

<sup>516</sup>Referring to Shah’s ‘The Parable of the Three Domains’ (*Tales of the Dervishes*, p.125) Bennett stated:

...to my mind nothing describes the new Work so well as the term Third Domain. If this is right, then G. and the Subud latihan...belong to the Second Domain and should be thought of as a preparation for what is now to come.  
(Letter to all associated with the Institute, March 1966.)

This is equivalent to saying that Shah possessed a *psychoteleios* perspective whereas their former work had been guided only from the *psychokinetic* level. (The reference to Gurdjieff should not, of course, be understood as meaning that *he* did not have the higher perspective, but only that it was not present in the Work after his death.)

<sup>517</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff Today*, p.40

<sup>518</sup>As I have already emphasized above, it is not my intention – nor is it within the scope of this thesis – to judge Idries Shah *per se*, but only to evaluate his significance in relation to Bennett (and hence the ‘Gurdjieff tradition’). However, it is relevant to note the possibility that Shah *does* have a ‘genuine teaching’, but that the references (implicit and explicit) to the ‘origin of the Gurdjieff teaching’, the fourth way and ‘higher Sufism’ are merely a smoke screen that he is using for some definite teaching purpose. The situation thus described is reminiscent of James Webb’s thesis that Gurdjieff’s complex psycho-cosmology is nothing more than an elaborate ‘deconditioning programme’. (*The Harmonious Circle*, pp.550-9.) It is also possible that, rather than ‘seeking’ immature pupils (as Elwell-Sutton suggests), Shah is – while maintaining a high profile – deliberately screening such people. This is, again, reminiscent of Gurdjieff’s self ascribed pursuance of the “way of blame” in an attempt to attract only strong pupils and repel sycophants. (*Herald of Coming Good*, p.12.)

<sup>519</sup>T.H. Meyer, *The Bodhisattva Question*, pp.29-30.

<sup>520</sup>This view has also been suggested to me by John Varney, a former pupil of Bennett (interview, July 1993). When asked about Bennett’s statement that Shah had brought “third domain” knowledge (see note 516) Varney expressed the view that, in actuality, Shah, like Bennett, was only “second domain”.

<sup>521</sup>Bennett, *Dramatic Universe*, Vol.III, p.260-1.

<sup>522</sup>*Witness*, p.366. Shushud was the author a work on the Khwajagan mediaeval Central Asian Sufi lineage, *Islam Tasavvufunda Hacegan Hanedani* (Istanbul, 1958; subsequently published by Coombe Springs Press as *The Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia*.) Bennett included much of Shushud's material in his own, posthumously published *The Masters of Wisdom*.

<sup>523</sup>Bennett states that he had first met Hasan Shushud in 1962, but that being then under the influence of the Shivapuri Baba he had not paid much attention to him. He also states that he had consulted Shushud about Idries Shah and that Shushud had advised him that he should be following his own path and that "the time had come for me to be free of all teachers and all schools." (*Witness*, p.366.)

<sup>524</sup>See especially my quotation from A.G.E.Blake's letter on page 237 which refers in the same breath to Shah and Shushud as independent and mutually confirming links between Bennett and the Khwajagan.

<sup>525</sup>*Witness*, p.377.

<sup>526</sup>With reference to Hasan Shushud's visit to Sherborne in 1971 Bennett says:

I was able to talk daily with Hasan which had not been possible two years earlier in Kingston. Within a few days I began to have visions and auditions. The latter were usually in English, but sometimes in Turkish. I was convinced that I had lived before in Central Asia at the time of *Khwaja Ubeydullah Ahrar* [1404-90] and asked Hasan how it had come about that I had been born so far away from my native land. I have always felt at home in Asia and a stranger in Europe. He said: "The wind can blow the seed across continents. The wind is blowing towards England now. That is why you were born here."  
(*Witness*, p.376)

<sup>527</sup>Idries Shah can be seen as having had a 'second line' impact to the extent that he 'relieved' Bennett of many pupils (at least temporarily). However, this cannot be seen as a direct influence on his ability to function as a spiritual teacher.

<sup>528</sup>*Witness*, p.366 and p.376.

<sup>529</sup>*Witness*, p.368.

<sup>530</sup>See page 227.

<sup>531</sup>*Witness*, p.368.

<sup>532</sup>The reader will recall that I have already discussed the idea that there is an equivalence between angels or higher powers and the higher centres at the end of Chapter Three (see page 232).

<sup>533</sup>*ISOM*, p.312.

<sup>534</sup>*Witness*, p.283.

<sup>535</sup>*Witness*, p.371.

<sup>536</sup>It was around this time that Bennett's senior pupil John Wilkinson established the College for Continuous Education – a 'successor project to Bennett's Academy – at Daglingworth Manor, near Cirencester with assistance of A.G.E.Blake and others (see A.G.E.Blake, *A Seminar On Time*, p.xii).

<sup>537</sup>The fiction that Chicoine and Rishi Dada Narayana were different people – he gave his address as “c./o. Chicoine” – and that the person in question was an easterner temporarily residing in the U.S.A. was maintained for the majority of Institute members even after Anthony Hodgson had met him during the summer of 1978.

<sup>538</sup>Gary Chicoine, first letter to the Institute, 24.8.77.

<sup>539</sup>Gary Chicoine, first letter to the Institute, 24.8.77.

<sup>540</sup>Interview with Gary Chicoine 'How the teacher teaches' (late 1982), p.4.

<sup>541</sup>Gary Chicoine, first letter to the Institute, 24.8.77.

<sup>542</sup>Alexandria Foundation pamphlet 'The Cosmic Vision of J.G.Bennett' (1986), p.24.

<sup>543</sup>Alexandria Foundation pamphlet 'The Cosmic Vision of J.G.Bennett' (1986), p.18.

<sup>544</sup>See, e.g., Tony Hodgson's open letter to the Institute 'A Meeting With Rishi Dada Narayana Sadashiva', Autumn 1978.

<sup>545</sup>See, e.g., A.G.E.Blake, 'A History of the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences, Ltd. And the Influences Upon It', p.14.

<sup>546</sup>See especially the minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Institute, 28.2.81.

<sup>547</sup>Elizabeth Bennett and her colleagues who continued to run groups (mainly in London and Derbyshire) subsequently established themselves on a semi-formal basis as the "J.G.Bennett Society. Elizabeth Bennett died in 1992. Cecil Lewis offers the following tribute:

Marriage must have meant a sacred oath, a vow to John: wherever you go, I will follow. I will be there. With you. Until death.  
And when she had kept that vow through all those extraordinary, greedy-for-God years, when he had gone home, leaving her, when she was alone, she kept trust with those that were left, those who had followed him, loved him and returned to them...keeping something alive, part of her vow, her love for him and what he had stood for.  
(Cecil Lewis, *All My Yesterdays*, p.196.)

In the U.S.A. the Claymont School for Continuous Education remained independent of Chicoine and continued to flourish under the directorship of Pierre Elliot. However, the original ten month programme was scaled down to three months and following Elliot's retirement in 1987 the level of activity became somewhat desultory.

<sup>548</sup>Alexandria Foundation pamphlet 'The Cosmic Vision of J.G.Bennett' (1986), pp.17-18.

<sup>549</sup>See, e.g., Chicoine's letter to the Institute, 25.11.80.

<sup>550</sup>Chicoine, although claiming a high level of universality, emphasized that he taught a form of Yoga (“Integral Yoga”) and that he had no interest in the “Gurdjieff method”. See, e.g., ‘An Open Letter To My Friend On Yoga Sadhana’, July 1978.

<sup>551</sup>Chicoine’s teaching enterprise eventually seemed to ‘blow itself out’ at the beginning of 1988. At this time Chicoine claimed that the whole enterprise had been an elaborate anthropological experiment to determine how far people could be pushed in their ‘cultic tendencies’. He publicly, definitively and aggressively repudiated his former claim to be a spiritual teacher (or, at its most extreme, Avatar). (See especially ‘An Open Letter Of Declaration Of Refusal Of Mr. Chicoine To Function As A Spiritual Leader, Teacher or Guide For Anyone...’ signed Gary B. Chicoine, 23.6.1988.) It is at this point, with the demise of the Alexandria Foundation (the successor organization to the Institute) that all association, however tenuous, with Bennett’s work seems to come to an end. However, I have been informed that Chicoine has continued to play the role of spiritual master to a small group of people (centred at Pitlochry, Scotland). The only one of Bennett’s senior pupils who is still associated with Chicoine is Anthony Hodgson, others (e.g., Blake and Wilkinson) having become strongly disaffected. (Interview with John Varney, July 1993.)



## **Notes and References to Conclusion**

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the validity of Bennett's position in relation to Gurdjieff and thereby to shed some light on the broader issue of lineage in this 'tradition'. From a biographical perspective I have argued that, contrary to the view of the Gurdjieffian orthodoxy, Bennett can be regarded as having been a senior pupil of Gurdjieff. In particular, I have attempted to sustain Bennett's own view that he was one of very few people capable of looking "beyond the man to his message"<sup>1</sup> – i.e., that he understood what the teaching was really about. I have shown that this understanding involved taking seriously the "fourth way schools" aspect and that he understood this within the much larger context of the Great Work. I now summarize the primary aspects of his position and its relationship to the Gurdjieff teaching under four headings: Doctrine, Purpose, Source and Transmission.

**1. Doctrine.** Bennett's "Great Work" idea can be seen as intimately connected to Gurdjieff's cosmological teachings on the place and obligations of the human being in creation. Although Bennett's schemes do not agree with Gurdjieff's on all points, there is a fundamental convergence on the idea that the human being must, through conscious evolution, incarnate higher levels of intelligence.

**2. Purpose.** Bennett gave a central position to Gurdjieff's idea that the teaching exists to fulfil the cosmic necessity for conscious evolution and that it adapts its form in accordance with the needs of particular times, places and circumstances. This is the idea that fourth way schools arise and disappear according to their own laws. Hence for Bennett it was axiomatic that a live teaching does not maintain a single form indefinitely. However, he was clear that his own 'fourth way purpose' was closely connected to that of Gurdjieff's school which he saw as addressing impending environmental crises of the late twentieth century. (Moreover, it has been shown that

he maintained a strong and definite continuity with Gurdjieff in terms of *method*. Although he was eclectic, drawing on a wide range of spiritual traditions, the transformative methods that he taught at Sherborne can be seen as predominantly rooted in Gurdjieffian antecedents in terms both of the practices themselves and of general principle.)

**3. Source.** Bennett also took seriously Gurdjieff's idea that fourth way schools only remain as such (i.e., transmit a live teaching) so long as they maintain a connection to the "esoteric centre" or "inner circles of humanity". Consequently, he saw it as necessary to attempt to contact the source of Gurdjieff's teaching after his death. It has to be concluded that it is unclear to what extent the terms "esoteric centre" and "inner circles of humanity" designate any kind of organization or location. Bennett, although having searched for 'external' contact (e.g., his journey of 1953, his hopes of Subud and his association with Idries Shah), appears to have concluded that such contact is *primarily* a matter of inner realization. However, his inner contact itself seems to have reinforced his view that the tradition he had connected to through Gurdjieff was associated with 'higher Naq'shandi Sufism' (the Khwajagan).

**4. Transmission.** Bennett's emphasis on the 'receptive lines of work' (help and grace) can be understood as a corollary of his emphases on the ideas of working in accordance with higher powers and serving cosmic requirements. It was his view: that Gurdjieff's methods, however powerful and appropriate, were not on their own sufficient; that Gurdjieff had supplied a necessary element of help; and that, after his death, something was required to replace the missing element. (I have argued that his identification of the need for balance between the 'receptive lines of work' and effort is wholly in accord with Gurdjieff's teachings.) Hence his 'search for the source' was

motivated by the (complementary) needs for help and for the possibility to serve. Bennett can be understood as having seen such ‘two way communication’ with the higher source as a precondition for the continuity of a real fourth way school.

These four aspects, which all have bearing on the idea of ‘fourth way continuity’, have been shown to be relevant not only to understanding Bennett’s position as a teacher at the end of his life, but also in describing the dynamics behind his post-Gurdjieff search. That is to say, these aspects were present from the beginning as imperatives to search and emerged more clearly as a result of the search. I have aimed to demonstrate that his position was authentic in relation to Gurdjieff’s teachings: (i) in doctrinal terms; and (ii) in terms of the development of *inner* qualifications (measured according to Gurdjieffian spiritual psychology). In particular I have attempted to show that his time in Subud – his radical and problematic departure from Gurdjieffian forms – was in practice a necessary transition stage in terms of the fulfilment of these aspects.

The starting point of this thesis was the lack of known roots of Gurdjieff’s teaching and the fact that it is represented as a manifestation of the “fourth way” which *inherently* lacks a constant institutional form. Applying ‘fourth way principles’ it has to be concluded that the ‘Gurdjieff tradition’ would become mere repetition if it ceased to contain people with direct connection to the “esoteric centre”. This is precisely what Bennett says that he feared during the years following Gurdjieff’s death. Believing that Gurdjieff’s death had deprived his pupils of the elements of *grace* and *perspective* (i.e., understanding of purpose) which were necessary to maintain the health of the school as a living organism, he saw it as his obligation to seek these elements elsewhere and eventually, I have argued, attained a degree of

personal connection to them through his own inner work. In doing so he compromised the status of his strictly lineal connection to Gurdjieff; and his own mature ‘authority claim’ synthesized *vertical* and *horizontal* aspects. He implies, but does not directly say, that by virtue of his ‘deep continuity’ – in the context of the Great Work – with Gurdjieff he was more truly an inheritor of Gurdjieff’s impulse than the orthodoxy (to whose ‘preservation of form’ he, nevertheless, attributes some value<sup>2</sup>). In terms of ‘fourth way principles’ (and on the assumption that Bennett’s account of his inner life is reliable) I have reached a conclusion in his favour.

However, it is necessary to point out that I have adopted a ‘Bennett-centred perspective’. This has been appropriate because Bennett developed an articulate view on matters relating to connection to the “esoteric centre” (e.g., Higher Powers and the Great Work) and because, by contrast, the orthodoxy have chosen to remain silent on matters pertaining to criteria of lineage. It has to be acknowledged that the perspective of the orthodoxy is largely unavailable (and that this may have resulted in a tendency to depict them somewhat two-dimensionally). Importantly, it is not known to what degree they have perceived the impasse that Bennett and his ex-Ouspensian colleagues spoke about (or what responses have been tried if they did perceive it).<sup>3</sup>

It is particularly noteworthy that the orthodoxy remain silent on the ideas of the “fourth way” (as a kind of tradition<sup>4</sup>), the “esoteric centre” and the “inner circles of humanity”. James Moore has suggested to me that talk of fourth way schools is a complete irrelevance to the issue of Gurdjieffian lineage.<sup>5</sup> Rather, their emphasis has been firmly on maintaining an authentic continuity of form of Gurdjieff’s teachings by means of fastidious lineage through his pupils.<sup>6</sup> The question inevitably arises: why do they apparently seem to ignore the aspect of Gurdjieff’s teaching which deals

with matters of source and higher authority? In the light of their (arguable) ‘over reaction’ to Elwell-Sutton’s misconceptions concerning their relationship to Idries Shah, I have suggested that they bracket off the “fourth way school” and “esoteric centre” ideas precisely because they perceive that such ‘*vertical* aspects’ pose a grave danger to *horizontal* lineal continuity.

Much of the justification for the orthodoxy’s attitude to lineage seems to be that this is what Gurdjieff is believed to have asked for. His reputed request at the end of his life for a solid base of continuity cannot be ignored. It is possible that he did wish his pupils to be united under one large institutional umbrella; but the evidence of his life would suggest otherwise. He was notorious for setting things up to be difficult. He had a tendency to dissolve or sabotage his own projects and to start something new;<sup>7</sup> and, according to Bennett, even at the end of his life he would deliberately act in such a way as to create disharmony rather than harmony among his pupils.<sup>8</sup> As is demonstrated by his deliberate alienation of his best pupils during the late nineteen twenties, he seems to have been much more concerned to engender situations conducive to the awakening of consciousness than to establish a stable organization.<sup>9</sup>

Whether or not it is assumed that the “fourth way schools” idea *is* to be taken literally, it seems likely that he recognized that his “school” could not remain “live” after his death by maintaining a constant form, but only through the creative initiatives of his pupils. Furthermore, it seems in accord with his philosophy to say that having sown *many* ‘seeds’ he then retired from the scene in the faith that a few would germinate.<sup>10</sup> These ‘seeds’ were mainly individual pupils<sup>11</sup>; but they were also his books; and it was (apparently) in this context that he asked Madame de Salzmann to establish a solid base of continuity.<sup>12</sup> In terms of Gurdjieff’s idea of the different orders of influence that exist in the world,<sup>13</sup> the function of Madame de Salzmann’s

relatively constant form may – assuming that *was* what Gurdjieff intended – have been to ensure the transmission of his ideas, as contained in his books, into the wider culture.<sup>14</sup> From this perspective Madame de Salzman’s mandate was not to attempt to establish a monolithic orthodoxy, but only to ensure the completion of a particular line of action. Again, it must be emphasized that there is no question of disputing de Salzman’s record of the final instructions that she received from Gurdjieff; but equally it is necessary to see these in the light of Gurdjieff’s clear indications to Bennett: (i) that the teaching was connected to something larger with which his pupils should expect contact after his death;<sup>15</sup> and (ii) that he (Bennett) had the capacity to act in a way that would appear to be betrayal, but which would ensure continuance of the teaching (see page 477).

It will be useful at this point to refer again to a key statement by James Moore which I have already discussed in Chapter Two.<sup>16</sup> He writes:

The esoteric stream...does not chatter. To the degree that the esoteric current remains in contact with its source on a higher level, it sustains a self-sufficient internal dynamism; it is weakened not strengthened by the rash admixture of tributary influences.<sup>17</sup>

This statement does not attempt to explain what the term “source on a higher level” signifies and nor does it address the question of what is actually required to maintain connection to it. As I have shown Bennett (who did attempt to define these matters) was led to the view that, within the Gurdjieff movement, self-sufficiency could not be assumed to be a symptom of connection to the esoteric source and that, on the contrary, some new impetus was required. I have argued that, in terms of Gurdjieff’s doctrines and, more specifically, by reference to his inner development in terms of Gurdjieffian developmental criteria, his position is at least plausible. It has been my



contention that Bennett achieved connection to the “source on a higher level” precisely because he was willing to explore other avenues. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the introduction of “tributary influences” has caused a weakening at the ‘horizontal level of lineage’.

In the case of Bennett’s contact with Idries Shah I argued that his own Work – in a line stemming mainly from Gurdjieff – continued because he had his own momentum and sense of direction. However, after Bennett’s death, the case of Chicoine is completely different. I suggested that, although Bennett’s account indicates that he had attained his own ‘vertical connection’, he did not have time to effectively infuse this into the ‘horizontal’ (lineal) dimension: consequently the enterprise was ‘left in the air’ after his death. The Institute simply did not have the strength to survive its encounter with Chicoine (however *his* status is understood).

The ‘problem’ inherent in taking the fourth way schools idea seriously is that there is very little basis on which anyone (who is less than “Man No.5”) could judge authentic continuity. Bennett’s emphasis on the vertical aspect over the lineal aspect inevitably meant that his branch of the Gurdjieff teaching became less firmly rooted in Gurdjieffian forms and historicity. Moreover, because his inner connection was still germinal and his enterprise experimental, the situation after his death was much more unstable than that after Gurdjieff’s death. Those of his pupils who chose to take up the challenge of fourth way continuity (or rather discontinuity) embarked on something which in terms of form was far removed from the Gurdjieff teaching. The long term result has been the dissolution of the Gurdjieff-Bennett line as an identifiable entity.

## Notes and References to Conclusion

<sup>1</sup>*Witness*, p.379.

<sup>2</sup>Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p.6.

<sup>3</sup>In fact there is evidence that de Salzman eventually admitted the necessity of *grace* in the Work. James Moore has revealed that during the 1980s a practice of opening to a downflow of spiritual energy – similar to the idea of the downflow of *kundalini* in Kashmir Shivaism – was introduced. (James Moore, ‘Moveable Feasts: The Gurdjieff Work’ in *Religion Today: A Journal of Contemporary Religions*, Vol.9, No.2, March 1994, pp.11-16.) However, Moore’s article provides no information as to how this innovation came about. And, from the point of view of the present thesis it is to be noted that it did not occur until a decade after Bennett’s death.

<sup>4</sup>This term seems to be acceptable to the orthodoxy only in so far as it refers to integral, three-centred work on oneself (as distinct from the single centred focuses of the “*fakir*”, the “*monk*” and the “*yogi*”; see *ISOM*, pp.48-9.)

<sup>5</sup>Interview, London, June 1994.

<sup>6</sup>‘Gurdjieffian Groups in Britain’ in *Religion Today: A Journal of Contemporary*, Vol.2, No.6, September 1986, p.3.

<sup>7</sup>Examples of this are: his considerable shift of attention away from his long fought for and only recently established Institute when he decided to become a writer after his accident of 1924 (James Moore, *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, p.236); his alienation of his American pupils whose financial help he needed to save the Prieuré from repossession in the early 1930s (James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, p.420); and his rebuff to Alfred Knopf, a publisher who was seriously interested in *Beelzebub* (Moore, *ibid.*, p.209). If we set aside the possibility that Gurdjieff was mad (as Ouspensky believed), his actions might be taken as suggesting that he was not working according to any ordinary pattern or time scale.

<sup>8</sup>*Witness*, p.274.

<sup>9</sup>See Gurdjieff *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am”*, p.45 (see also his *Herald of Coming Good*, p.12). For an account of this phase of Gurdjieff’s life see James Moore, *Gurdjieff: the anatomy of a myth*, pp.225-41.

<sup>10</sup>See Fritz Peters, *Gurdjieff*, p.40.

<sup>11</sup>This, of course, includes people who functioned within the ‘orthodoxy’. Other of Gurdjieff’s pupils who left the ‘orthodoxy’ to take their own ‘fourth way initiative’ (although none quite as radically as Bennett and all in the U.S.A.) are: Louise March, who established an art and craft based centre; Willem Nyland who established the Institute for Religious Development; and Paul and Naomi Anderson who set up the American Institute for Continuing Education (a title which has resonances with Bennett’s organizations at Sherborne and Claymont). (See Kathleen Riordan Speeth, *The Gurdjieff Work*.)

<sup>12</sup>See de Salzmänn 'Foreword' in Gurdjieff *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*, pp.xiii-xiv.

<sup>13</sup>Ordinary mechanical influences; conscious influences coming directly from a school; and influences that originated in a school but are now part of ordinary culture. (See page 241.)

<sup>14</sup>Madame de Salzmänn's dedication to this aspect of her task is shown by her (highly controversial) commissioning and publication of a new edition of *Beelzebub* in which Gurdjieff's excesses of linguistic complexity have been replaced by flowing sentence structures. (First published in 1992 – see bibliography. For background on the controversial nature of this enterprise see 'Interview with James' in *Telos: Inquiries into Self-Transformation in the Modern World*, Autumn/Winter 1993, p.7.)

<sup>15</sup>"After I go another will come. You will not be left alone." (*Witness*, p.284; – see also Anthony Bright-Paul, *Stairway to Subud*, p.156.) In this connection it is relevant to recall that even the 'arch-orthodox' C.S.Nott recalls Gurdjieff saying "I am small compared with those that sent me" (C.S.Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p.31).

<sup>16</sup>See page 115.

<sup>17</sup>James Moore, 'Gurdjieff Groups in Britain' in *Religion Today*, Vol.3, No. 2, May-Sept. 1986, p.2

# Appendix 1: Bennett Chronology

(Including main dates for Gurdjieff and Ouspensky  
and dates for post-Bennett events.)

21st March 1918. Bennett has an out of body experience after being injured in military action. He realizes that physical death is not the end of individual existence.

Summer 1918. Mathematical speculations about higher dimensions. He connects this to his 'out of body experience'.

20th December 1918. Bennett marries Evelyn McNeil.

February 1919. Bennett is posted to Turkey as part of the British military occupation. (He records his disquiet at the darker side of human nature that this experience caused him to see.)

September 1919. (Captain) Bennett is made head of "Military Intelligence 'B' office" in Constantinople

October 1919. Bennett's wife comes to live with him in Constantinople. A child is conceived.

March 1920. On discovering that she is pregnant, Bennett's wife returns to England.

18th August 1920. Bennett's daughter Ann is born in England. (It is clear that the marriage does not occupy an important place in his life.)

c.September 1920. Bennett (hitherto anti-religious) becomes attracted to Islamic mysticism (Mevlevi and Rufa'i Sufis). He visits *tekkes* and watches rituals. Conversation with a Mevlevi connects their ritual practices to his own OBE.

October 1920. Bennett is befriended by Prince Sabaheddin who tells him about Theosophy, Anthroposophy and western occultism. He records that these conversations were a turning point in his attitude to religion. Through Sabaheddin he meets Winifred Beaumont (subsequently Winifred 'Polly' Bennett). He sees the idea of a fifth dimension as resolving the problem of free will and determinism.

Late 1920/early 1921. Bennett meets Ouspensky but is uninspired by his talk of different levels of man and transformation. Subsequently Sabaheddin introduces him to Gurdjieff with whose knowledge he is greatly impressed. Gurdjieff emphasizes the necessity to *be more* rather than merely to know more. Bennett is invited to watch Gurdjieff's pupils practising the sacred dances.

January and February 1921. Bennett plays liaison role at London conference at which the Turkish nationalist tensions are calmed. (It becomes clear to him that his marriage to Evelyn is over.)

February 1921. He leaves the army and returns to Turkey, Mrs Beaumont and involvement in the inheritance claims of the heirs of Abdul Hamid (which is to occupy his attention until 1928).

March/April 1921. Bennett experiences a vision of his destiny (see Chapter Two).

May 1921. In connection with the 'heirs of Abdul Hamid' affair Bennett becomes involved with the financial adventurer and philanthropist John de Kay (an old friend of Mrs Beaumont).

c.May/June 1921. Ouspensky gives Bennett a copy of *Tertium Organum* with which he is profoundly impressed. Bennett arranges Ouspensky's entry visa to Britain.

June 1921. Bennett and Mrs Beaumont visit London and attend Ouspensky's meetings.

August 1921. Gurdjieff and his senior pupils leave Constantinople and travel to Germany.

13th February 1922. Gurdjieff's first visit to Ouspensky's group in London.

15th March 1922. Gurdjieff's second visit to England.

8th June 1922. Bennett and Mrs Beaumont move to London and commence regular attendance at Ouspensky's meetings (three or four evenings per week. Bennett was also learning Sanskrit and Pali.)

1st October 1922. Gurdjieff acquires the Prieuré des Basses Loges (Avon, near Fontainebleau in France) for his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.

January 1923. Bennett spends a weekend at the Prieuré.

August 1923. Bennett spends several weeks at the Prieuré. Towards the end of his stay he has a profound spiritual experience (see Chapter Six).

Autumn/Winter 1923-4. Bennett continues regular attendance at Ouspensky's meetings.

January 1924. Ouspensky announces the complete separation of his work from that of Gurdjieff: Bennett decides to stay with Ouspensky.

8th July 1924. Gurdjieff has near fatal car accident.

1924-5. Bennett becomes closely involved with Ouspensky (helping him translate his books). He begins to envisage a role for himself in the transmission of the work.

April 1925. Bennett and Mrs Beaumont marry in Athens.

21st March 1928. Bennett is arrested and imprisoned in Athens on a charge of forgery in connection with the claims of the 'heirs of Abdul Hamid'. Bennett is released when the preliminary investigations of the Examining Magistrate revealed no evidence of forgery.

April 1928. Bennett returns to London and finds himself estranged from Ouspensky (who annoyed at having been implicated as a possible 'communist connection' after his name had been found in Bennett's Athens flat.)

September 1929. Bennett stands trial in Athens: after sixteen days the prosecution admit 'no case to answer.' However, this event marks the absolute end of his involvement with the claims of the heirs of Abdul Hamid.

Autumn 1929. Bennett becomes involved with a proposed Brown Coal mining project at Vevi in Albania.

While at Vevi Bennett is profoundly impressed by the 'collective consciousness' manifested by a gathering of several thousand storks. This experience provokes him to envisage the eventual evolution of a comparable trans-individual consciousness in human beings. He sees this as being intimately connected to the aim of the work of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. He

resolves that, if he cannot work with Ouspensky, then he must work on his own and decides to form his own group.

Late 1929. On return to London Bennett engages in scientific work in connection to the Brown Coal project – this marks the beginning of his career in industrial research which lasts until 1950. He establishes a group: this is unauthorized, but he sends Ouspensky regular transcripts of meetings.

October 1930. Bennett, together with his small group, is reabsorbed into the Ouspensky fold. (It was around this time that Ouspensky decided to expand his activities – see Chapter Six.)

1st Jan. 1931. Bennett decides on a thousand day project of intense inner efforts with the aim of gaining inner freedom.

Mid-1931. Ouspensky has final meeting with Gurdjieff.

Early 1933. Gurdjieff distributes his book *Herald of Coming Good*. (He repudiated and recalled this book late the following year.)

May 1933. Gurdjieff loses the Prieuré due to financial problems.

1st October 1933. Bennett is disappointed to conclude that his ‘thousand day effort’ had achieved no tangible result. In general, he finds that he is simply more acutely aware of his inner deficiencies than ever before. (And such feelings are intensified, rather than alleviated, by his own position as a group leader.) During this period he becomes increasingly aware of the necessity for submission: he sees his teacher, Ouspensky, as the immediate, provisional and appropriate focus for his aspiration to submit. During this period Bennett's interest in the connection between higher dimensions and spiritual development is (re-)vitalized by an intuition of the reality of *eternity* as a negentropic counterpart to *time*.

September 1932. The ‘Brown Coal’ project ceases operations.

August 1933. Madame Ouspensky tells Bennett “You have in you the possibility of being of great value to the Work, but for that you must prepare yourself and gain your own experience.”

1934. Bennett is appointed as a Director of the newly formed Coal Burning Appliance Makers' Association which soon becomes the government funded British Coal Utilization Research Association of which he is appointed Research Director.

24th January 1937. Bennett's wife attempts suicide. While unconscious she experiences a certainty of the presence of Jesus. She also sees something important about Bennett's future, but does not tell him because she thinks he will not be able to believe it.

October 1937. Ouspensky permits the teaching of Gurdjieff movements (by Mrs Howarth and Mrs Nott): Bennett records that he was glad to be allowed to participate.

Spring 1939. In response to Ouspensky's "fading hopes" of contacting the source of Gurdjieff's teaching, Bennett writes to Bash Chelebi, the hereditary chief of the Mevlevi Sufi order. Bennett receives a warm reply inviting him to visit (Syria).

3rd September 1939. Bennett conceives the idea of writing a book connecting his ideas about eternity with both modern scientific thought and Gurdjieff's teaching.

January 1940. Madame Ouspensky and then Ouspensky leave for the U.S.A.

May 1941. Bennett obtains Coombe Springs (Kingston-on-Thames) as the war time headquarters of the B.C.U.R.A. Coombe Springs also became the meeting place of Bennett's group.

Late August 1941. Whilst on spiritual retreat with his group in Snowdonia Bennett experiences a series of profound philosophical visions concerning the structure of cosmic laws. His central insight was that "...Love and Freedom redeem everything." He records that the insights of this time formed the basis of his philosophical work for the next fifteen years.

May 1942. In response to reports that Bennett was giving lectures and writing a book on the System, Ouspensky writes pointing out the unauthorized nature of these activities. (Bennett introduced teaching of the Gurdjieff movements into his group activities at this time.)



1943. Bennett begins work on a mathematical paper, in collaboration with M.W.Thring and R.L.Brown, formalizing his vision of the five dimensional structure of reality. This paper was eventually published as 'Unified Field Theory in a Curvature-free Five-dimensional Manifold' (*Proceedings of the Royal Society*, A. 198 (1949), p.39.)
- Winter 1943-4. Bennett has discussions with other of Ouspensky's senior pupils at Lyne Place. He records that there was a clear conflict between his own 'kinetic' attitude emphasizing the necessity for 'development' and the 'static' and 'conservative' attitude of the others.
- Easter 1944. Bennett has a major experience of spiritual submission. The context of this experience was explicitly Christian: he saw the omnipresence of Jesus as the manifestation of God's Love in creation.
- May-June 1944. Bennett gives a series of public lectures on the Gurdjieff teaching. (He begins to envisage the need for what would be the I.C.S.H.P.S.)
- Early 1945. Ouspensky 'excommunicates' Bennett whose pupils are forced to decide whether to continue working with him or to remain in the orthodox Ouspenskian fold.
- Early 1946. Foundation of the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences Ltd.
- June 1946. Bennett acquires Coombe Springs as a base for group work and for the Institute.
- October 1st 1947. Death of Ouspensky.
- January 1948. Bennett and some companions visit South Africa with a view to the possible establishment of a community based on work principles. However, Bennett decides that such an isolated activity would be an abnegation of the wider responsibilities inherent in the work.
- May 1948. Bennett, whilst in the U.S.A., visits Madame Ouspensky who tells him of Gurdjieff's continued activities in Paris and advises him to go there.
- July 1948. Publication of *The Crisis in Human Affairs*.

6th August 1948. Bennett visits Gurdjieff and is accepted as a pupil. After Gurdjieff is severely injured in a road accident Gurdjieff tells Bennett that he will accept any of the people from Coombe Springs. Subsequently, many tens of Bennett's pupils travel to Paris to be taught directly by Gurdjieff.

13th January 1949. Gurdjieff names Bennett as his 'official representative in England' (this is most explicitly with regard to the task of publishing *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.)

October 1949. Publication of *What Are We Living For?*

29th October 1949. Death of Gurdjieff. Madame de Salzmänn rapidly addresses the task of establishing unity among Gurdjieff's pupils.

1949. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* published in New York (published in London the following year).

1950. Publication of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* in London and New York.

Early 1950. Madame de Salzmänn accepts responsibility for the work (under Gurdjieff's name) in London.

Summer 1950. Bennett is forced to resign from his research directorship at the B.C.U.R.A. following a scandal in which 'communist connections' are attributed to Bennett's work activities. At the same time, Bennett's wife almost dies from a heart attack.

1950. Madame de Salzmänn sends Madame H.H.Lannes to London to take charge of the work. (*Gurdjieff Bibliography*, item 394.)

Late 1952. Bennett gives four lectures at Carnegie Hall, New York (at Madame de Salzmänn's invitation) on the occasion of the inauguration of the Gurdjieff Foundation of America.

Autumn 1953. Bennett travels (alone) in Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Iraq and experiences several significant meetings with Sufis of the Naqshbandi and Mevlevi orders. His journal – *Journeys In Islamic Countries* (2 Vols) – records two visits to Damascus and the development of a friendship with the Naqshbandi teacher Emin Chikhov.

May 1955. Bennett and Elizabeth Howard (née Mayall, subsequently Bennett) travel to Persia via Cyprus and Damascus. In Damascus Bennett meets Sheikh Abdullah Daghestani who tells him that he (Bennett) has been chosen by God to play an important role in the coming of a new dispensation for mankind.

October 1955. Madame de Salzmann arranges the complete separation of Bennett's activities at Coombe Springs from those under the auspices of the Foundation.

May 1956. Publication of the first volume of *The Dramatic Universe* (at this stage it was to be the first of *two* volumes).

25th November 1956. Bennett is opened to the Subud *latihan* by Husein Rofé. (He does not tell his pupils of the experiment.)

Early 1957. Bennett travels to the U.S.A. to meet with Madame de Salzmann and Madame Ouspensky in order to inform them of his experience with Subud.

21st May 1957. Pak Subuh and his entourage arrive in England and accept Bennett's invitation to base their activities at Coombe Springs.

Summer 1957. A high proportion of Bennett's pupils and many other people are "opened" (to the *latihan*) at Coombe Springs. (The Gurdjieffian orthodoxy remains aloof.)

Autumn 1957. Bennett and Elizabeth Howard travel to California and then Australia to "open" people to the Subud *latihan*.

25th July 1958. Bennett's second wife (Winifred "Polly" Bennett) dies.

27th October 1958. Bennett marries Elizabeth Howard.

27th March 1959 (Good Friday). Bennett, in the U.S.A. on Subud business, experiences a profound vision of Christ.

June 1959. Bennett makes the first of many visits to St. Wandrille a Benedictine monastery in Normandy. (The monks had expressed an interest in the Subud *latihan* and three of them were subsequently "opened" by Bennett, but it is clear that he had other reasons to wish to be with them.)

Autumn 1960. Bennett and some associates resume practise of Gurdjieff's exercises. This rapidly leads to their excommunication from the Subud brotherhood.

1961. Publication of *The Dramatic Universe Vol.II: The Foundations of Moral Philosophy*.

March 1961. Publication of the first edition of *Witness*.

Easter 1961. Bennett visits the Shivapuri Baba – a ‘God Realized’ Indian holy man – in Nepal. (He had received what he took to be an inner call from the Shivapuri Baba in January of 1961.) The Shivapuri Baba asks Bennett to write a book expressing his Yogic teaching in terms intelligible to westerners. (*Long Pilgrimage*, first published 1965.)

Late 1961. Bennett is received into the Roman Catholic Church.

1962. Bennett makes a second visit to the Shivapuri Baba in Nepal. (The Shivapuri Baba died – aged, reputedly, 137 years – on 28th January 1963.)

June 1962. Bennett first hears of Idries Shah and his claim to bear knowledge from the ‘source of the Gurdjieff teaching’.

Summer 1962. Bennett gives a seminar at which he synthesizes ideas deriving from Gurdjieff, Subud, Sufism and the Shivapuri Baba under his own authority. (The transcript of this seminar was subsequently published as *A Spiritual Psychology*, 1964.)

Autumn 1962. Bennett meets Idries Shah.

1963. Publication of Gurdjieff's *Meetings With Remarkable Men*.

June 1963. Publication of the first edition of the Institute's journal *Systematics* (published quarterly until 1974).

Early to mid-1965. Bennett, experiencing mounting pressure from Idries Shah to help him with his mission, finally realizes the he is asking for full control of all Bennett's (i.e., the Institute's) material and human assets.

October 1965. An “Extraordinary General Meeting” of members of the Institute agrees to hand Coombe Springs over to Idries Shah.

1966. Simultaneous publication of *The Dramatic Universe Vols III and IV (Man and his Nature and History)*.

Late 1966. Bennett re-establishes work with groups as many of his former pupils had failed to find places in Shah's enterprise.

1967 to 1970. Bennett is increasingly involved with the work of the Integral Science Education Research Group (an offshoot of the Institute) whose researches and experiments in the area of bringing a higher level of creativity into the processes of scientific and industrial training culminated in the formation of the company Structural Communication Systems Ltd. (This company was eventually sold in July 1970.)

1968. Hasan Shushud (whom Bennett had first met in Turkey in 1961) comes to England with the explicit aim of awakening Bennett to his destiny. (Cf. March/April 1921) Shushud teaches Bennett and others a *zīkr* method which combined the “prayer of the heart” with a breathing exercise.

January 28th 1969. Bennett collapses from exhaustion. He has an experience in which he realizes that he can continue to exist, not only without his body, but also without his mind.

September 1970. Bennett, whilst on retreat at St. Wandrille, receives an inner call to found a school.

April 1971. The International Academy for Continuous Education is officially launched at the Institute's jubilee celebration.

June/July 1971. Bennett visits the U.S.A. By the time of his return to England he has 90 serious candidates for the proposed ten month course.

July 1971. Sherborne House is obtained.

15th October 1971. The first ten month course commences.

April 1972. Hasan Shushud visits the Academy.

June 1972. Bennett commences work leading to the publication of *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am”* at the request of Gurdjieff's family which had met with resistance from the Foundation.

1972 to 1973. (Second Sherborne course.) A Cambodian Buddhist Monk, Reverend Mahathera V. Dharmawara ('Bante'), visits Sherborne at Bennett's invitation to teach techniques of meditation.

1973. Publication of *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*.

1973 to 1974. (Third Sherborne course.) Bennett addresses the aim of founding a spiritual community; and, because of the high cost of land in Britain, he focuses his search for a site in the U.S.A.

1974. (Re-)publication of Gurdjieff's *Herald of Coming Good*.

October 31st 1974. Bennett acquires Claymont Court, West Virginia.

13th December 1974. Bennett dies. (Fourth Sherborne Course.)

September 1975. The American branch of the International Academy for Continuous Education opens at Claymont Court with Pierre Elliot – Bennett's nephew by marriage to his second wife, himself a pupil in turn of Ouspensky, Gurdjieff and Bennett – as director of studies. (An educational programme closely based on that which had been taught at Sherborne was continued at Claymont until 1988 shortly after Pierre Elliot retired from his position as director.)

October 1975 to August 1976. In accordance with Bennett's original plan, a fifth and final ten month course is held at Sherborne.

1977. Posthumous publication of Bennett's final and incomplete book *The Masters of Wisdom*. (During the late seventies A.G.E.Blake, a senior pupil of Bennett and Institute research fellow, compiled and edited the large corpus of Bennett's lectures which had been generated during the Sherborne period. See bibliography.)

24th August 1977. The Institute receives a letter from Rishi Dada Narayana (Gary Chicoine) stating that he can provide the spiritual leadership and connection which Bennett's former disciples require.

21st October 1977. The Institute chairman (Lord Thurlow) writes to Chicoine expressing gratefulness for his letter.

1978. First publication of Gurdjieff's incomplete *Life is real only then, when "I am"*.

1978. Posthumous publication of Bennett's *Transformation* (unfinished manuscript; probably written c.1968).
1978. Under the auspices of the Institute, A.G.E.Blake and John Wilkinson set up The College for Continuous Education (at Daglingworth Manor, Gloucestershire).
- June 1978. Anthony Hodgson travels to the U.S.A. and enters a powerful pupil-teacher relationship with 'Dadaji' (Chicoine).
- 22nd October 1978. Anthony Hodgson informs the Institute that Chicoine has decided to withdraw his offer of help "...to the Institute as a formally related group of people following on with Mr Bennett's work."
- June/July/August 1979. Francis Thurlow, John and Jennifer Wilkinson, and Sam and Miriam Edelstein (brother and sister) in U.S.A. with Chicoine. (Thurlow briefly returns to England for Council meeting of 20th July.)
- 20th July 1979. A full meeting of the Institute Council agrees to invite Chicoine to come and teach at Daglingworth, offering him control over the use of the property and selection of pupils for a two year period.
- 30th July 1979. Gary Chicoine files for divorce against his wife Angela on grounds of "irreconcilable [sic] differences in marital relationship."
- 22nd August 1979. Chicoine's divorce is granted. He marries Miriam Edelstein. (All evidence suggests that the divorce and marriage were purely a device to enable automatic entry to England.)
- September 1979. Anthony Hodgson, Elizabeth Bennett, Lord Francis Thurlow and John Wilkinson visit Chicoine at his home in Montana.
- 8th December 1979. Hodgson conveys that Chicoine had "decided to withdraw from his association with the Institute..." Chicoine makes it clear that there had been collective and individual failures to respond appropriately to his offer. He writes: "I can no longer with justice to my Divine Conscience and the Holy Task cooperate with the kinds of misunderstandings, insincerity, suspicion, doubt, hypocrisy [sic] and half-heartedness that have characterized the attitude of the Institute Council and membership in regard to my particular presence as a

spiritual teacher or leader at Daglingworth Manor. (Work at Daglingworth, which had been taking place under his remote direction, was “a failure on the spiritual plane” and was to be discontinued.)

December/January 1979/80. After appeals from his disciples in the Institute Chicoine agrees to “reconnect”.

16th January 1980. Elizabeth Bennett formally withdraws from ‘discipleship’.

1st March 1980. The Institute Council agrees to offer an unequivocal invitation to Chicoine. Hodgson conveys: “The Institute respectfully asks Dadaji to accept the heartfelt service of the Institute without reservation of any support that it can give to him in his task.” For his part, Chicoine agrees that “The College for Continuous Education [Daglingworth] should reinstate itself under the direction of Tony Blake, to provide a bridge between those requiring that kind of preparatory work and the Integral Way.”

March 1980. Chicoine announces that he will be coming to Daglingworth.

Early to mid-1980. John Wilkinson undertakes an extensive pilgrimage in India (under Chicoine's direction).

2nd May 1980. Chicoine arrives in England (with his family) to take control at Daglingworth.

6th/7th September 1980. Blake and Hodgson give seminar – designed under Chicoine's direction – on Bennett's “sevenfold work”.

9th September 1980. Elizabeth Bennett and Lilian Massey start weekly group meetings (with movements classes) in London.

23rd to 27th September 1980. A private investigation of Mr Chicoine, commissioned by some Institute members is conducted in the U.S.A.

October/November 1980. Chicoine returns to the U.S.A. stating that Elizabeth Bennett and others had conducted a smear campaign against him, that he had not been granted the autonomy he had been promised, that, fundamentally, people had shown themselves to be unworthy of his help and threatening legal proceedings to compensate for the trouble and expense that had been caused to himself and his family in relocating to England.



28th February 1981. Blake offers himself as director of studies and is accepted by an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Institute.

4th March 1981. Chicoine names Blake as the valid successor to Bennett.

25th July to 15th August 1981. Three consecutive summer schools are conducted at Daglingworth: Gurdjieff; Sufism; and Yoga.

August-September 1981. Wilkinson and Hodgson in U.S.A. with Chicoine.

April 1982. Daglingworth Manor is sold. The capital is invested in three related directions: 1. Financing Coombe Springs Press; 2. Financing the Alexandria Foundation, a newly founded charitable trust dedicated to a comprehensive survey of world traditions with the specific aim of helping western seekers to find their way; and 3. Financing pilgrimages to India. This last is related to the Alexandria Foundation's information gathering project, but has the deeper significance (in Chicoine's terms) of connecting India to England for the transference of the focus of high spiritual teachings.

Mid-1982. Chicoine's supporters now have complete control of the Institute council. Others withdraw and do not renew their membership. These latter continue group meetings along 'Gurdjieff-Bennett' lines in London. (During the following decade groups also meet at Hemel Hempstead (Michael Franklin), near Bakewell (Lilian Massey) and near Warminster (Elizabeth Bennett).)

July 1982. Hodgson and Blake announce the attempt to set up a 'Sarmaun school' in England – i.e., under the spiritual authority of Chicoine. (Around this time Hodgson and Blake, together with some of the other Chicoine disciples, move to a house near Ripon in North Yorkshire taking with them the operations of the Institute's Coombe Springs Press.)

1983. Blake founds the International Gurdjieff Society.

1986. Inception of Alexandria Foundation School (i.e., for children).

January 1988. The Alexandria Foundation, Coombe Springs Press (now 'World Township Distributors Ltd') and Chicoine himself send out letters announcing the discontinuation of their operations. They assert that their interest in spiritual

matters had been for research purposes only, that their research is complete and that spiritual seeking is immature.



(Chronology of *Beelzebub*, continued...)

‘1st time line’ (‘depth’)	Chapters	‘2nd time line’ (sequence)
<p><i>Change of course</i> to enable visits to <b>Purgatory</b> and <b>Deskaldino</b> (the latter destination being difficult)</p>	<p>‘35. <u>A change in the appointed course of falling of the transspace ship <i>Karnak</i>.</u>’ –‘Time lines’ intersect–</p>	<p>≡ G. in Turkey in 1921 – i.e., when he decided bring his teaching to Western Europe (and USA)</p>
	<p>‘36. Just a wee bit more about the Germans.’</p>	<p>≡ G. in Germany in 1922; +mention of a short period in “Italy” [≡ to G’s brief visits to England].</p>
	<p>‘37. France’</p>	<p>≡ G. in France, 1922 on.</p>
	<p>‘38. Religion.’ [ Concerning sacred beings sent from above].</p>	
<p>Visit to <b>Purgatory</b></p>	<p>‘39. The Holy Planet “Purgatory”’ –purification of higher bodies.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">:</p>	
<p>[Volume Three/Third Book]</p>	<p>‘41. The Bokharian dervish <b>Hadji-Asvatz-Troov</b>’ [Hadja-Asvants-Truff]</p>	<p>(relates to the death of G’s wife from cancer in 1926; and <i>rumoured</i> visits to <b>Central Asia</b> in late 20s or early 30s)</p>
<p>Visit to <b>Deskaldino</b> (home (of Beelzebub’s “first educator”, Saroonoorishan)</p>	<p><b><u>Break between second and third book in original arrangement</u></b></p>	
	<p>‘42. Beelzebub in America</p>	<p>≡ G.’s trips to USA in late 20s and early 30s</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">:</p>	
<p>The light of <b>Karatas</b> becomes visible. Beelzebub speaks to Hassein about <i>compassion</i>.</p>	<p>‘45. Electricity.’</p>	<p>Beelzebub receives full pardon (in connection with Ashiata Shiemash) and returns to <b>Karatas</b> via <b>Deskaldino</b></p>
<p>(Beelzebub is revealed to be a “<i>Podkoolad</i>” being.) Arrival at <b>Karatas</b></p>	<p>‘46. Form and sequence.’</p>	
	<p>‘47. The inevitable result of impartial mentation.’</p>	
	<p>‘48. From the author.’</p>	

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 \*See also the entry for The Alexandria Foundation.



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 ‘This Problem of Authority in the Institute’ (Montana: April 1982);  
 ‘Progressing in the Path of Dadaji’ (Montana: 28.5.82);  
 ‘The Central Anguish of Ego and Spiritual Authority’ (Montana: July 1982);  
 ‘Another Interview With Dadaji’ (Montana: 29.8.82);  
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## J.G.Bennett Lectures on Cassette Tapes

Tape Number. Title and Date of Talk.

### Group A: Public Lectures.

- 002 *Gurdjieff: Making A New World.* (Caxton Hall/November 22nd 1973.)  
003 *The Fourth Way.* (Last Public Talk: Friends' House, London/November 6th 1974.)  
015 *To Be Or Not To Be.* (London/July 1973.)

### Group B: Human Relationships (Sex).

- 004 *Sex One: First Sex Talk (Third Course).* (April 29th 1974.)  
005 *Sex Two: Second Sex Talk (Third Course).* (May 1st 1974.)  
006 *Sex Three: The Role of Sex in Human Life.* (July 25th 1972.)

### Group C: Future Communities.

- 001 *Future Communities One: The Sermon on the Mount.* (August 1973.)  
007 *Future Communities Two: The Master Idea of the New Epoch.* (April 9th 1974.)  
008 *Future Communities Three: The Ideal Society.* (June 17th 1974.)  
009 *Future Communities Four: Concern For The Future.* (15th March 1972.)  
032 *Future Communities Five: The Future — What Is Our Responsibility?* (June 10th 1974.)  
033 *Future Communities Six: Knowing the Future.* (June 19th 1974.)

### Group D: Commentaries On Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson.

- 009A/B *Commentaries On Beelzebub One: Purgatory I and II.* (December 4th 1974 -9 days before Bennett's death.)  
010 *Commentaries On Beelzebub Two: Purgatory Three.* (December 5th 1974.)  
011 *Commentaries On Beelzebub Three: Purgatory Four / The Two Streams of Life* (Recorded a few days before Bennett's death.)  
019 *Commentaries On Beelzebub Five: The Two Streams of Life II.* (June 21st 1974.)  
023 *Commentaries On Beelzebub Five: The Heropass.* (December 11th 1974 -2 days before Bennett's death.)

024 *Commentaries On Beelzebub Seven: Conscious Labour and Intentional Suffering.* (April 8th 1974.)

Group E: God And The Creation/The Dramatic Universe

- 012 *God And The Creation One:- Dramatic Universe I: The Notion of the Transfinite A.* (May 8th 1974.)
- 013 *God And The Creation Two:- Dramatic Universe Two: The Notion of the Transfinite B.* (May 9th 1974.)
- 014 *God And The Creation Three:- Dramatic Universe III: The Notion of the Transfinite.*
- 016 *God And The Creation Four:- Dramatic Universe IV: The Tetrad of Deity A.* (May 13th 1974.)
- 017 *God And The Creation Five:- Dramatic Universe V: The Tetrad of Deity B.* (May 14th 1974.)
- 018 *God And The Creation Six:- Dramatic Universe VI: The Tetrad of Deity C.* (May 14th 1974.)
- 020A&B *God And The Creation Seven:- (i) The Demiurge (Wisdom) (July 29th 1974.): God, the World and the Work (February 12 1973.)*
- 021 *God And The Creation Eight:- Dramatic Universe VIII: The Tetrad of Vitality A.* (May 27th 1974.)
- 022 *God And The Creation nine:-Dramatic Universe VIII: The Tetrad of Vitality B.* (May 28th 1974.)
- 029 *God And The Creation Ten:- Dramatic Universe IX: Tetrad of Matter A.* (May 29th 1974.)
- 030 *God And The Creation Eleven:- Dramatic Universe X: Tetrad of Matter B.* (May 31st 1974.)
- 037 *God And The Creation Twelve:- Dramatic Universe XI: The Creation of Life A.* (June 10th 1974.)
- 038 *God And The Creation Thirteen:- Dramatic Universe XII: The Creation of Life B.* (June 11th 1974.)
- 039 *God And The Creation Fourteen:- Dramatic Universe XIII.*

Group F: Study of Man Series.

- 025 *Study of Man I: Function, Being, Will A.* (October 7th 1974.)
- 026 *Study of Man II: Function, Being, Will B.* (October 8th 1974.)
- 027 *Study of Man III: Energies A.* (October 14th 1974.)
- 028 *Study of Man IV: Energies B.* (October 15th 1974.)
- 035 *Questions on the Study of Man: Dramatic Universe A.* (June 3rd 1974.)

- 036 *Questions on the Study of Man: Dramatic Universe B.* (June 5th 1974.)
- 040 *Study of Man 5: Centres in Normal Man.*
- 042 *Study of Man VII: The Seven Worlds A.*