

Gurdjieff's "I AM" Exercise

For the correct understanding of the significance of this first assisting exercise, it is first of all necessary to know that when a normal man, that is, a man who already has his real I, his will, and all the other properties of a real man, pronounces aloud or to himself the words "I am," then there always proceeds in him, in his, as it is called, "solar plexus," a so to say "reverberation," that is, something like a vibration, a feeling, or something of the sort.

This kind of reverberation can proceed also in other parts of his body in general, but only on the condition that, when pronouncing these words, his attention is intentionally concentrated on them.

If the ordinary man, not having as yet in himself data for the natural reverberation but knowing of the existence of this fact, will, with conscious striving for the formation in himself of the genuine data which should be in the common presence of a real man, correctly and frequently pronounce these same and for him as yet empty words, and will imagine that this same reverberation proceeds in him, he may thereby ultimately through frequent repetition gradually acquire in himself a so to say theoretical beginning for the possibility of a real practical forming in himself of these data.

He who is exercising himself with this must at the beginning, when pronouncing the words "I am," imagine that this same reverberation is already proceeding in his solar plexus.

Here, by the way, it is curious to notice that as a result of the intentional concentration of this reverberation on any part of his body, a man can stop any disharmony which has arisen in this said part of the body, that is to say, he can for example cure his headache by concentrating the reverberation on that part of the head where he has the sensation of pain.

At the beginning it is necessary to pronounce the words "I am" very often and to try always not to forget to have the said reverberation in one's solar plexus.

Without this even if only imagined experiencing of the reverberation, the pronouncing aloud or to oneself of the words "I am" will have no significance at all.

The result of the pronouncing of them without this reverberation will be the same as that which is obtained from the automatic associative mentation of man, namely, an increase of that in the atmosphere of our planet from our perception of which, and from its blending with our second food, there arises in us an irresistible urge to destroy the various tempos of our ordinary life somehow established through centuries. This second exercise, as I have already said, is only preparatory; and when you have acquired the knack, as it were, of experiencing this process imagined in yourself, only then will I give you further definite real indications for the actualization in yourself of real results.

First of all, concentrate the greater part of your attention on the words themselves, "I am," and the lesser part concentrate on the solar plexus, and the reverberation should gradually proceed of itself.

At first it is necessary to acquire only, so to say, the "taste" of these impulses which you have not as yet in you, and which for the present you may designate merely by the words "I am," "I can," "I wish."

I am, I can, I am can.

I am, I wish, I am wish.

In concluding my elucidations of this assisting exercise, I will once more repeat, but in another formulation, what I have already said.

If "I am," only then "I can"; if "I can," only then do I deserve and have the objective right to wish.

Without the ability to "can" there is no possibility of having anything, nor the right to it.

First we must assimilate these expressions as external designations of these impulses in order ultimately to have the impulses themselves.

If you several times experience merely the sensation of what I have just called the "taste" of these impulses sacred for man, you will then already be indeed fortunate, because you will then feel the reality of the possibility of sometime acquiring in your presence data for these real Divine impulses proper only to man. And on these Divine impulses there is based for humanity the entire sense of everything existing in the Universe, beginning from the atom, and ending with everything existing as a whole - and, among other things, even your dollars.

For an all-round assimilation of both these "assisting" or as they might otherwise be called "helping" exercises for the mastering of the chief exercise, I now, at the very beginning of the formation of this new group composed of various persons pursuing one and the same aim, find it necessary to warn you of an indispensable condition for the successful attainment of this common aim, and that is in your mutual relations to be sincere.

The unconditional requirement of such sincerity among all kinds of other conditions existed, as it happened to become known to me from various authentic sources, among people of all past times and of every degree of intellectuality, whenever they gathered together for the collective attainment of some common aim.

In my opinion, it is only by fulfilling this condition for the given proposed collective work that it is possible to attain a real result in this aim which one has set oneself, and which has already become for contemporary people almost impossible."

(Gurdjieff - Life is real only then, when "I am")