

Outline – The Compromise Exercise

Gurdjieff refers to this exercise as the "compromise" exercise. In this exercise, attention is divided between the breathing and the head brain and the results of this are gathered into or concentrated in the solar plexus. Gurdjieff says that this will enhance the sense of 'I AM', which he couples with what he calls 'active mentation'.

Attention & Associations

In describing the exercise, Gurdjieff makes a number of statements about attention.

1. For 'real men' there is an attention that can be divided into two directions.
2. There are three kinds of attention
3. The attention of a real man can be free of associations.

The attention of a real man would be 'conscious'. The pragmatic test is that such an attention can be divided. The three kinds of attention are referred to by Gurdjieff as 'to sense, feel and constate' - which we might know more abstractly as sensing, feeling and thinking.

Associations go on by themselves and Gurdjieff says they not only go in our sleep, when we dream, but even after death! In describing (conscious) attention, he says that it can be concentrated away from such automatic proceedings.

In the course of describing the exercise, he tells his pupils to concentrate their attention on specific aspects of their (experiential) organism. In everyday life, we would not do this. Though not specifically mentioned in this description, we should bear in mind the kind of ideas he put forward in the beginning of his teaching about man as a 'factory', taking in raw materials of food, air and impressions and transforming them (see in *In Search of the Miraculous* by P. D. Ouspensky). Part of this transformation goes automatically, by itself, but there are stages that require conscious work. This is where the attention of a real man comes in.

Warning

Both at the beginning and at the end of his description, Gurdjieff warns against auto-suggestion. He also warns against excessive zeal and 'self-enthusing'. In contemporary colloquial language, we might say that if someone is 'getting off' on this exercise, then it is going wrong. Gurdjieff is emphasising that doing this exercise should have nothing to do with generating emotional experiences. The real results accumulate gradually through repeated practice.

In modern times, inner exercises of various kinds have been taken up precisely because they give rise to emotional experiences. It is forgotten that, for example, in Buddhism Mara the 'evil one' was the name given to bliss experienced in meditation! Gurdjieff is also following the core tradition of mysticism in Christianity, which tended to reject 'experiences' as distractions. He makes the exercise seem like shoveling coal!

In a technical sense, 'bliss' (as in the ananda of the Hindu sat-chit-ananda - being-consciousness-bliss) is always a descending phenomenon, which means that a higher energy is transforming down into lower energies. Gurdjieff's exercise appears to have the intent of an ascending process. Flying in the face of his repeated assertion that 'man cannot do' he claims that this exercise will enable his pupils to "do", which may be to build up a substance giving the possibility of doing.

Here we will simply remark that John Bennett described such a possibility in terms of his own language, drawn from science, of 'potential energy'. Energy withdrawn from actualisation, from anything happening, enables real choices to be made, or voluntary action taken (see his series of lectures recently republished under the title *Making a Soul*).

Assimilating Air

In this exercise, Gurdjieff says, the attention is divided into two parts. The first part concentrates on breathing: becoming aware of the air coming into the lungs and then leaving, but not entirely, since some of it is assimilated. The air that is assimilated 'flows in my presence'. Now, it is likely that Gurdjieff was not referring to oxygen here as the part of the air that is assimilated (there is a tantalizing passage about the active ingredients in the air, which is deliberately broken off and left unfinished, in the Third Series). In later years, John Bennett would explain that there is an 'active substance' in the air - he even at one time said that it derived from the sun - and that this active substance can only be assimilated into us if it is taken in consciously. The underlying reference is to the theory of the 'food factory' we mentioned before: in order for the second-being food or 'air' to be transformed it requires at a certain point assistance from (intentional) impressions - i.e. conscious attention.

It is widely known that awareness of our breathing changes our state. But the idea that it can produce a certain substance in us is very much Gurdjieff's alone. John Bennett speaks of it as prana - a Hindu term that is usually translated as something like 'life-force'. Needless to say, there is no evidence whatsoever for there being such a substance, besides the changes in state that are subjective and we are even warned about by Gurdjieff himself.

The Mental Component

By concentrating on the breathing, the pull of mental associations has become weak. However, next 'the other half' of the attention is put onto the 'mind' or, as Gurdjieff also calls it 'my head brain'. He says that with practice we can detect something arising there from our associations, at first faintly. Nowhere does he say what this 'something' is. He even says that "what arises in the brain is not important"; instead he says that there should be a flow in to the solar plexus.

The austerity of language should be remarked. In this case it is most fitting since, in general, the substance of the head brain is taken as abstract.

However, there is a sense in which we can take what arises and what flows as in some way being the 'substance underlying associations, thoughts or knowing'.

Solar Plexus

What flows in my presence from the air and what comes from my head brain combine together in the solar plexus. Gurdjieff does not say that they blend together or make any statement about their conjunction. The location of the solar plexus is only explained indirectly when Gurdjieff says that the exercise increases the strength of his 'I AM'. Someone who actually does the exercise can see what this means for herself. Speculations based on the chakra system tend to be totally misleading since Gurdjieff never used this system or made reference to it. Nor does he make use of other Asian concepts such as the 'stove of the belly'.

What is striking is that the Desert Fathers practiced bringing their thoughts into the region of their navels (hence the origin of the phrase 'navel-gazers') and readers of the immensely influential Philokalia may recognize the similarities.

In Gurdjieff's own system, it is fair to say that 'I' would be most associated with the head brain and 'AM' with the solar plexus.

Proceeding Automatically

More than once, Gurdjieff says that the exercise or part of it is proceeding in him by itself or automatically. It is worth taking note of this. While Gurdjieff is talking, the exercise is building and proceeding in him. But, how can it proceed automatically when the whole emphasis has been on concentrating the attention?

It would confuse the clarity of the exercise to say very much about this; but it seems to us that it is important to observe that concentrating the attention is not really a matter of effort. Nor is it a matter of 'I

am doing this'. There is more a sense of an impersonal act proceeding by itself. One intends something such as a flow from the head brain to the solar plexus and then one has to allow it to happen as it will: it is no good 'doing' anything to try and make it happen. It is as if the act of seeing creates what is to be seen.

Trying to describe and explain what happens can generate metaphysical sickness, and a stark simplicity is called for in the doing of the exercise. However, it is important to grasp that what Gurdjieff calls 'automatic' has two sides to it.

Intended Results

Gurdjieff says that the practice of this exercise by his pupils is "only a preparation to have an 'I'" but in his own case it provides 'food' for his 'I'. The task for the pupils is to recognize the two sources - the flow from the head brain and the assimilation from the air. We have already mentioned that he also said it would enable people to 'do' or have the possibility of doing as well as the wish to do.

We want to draw attention here to a common feature of Gurdjieff's methods, which might be expressed as: first detach, then divide and then unite into a new whole. What can be taught or imparted is something about detachment and division. But the new unification cannot be taught. As long as people remain followers of the instructions, they remain divided. No one can tell them to unite themselves, to 'make' I AM in themselves. Gurdjieff suggests that he unites himself and then leaves it there.

His almost final statement about the exercise is that it will enable his pupils to have 'real active mentation'. This may be the key to the whole thing. The very idea that inner exercises should be devoted to something that is akin to thinking is anathema to most so-called 'spiritual' seekers at the present time. It is also a side of Gurdjieff that has been strangely neglected by those professing to follow his ideas. Though Gurdjieff's active mentation is not just our usual 'thinking' it is still conscious, willed direction based on understanding and is what thinking ought to be.

Another way of regarding active mentation is as 'thinking with the whole of oneself'.

Essential Features

It is useful to make a summary of the essential features of this exercise. Readers may differ with us on our choices and interpretations. Such a summary may also be tested against other exercises (as we will do in the following essay). At the outset, we have to state that it is our contention that such an exercise is integrally connected with the rest of Gurdjieff's teaching, particularly with his theories of human structure and process. We believe that his account of the assimilation and transformation of the three 'foods' of food, air and impressions is of paramount importance. The general inference from this teaching is that conscious attention can affect the process of transformation; in particular, to produce 'substances' that would not otherwise be made. These substances share in the characteristic of enablement: if we have them, we can 'do' and if we do not then wanting to do is just wishful thinking. In a word, these substances turn our view of ourselves as free, whole, creative beings from fantasy into reality. We spoke of 'wishful thinking' and might consider that such substances when added to the equation produce a real result: thinking + wish + substance = real doing.

1. The purpose of such an exercise is to produce an enabling substance (or energy) that can make life more real
2. It depends on exercising a free attention that can be divided into at least two parts.
3. There is an energy or substance that can be assimilated or made available to us by bringing attention onto our breathing.
4. In a perhaps similar way, there is an energy or substance that can be released from the thinking process or head brain by careful attention.
5. Such energies can be combined together to produce a new sense of wholeness or 'I-Amness'.

The 'sense' of new wholeness that is posited at the end of the exercise is the most important 'proof' of the efficacy of the exercise. But, as we commented, it is the most problematic - not least because it has to be

self-defining. However, during the course of the exercise, it is possible for us to test out and explore the meaning of points 2, 3 and 4. These features give us a chance to struggle with our convictions. We just have to come to terms with how things work out in us when we try to follow the instructions. We have to decide what is real in our experience.

There is no way of knowing whether what happens to one person is the same as to another. Each will describe their experience in different terms. We have adopted the method of 'experiencing' to take account of this, which has the advantage of providing mutual support without the imposition of any one person's models of the experience. Experiencing also follows the situation exemplified by Gurdjieff himself in describing the exercise, where it is clear - and even stated by him - that the exercise can be working in him as he speaks about it [see below on 'Transmitting Exercises']. In 'experiencing' every participant is encouraged to articulate the process going on in her or him while it is taking place. At first this feels like an added difficulty and an immense distraction. But it facilitates detachment from emotional experiences (see Gurdjieff's warning) and can also assist in the end, through practice, in attaining the condition indicated by Gurdjieff of the exercise 'proceeding automatically'.

The five essential features we have listed all belong to what can be called a 'psycho-cosmology'. It is difficult to establish whether knowing about this is an integral part of the exercise or not. One imagines that Gurdjieff's pupils were well aware of the background to the exercise they were being shown. The exercise can be done without knowing anything about the 'food factory' model but would it be the same? Gurdjieff gives the essentials without any appeal to theory but it would be hard to put it all together without some theoretical support.

We tentatively, then, add a sixth feature:

6. To constate and reason on the purpose and meaning of the exercise, with the provisos "don't imagine things" and "don't be the slaves of the data you have within yourselves for autosuggestion".

THE EXERCISE AS GIVEN BY MR. G (with some minimal editing)

this version differs slightly from the text given in the Third Series

The totality of man's attention received from the whole of him, from all his spiritualized parts, he can divide into two directions. For real man there is one attention. Only this attention can be divided into two directions. In general if the sources of man's attention are taken into account, there are three kinds of attention. You must first understand and then recognize the difference. When this attention is concentrated, then our associations are 'in galoshes'.

Associations can never stop. If they would stop men would die. Associations always flow. Even after death they continue to flow by momentum. Only when attention is seriously occupied, associations are not constated; all the same they flow automatically. Even in sleep they continue and are sometime remembered- this is what constitutes dreams. Those who remember their dreams were only half asleep. If a man really sleeps, his attention also sleeps.

Real man has one attention. When this is concentrated seriously somewhere, whether on his body or on something outside, and all the forces of his attention are concentrated, his associations do not hinder him. For example I am now looking at L.. and my attention is directed on my right foot; so although I look, I see only automatically, my attention being elsewhere.

I will now show you that new exercise, the one to which is attached the risk I spoke of, the "compromise" exercise.

It is a serious experiment; many of you have such data in you for auto-suggestion that impressions may be obtained which will be the result of some kind of self-hypnotism.

If you are now a nonentity, you may become a thousand times more so. You might, if you will excuse my using this word, "stink". Be careful with the experiment. It is not quality that is necessary, but quantity. Do it often. Don't try to get absolute results. Make repeated efforts. Then only little by little, can you actualize results. Then only will you be able to "do". And parallel with wishing to "do", there will arise in you the possibility of "doing".

Do this without excessive zeal, without self-enthusiasm, which is a very harmful property. If you repeat this exercise often, your auto-suggestiveness will diminish.

This is the exercise.

Outwardly, at the first glance, this exercise is simple. For instance, you see, I sit here in my usual posture. I am dividing my attention. But no one can see this inner process. I divide my attention consciously into two parts. With one part I now sense, feel and constate simultaneously with one conscious concentration. Now I breathe. I feel that something happening to the air that I breathe in. Part of it goes in, part goes out, and a part remains. My organism, that is my lungs, take a part, then a part leaves and a part remains. I feel what is happening in my lungs. When I breathe in, part of the air is assimilated and I feel its flow all over the body. It goes everywhere. I keep my attention fixed; I feel, I sense how this air is being assimilated in me and how it flows in my presence. It is not necessary to find out where it goes, it just flows in my presence.

One part of my attention is occupied with this - breathing, assimilating and flowing of the air. Already my mental associations are very weak. I notice them sometimes, by the way, because part of my attention is free, and is able to notice mental associations.

Now I will concentrate the ether half of my attention on my mind. my head brain. I feel that in my head-brain something arises from the total of the flow of associations there. I don't know what is taking place there, but there is something, and with my half attention I notice this very thin something arise, so small, so light, so thin, that nobody feel it the first few times, not until constant practice gives the feeling. I know this subjectively because I have practiced it. I feel, I sense, I constate, that something arises in my head-brain. All the time, of course, the other half of my attention is occupied with the breathing process. Even while speaking, this exercise is being automatically done.

Now I direct my attention to help this something in my brain to flow towards my solar plexus. What arises in the brain is not important. What is important is that the something that arises there should flow into the solar plexus. Now I feel how it flows. My attention is fully occupied and I don't see any more associations. All my attention is occupied with feeling, sensing, and assimilating the flow of air. and also with this arising in my head-brain.

This flow of assimilated air, and this something which arises in my head brain, I specially, consciously, with my wish, concentrate to let it flow into my solar plexus.. Now. by the way I feel and constate that I breathe, I assimilate and that this flow goes to the solar plexus. And all the time the flow from the air I breathe and the flow from my head-associations go to the solar plexus although they issue from different sources.

For me personally, at the same time, I feel very strongly that I AM. I feel that I AM ten times stronger. My "I" takes in this food more intensely, but for you, at the present moment, do not do this exercise in order to be stronger. For you this exercise is only a preparation to have an "I" and so that you should constate the two sources from which this "I" can arise. For me it gives food to my "I". It makes it stronger, so that now I am not "tail of donkey". I AM.

But you can not yet use this exercise to make yourself stronger; you must first learn and constate the two sources from which this possibility can arise, to have a real "I" - from air and from mentation, even automatic mentation; and then, when you will have practiced this exercise a great deal, you may be able to have possibilities for real active mentation. And then with real active mentation, the "I" can become stronger.

Enough. I stop and let these processes proceed in me automatically. Now, without titillation without philosophizing and manipulation, try to understand the total of all this and formulate it according to your subjective understanding, according to whatever kind of idiot you are. Then do [it].

Don't imagine things.

Don't be the slave of the data you have in yourselves for autosuggestion, but try very hard.

We have at hand another report of an exercise dictated by Mr Gurdjieff, this time dated to 1939. It is instructive to read this account in the light of our previous discussion. We add some comments afterwards.

EXERCISE BY MR GURDJIEFF

From hand-written note 1939

Fifteen minutes relax. Break tempo of ordinary life before doing exercise.

Breathe in - 'I'. Breathe out - 'am'. With all three parts do. Not just mind. Feeling and body also. Make strong! Not easy thing.

When breathe out, imagine part of air stays in and flows to corresponding place. Where flow, how flow, that is its business. Only feel that part remains. Before beginning exercise say: 'I wish to keep this substance for myself'.

Without this conscious and voluntary labour on your part nothing at all will be coated. All in time will evaporate. Just this small property in blood makes possible very big result if done with conscious labour. Without this, one month you must work for such result.

When doing, must be careful not to change exterior. It is inner thing. No one need know. Outside keep same exterior. Inside you do. Not hold breath. Just breathe in and out. Of course, to change thinking will take time. Automatically breath will adjust. To be able to do exercise not lopsidedly you must whole attention on it.

To arouse feeling, interest and attention, for co-operation you must think following before beginning: 'I am now about to begin this exercise. With full attention I will draw in my breath, saying "I" and sensing the whole of myself. I wish very much to do this in order that I may digest air.'

To arouse body to co-operate, take corresponding posture. Inner tension of forces. Mobilize your centres for working together for this aim.

In breathing, imagine something flows, like when inhaling cigarette. I am now about to begin this exercise, which I have been fortunate enough to learn from Mr. Gurdjieff, and which will enable me with the aid of conscious labour, to coat higher bodies in myself from active elements in the air I breathe.

First of all, it is clear that this exercise constitutes only a part of the one we reviewed before (the 'compromise' exercise as Gurdjieff called it). This part concerns awareness of breathing and, in particular, of part of the indrawn air being assimilated and flowing to its 'corresponding place'. It is important to note that these exercises had a somewhat modular character in that more simple exercises could be combined to form more complex ones.

Though he does not use the same words - sense, feel and constate - that we encountered before, the intent is exactly the same: "with all three parts do". He emphasizes wish in this exercise, and speaks of "feeling, interest and attention" instead of just attention.

An important word in this description is "imagine".

Of particular interest is his comments on preparation and disposition. These include:

1. Fifteen minutes relaxation "to break the tempo of ordinary life"
2. Taking a "corresponding posture" for the body to co-operate [as we learned this from John Bennett, it was to sit with erect posture with the hands on the knees, in balance and not slouched]
3. Having a clear mental intent to do the exercise and realize that it is for the conscious 'digestion' of the air that will make a "coating" for an inner body. [Gurdjieff also implies there should be a feeling of gratitude towards himself for providing the exercise].

In our essay on 'Inner Exercises' we spoke of the three stages of preparation, concentration and realization. Here we see preparation pointing to the engagement of the whole of oneself in the act of concentration. In this instance, the preparation includes an intellectual understanding of what the exercise is for. In our previous comments we left this open as a question: Is it necessary to know the 'theory' behind the exercise? Now we see that the answer to this question is 'Yes'.

It is for the person doing the exercise to decide whether what is happening in connection with his breathing is 'just' her imagination or whether this imagination is simply the means of realizing what is taking place 'because of' imagination. In his teaching, John Bennett used to caution against using the concept of 'just imagination' implying that imagination was not necessarily indulging in fiction but a real action that could produce definite results in us.

The supposed result of the exercise, however, is something out of sight. As far as we know, no one supposes that it is possible to observe 'coating' - which would be tantamount to observing the formation of one's soul. It is in the realm of being or 'what is' and cannot be seen as a process. In our analysis in 'Inner Exercises' we equated it with Samadhi for the reason that no observation is possible. The dilemma then is that we have to take this result on faith because there is no way in which we can know it directly for ourselves, which contradicts the basic foundation of these methods on verifying for oneself.

John Bennett appeared to have claimed that he could perceive such results. We remember him once remarking to a lady that she now had her kesdjan body, which was much to her surprise since she had no sense of it herself!

We should emphasize that the use of breathing advocated by Gurdjieff did not involve changing the breathing in any way. The breathing tends to change of itself and this should be allowed to happen in a natural and easy way. Gurdjieff was against altering the natural tempo of breathing, instead emphasizing the supreme importance of awareness and attention as changing the very substance of the air itself in us.

In the next section, we look at other features of the exercises which have come down to us over the years. We also take into account some of the material to be found in Ouspensky's book *In Search of the Miraculous*. Needless to say, attempting any of these things at random is of little consequence.

Bennett's Struggle in Paris

In the book written by his widow, Elizabeth, *Idiots In Paris*, we can read of John Bennett's struggle with a basic exercise apparently given him by Gurdjieff. Though we cannot presume to know the whole of this, he does provide an outline of what it entailed. Very simply, he would kneel with arms out sideways, fixing his

attention on a fixed spot on the wall. The accumulating sensation (even pain perhaps) in his arms would establish 'Am' and the mental focus would provide 'I'.

Gurdjieff seemed to have been consistently concerned with 'I Am' exercises. Readers of *In Search of the Miraculous* may remember his account of monks in Mount Athos who would pronounce the word "I" while noticing where it 'sounded' in them (see loc. cit. page 304). For some it would be in the chest and others in the head - or even above the head. He also mentions that they would adopt a certain posture, such as kneeling with the arms lifted and bent at the elbows.

"The purpose of this exercise is to feel 'I' every moment a man thinks of himself and to bring 'I' from one center to another."

One of the reasons for discussing this exercise is that it makes very clear that Gurdjieff was not at all concerned with what is now generally called 'meditation'. John Bennett always made it clear that the exercises derived from Gurdjieff were active, while meditation was essentially receptive; a distinction that is discussed in his book *The Sevenfold Work*. We would do the active exercises in the morning and the receptive ones at night.

If we were to attempt a single simplistic formula for the Gurdjieff exercises, it would be

To realize 'I Am' including the generation or accumulation of energies enabling 'I' to 'Am'.

In doing an exercise, the person would have to draw on the whole of themselves. Thus, Gurdjieff would speak of integrating the impulses of 'I can', 'I wish', and 'I am' as can-wish-am. This was nothing but a direct application of his teaching that man consists of four personalities. These are now only crudely understood in terms of body, feelings, mind and 'I'. Behind this model stands the model of the food factory, and the implications stemming from correspondences such as: body-food, feelings-air, mind-impressions.

Relaxing and Filling

From the early days in Russia, Gurdjieff taught relaxation and sensing (see *In Search of the Miraculous* pp. 350-1). There he initiated the practice followed more or less since of beginning relaxation starting from the muscles of the face. He also showed how to 'feel' (i.e. sense in fact) any part of the body at will. The exercise in 'circular sensation' shown around 1917 became Bennett's 'Six Point Exercise' used at Sherborne more than fifty years later.

It is not documented when Gurdjieff explicitly introduced the practice of 'filling', though it became 'The' exercise for many after his death. In 'filling' we bring sensation energy into the body. Starting with the feet. Thus, relaxation goes from top to toe and filling from toe to top. The head is the last thing to be filled with sensation.

The deliberate sensing and movement of sensation is at first an astonishing thing. As far as we know, no one besides Gurdjieff has drawn attention to this as a fundamental practice of voluntary experience. It predates biofeedback by half a century. It is also intriguing, as Ouspensky points out, that none of this to be found in yogic practice.

In teaching about relaxation and filling it was always emphasized that attention should never be drawn into the inner organs such as the heart, liver, spleen, etc. This advice is echoed in e.g. autogenic therapy. The reason for it is that unskilled attention can alter the tempo of functioning or other features of the organ. In general, Gurdjieff was against any altering of diet, chewing, breathing, etc.

Bennett's arms out sideways (a practice that certainly came from Gurdjieff) will inevitably produce sensation! It must be emphasized over and over again that Gurdjieff taught that we do not need to get beyond the physical because we are not in it yet - and the first step is to attain the physical!

Stillness

Besides keeping the body still, there was also taught a way of having an inner stillness as well. This concerned two things. The first was the 'balancing of the three centers' and the second was 'non-emanation'. The 'all-three-centred-balanced-state' was as it sounds, bringing the three centres into equal attention.

[As an aside, we might refer to the Samkhya system in which the primal nature or prakriti consists of the three gunas in equal proportions. In this condition, nature no longer obstructs or hides the 'witness', the spirit or purusha. Samkhya is the closest equivalent of the Gurdjieff system in Asian teaching, as was pointed out by Sri Anirvan in Lizelle Reymond's book *To Live Within* (readers should attempt to find the Coombe Springs Press edition since the current one is lacking some material).]

The non-emanating state is alluded to in the exercise of the Immovable Point discussed in our previous essay. In this, we imagine that our psyche is like a cloud surrounding the physical body through which 'vibrations' come and go. In the non-emanating state this flow of vibrations is calmed down and diminished. A more modern description would be 'containment'. The state is relaxed but not distracted.

The two - 'balanced' and 'non-emanating' - amount to the same thing in practice (at least, we have found so)

Conscious stealing

One of the many things that Gurdjieff taught was that there were concentrations of energy that included higher energies - we might also say now, that included information. He even suggested that there were such concentrations on the scale of the solar system, embodying 'images' of the higher principles. On Earth, he said that there were concentrations of energy around places associated with sacred individuals. The four usually referred to were: Lhasa (Saint Lama), Mecca (Muhammad), Benares (Buddha) and Jerusalem (Jesus). It was possible to 'download' we might say from such concentrations into ourselves for our own work.

This was associated with the concept of 'conscious stealing', which postulated that we could just 'take' something if we could really make use of it. How we might contact and draw into ourselves substance from such concentrations cannot easily be described here. Suffice it to say that we have to visualise such concentrations and connect with them by means of a 'thread', whence we bring their substance into locations in our bodies.

This linking with concentrations of energy associated with places extended to deliberately bringing higher energies into 'non-sacred' places such as London. This we did only once with John Bennett. It is mentioned here to emphasize this side of the exercises: making connections with places and energies outside of ourselves.

Sacred exercises

How the exercises developed with John Bennett is largely unknown. He introduced material from Sufi, Hindu and Taoist sources, though it is our contention that he remained true to Gurdjieff's method. We speak of sacred exercises here because as he developed or taught them, some of the exercises were religious in character. In 'The Eye of the Needle' exercise, for example, we were to realize what it is of us that can pass into the sacred realm.

We have no evidence whether Gurdjieff taught an exercise similar to 'The Master'. In this as in some other exercises, the attempt is made to connect with the 'Real "I"' employing means that treat this 'I' as a sacred image. There are demanding tasks of visualization involved.

Transmitting Exercises

In the Third Series (*Life Is Real Then, Only when 'I Am'*) Gurdjieff explains:

". . . I was convinced of the impossibility of exactly explaining and fully formulating in words the various fine points of the procedures of any intentional experiencings and exercises for the purpose of self-perfection . . .

.knowing at the same time of the existence among our remote ancestors of a special method which was then called the 'principle of illustrative inculcation' for the purpose of better taking in new information, I therefore introduced this method also in general program . . ."

Illustrative inculcation means taking people through the exercise while doing it oneself, so that the person teaching the exercise is in actual contact with what happens in it as he speaks. Besides making the explanations more authentic, there may be a biochemical factor. It seems from recent research that the action of peptides in one person can affect those in others who are near. The peptides are critical for the intercommunication between the three main physical systems: limbic-digestive; respiratory-circulatory and neural-brain.

Similarly, the instructor may be able to tune in to his audience and adjust what he says to suit their level of experience.

Final Comments

We propose that there is a basic Gurdjieffian 'I Am' exercise in which the subjective (I) and the objective (am) are fused. No one else has this basic exercise. Ramana Maharshi's 'Who am I?' is not the same thing.

To fuse I with Am we have to bring into play the three realms that are roughly indicated by thought, feeling and sensation. This bringing into play also minimizes distraction from mental associations. The exercises are done while sitting still. We do not know whether Gurdjieff taught them to be done with eyes closed or open.

The exercises require preparation and right disposition to begin, including some background understanding of what they are for. The exercises are not concerned with generating emotional experiences but with 'making a substance'. This substance is characterized somewhat as an 'ableness', such as in being able to "do".

The exercises are embedded in deep views of reality, or psycho-cosmologies. The latter term means an understanding of the world that also makes account of human experience and possibilities. Gurdjieff connects his exercises with active mentation. This might mean that it is possible to 'do' them while 'thinking' as long as there is sensation as well.

They are also related to some kind of practice 'in life'. Gurdjieff seems to advocate 'returning to oneself' - like touching base again - in his well known but obscure self-remembering ("to feel 'I' when he thinks of himself"). A typical experience of self-remembering is like a clean wave of energy sweeping through oneself that it is difficult to sustain without turning it into something of less value. There can also be a sense of the body that is very new and different from usual.

The exercises can become very complex, but everything depends on being able to become aware of energies or just 'something' - and to locate and direct them. Sensation, wish and attention are key. If anything, attention is the 'Philosopher's Stone', by which the enabling energies are generated.

Extracts from a section on 'Attention' in John Bennett's book Deeper Man

"To be effective, the will needs an energy that is like itself. Man has been given such an energy and with this he can set himself free.

"Many people believe this energy to be thought or consciousness; but it takes very little to realize that something deeper stimulates thought and that consciousness does not initiate anything. Neither thought nor consciousness are a true beginning. In every act of will there is a beginning of something new and the only thing that corresponds to an act of will is creative energy. . . .

"At the moment of bringing attention to something there is no effort; effort only comes in when we try to sustain our attention. . . .

"Work with attention enters into all work on oneself. It is the ground on which a great deal is based. If we cannot tell the difference between voluntary and involuntary attention, we are living in a dream world." (pages 34-6)

Gurdjieff on the possible transmutation of the physical body, from *In Search of the Miraculous*

"The whole of the physical body, all its cells, are, so to speak, permeated by emanations of the matter si 12. And when they have become sufficiently saturated the matter si 12 begins to crystallize. The crystallization of this matter constitutes the formation of the 'astral body'.

"The transition of matter si 12 into emanations and the gradual saturation of the whole organism by it is what alchemy calls 'transmutation' or transformation. It is just this transformation of the physical body into the astral that alchemy called the transformation of 'coarse' into the 'fine' or the transformation of base metals into gold." (page 256)

Gurdjieff on attention, feeling and sensing, from *Life is Real Only Then. When "I Am"*

". . . it is indispensable first to learn to divide one's entire attention in three approximately equal parts, and to concentrate each separate part simultaneously for a definite time on three diverse inner or outer 'objects'.

"For the possibility of a practical achieving of this aim, in the same mentioned detailed program [of G's Institute] were indicated a series of exercises under the name 'soil preparing'. . . .

"First, all one's attention must be divided approximately into three equal parts; each of these parts must be concentrated on one of the three fingers of the right or left hand, for instance the forefinger, the third and the fourth, constating in one finger - the result proceeding in it of the organic process called 'sensing', in another - the result of the process called 'feeling', and with the third - making any rhythmical movement and at the same time automatically conducting with the flowing of mental association a sequential or varied manner of counting. . .

". . . you Americans . . . totally lack any understanding of the difference between two entirely distinct impulses of an average man, namely, between the impulses of 'feeling' and 'sensing'."

After connecting feeling with the solar plexus and sensing with the spine, he goes on to urge his audience

". . . to understand the sense and significance of this exercise [exercise 4 in a series], without expecting to obtain any concrete results."

And he speaks of these exercises as "required for the acquisition of one's own individuality". (pages 112-5)

On the solar plexus

". . . a man who already has his real I, his will . . . 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. . . . 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. . ." (pages 134-5)