

Exploring Gurdjieff's Teaching of the Fourth Way—The Way of Transformation in Ordinary Life

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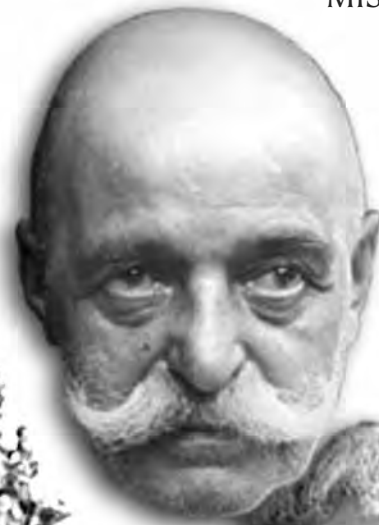
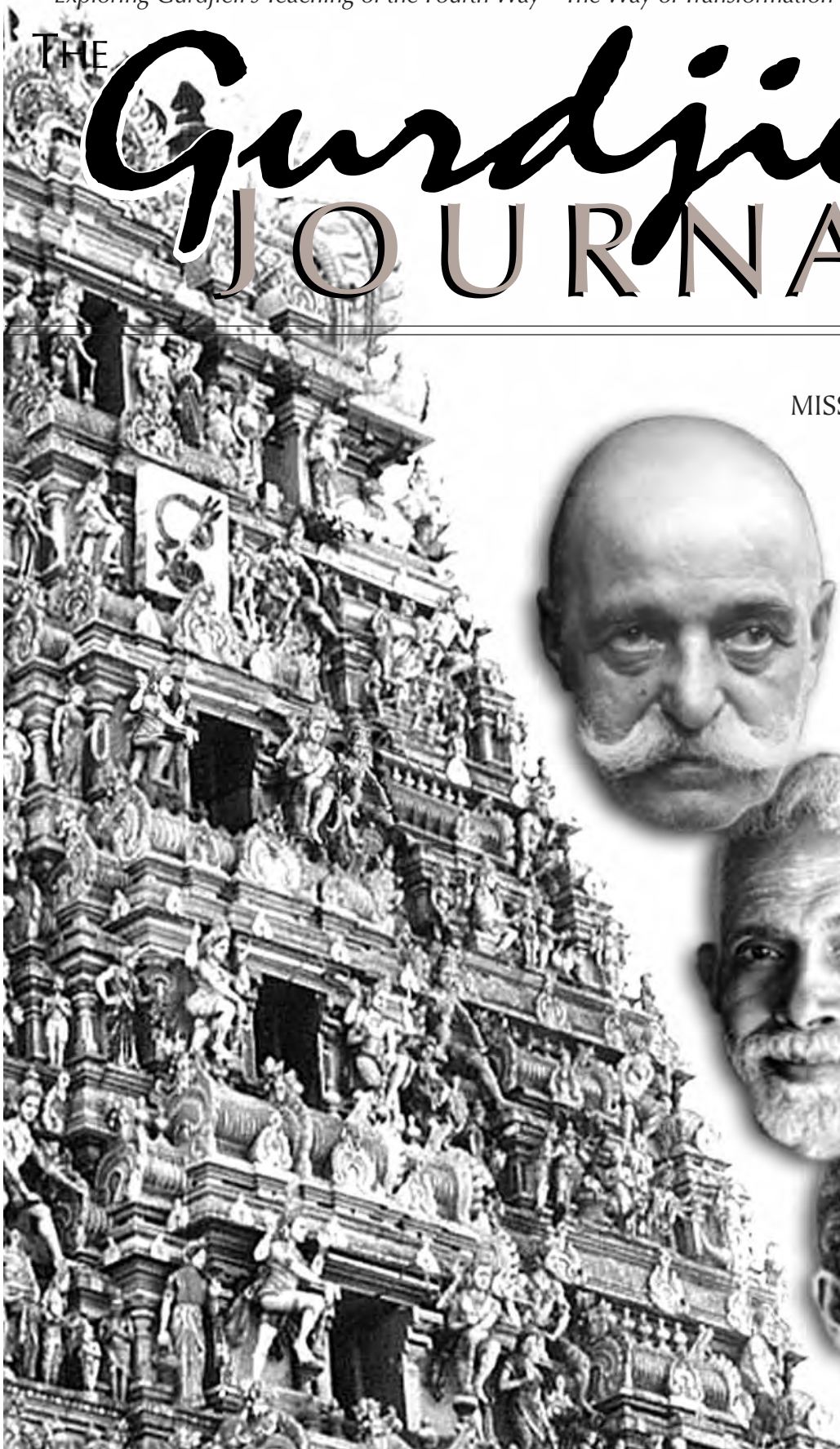
# Gurdjieff

## JOURNAL

\$7.50

MISS MERSTON IN INDIA  
Part III

**GURDJIEFF,  
RAMANA  
MAHARSHI  
& KRISHNA  
MURTI**



# Letters to TGJ

Please send your letters to  
The Gurdjieff Journal Letters,  
P.O. Box 58, Fairfax, CA 94978-0058,  
or email us at:  
aretelos@gurdjieff-legacy.org.

## Miss Merston Intriguing

I'm amazed and delighted at the level of research you folks do. Never knew much about Miss Merston but her story is intriguing. You are performing a vital and necessary function in straightening out and adding to the history of the Gurdjieff Work. Keep it going!

Paul Taylor  
Peoria, IL

## Nyland Defended

Thank you for posting [on our Website at [www.gurdjieff-legacy.org](http://www.gurdjieff-legacy.org)] the review of *On a Spaceship with Beelzebub*. When I first read the book, I actually liked it. But when I joined the Work at the Chardavogne Barn I realized how judgmental the book is. How is Mr. Kherdian justified to criticize Mr. Nyland and his group when he himself was a beginner at that time. He says Mr. Nyland didn't talk, and he played the piano for two hours. I find this hard to believe. There are literally thousand of tapes of his talks, question/answers, etc. and if I knew on which day he was there I could certainly

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## CONTENTS

Letters to The Gurdjieff Journal ....	2
Miss Merston in India, Part III: Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti & Gurdjieff.....	3
The Making of the Gurdjieff Trilogy: An Interview with William Patrick Patterson .....	7
John Lester: An Australian at Gurdjieff's Table.....	9
Gurdjieff & the Turkish Bath ....	11
Cannabis Sativa: Visionary Medicine or Blissful Poison? .....	13
Film Review: <i>Talk to Her</i> by Pedro Almodóvar .....	15
Art Review: Max Beckmann: Artist in Search of the Self .....	16
Kultur .....	27

look up the tape. But if he really wanted to hear Mr. Nyland's talk, he could have the next day or the following week. No? I don't mind him saying Mr. Nyland's playing was abysmal because Kherdian admits later in the book of his inability to hold a note in the choir. He says somewhere in the book that Gurdjieff's music sounds Armenian. I'm Armenian myself and this is simply not true.

Razmik  
New York, NY

## Adaptation Observed

I'd seen the movie but really didn't understand it until I read your review "Adaptation Observed." I like the way you are taking things from popular culture and showing how to see them from a Work perspective.

Donna E. Boss  
Colorado Springs, CO

## Sunyata

I knew Sunyata a.k.a. Mr. Nobody in Almora. I was there in '73 when the Alan Watts people came by and tried to induce him to come to America. I remember their guide telling them after they had visited Lama Govinda that if they really wanted to meet someone who lived what the great sages talked about they should meet him.

Larry Cofey  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

*Sunyata came to America in 1974 courtesy of the Alan Watts Society. Then he came for good in 1979. He gave a weekly darshan on Watts' houseboat in Sausalito and later at various places in Marin County. He was born in 1896 and died in 1984.*

## Weird Knots Unraveled

Thank you for the article "Gurdjieff, Sufism & Mohammed." It cleared up what kind of Christian Gurdjieff was, as well as showing—contrary to many people's belief—that he was not a Sufi or that his teaching is not just an assemblage of Sufi ideas. Weird how things get knotted!

Joan Parsons  
Las Cruces, NM

## Hard to See

After watching *Gurdjieff's Legacy* several times, I noticed a diagram on an easel in one of the photos that I have never seen before. What is it?

Andy Castagno  
Chicago, IL

*The video contains elements of the "third track" mentioned at the end of the interview in this issue. ✎*

## Sayings of Substance

There are periods in the life of humanity, which generally coincide with the beginning of the fall of cultures and civilizations, when the masses irretrievably lose their reason and begin to destroy everything that has been created by centuries and millenniums of culture. Such periods of mass madness, often coinciding with geological cataclysms, climatic changes, and similar phenomena of a planetary character, release a great quantity of the matter of knowledge.

Wars are not decreasing, they are increasing and war cannot be stopped by ordinary means. All these theories about universal peace, about peace conferences, and so on, are again simply laziness and hypocrisy. Men do not want to think about themselves, do not want to work on themselves, but think of how to make other people do what they want.... War has many causes that are unknown to us. Some causes are in men themselves, others are outside them. One must begin with the causes that are in man himself. How can he be independent of the external influences of great cosmic forces when he is the slave of everything that surrounds him? He is controlled by everything around him. If he becomes free from things, he may then become free from planetary influences.

Beings of one community began to pipe with full blast against beings of another community that 'Hasnamussian music' they call 'policy,' that is, they began to 'criticize each other,' to 'lower each other's standing,' 'to drown each other,' and so on, their aim being to create what is called 'prestige' among the local beings in relation to their own community.

There is just now proceeding the process of the final 'dispatch' of two of the great religions of the five mentioned...one on the teaching of Saint Jesus, and the other, on the teaching of Saint Mohamed.

...They produced these 'wars' or 'crusades' only in order that this city Jerusalem—in which this Divine Teacher Jesus Christ had existed, suffered, and died—should become exclusively Christian; and during these Crusades of theirs nearly half of the beings of male sex of that continent [Europe] were completely destroyed.... I already see in my mind's eyes that before many of their years have passed, there will be on the spot where the planetary body of the Divine Jesus was buried, a place for parking contemporary cars.

The teaching of Jesus Christ [is] the religion and teaching upon which the highest Individuals placed great hopes.

—G. I. Gurdjieff

# RAMANA MAHARSHI, KRISHNAMURTI & GURDJIEFF



*From Arunachala Hill, near Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's cave, the Shiva-Parvati temple could be seen down in the nearby city of Tiruvannamalai.*

**I**N 1946 MISS MERSTON LEFT FOR GOOD THE VILLAGE OVERLOOKING the Ganges where she'd lived for seven years. Though attached to Ramana Maharshi, she did not immediately settle at his ashram, but instead wandered about India, visiting friends and sights such as the great neglected temple complex of Khajuraho in central India. She wasn't always pleased by what she found. Regarding the Temple of Madura, for example, one of the most celebrated in South India, she said,

Its entrance [was] full of shops and stalls selling every conceivable souvenir from jewelry to lacquered toys, hideous colored prints of the deities, sandal paste, joss sticks, and goodness knows what: just what the Temple in Jerusalem must have been in Christ's day which caused Him such fury. Hindu temple authorities seem to have the same faculty for mixing commerce with religion.

Finally, in January 1947, she returned to Tiruvannamalai to "once more land at Bhagavan's feet," this time making it her

permanent home. More and more, his teaching seemed to be "my way, could I but follow it." Fifteen years later, appraising her diaries of this time, she would write,

How little I was ready, and, alas, still am—to put the teaching into steady practice. I see how again and again I tried first one aid for concentration and then another, never sticking to one for more than a few hours, a day or two or, at most, a week, forgetting for days on end. All my attention would be turned outward. On the streams of people who came into the Hall, on their dress, their actions, their behavior, wondering who they were, where from... associating constantly, mind always roaming, as it still does.

The Sarvadikari, Bhagavan's brother, ran the ashram on very orthodox Brahmin lines, so—as all women and families had to—Miss Merston lived outside the ashram grounds, where housing problems, getting meals, servant worries and such, didn't help "an extrovert like myself"

She was used to dealing with a variety of problems from her years of village life. "People soon gravitated my way when in need of something," she said. "Perhaps it would be nearer to the truth to say that, being used to taking responsibility and sensing needs, I would gravitate to them."

### **Life at the Ashram**

The ashram was still notable, as it was in 1939 when she had first visited, for "its cleanliness and the extreme punctuality of its routine; both unusual in India." Everyone took meals in the dining hall. It was divided by a high screen extending two-thirds of the way across the hall, the Brahmins on one side and on the opposite side the other castes and untouchables such as "we westerners." For his part, "Bhagavan sat on our side of the screen against the wall in such a way that both sides of the screen could see him. Even so, this made for some discontent amongst the Brahmins, many of whom would have liked to eat on our side of the screen so as to eat 'with' Bhagavan."

He would not allow this unless they discarded all their other special Brahmin customs, as he had done when he left home to live the life of a sadhu. Very few were willing to do so, as they would have been cut off from their families, polluted by having eaten with untouchables. "This did not shock me," said Miss Merston, "having learnt from Gurdjieff about the laws of vibrations underlying caste regulations, but it shocked most westerners who saw in it only pride and snobbery, knowing nothing of the laws."

At the end of a meal, everyone took their leaf platter from the table, including Bhagavan who would never accept special privileges. Later, as he grew older, Sarvadikari wanted him to leave his platter for a server to clear away, but he refused, so long as everyone else had to take theirs. It was only when Sarvadikari ordered everyone to leave their platters that "Bhagavan, satisfied, left his happily."

#### Miss Merston Intercedes

Once or twice a year on special festival days there were feasts. The poor came to be fed, often 1,000 or more. These were unruly occasions, with ruffians from the city charging barricades that had been erected, to be met by policemen who "beat all and sundry who tried to get in. The crowds surged, women were knocked down and Sarvadikari himself, trying to get out, had his shirt torn off his back in the melee. All this in an ashram, a holy place of peace! And in front of Bhagavan." Miss Merston vowed that it would not happen again. The next year at the feeding of the poor, she roped in ashram residents who sat with Bhagavan on the verandah of the little Hall where, day and night, he lived on his couch. At his back she put the police, and had all join hands to form a cordon, "and with banter and laughter kept the crowd from getting out of hand. It is truly marvelous what you can do with a crowd by a laugh. No one that day was knocked down, trampled on, or hurt."

The Hall was built east to west with a large open square to the north where mango trees and a terrace looked out on the sacred Hill of Arunachala. To the southwest of the Hall was a little adobe hut built over the grave of Bhagavan's mother where prayers were said daily and a sacred fire was lit. Before it died out, its ashes were brought to him in the Hall, and following custom, he would pass his hand over the flame and smear a bit of ash on his forehead. "Rightly or wrongly,"

## RAMANA MAHARSHI'S ASHRAM



*The stone bench in Virupaksha Cave where Bhagavan slept*

*Just inside the main gate is a 100-year-old peepul tree with the offices and bookstore on the right, the New Hall on the left.*



*In the New Hall, a statue of Bhagavan sits on a stone bench built for him—he would use it only for a few months.*

*The Old Hall, preferred by Ramana Maharshi, where visitors took darshan with him*

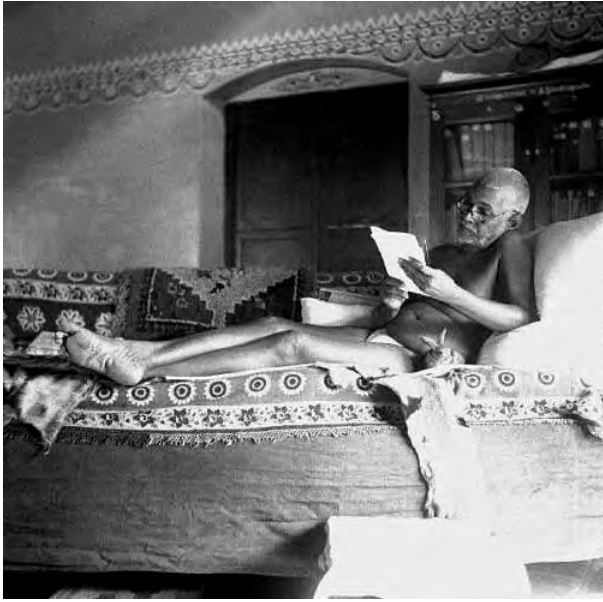


*The path to the shrines with the "Guest Room for Gentlemen" on the right*

*The dispensary, with a garden to its left used to grow herbs for the kitchen*



For more views of the ashram, see the Bhagavan Sri Ramanasram Website at [www.ramana-maharshi.org](http://www.ramana-maharshi.org).



*Bhagavan reading a letter*

Miss Merston said, "I always felt that he did this out of custom as a lead to us, for it could be of no significance to him who needed no reminders or help to realize That which he was already consciously."

Near the Hall to the east were a deep, stone-lined well, the office and bookshop and the great dining hall with a huge kitchen attached. Stretching further eastward were storerooms, the men's dormitory, the women's rest hut, the boy's Sanskrit school, post office, cow stables and the men's bathroom. Northwest of the square lay the dispensary with several beds and a cottage for the resident doctor. To the west were a few cottages for residents. South of the Hall was a temple-shrine erected by Sarvadikari in memory of his and Bhagavan's mother. Built of great blocks of granite hewn out of the local quarry and all the trimming and sculpture done on the spot in the traditional way, it dwarfed Bhagavan's little Hall. It was thought that Bhagavan might be enticed to live and give lectures there when the crowds began to grow too large, but he apparently never felt at home in the temple-shrine and toward the end of his life refused to stay in it.

### **The Rhythm of the Ashram**

Life at the Ashram revolved around a daily routine. At 4 A.M., the men and Bhagavan joined the kitchen staff in peeling the day's vegetables. At 5 A.M. everyone chanted the Vedas. At 6:45 breakfast was served, the Brahmins bringing buckets of sweet coffee and South Indian steamed rice-cakes which

were eaten with chutney. Everyone sat on the floor in rows with a leaf platter in front of them. Foreigners and North Indians ate with their fingers, but South Indians ate with their whole hand, making the rice quite liquid with pepper-water, crooking the fingers and half drinking, half licking the food from the wrist to the fingers. Lunch, at 11:30, was a large meal of rice, vegetable stew, vegetable curry, a pickle, pepper-water and buttermilk. Cups of tea were served at 2:30 and supper at 7:30, with the same fare as lunch.

Bhagavan always took a bath before breakfast.

Several women devotees always stood outside waiting for the bath water in which he had rinsed himself to gush out of the drainage hole. They would stoop down, cup a handful, drink some and smear the rest onto their heads. "They were sure," said Miss Merston, "that anything that had touched so holy a man would have a beneficent effect both spiritually and physically. It revolted Westerners to see dirty water thus drunk but who can say how far faith and science meet?"

After breakfast Bhagavan would take a walk, always visiting the cows, especially his pet Laksmi who would come daily into the Hall for a treat from his hand and almost bow to him. "When Laksmi died, many devotees considered her a realized soul and she was buried on the terrace with a bronze statue of her over the grave. Bhagavan himself attended her funeral at which the usual service for the dead was recited by the priest."

He walked slowly, leaning on a stick, as his hip and knee joints were affected by his youthful austerities. By 7:30 A.M. he returned to his couch where he would read the Tamil and English newspapers (he spoke English perfectly) or be absorbed in samadhi. At 9 he rose and, accompanied by an attendant, would walk on the hill of Arunachala, returning in a half hour to lie on his couch for the rest of the morning where devotees would sit quietly in his presence until a time came for questions. If they were of a private nature, he met with the person alone. He also would read his mail, giving

his secretary guidance on replies, commenting aloud on a subject if he knew it touched on someone's problem. Afterwards, he sat silently in samadhi but always ready to answer any questions asked by devotees or visitors, "either silently or aloud."

### **Indirection**

For some days a young North Indian boy had been "doing all sorts of antics in the Hall," according to Miss Merston, "contorting, moaning, crying out, quite oblivious of anything or any one around him. He'd been at it for days and was obviously doing some yogic practice, not Bhagavan's way and very dangerous for him." One morning she warned him that he was in danger of a bad breakdown. He didn't care, he said, as long as he got realization. He then went into the Hall and resumed his contortions.

Bhagavan was reading a letter from a woman in North India asking about the expiation of sins. He handed it to someone to read aloud, and then addressed the young man:

It is no good writing, one must act. It is of no use muttering and contorting unless it reminds you to turn inward and to think why you are so acting. The only use of repeated muttering is that in the end you may suddenly be reminded by it to enquire and think. Pranayama is useful only in so far as you enquire and think. Mere antics are of no use. If a pipe or wire leaks water or electricity, we shall be at pains to stop the leak. Similarly our job is to stop all leakage outward of the inward flow of Shakti.

"The poor young man heard none of this," said Miss Merston. "Absorbed by his antics, and even when told afterwards what Bhagavan had said, he persisted in his ways with the result foreseen—he fell very ill three weeks later and had to leave."

At first, like everyone else, Miss Merston asked questions but after a time found it unnecessary, having become able to receive Bhagavan's answers telepathically. "If I were really stuck over some problem," she said, "Bhagavan would seem to know it and I would get the answer silently projected by him into my consciousness. Sometimes I could even feel the current of the projected thought." Once when she had been mulling over a problem for several days, he suddenly asked his attendant to hand him a book on the *Puranas*. He turned to a passage,

passed the book to a devotee, and pointing to her, told the devotee to read the passage aloud. "It was a complete answer to my problem. But it is quite impossible to write of what Bhagavan did for me." A "lack of power to concentrate" worried her most at the time, her mind wandering "hither and yon, reacting to outward things. But in the little Hall, in Bhagavan's presence, I could sometimes get quiet."

### Ethel, Juliette or Esther?

A period came when she began inquiring into the names by which she was known, as they represented different "I's." Gurdjieff had spoken of nicknames as being important ways of seeing oneself. In addition to her given name of Ethel she was known as Juliette and Esther. "Each name," she said, "seems to apply to a different side of me: Juliette seems to represent universe, spirit, joyousness, lightness. Esther represents race, mind, heaviness, half-alive; Ethel, the person, the body, without life of her own, purely reactive. I see life as the current of 'I AM' bearing the three along with it." She came to see that Esther *thinks* she leads Juliette and Ethel and must always be 'doing' something. Esther uses Ethel's eyes and ears and pulls her away from Juliette who prefers to stay in the current. Ethel is completely passive and can be used by either Juliette, spirit, or Esther, mind, whichever is the stronger. As Juliette won't leave the

other two, she is taken from the current as well. Esther is aware that really the only way in the current is to stick close to Juliette, but is continually drawn aside by the rock islands of pride, jealousy, resentment, curiosity and so forth to which she clings. "Juliette is the most fluid and responsive to the current, in touch with it, whilst Ethel and Esther, body and mind, can only really be in touch with the current through her."

Miss Merston came to realize that each of the three had minds of their own but that they think differently.

Juliette is feeling-thinking, active thought, or pondering; Esther is thoughts-thinking or reactive thinking. Both can be watched through

Ethel's bodily reactions. Juliette receives in, Esther goes out. Juliette holds Ethel's head to the right and sees and hears impartially; Esther holds Ethel's head to the left and looks and listens and judges. Ethel gets tired when Juliette is at the helm, doubtless because the pace is too quick, kept back as she is by the slow Esther. Esther's voice is different from Juliette's.

One day a Parsee put a question to Bhagavan in English, but Miss Merston could neither hear the question nor the answer and she seethed. Later she wrote in her diary:

Why do I mind so much? Why do I so much want to know? Who wants to know? Presumably Juliette knows the



*Gods & goddesses on a gopuram of Meenakshi Temple in Madurai, South India*

answers, so it can only be Esther. She pretends interest, but would do nothing about it; it is, therefore, merely to satisfy her pride, and also a dislike of not being in on everything, of being outside anything considered important or good. I could ask the questioner what he had asked, but Esther does not want to show that she was out of it. Obviously then she has no real interest in the subject itself, but only in being 'in' it; also, someone is getting something valued and Esther is not. I see this and say to Esther (myself): 'Accept the fact that you can't have everything, or preferential treatment; be glad if it comes your way, but be neither sorry nor cross if it doesn't.'

### Return to Europe?

Though she had only been at the ashram a month or so, Miss Merston wondered whether to return to Europe. She had been gone nine years. Should she go and see friends and relatives or stay on with Bhagavan?

I could not make up my mind. In the end I put the question verbally to Bhagavan himself. I sought him out on the Hill during his morning walk and he replied in English that destiny decides where the body shall go; I couldn't. But my real nature always stays everywhere with me wherever I am. "So be in it. Wherever you are, remember, Bhagavan is there in your heart watching over you... It isn't in our power to say whether you will go or stay. Years ago, did you ever think that you would come

to India, to Bhagavan?... Even the urge to go is of the mind."

That Bhagavan spoke of the urge to go as of the mind when he might have said the urge to stay, decided me that I should stay. How right that decision proved, for it was to be the last three years of his life in the body.

One day shortly after, sitting quietly in the Hall, a "fine old man at the back, half-blind, half-paralyzed and seemingly half-mad, suddenly jumped up, his face radiant, laughed aloud and bowed first to Bhagavan then to all of us, repeat-

edly. He looked so happy and Bhagavan smiled so radiantly at him with such love in his eyes, that I wept with emotion." Later the old man told her, his face simple and child-like, that at that moment he had "got realization of the Self for which he had been searching for the past fifty years."

### Mind & Self

Miss Merston had great difficulty turning off her mind. And so she was especially alert when one afternoon a man asked Bhagavan:

*Q: How am I to get rid of the mind?*

*A: Attach yourself to You, not to the outside.*

*Continued on page 20*



talking about in terms of time?

WPP: The time was 7,500 B.C.E. and before. That was when Egypt was green. Later I came upon a video by John Anthony West, a member of the Gurdjieff Society in England, who believes that the Sphinx dated from pre-sand Egypt. He had read *Sacred Science* by René Schwaller de Lubicz, the great hermetic Egyptologist, in which de Lubicz says that the erosion we see on the Sphinx is not caused by wind or sand but water. West has done a lot of pioneering and innovative work with geologists to establish the true date of the Sphinx and is still carrying on the struggle.

TGJ: With this insight why didn't you write a book rather than do a video?

WPP: I've written a number of books so that would not be a challenge. More importantly, I believe, as never before, we need to build bridges to young people, and young people seem to be more influenced by video and film than books. Then, too, I have groups and groups need projects and what better project to jump into than something none of us knew anything about.

TGJ: Did you plan a trilogy from the outset?

WPP: No, not at all. Creating a video was a many faceted project. Our aim was to meet professional standards so that what we did technically would not take away from the tremendous and unrecognized story we had to tell of Gurdjieff's search in Egypt and Abyssinia.

TGJ: Unrecognized?

WPP: Yes, most people believe that the origin of the Fourth Way was in Central Asia—basically Sufi or dervish. Either that or Russian Orthodox Christianity.

TGJ: Why is that?

WPP: Let's get into that later. So, as I was saying, we just hoped we could com-

plete the first video—we had no idea of doing a trilogy. But then on completing *Gurdjieff in Egypt* it just seemed right and necessary to tell the entire story.

TGJ: Necessary? Most people know the story don't they?

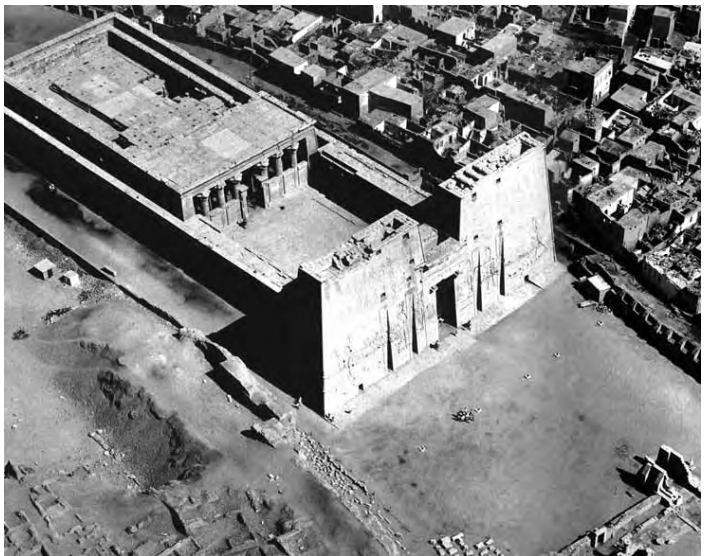
WPP: To some extent. But I believe the emphasis has been ...

TGJ: Wrong?

WPP: The film of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, as beautiful and compelling as it is in many sections, gave only a part of Gurdjieff's life. James Webb's biography of Gurdjieff shows prodigious research but is fanciful at times and biased throughout. James Moore's biography is much better, but I find his vision conventional and limited and the language too self-referential.

TGJ: What about Bennett's *Making a New World*?

WPP: This is his best book in my opinion. But he believes the origin of the teaching is Sufi. He, like Ouspensky, has had a significant influence on framing the public view of the teaching. Just as Ouspensky believed the teaching was fragmentary—his view was based solely on the Russian period of the teaching, and when presented with Gurdjieff's Legominism he thought it was rubbish—Bennett, too, never seems to have realized what Gurdjieff says in *Search*, that “The



The Temple of Edfu, 30 miles south of Thebes, on whose walls hieroglyphs speak of the Seven Sages

teaching whose theory is here being set out is completely self-supporting and independent of other spiritual lines and it has been completely unknown up to the present time.” The emphasis is mine.

TGJ: You lost me.

WPP: Bennett was introduced to the teaching three times. In Constantinople in 1921. At the

Prieuré in 1923. And in Paris in 1948. From what Bennett reports in *Witness*, Gurdjieff had high hopes of Bennett spreading and carrying on the teaching. Instead, Bennett hopped from the Work to Subud to Catholicism to Idries Shah to Hinduism and then into some eclectic combination of all these which he taught and called the Fourth Way. His actions show he never realized that “the teaching . . . is completely self-supporting and independent of other spiritual lines.”

TGJ: You mean he shouldn't have kept searching?

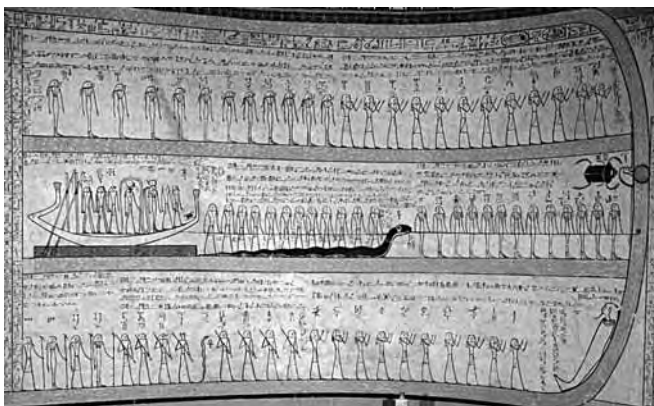
WPP: Like a good many people who enter the Work, he didn't realize the search was over. He had found what he had been searching for. Some people, you know, are perennial seekers. They 'collect' teachings and teachers but remain aloof, uncommitted. It's one form of what I call esoteric egoism.

TGJ: Let me see if I understand what you're saying. Namely, that Ouspensky's and Bennett's views have largely framed the teaching—Ouspensky in terms of it being fragmentary and Bennett because he believes it is derivative in origin—mainly Sufi. Right?

WPP: That's good enough for now.

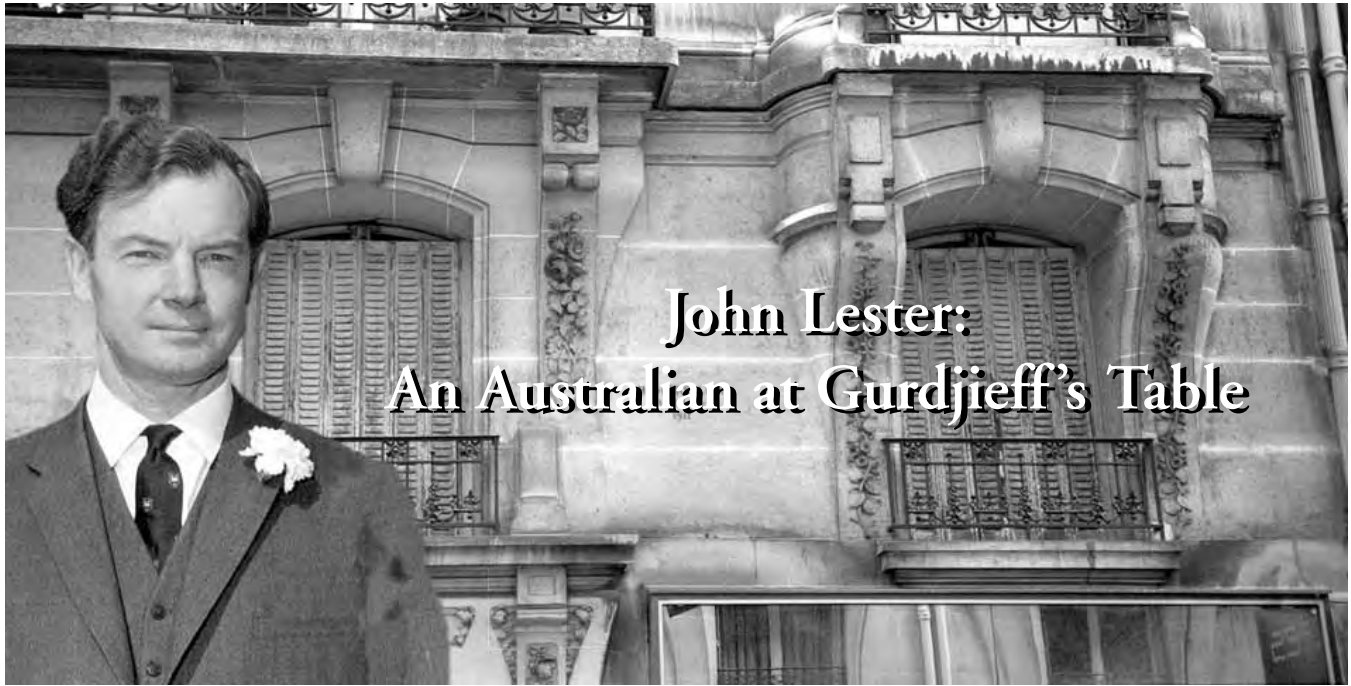
TGJ: So what is your viewpoint?

WPP: Let me first just clear up another strand of thought. In *Search* when Gurdjieff is asked “What is the relation of the teaching to Christianity as we know it?” Gurdjieff replies: “I don't know what you know about *Christianity*”—Ouspensky puts the word in italics, noting that Gurdjieff emphasized the word. This indi-



The 12th hour of Am Duat, from the Book of the Dead in the tomb of Tutmosis III

Continued on page 25



Dr. John Lester

Mr. Gurdjieff's apartment windows at 6 rue des Colonels-Renard

## John Lester: An Australian at Gurdjieff's Table

***Indecision is due to emotional interference.—John Lester***

THE ONLY AUSTRALIAN WHO SAT AT GURDJIEFF'S TABLE IN PARIS, so far as I know, was Dr. John Ritchie Lester. Born in Mansfield, Victoria, Australia in 1919, he went to Oxford just before the outbreak of WWII to study medicine. He had thought of going into law, but although accepted by a prestigious law school, he thought better of it. Legal practice seemed to him to be so intimately involved with pathology. While in England, he met Jane Heap and became her devoted student until the day of her death in 1964. Between 1946 and 1949 he frequently traveled to Paris, as Gurdjieff's pupil. Eventually, he moved to Oregon to study with Mrs. Annie Lou Staveley who, like himself, had studied with Jane Heap and Gurdjieff. He always said that he had been extremely fortunate in having had as his teachers Gurdjieff, Jane and Annie Lou (as he always called them).

***The value of living is the number of inexperienced experiences you can make to pervade your organism. The rest is automatic repetition.—John Lester***

As a physician, Dr. Lester had an eventful life. He was part of the testing of antibiotics in WWII, when it had been found that small amounts could be quite effective, and was concerned when he saw

large quantities prescribed for no compelling reason. He became disillusioned with medicine as it was practiced. Jane Heap recommended that he try osteopathy, on the grounds that medicine, bound by society's rules, was too often practiced unsympathetically. Following her advice, Dr. Lester eventually became dean of the London School of Osteopathy.

However, Dr. Lester never ceased to use all of his knowledge to treat his patients. He was, for example, a pioneer of wheat-free diets for cases of hyperactivity. He first met with success when he treated a child who had driven his parents to despair. He had the child taken off wheat. When the boy's father came to visit, he walked straight past the child, who was now playing so calmly that the father needed a little time to recognize his son.

Another case concerned a woman with intractable psychiatric problems. Dr. Lester asked her to sit outdoors for two thirty-minute periods each day, her bare feet in contact with the earth. This technique worked a remarkable and permanent cure. He had long held a theory that our way of life is overly divorced from nature. Most animals live in constant and direct contact with the earth, or trees, or water. We are the only creatures to insulate ourselves from nature. We wear shoes and socks, and live and sleep with a membrane of tarmac, concrete, carpet and brick between the good earth and ourselves. This, Dr. Lester believed,

affected the electrical nature of our bodies; we are not properly "grounded." By bringing this woman into contact with the bare earth, the natural circuits were able to operate as they should, and sixty minutes a day were sufficient to restore her to her mind.

***Cure a pain or unhappiness by taking on the potentiality for a greater one.—John Lester***

In respect of the numerous teachers who took part in spreading Gurdjieff's ideas after his death, Dr. Lester once wrote:

For what it is worth I look at all our teachers as far far below Gurdjieff and they, like us, are all too human, struggling with the consequences of the organ Kundabuffer. So what if one sees they are crystallized in vanity and oneself in lying. One crystallization is no better than another and for the sufferer they are all equally difficult to eat, swallow and digest.

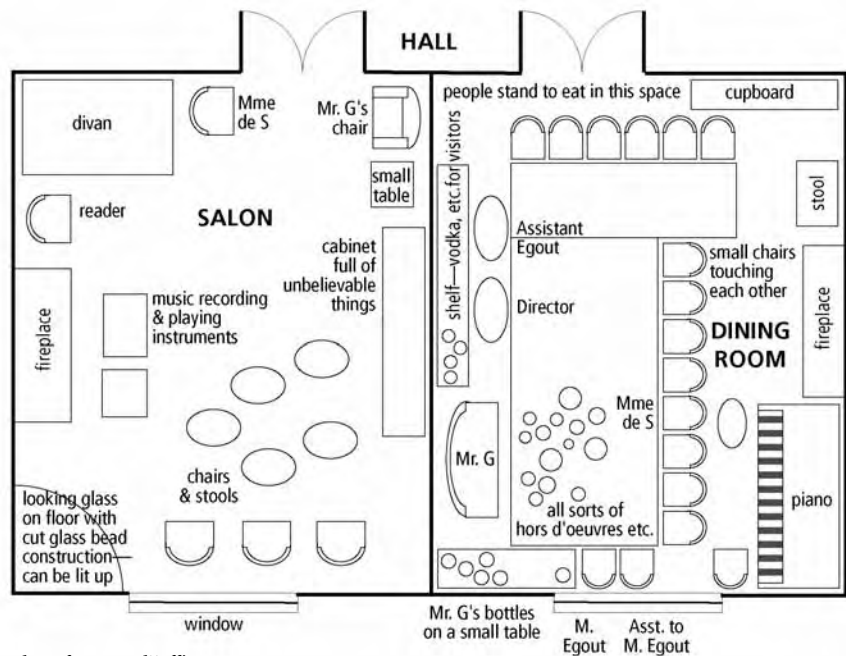
Dr. Lester was one of the most impartial men I ever knew, and therefore one of the most fearless, for he had rendered passive that fear that prevents us from seeing things as they are and calling them by their right name. In fact, he gave me quite a shock over the revised version of *Beelzebub*. I had been unthinkingly taking the "party" stand, defending it and saying that we should be united and so on. Dr. Lester had written to me with his reasons for refusing to accept it, chiefly,

that no one had the understanding of Gurdjieff, and Gurdjieff had emphatically approved the English book as first published in 1950. In Paris Gurdjieff had often advised him to "Read my book!" He knew at first hand what care Gurdjieff had taken with it. Errors of punctuation and spelling were one thing. Dr. Lester could contemplate their correction with equanimity, but he absolutely insisted that Gurdjieff did not treat the English book as a translation. Gurdjieff had endorsed the English, and no one had the level of being necessary to authorize a change, especially not to make the prose easier for the reader, as its "difficulty" was absolutely intentional. Gurdjieff meant us to labor while reading *Beelzebub* on the third and subsequent occasions.

I was still laboring under my first views of the revised translation, when I was engaged in a telephone conversation with Dr. Lester. He raised the question again and I began humoring him, self-consciously proving my loyalty to the "authorities" who were behind the new version. At a moment that I shall never forget, I was suddenly more present and realized that I was not being honest with myself. This man knew what he was talking about and was as honest and true as he could be. I saw how superficial and sly my own defense of the new version was. I was finding arguments to support something I had unthinkingly accepted. What was my opinion, as opposed to the opinion something in me had accepted? Here



Jane Heap



Plan of Mr. Gurdjieff's apartment

was a man who knew how to hold onto what was good and who made up his own mind on vital issues.

He also insisted that the exercises Gurdjieff had given his students should not be abandoned but could be used by contemporary students. He did not criticize the new type of sitting and exercise. His position seems to have been that those who found them helpful could use them, but that pupils of Gurdjieff would study Gurdjieff's own—superior—sittings and exercises, and then perhaps add others. Bennett too, ultimately seems to have come to this view.

In groups, Dr. Lester encouraged people to work in such a way that their thoughts and conclusions were really their own, and not to identify with every stray notion passing through their heads. "Pondering," he said, "is not done with the head alone but also with feeling and body. So when you receive an answer to your questioning, put it away. Just wait until something appears here (gesturing over the chest). Then I get an answer I really know about."

***I can cease repetition when I have experienced something fully and no longer need it. I can then pass on to the next.***

—John Lester

The ongoing Gurdjieff work was central to Dr. Lester's life—he organized his life and appointments around it. Consequently, he seemed to have had no fixed geographical home, and yet he always

remained an Australian, forever keen to have news of "down under." In 1997–98 he returned to Australia from Oregon to see his family and visit the groups there. He was planning to return again when his health deteriorated, and he soon after died. This was a shame—he had been seriously thinking of moving back to Australia, and I am fairly sure it would have suited him in a way that the United States never could.

Dr. Lester loved to pass on what he had learned from Jane Heap—which actually originated in Gurdjieff—but one was rarely told this was so. It was what one made of the disclosure that counted: Could one verify it? Again, Jane had been a juggernaut in making her people think independently and broadly. Nothing human seemed beyond her interest. Egyptian civilization fell, she said, because it was "too spiritual and not enough with feet on the ground." "Shakespeare," she said, as in "Shakespeare's plays," was really a school which put forward William Shakespeare as their front man. This would go some way to explaining why there is an enigma around the authorship of the plays. One piece of advice Dr. Lester wrote in 1995 bears repeating:

Work groups need some kind of momentum but also *initiative* to keep

Continued on page 18

OF ALL THE BOOKS WRITTEN ABOUT THE GURDJIEFF WORK AND GURDJIEFF'S METHOD OF

TEACHING, very rarely do we hear much of Gurdjieff's teaching at the Turkish bath at the Prieuré. C. S. Nott touches briefly on the bathhouse and Fritz Peters writes of Gurdjieff's behavior both there and at the swimming pool. Despite numerous speculations and lurid rumors published in newspapers at the time, Gurdjieff

maintained a traditional setting at the Prieuré bathhouse. Says Peters: "The men and women bathed separately at the bath...the swimming pool was equipped with curtains which were always drawn whenever anyone went in swimming. It was forbidden, in fact, for even the small children to swim without drawing the curtains."

The design was not complex, but there were separate rooms for different purposes. "The first room, into which one enters, was for dressing and undressing; the second room was a large circular room, equipped with a shower and several water faucets...the third room was the steam-room with wooden benches on several levels." Nott says the bath "was sunk in the ground, the roof just showing above." Bathing at the Prieuré was a weekly event, early Saturday afternoon for the women, and early Saturday evenings for the men. The women's bath must have been "a dull affair," Nott writes, "since they did not have Gurdjieff to entertain them as he did us." Entertain or teach? Was the Turkish bath at the Prieuré merely a cleansing ritual, a time to "let one's hair down?" Or was it a particular place where Gurdjieff taught, a place that has its roots in antiquity? Earlier in *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, Nott writes that Gurdjieff never behaved rashly without some meaning behind his actions. Could the same be said for his "ribald or off-color" stories told in the bath at the Prieuré?

## Gurdjieff & the Turkish Bath



The entrance to the Turkish bath at the Prieuré

### Baths Have Greco-Roman Roots

The Turkish baths do not have their history in Islamic roots; rather the style of the baths goes back much further to ancient Greco-Roman times. "Turkish baths are the direct and only descendent of this long line of baths and bathing culture which started with classical prototypes," writes Fikret Yegül in his archaeological work on the ancient baths. Public baths of such style date back to the recorded bathhouses in Greece, which were conjoined with their gymnasiums. These centers focused on physical development; bathing and oiling the body became part of the process for athletes. This union was not always considered wholesome however; the baths were considered by some to be corrupting. Later Greeks, such as the playwright Aristophanes, decried the "ruined lads" who abandon the gymnasium for the bathhouse.

The bathhouses of ancient Rome established more of what public baths have become known for. While hundreds of small public baths existed in the Roman territory, there were also several enormous structures for large-scale public bathing called *thermae*. These were social centers, equipped with libraries, lecture halls, promenades and several chambers with hot water baths (*caldaria*), cold water baths (*frigidaria*), steam rooms, and masseuses. The *thermae* were political hotspots, the place of the business deal, a gathering spot for

friends and a place of prostitution. Moreover, the public baths attracted people of all classes; "The baths represented an anomaly, a remarkably egalitarian feature of Roman daily life, a place where social distinctions broke down."

As the pagan era came to an end and Western Christianity moved to Rome, the baths remained, with the Church establishing a stricter morality in the baths based on the taboo of public nudity. At times, the

Church seemed to adopt a "don't ask, don't tell" approach to public bathing. Of course, there were small sects of monks, such as the Alousia, who decried not only bathing in public but bathing at all. But the elite of the Roman church, the priests, the bishops, even the pontiff himself, were often frequent visitors to public bathhouses.

Like all civilized amenities, the public bathhouse spread throughout the world. At its height, there were 154 small baths and eight *thermae* in Constantinople, making it second only to Rome in the number of baths. Islamic countries also adopted public baths (called *hammans* or *hammams*), as their influence spread into Africa and further east. These places, writes Yegül, operated as "a form of social gathering linked with the ultimate luxury of water and hot baths in the desert...[they] provided new urban aristocracy not only with physical comforts but also with symbols of a princely lifestyle."

### A Setting for Teaching

Public baths have had a rich history throughout the world, from the gymnasiums to the *hammans*. So at the Prieuré, was the bath merely a method of cleansing? Was Gurdjieff merely entertaining? Or was there a teaching behind it? Gurdjieff's base joking and chiding regarding the body offered an unusual way of bringing students to question their conditioning, while working inside an age-old tradition. This unique nuance is

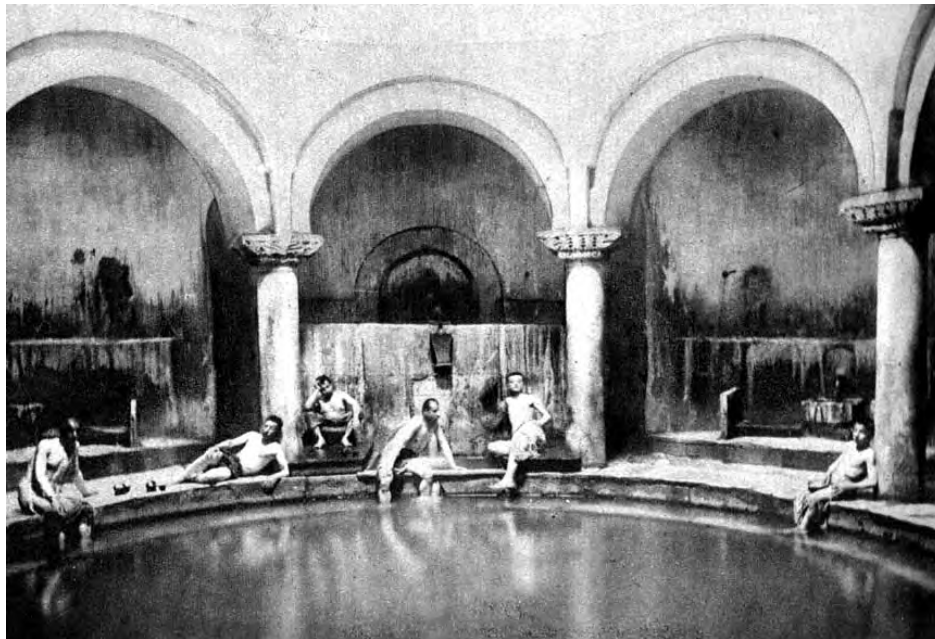
clearly seen in two recorded episodes. In the first, described in *Boyhood with Gurdjieff*, the Archbishop had come to bury Gurdjieff's wife, Mme Julia Ostrowska. Although participating in the Saturday night bath ritual, he refused to take the bath nude, and Gurdjieff "made numerous references to the Scriptures, and generally poked fun at the Archbishop's 'false modesty.'" As the episode progressed, leaving the steam room for the washing room, Gurdjieff's tone changed. He began to talk of the cleansing ritual, how the Archbishop's modesty was "psychologically and physically harmful ... [and that] ... many religious ceremonies in former civilizations had stressed such cleanliness as a part of their religious and sacred rites." In the dressing room, during the half-hour "cooling off," Gurdjieff changed his tone again, bringing the discussion around to completion. "Mr. Gurdjieff brought up the question of funerals and said that one important measure of respect even for the dead was to attend their obsequies fully cleansed, in mind and body. His tone, which had been ribald in the beginning, serious in the washing room, had become conciliatory and persuasive and he reiterated that he had in no way intended to show disrespect to the Archbishop."

### The Sex Center

Edwin Wolfe, in his short work *Episodes with Gurdjieff*, describes another example of Gurdjieff's behavior in the bathhouse. "He had been speaking about Little Mister. This subject he obviously enjoyed speaking about for he embellished his talk with broad smiles and large descriptive gestures." Wolfe, who was new to the Prieuré thought he understood, but must have thought the subject peculiar enough to ask his neighbor for the

exact meaning. What seemed like simple joking (indeed it elicited "subdued laughter" among the students) quickly became a discussion of the function of sex center. "Mr. Gurdjieff was now saying that often Little Mister was much more powerful than Big Mister. His influence was really impressive. In fact, Little Mister was often the real boss." Again we are faced with Nott's comment that Gurdjieff did not act rashly or in such a manner without a purpose.

In addition to Gurdjieff's recorded behavior in the bathhouse, we also have what Gurdjieff said about baths, as recorded in *All and Everything*. This record is different from that of the archaeologists Yegül and Fagan. As humans had taken to wearing clothes, an "oily-something" collected in the



A Turkish bath in Constantinople in 1921

pores of the skin, for which "it was necessary to seek a method for artificially eliminating from the pores of the skin these remains of the second food." This could only be accomplished by the slow warming unique to the hammam.

Though largely unmentioned, the bathhouse at the Prieuré held a very important place, both in the sense of tradition and in having students look at their conditioning. It showed a side of Gurdjieff both adhering to ancient ritual and to his work at establishing the Fourth Way. ✎

— David Morley

### Notes

1. *Men and women bathed separately*. Fritz Peters, *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1964) p. 80.
2. *The first room*. Peters, p. 105.
3. *Sunk in the ground*. C. S. Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 58.
4. *A dull affair*. Nott, p. 58.
5. *Archaeological work on ancient baths*. Fikret Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), p. 350.
6. *Ruined lads*. Yegül, p. 427.
7. *Social distinctions broke down*. Garrett C. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 189.
8. *Alousia*. Yegül, p. 318.
9. *Second only to Rome*. Yegül, p. 324.
10. *Princely lifestyle*. Yegül, p. 349.
11. *Mme Julia Ostrowska*. Always referred to as Gurdjieff's wife, there is no record of their ever marrying, though Gurdjieff is buried next to her beside the large menhir under which she is buried. Significantly, their heads point toward the East. Gurdjieff's mother is buried beneath the smaller menhir. In reality Mme Ostrowska may be Vitvitskaia. See William Patrick Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope: Gurdjieff's Special Women's Group*, (Fairfax, Calif.: Arete Communications, 1996) pp. 249–254.
12. *False modesty*. Peters, p. 106.
13. *Cleanliness*. Peters, p. 106.
14. *In no way intended to show disrespect*. Peters, pp. 106–07.
15. *He had been speaking about Little Mister*. Edwin Wolfe, *Episodes with Gurdjieff* (Far West Press, 1974), p. 5.
16. *Artificially eliminating from the pores*. G. I. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (New York: Penguin Arkana, 1964), p. 649.

**I**T WAS DISCOVERED IN 1988 THAT THE HUMAN BRAIN HAS RECEPTOR SITES for the psychoactive constituents of the marijuana plant, *cannabis sativa*. This discovery led to speculation that man and plant may have coevolved in a symbiotic relationship over many thousands of years. In fact, marijuana is among humankind's first cultivated plants and has had a role, in one form or another, in the vast majority of known cultures and civilizations. It is well documented that marijuana has been used for textiles, paper, oil, rope and medicine for at least 10,000 years. The oldest known piece of cloth is made of hemp. There is evidence of hemp cord wrapped around clay pots as early as 8,000 B.C. The medicinal and psychoactive uses are also well documented throughout known human history. In the modern Western world, it

## *Cannabis Sativa* Visionary Medicine or Blissful Poison?

tetrahydrocannabinol) and is metabolized into more than 100 compounds in the body. About 60 of the other constituents in marijuana are structurally related to THC (cannabinoids) and are metabolized in a similar manner. So actually, when marijuana is smoked, many thousands of compounds affect the body and brain. THC is responsible for 70% to 100% of the psychoactive effects of cannabis. THC is present mostly in the flowering buds and upper leaves of the female plant, but can vary in concentration from less than

the basal ganglia, cerebellum, hippocampus, and cortical levels I and VI. These areas control motor coordination, short-term memory, the brain's reward system, as well as many other complex functions that are not understood.

The reason marijuana overdoses are not lethal is because of the very low concentration of receptors in the brainstem regions controlling cardiovascular and respiratory functions. In fact, marijuana has no known lethal dose. Morphine and related opiates bind very tightly to another



is the most commonly used illicit drug and is far easier for the average American teenager to obtain than alcohol or tobacco. But what exactly is marijuana? Why are there receptor sites for it in the brain? How does it affect the brain? Is it medicine or is it poison? Can it help or hinder us in our search for truth?

### What Is Marijuana?

Marijuana has many names. It is known as pot, weed, grass, hemp, cannabis, hashish, ganja, dogga, as well as many other names in modern and ancient languages. Marijuana is not just a single chemical, however. The marijuana plant contains over 400 identifiable chemical compounds. This number increases to 2,000 compounds when the plant is burned (smoked). In addition, when the body metabolizes these compounds, the number of subsequent chemical compounds increases significantly. For example, the main psychoactive constituent in this mixture is THC (delta-9-

1% to 12% in individual plants, depending on phenotype and environment. The other well-known major constituents are CBD (cannabidiol), the biosynthetic precursor to THC; and CBN (cannabinol), the degradation product of THC. These two components modulate the subjective effects of THC on the brain.

### This Is Your Brain on Pot

Not long after it was discovered that the brain has receptor sites for THC, it was discovered why. Actually, the receptors are not for THC at all. THC only mimics a natural, endogenous messenger chemical that is involved in higher brain functions and many other, mostly not understood, functions. In 1992, this messenger molecule was discovered and given the name *anandamide*, derived from the Sanskrit word for bliss, *ananda*. THC and other constituents of cannabis bind to anandamide receptor sites with a slightly greater affinity than anandamide itself. These receptors are concentrated in

receptor site intended for endogenous polypeptides known as *enkaphalins*, or endorphins. With a high concentration of these types of receptors in the brainstem, opiates bind to brainstem cells controlling basic functions such as heartbeat and breathing, and consequently, it is not uncommon for users to die from an overdose of morphine, heroin or opium. The reason opiates are more addictive than marijuana is because their binding affinity to their respective receptor site is very high, compared to THC. Dependence and sometimes addiction to marijuana is not unusual. Tolerance in frequent users is very common.

The highest concentration of anandamide receptor sites is not in the brain, but in a woman's uterus. Anandamide is somehow involved in the first communications between mother and fetus. How marijuana affects this early communication is not understood and is only recently receiving attention. Many other

organs in the body contain receptors for anandamide, as well.

Whereas anandamide is quickly metabolized in the body, marijuana cannabinoids are not. In fact, they are highly lipophilic (fat-soluble) and are only very slowly cleared from the body. Cannabinoids accumulate in fatty tissues and deposit on cell membranes. Recent studies indicate that this accumulation results in a slowing of cellular renewal (DNA/RNA replacement) with a consequent deceleration of cellular activity. This may explain marijuana's lowering of the body's energy level, cognitive clarity, sperm counts, testosterone production, ovulation and awareness of the passage of time.

### Medicinal Uses

Marijuana is the most potent anti-nausea substance known. It has been

ahead, to know their possibilities better, to see beforehand, 'in advance,' what can be attained later on as the result of prolonged work.

Marijuana creates certain effects in the user that alter perception and suggest new possibilities and potential directions. Some of the most commonly reported effects include the following:

Euphoria.

Aesthetic experiences and emotions are brought into high relief.

Sexual experiences take on new qualities with deeper pleasure, becoming a whole-body awareness.

Visual patterns are detected in seemingly meaningless shapes, lines, etc.

Colors take on a spiritual glow.

Visual images take on a tactile quality

Difficulty in reading.

Memory span is shortened, often with a lapse of memory while speaking in mid-sentence.

Ease in going-with-the-flow and accepting whatever is happening.

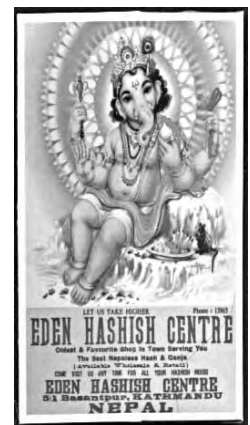
Easily side-tracked from completing tasks.

Feeling of power and self-significance with high capabilities and intelligence.

Ease in falling asleep.

Confusion and paranoia.

These effects are most powerful in novice users. In time, with repeated use, tolerance develops and the intensity of the experiences decreases. Some serious users deliberately abstain for six months to clear the body of marijuana so that the initial intensity can be reexperienced.



shown to be extremely useful in alleviating nausea during chemotherapy for cancer patients. It also stimulates appetite for HIV patients suffering from wasting syndrome. Beneficial effects have also been shown in the treatment of glaucoma, multiple sclerosis and epilepsy. Many pharmaceutical companies and universities have active programs investigating these uses of marijuana. The brain's cannabinoid system is not well understood and any marketable drug from these studies is not expected anytime soon.

### Consciousness & Pot

Drugs have been used to "expand consciousness" and to see to the "next level" of what might be possible. As Gurdjieff wrote:

In many cases these substances are those you call 'Narcotics.' But they can be used in an entirely different way. People in these schools take them for self-study, in order to take a look

or sensation.

Rhythms in music stand out and are more vivid.

There is greater spatial separation between instruments in music.

Sensory enhancement, especially in the tactile sense.

Sense of taste takes on new qualities with greater interest and enjoyment in eating.

Distortions in the sensing of the passage of time.

Distances between things seem greater.

Total absence of body awareness when focused on fantasy.

Physical relaxation and lack of interest in getting up to move.

Ostensible deep insight into others and into oneself.

Greater sense of empathy.

Most others develop tolerance and continue to smoke more. For some individuals, dependence develops. New studies show that actual addiction does occur, however, the withdrawal effects are muted due to the very slow clearance of THC and its metabolites from the body. Withdrawal symptoms include fatigue, anxiousness, depression and muscular tension. The link between anxiety disorders and long-term marijuana use has just recently been recognized as a serious risk. Individuals differ greatly in their response to the effects of marijuana. In rare cases, marijuana triggers a chronic anxiety disorder. There are even more serious risks from marijuana, however.

### Cannabis as a Blissful Poison

Marijuana is a complex mixture of chemicals that affect numerous body systems in a complex manner. These

Continued on page 17

## Film Review

# Egotism Erased

Talk to Her

Directed by Pedro Almodóvar

IT'S NOT OFTEN ONE SEES A FILM THAT REACHES SO DEEPLY THAT AT ITS END THE MIND IS LEFT WITHOUT WORDS. And when later feelings form into words even the best seem so paltry in comparison. Such a film is *Talk to Her* by the Spanish auteur Pedro Almodóvar, whose *All About My Mother* won an Oscar in 1999. This new film probes the depths and many-sidedness of communication, vacancy, loneliness, love and obsessive passion as it moves the viewer to encounter forbidden territory in a way that is neither black nor white.

### Strangers in Affinity

From the very beginning one is put into question. We see a modern dance performance in which two women, their eyes closed, their minds taken by trance, move quickly between two walls on either side of the stage, a man scurrying before them removing tables, chairs and other obstacles so the women don't hurt themselves. In the audience sit two men, polar opposites, one earthy, strong and

worldly, the other soft, sensitive, immature, both touched and taken by the performance, which causes the worldly man to weep. They are strangers and would never know one another were it not for events that bring them together in a hospital, each involved with women who are comatose.

Marco (Darío Grandinetti), the strong one, is a journalist. He is writing a piece on Lydia (Rosario Flores), a female bullfighter, who has just broken up with her lover, another bullfighter. Though fearless with bulls, Lydia is afraid of snakes.

Finding a snake in her kitchen she becomes hysterical. Marco kills the snake for her and the two become close. Almodóvar does not explain Lydia's fear of snakes. But the film tracks on many levels, one of which is the mythic. Given the primordial garden experience, it's not surprising that serpents can cause women deep alarm.

Almodóvar shows Lydia in the ring in the bullfighter's suit of lights engaging in an intimate dance of death with a huge bull, its body laced with blood from the banderillas sticking into its sides. Again and again, trying to gore the lithe figure behind the red cape, the enraged snorting bull finally is brought to a shocked stillness by her cape work.

The animal completely dominated by Lydia's intelligence and art, she turns her back to the panting bull and faces the wildly cheering crowd. Her performance is so powerful it brings to mind Hemingway's *Moveable Feast* in which he says of the great Spanish bullfighter Antonio Ordeñez, "If you didn't know his name or what he did or where he was from, you would still know



Lydia's (Rosario Flores) gaze in the bullring is remarkable for its focus and intensity.

Courtesy Sony Pictures Classics

he was the best in his field. He had that manner."

Marco and Lydia begin a love affair. He tells her of his former girlfriend (who was also afraid of snakes) and she becomes violently jealous. As he drives her to her next bullfight she tells him, "We have to talk." "But we've been talking for the past two hours," he says. "No," she says, "you have. I haven't said anything. After the fight, we have to talk." We see her next in the ring, this time directly in front of the bull's pen, on her knees, her red cape spread out in front of her like a womb. When the gate opens a ferocious black bull charges directly into her cape, goring her into the earth, tossing her about, doing as he will with her limp body. It is an electrifying primal scene.

### A Synchronistic Meeting

The goring leaves Lydia comatose in a hospital, the grieving Marco at her bedside. Here he meets Benigno (Javier Cámara), the stranger he sat next to at the dance performance. Benigno is a full-time male nurse for Alicia (Leonor Watling), a beautiful dancer, who also is comatose. In the respectful but intimate manner in which Benigno oils, massages, bathes, grooms, shampoos and manicures her beautiful but inert body, softly talking to her all the while as if she could hear him, one sees his love and devotion to Alicia are unconditional. Yes, there is also something odd about Benigno. He is living through this woman whom he never knew and when we see him before this—he has an apartment across from the studio where she



Benigno (Javier Cámara) and Marco (Darío Grandinetti) bring the comatose Alicia (Leonor Watling) and Lydia (Rosario Flores) outside for a breath of fresh air.

Courtesy Sony Pictures Classics

Continued on page 24

## Art Review

# Max Beckmann

## Artist in Search of the Self

*Ultimately, all seeking and aspiration end in finding yourself, your real self, of which your present self is only a weak reflection.*

—Max Beckmann

OUSPENSKY SAYS IN *SEARCH*, “I HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION A LONG time ago that there was no escape from the labyrinth of contradictions in which we live except by an entirely new road. But where this new or forgotten road began I was unable to say.” But he does know, as he says, that “beyond the thin film of false reality there existed another reality. The ‘miraculous’ was a penetration into this unknown reality.”

The painter Max Beckmann puts it this way: “What I want to show in my work is the idea which hides itself behind so-called reality. I am

seeking for the bridge which leads from the visible to the invisible, like the famous cabbalist who once said: ‘If you wish to get hold of the invisible, you must penetrate as deeply as possible into the visible.’ To penetrate is to go through.”

A contemporary of Ouspensky, Beckmann also lost a father when he was very young, dropped out of school at the age of 15 in his quest to discover the reality that lay beyond the surface of things. Both men were gifted, determined and headstrong.

Both were influenced by Nietzsche and Kant. They differed only in the road they took to penetrate beyond the surface of life. Ouspensky’s way of penetration was first Theosophy and then the ancient esoteric teaching of the Fourth Way. Beck-

mann’s was through painting. In his essay “On My Painting,” he speaks of the self as “the great veiled mystery of the world.” He sees it as his task “to find the self, which has only one form and is immortal—to find it in animals and men, in the heaven and in the hell which together form the world in which we live.” It is his opinion, he says, that “all important things in art since Ur of the Chaldeans, since Tell Halaf and Crete, have always originated from the deepest feeling about the mystery of Being. Self-realization is the urge of all objective spirits. It is this self that I am searching in my life and my art.”

In his pursuit of the hidden self, Beckmann comes to see that “Its path is, in some strange and peculiar manner, our path. And for this reason I am immersed in the phenomenon of the Individual, the so-called whole Individual, and I try in every way to explain and

into the domain of applied arts.”

While he revered Cézanne and admired Van Gogh he had little use for Gauguin and his followers. “I do not regard Gauguin as a world-shattering innovator, but as a person of taste who succeeded in assembling a momentarily diverting décor out of Cézanne and tropical-island motifs. What I find feeble about him is his dependency on ancient, primitive styles, which in their own time had grown organically out of a shared religion and a shared, mystical, folk consciousness. Feeble, because he was not capable of extracting from our own time—murky and fragmented though it may be—types that might be for us, the people of the present, what gods and heroes were for those people then.” As for Matisse and Picasso, he says, “Matisse is an even more deplorable representative of this ethnology museum art: the Asian department. Even

this he gets at second-hand from Gauguin and Munch.... Not until the combined forces of pure and applied art have spent another ten years churning out their framed Gauguin wallpapers, Matisse fabrics, Picasso chessboards, and Siberian-Bavarian folk-

icon posters will they realize, perhaps, that genuinely new personalities do exist—but that they have never, alas, been all that modern or contemporary. I say new personalities intentionally, for that is the only new thing there is. The laws of art are eternal and unchangeable, like the moral law within us.”

For Warhol and his crowd he would have little use as well. In his sardonic essay, “The Social Stance of the Artist,” he writes:

1. The talent for self-promotion is a prerequisite for those inclined to pursue the artistic calling.
2. The budding genius must learn above all else to respect money and power.
3. A reverence for critical authority must dominate his life.



*Self Portrait in Tuxedo, 1927*



*The King, 1933, 1937*



*Columbine, 1950*

present it. What are you? What am I? These are the questions that incessantly hound and torment me, but which also perhaps contribute to my artistic efforts.”

Painting, for Beckmann, was a way of exploration and discovery, extending his consciousness deeper and deeper into the subconscious realms. And so his paintings are often disturbing and demanding, taut and ripe with the tension of opposites. They put the viewer in question, not intellectual question, or question as some sort of conceptual or perceptual game. He aims at the primal, the mythic. He held modern art in low esteem. “There is one thing that always happens in good art,” he said. “This is the conjunction of artistic sensuality with the artistic objectivity and actuality of the things to be represented. Abandon this,” he warned, “and you inevitably fall

4. The riskiest thing an artist can have is too strong a backbone.
5. Let him therefore take cognizance of the fact that he is a subservient member of society, nothing more in essence than a slightly better employee.
6. Let him not forget that fashion



*The Night, 1918–19*



*Departure, 1932–33*

changes every five years.

7. Aside from the talent for self-promotion, the most important asset an artist can have is a girlfriend or a beautiful wife.
8. The artist can know nothing of religion, politics, and life.
9. The best thing an artist can do, of course, is to die. Only when the last living vestige of this bothersome personality has disintegrated in his grave can his fellow men take plea-

sure in his work. Only then does the artist's work truly belong to his contemporaries, for if they buy it at the right time it is as good as if they had made it. The artist is therefore strongly advised to die at the right time. Only thereby can he put the finishing touches on his work.

10. The artist who follows these fundamental precepts will have a good life. His fellow men will gladly accord this well-respected and untroublesome element in the fabric of the state all the love and recognition he deserves.

That New York's Museum of Modern Art would follow their exhibit of Matisse/Picasso with the Max Beckmann exhibit (June 26 through September 29) puts in high relief the essential clash between abstraction and what Beckmann called "transcendental realism." Matisse and Picasso have certainly been taken to be the giants of the last century, with Beckmann running a poor third or worse. But now, more than ever, does the world need to explore the realm of the self, and Beckmann's can-

vasses powerfully and honestly depict his journey into inaccessible regions. They shout and scream and confront as they declare the mysteries of life and the latent violence and beauty of forces not reconciled. ✎

#### Notes

All quotes from Barbara Copeland Buenger, *Max Beckmann: Self-Portrait in Words: Collected Writings and Statements 1903–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

## Cannabis

Continued from page 14

overlapping effects are not well understood. Some of marijuana's effects on the mind and body are very apparent, while others are very subtle. Even the most fanatical proponents of marijuana use do not deny the deleterious cognitive, memory and time-distortion effects. The negative effects on motivation and will are frequently denied by heavy users, but are apparent to those around them. The pernicious and insidious erosion of will associated with the use of cannabis is antithetical to work on oneself. One of Gurdjieff's most important aphorisms is:

*The highest a man can attain is to be able to do.*

### Amotivational Syndrome

The apathy and lack of will that marijuana induces in its users is exemplified in this statement from a typical pot user: "I was even all dressed in my biking clothes, smoked some bong and never left the house."

This is commonly recognized as amotivational syndrome and has been described in this way:

Apathy, loss of effectiveness, and diminished capacity or willingness to carry out complex, long-term plans, endure frustration, concentrate for long periods, follow routines, or successfully master new material. Verbal facility is often impaired both in speaking and writing. Some individuals exhibit greater introversion, become totally involved with the present at the expense of future goals and demonstrate a strong tendency toward regressive, childlike, magical thinking. McGlothlin and West (1968)

There is no proven causal relationship between amotivational syndrome and marijuana use that has been scientifically validated. Of course, there is no scientific validation that consciousness exists either. Marijuana use may allow one to see what is possible, that is, to at least confirm that other levels of consciousness exist. The merciless irony is that, in the process, it makes for willlessness and zaps the very qualities and subtle higher energies that are needed to attain these levels for oneself in a real and meaningful way. ✎

—Scott Broadbent

## Dr. Lester

Continued from page 10

going. It really cannot be left to likes and dislikes or to conveniences and inconveniences. With a leader like Jane she simply put up a roster and didn't ask whether it was convenient or one had another date, or as the Bible says so succinctly, you have to go and leave the bride at the altar!

I feel it all revolves around the amount and quality of food one receives to keep groups going. It is one thing when there is a real head like Jane. But in our groups now it depends upon a few with enough initiative to sponsor work in its various forms and the capability to provide quality. You could think of working to make together a *powerhouse*. If we don't come together now, it may be too late when we find that we really need to join forces.

If Jane could be subtle and enquiring, she could also be blunt and demanding. She once said to them: "If you don't know that movement by next week, I'll shoot you." To help her group be more versatile, less literal, less narrow, she would answer the objection "But, Jane..." with "That was yesterday, this is today." With reference to the way we fail to make use of so much of what we hear, distorting it instead, she remarked "it goes into one ear and trips over itself trying to get out of the other."

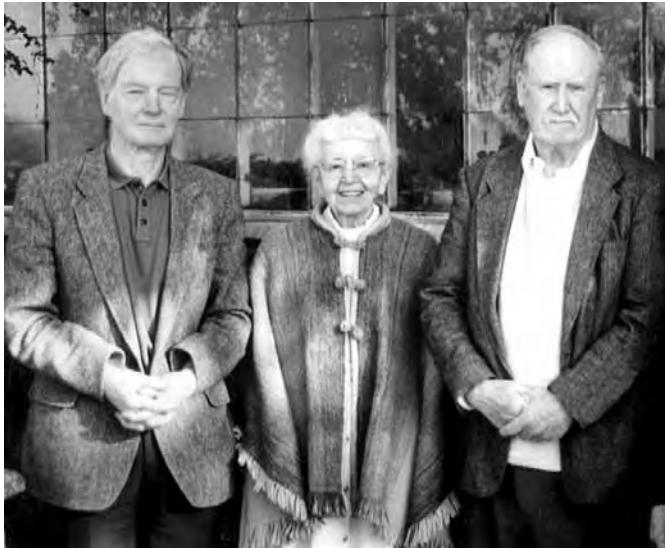
One thing Dr. Lester did have from both Gurdjieff and from Jane was that each placed a high value on the Gilgamesh epic.

***The passive force can be activating in that the active force needs to take it into account.—John Lester***

Dr. Lester learned a good deal from Jane Heap in the group's London craft shop, "The Rocking Horse." If someone was hammering a nail into a table and producing all sorts of noise, Jane would shout "no passive force." One task had been to repair a rather complex doll which was held together by elastic in such a way that Dr. Lester could not take the dress off. He thought and thought about it, but could devise nothing. The day before it

was due, he remembered something Jane had said about how "the hands have a life of their own." He "let" his hands work on it for half an hour and they found how to mend the doll. It was almost as if he was watching inanimate objects come to life, like possessed brooms and dusters in a fairy story, his hands went about the job so quickly and deftly. From then on, for all his life, he found that he hardly ever dropped anything.

When Jane was dying he stayed in the corridor near her room. He soaked cotton wool with water to moisten her lips, for she could not drink. He persisted in advising her to go to the hospital, and finally she agreed. When the ambulance arrived, she sent him for the bedpan. She knew that he would obey this request, if no other. In the time he was gone, she got



Dr. Lester, Annie Lou Staveley and George Cornelius

out of bed, walked or crawled to the middle of the floor, stood up, and collapsed. And that was it. Her final physical affirmation—an effort to be upright.

On a visit to the beach, in his declining years, Dr. Lester was initially shocked at some of the nearly naked women. Then, recollecting himself, he said, "Jane had observed that a different aspect of the passive force is starting to manifest itself through women." He meant that this perspective, this wisdom, is far above the polar dispute between feminism and conservatism.

***When negative, change centers.—John Lester***

Ultimately, for Dr. Lester it all came back to Gurdjieff. He recalled how Gurdjieff would pick up a piece of meat and

say "I can eat"—he had earned the right.

I enquired of him once about why Gurdjieff smoked, unable to reconcile myself to the idea. Dr. Lester replied:

I do not want to even seem to defend Gurdjieff. It would be like an unconscious man defending a conscious teacher! It's for us to defend those who are weaker than us. There is an order in the Obligolnian strivings, and as one climbs up, that is, acquires knowledge and becomes more responsible, one finds that one can take care of more, but really of what is behind us. Would a beginner in judo be expected to defend a black belt? No, it's not Gurdjieff who needs defending, and Jane said to us many times that the work was an inviolable system of ideas.

So if I think I'm defending Gurdjieff's smoking and drinking, am I not defending my own notions of him?

How radical this insight is!

And this brings me to the only personal point I wish to make. Even when he was at university, his teachers told him that he had great ideas but could not express them properly. In fact, they told him that he wound up tangling himself in his good ideas, and no one could discern the quality present. He even said that one professor had gone so far as to say that his brain translated excellent ideas into tangled formulations before they got out of his mouth.

Dr. Lester realized, to some extent, that he had this affliction. For this reason, he formulated the pithy aphorisms placed in this essay. People who knew him could very well doubt that he was their author. In conversations where those present had been impressed with something he had said and eagerly awaited his next sentence, they sometimes lost interest at the inconsequence of what followed. But he had more inside for those who knew how to tease it out of him or wait patiently for it.

He was well aware that certain persons connected with the Gurdjieff legacy found him difficult to deal with, partly for this reason and partly for his frankness in not diplomatically hiding his acceptance of ideas he knew they would find "cranky." Yet he harbored no grudge. Dr. Lester even fondly recalled having been invited to a conference in the United States. As he was

leaving the door to catch his plane, a call came asking him if he wouldn't mind staying away as "no one of his caliber would be there." As if he couldn't see through the insincerity! So why the warm smile when he told the story? Because he could accept it as the very stuff of his life.

We have certain ideas of what a "developed man" is. We expect a certain weight and presence. But we are liable to error. We just do not see enough examples of the species to be able to discriminate as well as we imagine. Rather, what I think we tend to respond to is what the Romans called *gravitas*, a sort of quality of self-conscious dignity and severity. Once someone has established their *gravitas*, they can then treat us to *levitas*, lightness, and it is seen as augmenting their dignity even further. Dr. Lester neither possessed nor affected any of this. He just presented himself as he was, and yet, when taking sittings, exercises and groups he manifested a real power. It simply did not manifest the way we expect being to manifest, and so many of us missed it.

In some ways it is fitting that John Lester—the only Australian we have heard of who studied directly under Gurdjieff—returned to Australia shortly before his death to share the fruits of his rich eventful life. It seems to me that the teacher and the pupil are *one*—in their work they are united. Yet, there is also difference, just as there is unity and diversity in the great universe. No one pupil can receive everything a teacher has to offer: it is impossible, not only because of their essential differences. It is all the truer with someone like Gurdjieff, who was so much more than his pupils. Dr. Lester was a pupil of George Gurdjieff, and he strived as sincerely as he could, for the rest of his life, to develop his own proper individuality. In doing so, he preserved some of the direct influence of Gurdjieff in an individual way, which no other person in the world ever could—they had their own dispensations and graces.

Here is an extract from one of his letters:

Many thanks for your letter. Your comments on loneliness ring a very old bell in me. As a medical student I read a Platonic saying: "Loneliness is man's natural

state." I feel and have felt *subjectively* that it is very, very accurate. Objectively, aloneness is man's natural state. I'm sure all organic life is gregarious, because it's separated sexually, on the physical, emotional, mental and psychic planes. As John Donne says, united souls desire to be truly each other, which, being impossible, their desires are infinite and must proceed without a possibility of satisfaction. So briefly, unless you find your "counterpart" in loneliness, the only way out of it is to consciously engage another center.

Loneliness, I'm sure, can come from different centers. Physically—lost in a forest and not knowing the way out. Emotionally—no one with whom to relate to emotionally, and so on. No doubt if you were unified and related in yourself, you wouldn't feel it so much. But what is wrong with experiencing the state of loneliness—being uncomfortable is not a reason for avoiding or trying to avoid it! Sadness, I feel, is very different from loneliness, and has some wonder in it. Compassion is made up of love, and, I think, includes a feeling of sadness. Marriage is often very subjective, and filled, I'm sure with identification. There is none so blind as those in love. I do feel it's an experience, and a good one to go through. Why not?

If you were conscious I'm sure the emotion would be aloneness, i.e. all oneness, which is of course quite different from loneliness....

In re-reading what I've written, I can't help feeling concerned that here I've been pontificating about a subject

that to me is the least understood even if perhaps the most known. Maybe I should shut up and suggest you go elsewhere. However, I could continue and put myself at risk. Life is gregarious, and everything seems to need vibrations from its own form of life. Obvious examples are one animal in a field and one animal in a cage. Each of them looks, and is, alone. But the difference in their aloneness! With plants, it's more difficult to see, but if you look at crops, and at bushes, I've noticed the plants in the middle are always the strongest—they are surrounded by their friends, and they have competition. The ones on the edge tend to be smaller and therefore perhaps lonely, or relatively so.

I do feel aloneness is objective. For instance, it can describe someone who really understands a great deal, and therefore has many obstacles in communicating with people who understand so much less. But that is not my category except in a minute way perhaps professionally as a doctor. In musing on the other side, it has occurred to me that it is possible that one may not want to relate to other people and make oneself vulnerable. One is self-protective. In my case, this is probably the inverted side of vanity. I remember Jane once said that what was wrong with being hurt was that one doesn't like it, one is self-protective, and misses out on a lot of experiences. We need all sorts of food for digestion. There may even be a connection here with what I wrote about being separated sexually. We need vibrations on the highest levels in all our centers. Sex energy uses the finest of vibrations, and so we need that energy, that energy for which our separation is the very catalyst. Would our sexual energies be the same without the hurt of loneliness? There's nothing morally wrong about any of this, and it indicates one's attitude.

All the best,  
John

Dr. John Ritchie Lester died on September 29, 1999. ✍  
—Joseph Azize

#### Notes

1. All letter excerpts are from letters from Dr. Lester to the author.
2. Photos courtesy Joseph Azize.



Dr. Lester relaxing

## Miss Merston

Continued from page 6

Q: *How to do that?*

A: Thinking of one thing means not thinking of another. Give one thought place and all the 99 other thoughts vanish; the process is simultaneous, if we move in the one [thought], the others are all automatically lost.

Q: *But if the body is pricked, although we get rid of the thorn, the pain still remains.*

A: Where does consciousness come between body and mind? There is no mind without thought.

Q: *How to get rid of thoughts?*

A: Find out the nature of mind. Only by natural mind can mind be eradicated.

Q: *Is Bhagavan's teaching the right one?*

A: Such discussions are fruitless. Drop it!

Several days later another man asked Bhagavan about mind.

Q: *Is it possible by mere practice to merge the mind in the heart? I find it [the mind] like a cork, when pressure is removed it bobs up again.*

A: First know what is the mind's nature and what the heart's. You speak of the consciousness and the heart and the mind. Where is the surface of the consciousness?

Q: *Outwards.*

A: With reference to what is outer or inner?

Q: *The phenomenal world is outer, and that cut off by the senses [the] inner.*

A: Consciousness that the outer world exists outside? Without knowing mind?

Q: *Thoughts are mind.*

A: So you accept thoughts as the mind?

Q: *As the waves are the water, so thoughts, consciousness, are the mind.*

A: Thoughts are there as latency in samsara and now come out.

Q: *Is there a practice to get thoughts out?*

A: The state of no-thought is our real nature, otherwise people would be just as they are. So where is the need for merging? Merging means seeking the source of the thoughts, whether heart or consciousness. Heart and consciousness are the same, so world does not exist apart from the Self. Why therefore see ever so

many apart from the Self? When you see your Self, no inner or outer is seen. Mind devoid of all parts is itself the Self. When still, it is the Brahma (the Godhead).

Q: *I am ignorant of this state.*

A: How do you know? It is the knowledge that you have woken up which is the ignorance you feel, you the fellow who wakes up not to You. Who is the man who has woken up from the ignorance and is yet conscious of the ignorance? And you the person sometimes ignorant, sometimes knowing?

Q: *Super-consciousness and consciousness are one, but there are sort of layers.*

A: Is there anything apart from consciousness?



An image of Ganesha on a gopuram

Q: *No, but a modification. Ignorance is itself a modification.*

A: Of what?

Q: *Of Reality.*

A: Is there unreality?

Q: *I don't know Reality. I may be part of Reality.*

A: Do you conceive that you are ever conscious?

Q: *Not in sleep.*

A: If not conscious in sleep, how do you know you are coming out of it? Are you the same person in sleep?

Q: *Yes.*

A: Ignorance itself is consciousness.

Q: *What?*

A: There is no thing but what actually is. If the Self alone is conceded, where does the question of mind and consciousness arise?

Q: *I don't know.*

A: The unrealized has not recognized the Self.

Q: *How to do so?*

A: If at any time it is not present, then you must seek it. To the Reality, 'I', we have added a lot of things. When these are cast off, then you will be as you are, you won't change.

Q: *How to remove the super-impositions?*

A: Find out to whom they are and the things will cease to exist and the seeker with them. Thinking that the other things exist, you can never control them for they are not tangible.

Q: *Has the Self ever undergone any modification?*

A: Who are you to question the Self? These statements are made according to each one's state of mind.

During a chanting, she suddenly saw Bhagavan's head within her, staying of its own accord. She went on pondering, later noting: "Comparisons are odious because they take the present back to the past and are therefore not life. Traits in people are like spellings: earth, harte, terah, etc. instead of heart. There should be a relationship in the order of letters through the letters themselves. Heart is there always and has to be sought beneath the bad spellings or grammar. Mis-spellings are disharmonious."

She continued her work with "concentration or the lack of it, ego-mind manifestations, the watching and pondering over them." Days of depression, feeling like running away, hopelessness followed. "I could neither surrender nor feel Bhagavan's grace." There seemed only one thing to do—"watch ego-antics, not indulge them," try to keep before her a vision of a shining figure that had come to her. Then followed a few months of "irritation, resentments, losing my temper with all and sundry, and not even the Hall in front of Bhagavan could quiet me for more than a short while."

### A Visit to Sri Aurobindo

An inner debate began over the question of whether or not to go to Pondicherry to Sri Aurobindo's darshan. Born in 1872, Sri Aurobindo, was edu-

cated in England from the age of seven, and after receiving a first-class degree in Classics from Cambridge became a leader in the Nationalist movement. To develop the power to help him to liberate his country from colonial Britain, he began practicing yoga. Arrested in May 1908 for conspiracy, he spent one year in jail awaiting trial, where he practiced intensively and came to deep spiritual experiences. After acquittal, he withdrew from politics and in 1910 went to Pondicherry in order to devote himself exclusively to the practice of yoga. That year he met Mira Alfassa, his lifelong partner. She was born in France in 1878 to well-off middle-class emigrés, a Turk-



*The Mother*

ish father and Egyptian mother. Having had many experiences of the Divine since the age of five on, she realized, around the age of 19 or 20, by her own efforts, “conscious and constant union with the Divine Presence.” She became known after 1926 as “The Mother,” the individual expression of the power of spiritual consciousness. Together she and Sri Aurobindo developed a system of spiritual development called Integral Yoga.

When the time arrived, debate forgotten, Miss Merston went. Though arriving prejudiced by what she had heard of the Mother and her theatrical ways, she found “a powerful force came from her still gaze”; her eyes “very kindly and keen gave me the impression of creating a definite role outwardly beneath which she works seriously and with great love.”

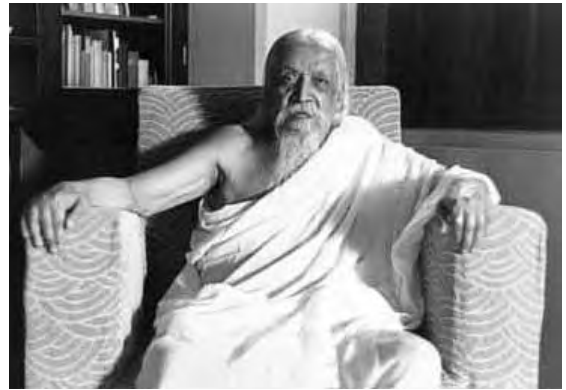
With a flower in our hand, we queued in line for the personal darshan of the

Mother seated on a carved chair on a dais. She had a tray of flower-heads on her right from which she gave a pinch to each devotee as he or she filed past, while with her left hand she received the flower offering which she passed to an attendant who separated the kinds. Bunches of lotuses were brought in and baskets of fruit. She touched each of us with her hand on our head and gave us a lotus or a fruit and spoke answers to

questions. When answering questions, her face would be very serious and thoughtful; otherwise she wore a fixed smile. At 10 P.M. we all again repaired to the ashram hall for the Mother’s blessing; she, this time, in a blue gauze veil with gold fillet and a large jewel on her forehead, looking for all the world like an old Druid priestess. For the morning’s balcony darshan, she was clad in a pink satin tea-gown with a gold gauze veil. In the afternoon the darshan was held in a small room upstairs. There were two doors and we filed in by one and out by the other door in completely orderly fashion, so different from the disorderliness of the Ramanashram. We passed Sri Aurobindo, an old man of 75 with a fine head, rather Neptunesque, dignified, aloof, who paid no attention to anything or anyone, completely withdrawn. The Mother, robed in cloth of gold and gold gauze veil with a jewel on her forehead, smiled her smile at one and all. As time went on, more and more did I appreciate the simplicity of Bhagavan.

#### **Restless at the Ashram**

Back at Ramana’s ashram Miss Merston said, “It was good to be back in the presence of Bhagavan after all the show of Pondicherry.” Her work continued, with Bhagavan making some “enlightening remark about it,” now not necessarily in her presence but also during the evening talks with the men. She became close work-friends with Bhagavan’s youngest attendant,



*Sri Aurobindo*

Ramananda, who would often report Bhagavan’s remarks to her the next day—activity of the mind and mind’s relationship to the Self, radiations, stillness, death, attention. One evening while she was trying hard “to use my will in order to concentrate,” Bhagavan pointed out to the men the danger of strengthening one’s will in this way, “for then the ego can also use it.”

After several weeks chanting verse-prayers she’d made up to suit her work at the time, while asking the Lord to “draw me in,” to swallow her, Miss Merston remembered that Gurdjieff had said men were food for the gods, and Bhagavan had said that we are food for the Lord, though she had had no conscious recollection of either when writing the chant.

#### **Off to See Krishnamurti**

In October Miss Merston had a sudden desire to see Krishnamurti who was in Madras. So, as she said, she “flitted off for two days” to see him. In her diary she recorded that “Krishnaji is changed, looks older, more powerful, but still shy, impatient, shocked. He *knows* but is not yet at



*Jiddu Krishnamurti*

home with people in general. He talked about gratification and how all opposites and conflicts arise from the desire for gratification; no relationships are real relationships, but only a question of gratification of ourselves.... This is too painful to accept: pride, fear, security, love of power, love of possessions are all involved. Also, to face that we have no relationship with anyone brings home our isolation and we can't face our loneliness."



Sunyata, "The Viking"



Almora, with its 23-mile vista of the Himalayas

Commented Miss Merston, "All very true, but he did not tell us how to begin to face our loneliness. That is always the difficulty with Krishnaji, he hits the nail on the head all right, but does not know how to drive it home."

Back in Tiruvannamalai, the questions of security and gratification she brought soon turned to meditation when a devotee asked:

*Q: What is the method for meditation and how can one become thoughtless?*

A: To have only one thought, no matter what, instead of ten thoughts, is the way to become thoughtless in the end.

About mind processes, Bhagavan said one day: "Mind is like a monkey following its trainer's stick, up, down, left, right." Later he said: "Don't focus on things that get in the way trying to get rid of them, focus on the fact that you are already the Self and that the other things are only fictions created by your mind; dwell not on multiplicity and the Divine in each, but on the only One, nothing else existing."

### Evaluating Her Experience of Krishnamurti

At the end of November, she again went off to Krishnamurti's talks. She received little inspiration other than realizing how little she worked on herself. On Christmas she returned to the ashram. She received "a lovely greeting from Bhagavan which warmed my heart. He must have realized how insecure I was feeling with the move ahead of me."

Seeing that she was going round and round from teaching to teaching, Miss

Merston tried to formulate what each offered. She saw Krishnamurti's approach as the hardest way, dealing with the "mental and emotional, subtle centers, laying itself open to an intellectual cul-de-sac." Gurdjieff's approach she characterized as "physical and mental, and if slowest, the least dangerous, leading to no cul-de-sac." Bhagavan's approach, she believed, goes "beyond all three, not working with centers at all, or perhaps rather, with all of them, watching and enquiring." Like many who had been with Gurdjieff for a short time, Miss Merston's understanding of the scale of Gurdjieff's teaching was limited. Its practices of self-remembering and self-observation link directly to Bhagavan's teaching when the student's experience is such that it leads to the question of the self/Self in remembering. She also didn't know or had forgotten that the teaching works with all centers at once. And—strangely—she never mentions work with sensation and so perhaps her work with Gurdjieff was on the mental level alone.

The following April, in 1948, she again went to Madras for Krishnamurti's talks. At the end, she found herself bored. "I now know that I have to stick to Bhagavan whether I get anything or not, but it was a useful time of watching myself feeling out of it and hurt, and asking myself 'who is out of it?'"

### A Summer in Almora with "The Viking"

That summer after some months of dysentery she traveled to the barren hill town of Almora to visit "the Viking" and other friends. They lived a mile or so above the town on a ridge known as

Kasardevi because the ridge stretches to the rock of Kasardevi, a natural hollow where human sacrifices were offered up in ancient times. From the ridge looms a majestic 23-mile view of a vast and towering Himalayan landscape, extending to the summits of mountain ranges upon which goddesses are thought to dwell. The mountain ranges of Badrinath and Nilkanth stand to the west while to the east rise the mountains of Nepal. Straight on stand Trisul and Nanda Devi, the latter some 24,000 feet high.

Despite Kasardevi's grand vista, locals called it "Cranks' Ridge" because of the oddity of its foreign inhabitants. Sunya—the "Viking"—had arrived in the late 1930s and built a stone hut for himself. Earlier, at the ashram of poet Rabindranath Tagore, Sunya had met Lama Govinda, the German author of *The Foundations of Tibetan Buddhism*, and his Parsi wife, Li Gotami, and sometime later they moved to Almora. The artist Earl Brewster had a house there, as did W. Y. Evans-Wentz, the Oxford don who translated *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and other esoteric Tibetan texts. The Indian sage Sri Anirvan and his pupil Lizelle Reymond both lived there as well in a house he called Haimavati, a name taken from the *Kena Upanishad* meaning the immaterial whiteness. Sunya was a friend of Anirvan's and it was he who had introduced Lizelle Reymond to him. She would later write *To Live Within* about her days with Sri Anirvan, and upon returning to France would meet Mme de Salzmann and join her Gurdjieff group in Geneva, Switzerland.

As she makes no mention of them, apparently Miss Merston did not meet Sri

Anirvan or Lizelle Reymond. It was unfortunate as Sri Anirvan had studied Gurdjieff's writings and held him in high esteem. In *To Live Within*, Reymond reported that Anirvan held there are four stages of work on oneself: the plurality of "I's," a single "I," no "I," and the Void, concluding that "Gurdjieff opens for us the frontiers of the two last stages."

Leaving Almora, Miss Merston then traveled to the ashram of Mirtola, some 18 miles distant, to visit her friends the Englishman Richard Nixon and the Australian Alec Phipps, now known respectively as Sri Krishna Prem and Madhava Ashish. Krishna Prem was the disciple of the female guru Sri Yashoda Mai, a visionary and mystic once known as Monica Devi. Yashoda and Krishna Prem built Mirtola and consecrated its temple to Sri Krishna and his consort Radha. At Sri Yashoda Mai's death in 1944 Krishna Prem became the ashram's guru. In 1946 Alec Phipps arrived and became Krishna Prem's chela, or disciple.

### Bhagavan's Decline

After two weeks at Mirtola, Miss Merston returned to Tiruvannamalai. She found Bhagavan thin and weak, though still "cheerful as ever and carrying on his usual routine." Hearing of his declining health, Krishna Prem arrived and stayed for three days and sang to Bhagavan "so gloriously," said Miss Merston, "I wept with emotion." When Krishna Prem left, Miss Merston said she felt a sense of flatness and blankness. She wondered whether "Perhaps it was Sri Krishna Prem's strong physical and emotional quality, whereas Bhagavan's was too subtle for me to feel so strongly." A month later the Shankaracharya of the Jagannath Puri Mutt came from North India to visit Bhagavan and ask for help with resolving a doubt, after which he went into samadhi.

By 1949, Miss Merston noted that Bhagavan looked "more and more gray and thin, though continuing his life as

usual." On May 1st a doctor came and cut out a little nodule on Bhagavan's left elbow. In July the arm began to bleed, and at the end of the month he was given penicillin. But his temperature rose and on August 7, the surgeons operated on his arm. Seven days later he was given radium treatments for three and a half days. The radium did no good and the sarcoma spread rapidly up his arm. A second operation was performed on August 27. He began to look better in early September, but "Alas it did not last: he grew again thinner and his color turned to an ashen gray. All through this time of what must have been agony from the tumor on the nerve in his arm, Bhagavan remained imperturbable, and except for his color and the bandage one would never have

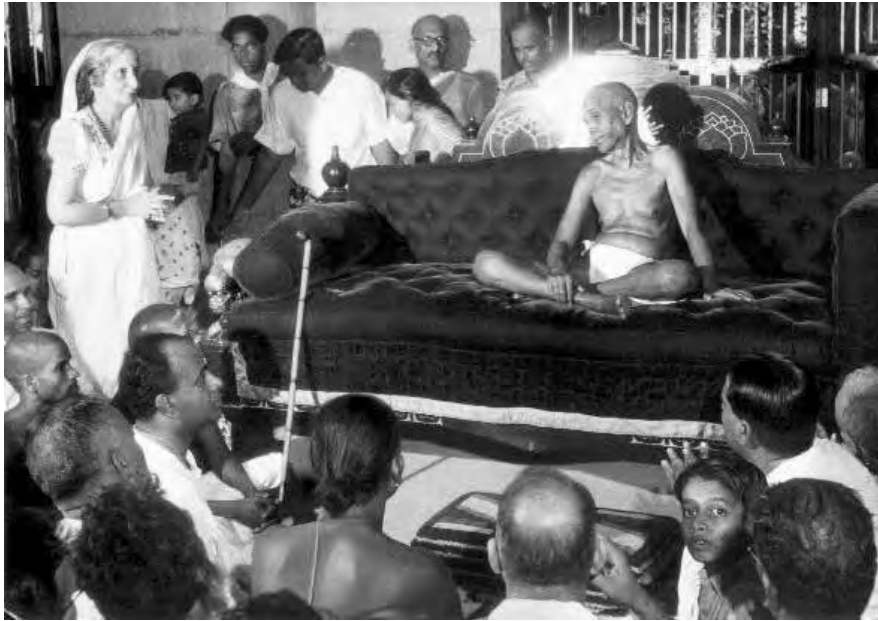
On February 5, the arm began to bleed again and on the 12th, there was a new tumor. After the first operation the surgeons had wanted to amputate the arm but Bhagavan had flatly refused. Now it was too late as the cancer had spread up the shoulder and down into the body. The arm was bleeding steadily and he looked bloodless yet he was still walking. On April 2, medicines were stopped. Miss Merston said, "He looked like a corpse, eyes sunk in their sockets, nose pinched, greenish in color and rather horrible with his fixed stare. This rigidity and fixed stare lasted for five days." There followed several crises. All along he had given darshan but on the morning of the 10th, there was none. That afternoon however he gave the darshan as usual. "He had changed quite a bit," said Miss Merston. "No longer rigid and staring, but completely conscious, as he recognized people and gave them each a smile. The body was weak but very relaxed. He was obviously taking farewell of us."

### Bhagavan Departs

The next day he gave darshan in the morning. "There was still the peace of the body almost ethereal, and complete consciousness, but increasing weakness, and we felt him almost at the end. It

was as though he had died to the body in the crisis of the day before. But that afternoon there was no longer peace but a struggle for life, chest slightly arched, breathing rapidly. The night of the 13-14th," Miss Merston said, "I spent sitting on the steps by his room. For the first time I heard him moan and cry out in agony. The day before he had for the first time shown signs that he was in pain; before that, one would never from his face have known that he was in pain at all. It was terrible to hear him now cry out in such agony."

On April 14, 1950, at 8:47 P.M. Bhagavan finally passed away.



*Up to the very end, Bhagavan continued to meet with his students, as had Gurdjieff in Paris.*

guessed that anything was wrong with him. He watched as ever over his devotees, their work and problems, helping and teaching each in his own way."

On December 9, a new tumor was found and for the third time he was operated on. The doctors realized it was hopeless. "Now," said Miss Merston, "they allowed all kinds of treatment—homeopathy, ayurvedic, spells and mantras but all were equally ineffectual." Though his condition worsened, people passed by the open door or window of his room for darshan, continuing to do so until the night before he died. For despite his ravaged body, "one would never have known from his face that he was in pain at all."



G. I. Gurdjieff in Paris in the last year of his life

The corpse was ritually prepared and within fifteen minutes of his passing the corpse was brought out in a sitting position, chin tied up inadequately, and it was carried into the big Hall and garlanded. We followed the corpse and sat around while bhajans were sung all through the night. At 4 A.M. I went home for a bath and some food before returning for the ceremonies at 9 A.M. Then the corpse was carried out onto the south verandah for a ritual bathing. Water was poured and poured over his head and body, the body was then rubbed all over with haldi (asafoetida), buttermilk, coconut water and so forth. It was then swathed in garlands until nothing showed but the ghastly, already decaying corpse face, eyes staring, mouth gaping. It had nothing human about it, not a vestige of Bhagavan in it. The whole performance seemed revoltingly idolatrous.

At 7 P.M., the burial began and two hours later the grave was closed, though for Miss Merston and many others “Bhagavan had not gone.”

### Gurdjieff & Bhagavan

Summing up her years with Bhagavan Miss Merston wrote:

If I understood anything of the Maharshi’s way of Self-enquiry, it is entirely due to Gurdjieff. I realized on the second visit to the ashram that had it not been for Gurdjieff, I should never have begun to understand Bhagavan’s teaching, just as I realized that unfit [as] I had come to Bhagavan I had never really understood Gurdjieff’s. Gurdjieff’s, when I was with him, was the

exoteric method and I had now found the mesoteric—or exoteric perhaps for those who were already awake enough on that more subtle plane—in the Maharshi’s method. The two aims were the same, namely, to awaken people to their real Self by self-observation or self-enquiry.

Gurdjieff’s method was to shock awake those still soundly asleep, the Maharshi’s to continue the process of awakening in

those already partially awake. There is no antithesis in their teaching—as people who are ignorant of the one or of the other think, on account of the two men and their methods being so different. So many people devoted to one Teacher seem to think that *their* Teacher is the one and only one for all men at all times, not realizing, or unwilling through deeply rooted fear or pride to do so, that different types of teachers are needed for the different stages of awakenedness. Neither Jesus nor the Buddha succeeded in awakening every man; even within their own circumscribed circle, there were still Judases, Peters and Pauls with uneradicated ambition, fear and conceit respectively; and how many of Buddha’s followers trod the eight-fold path? Why are we so sectarian? Is it that we do not yet recognize the depth of our sleep, are not aware of our selves, much less of our Self?

Now, so many years later, when Gurdjieff’s name is known the world over, he, the man, still remains an enigmatic figure, despised as a rogue by some, revered as a Master and God by others. I can never be grateful enough to him for awakening me sufficiently to have been able to go on with Bhagavan, and to realize that both he and the Maharshi, my two main Teachers, though so different as men and in their outward method for reaching the ultimate Divine Unity within, yet used the same technique of Self-knowledge through self-observation and self-enquiry. ✎

*The fourth installment will appear in the next issue.*

—Mary Ellen Korman

## Talk to Her

Continued from page 15

danced—there is a vacancy to him, an emptiness, a lack of real ego, that recalls Peter Sellers character Chauncey, the gardener, in the film *Being There*.

Benigno introduces the worldly Marco to a world he has never known. Seeing how frustrated and lonely Marco is at Lydia’s coma, Benigno quietly tells him, “Talk to her . . . she’ll hear you.” Marco’s rational mind won’t let him, but in the circumstances in which they find themselves, the men begin to know one another and an unlikely but deep friendship evolves, dashing the prevalent Darwinian idea that men can never form friendships, only alliances.



Benigno tenderly massages Alicia as Marco looks on in wonder.

At this point Almodóvar introduces a shock that takes *Talk to Her* into another realm. Alicia had liked films and Benigno, taking her animate life for his own, regularly sees movies on his one night off and faithfully shares with her all he has seen. One evening he sees a silent comedic film, *The Shrinking Man*—a brilliant Almodóvar construction—in which a man becomes so small he steps in and out of a woman’s cave-like vagina, only to finally disappear into it. So virginal in appearance and action, it seems certain that this is Benigno’s first introduction to sexual intimacy.

The shock of the images, not in the least pornographic, unleashes laughter in the viewer. It also awakens Benigno to his “man.” And thereafter his relationship with Alicia radically changes. Here Almodóvar dives deep to explore meanings of love that question conventional boundaries. The suspense, comedy and tragedy of the film resound in the viewer as images play over and over again, the psyche finally finding a way to the heart. *Talk to Her* (Talk to Him) offers that special magic that erases the isolating quality of egotism, esoteric or otherwise. ✎

## Making of Gurdjieff Legacy

Continued from page 8



The Galata Bridge in Constantinople, 1921, led to the West, toward Europe ...

cates that Gurdjieff is speaking of a special form of Christianity. "It would be necessary," he says, "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.*" What does that tell you?

TGJ: That the Work is esoteric Christianity.

WPP: That's what it told Boris Mouravieff and his latter-day follower Robin Amis. But Gurdjieff is *not* referring to the Christianity we know—but the Christianity we don't know.

As he says later in *Search*, "It will seem strange to many people when I say that this prehistoric Egypt was Christian many thousands of years before the birth of Christ, that is to say, that its religion was composed of the same principles and ideas that constitute true Christianity." So the esoteric Christianity Gurdjieff is referring to is a Christianity that existed *before* the birth of Christ and *before* the ancient Egyptian religion as we know it—that is, a prehistoric Christianity.

TGJ: That really is a revolutionary statement.

WPP: Yes. And what it means is that

the Fourth Way *predates* all the religions we know. Thinking in a linear way, just because Gurdjieff introduced the teaching in St. Petersburg in 1912, people have thought that Sufism, the Cabala, and so forth have all predated the Fourth Way.



... where, despite the intensity of work at the Prieuré ...



But it's just the reverse. As Gurdjieff says, we see the world topsy-turvy. We go into all this in detail in *Gurdjieff in Egypt*.

TGJ: Was there any overriding structure you followed?

WPP: The trilogy runs on three tracks. The first is the historical, the second is the people in Gurdjieff's life, and the third is the major tenets of the teaching.

TGJ: So the trilogy tells the history of the Work, as well as giving the major aspects of the teaching?

WPP: Yes, but the history and its interpretation differ at points from what

is conventionally presumed.

TGJ: What do you mean by that?

WPP: Many of Gurdjieff's students who wrote about him, and certainly all of his critics, speak from their point of view. Everyone levels him to fit their ideas and beliefs. No one speaks of his mission—that he came to give humanity a teaching that would save it from destroying itself. Everyone seems to unconsciously think he came to awaken and liberate them. I wanted to give the point of view that is rarely recognized—Gurdjieff's.

TGJ: Isn't that a bit presumptuous?

WPP: Of course. And his view can't really be known. But by carefully considering his mission, what he says and how he lived I think we can shine a needed light on his life and teaching and clear up some misconceptions.

TGJ: How so?

WPP: Once he rediscovered the fundamental ideas and principles of the teaching in Upper Egypt and Abyssinia he realized that over time elements of the teaching had drifted northward. So he made a series of journeys to the Hindu Kush, Siberia and Tibet to collect these elements. He then reformulated the teaching for modern times and brought it to the West. As mentioned previously, the teaching, paradoxically, is as old as it is new.

TGJ: Why did he want to bring the teaching to the West? Why didn't he just stay where he was and introduce the teaching there?

WPP: He realized that humanity was approaching a crucial shock point in its history. As he says, "Unless the 'wisdom' of the East and the 'energy' of the West are harnessed and used harmoniously the world will destroy itself."

TGJ: That sounds ominous.

WPP: Yes, but who took that warning seriously? Now, given 9/11, it's a different world, no? He saw that the West was where the power was. So in



... Gurdjieff, after his car crash, came to realize he must find other means to establish the Teaching in the West.



While Ouspensky prospered outwardly...

1911 he took a 21-year vow to live an artificial life in order to introduce and establish the teaching in the West. The second video of the trilogy, *Gurdjieff's Mission*, begins with his coming to St. Petersburg in 1912, then to Moscow, on to Constantinople, France, England and America. We followed his path, shooting all the way.

TGJ: Why did he go to St. Petersburg?

WPP: I assume because it was the most cosmopolitan city in Russia, right on the edge of Europe. He was fluent in Russian, knew the customs and had friends there. His plan was to form groups, then establish the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, train helper-instructors who would disseminate the teaching to the major capitals of the world. He had brought with him a million rubles, two collections of Chinese cloisonné and many rare carpets.

TGJ: Why so much money?

WPP: As he says in *Meetings*, he wanted to be dependent on no one. But let me continue. The plan was on schedule until 1917 and the shock of the Russian Revolution. It drove him to Tiflis in the Caucasus where he tried to again set up the Institute. But the uncertainty of the times and governmental red tape made it impossible. So he left for Constantinople where he again opened and closed the Institute—the city was flooded with refugees and a secular movement was coming to the fore. Now what to do?

TGJ: Why didn't he go to Greece? He was part Greek, knew the language and so forth?

WPP: The power that will determine the fate of the world lies in Europe and

America. So, though he didn't speak the languages, know the customs, had no friends and little money—his million Russian rubles were virtually worthless—Gurdjieff stepped off into the future. In 1921, he left for Europe and a year later opened his Institute in France.

TGJ: When you shot in Russia and Constantinople did you come upon anything interesting in terms of the Work?

WPP: In St. Petersburg we found the street—Pushkin Street—where Gurdjieff lived, the apartment on Liteiny Street



... and established himself at Lyne Place, in England, Gurdjieff, in France, lost the Prieuré to creditors ...

where Ouspensky lived and The Stray Dog café, a haunt of Ouspensky and the intelligentsia and the art world. It was closed by authorities in 1915 and had just reopened several months before we arrived.

TGJ: What about the restaurant where Thomas de Hartmann met Gurdjieff?

WPP: Yes, we found that but it's a gambling casino now, so we didn't shoot it. In Constantinople we stayed in the Pera district, the European quarter, and found Yemenici Street and the townhouse where Gurdjieff set up the Institute. Of course we shot that, as well as the Galata Bridge, the street life and the train station from which Gurdjieff left for Europe.

TGJ: You say a second track

of the videos is Gurdjieff's students.

WPP: Yes, we show the real reasons why Ouspensky left Gurdjieff. They were not the ones he speaks of in *Search*. And we follow their relationship through the years from Ouspensky's final break with him in 1924, the final meeting in 1931, and then what befell Ouspensky at the end of his life. We shot at his estates—Lyne Place in England and Mendham in America—and his grave site.

TGJ: What about Orage?

WPP: This was a much more intricate relationship. Jesse Dwight played a larger part than is generally thought. In short, Orage wanted his woman and the teaching, too. Also, Gurdjieff put a lot of pressure on him in terms of money. Orage never seemed to realize—at least he never said—that Gurdjieff used money as a teaching device. Gurdjieff saw how fixated Westerners are about "making dollars" and used it. Remember, he came to Russia with a million rubles, all

of which he had earned himself. Obviously, he didn't want money to be a factor.

TGJ: Going back to the origin of the teaching for a moment ... what's the proof that the teaching comes from prehistoric Egypt?

WPP: No proof other than what Gurdjieff says. Do we believe him or not? If

we don't, why are we following someone who we don't believe? I could speak for a long time on all the facts that point to the origin of the Fourth Way being in prehistoric Egypt, but let me just say this: the question is what came first—sacred sci-

Continued on page 28



... and A. R. Orage in marriage to Jessie Dwight.

# Kultur

**B**ELIEVE THIS? BELIEFNET.COM DESCRIBES ITSELF AS "AN INDEPENDENT, multifait e-community designed to help meet your own religious and spiritual needs in an interesting, captivating, and engaging way." Don't know what faith you are? Just answer 20 questions about your concept of God, human nature, etc., and Belief-O-Matic tells what religion (if any) you practice... or ought to consider practicing. Warning: Belief-O-Matic assumes no legal liability for the ultimate fate of your soul.... *Adam & Eve*. Wrote Albert Camus in his *Notebook*: "Brief psychology of Adam and Eve: he formed for contemplation and courage; she for softness and alluring grace. He for God alone; she for God in him.... *True or False*. Joyce Collin-Smith, wife of Rodney Collin-Smith's brother, reports a rumor that the little Peruvian cripple, now a man, whom Rodney Collin-Smith befriended, admits to pushing him off the church tower because he was angry that Collin-Smith had given him only clothes and not money.... *The Golden Years*. Nursing home care in America ranges from \$50K to \$95K per year. That's \$137 to \$260 a day, including room, board, drugs and medical supplies. In-home health care can cost as much as \$300 a day. Over the next 20 years, according to the General Accounting Office, long-term care is expected to triple. Insurance costs vary according to age. If healthy and 50 years old, it's \$500 a year. Over 75, \$5K. Medicare, a federal health care program designed primarily for those over 65, covers long-term care but is extremely limited, covering only about three months of nursing home care. To be eligible, you must first exhaust virtually all personal assets. AARP recommends Phyllis Shelton's *The Long-Term Planning Guide* as a good resource.... *Doping Doubling*. Children and adolescents on psychiatric medications more than doubled from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, according to a study published in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.... *White Supremacy*. Since the mid-1990s, it has exploded within the prison system. One of the largest prison gangs of white supremacists—invariably pronounced "supremists"—is the World Church of the Creator which, because of its religious

underpinnings, allows members to gather for prison meetings. Others are Krieger Verwandt ("warrior kindred" in German), Fourth Reich, Hammerskins, Nazi Low Riders and White Aryan Resistance.... *Tattoo Removal*. A visible tattoo—especially a gang-related one—affects job chances. Laser tattoo removal typically takes at least 10 to 15 treatments, spread out over two or more years, and costs \$7,000 or more per tattoo. Traces of the tattoo can remain. A new process uses infrared light that is less expensive and obliterates all colors, usually within a month. This new process is at the heart of Texas' statewide program to help young people get jobs. With conditions, any resident under the age of 21 can have his or her tattoo removed. The Bandera Texas Police Department alone has treated over 5,000 individuals. The first mention in the newspaper resulted in 3,000 telephone calls in 24 hours.... *Computers Versus Humans*. For humans the game of chess involves a great deal of high-level abstract thought—visual pattern matching to recall board positions, rules and guidelines, reflection, psychology...and emotion. While the technicalities of computer chess can be fairly intricate, the computer fundamentally uses brute force calculation to try to look at "all possible moves." Even the most advanced compute, however, faces a daunting task. There are  $10^{120}$  possible moves in chess; by comparison, there are thought to be only  $10^{75}$  atoms in the entire universe. What a chess computer tries to do then is to generate the board-position tree 5 or 10 or 20 moves into the future. Once it generates the tree, it looks at the pieces on the board and decides whether that arrangement of pieces is "good" or "bad." No matter how complicated the evaluation gets, it is condensed down to a single number that represents the "goodness" of that board position. On a fast enough computer, the algorithm can look far enough ahead to play a very good game. By adding in learning techniques that modify the evaluation function based on past games, the machine can even improve over time. Deep Junior, the reigning world computer chess champion, has gathered all possible titles and achievements of computer chess and has not lost to a human in an official chess match for the past two years. Among chess programs, Deep Junior's style and vision of the game is unique. Its daring and enterprising style of play is considered the antithesis of the mechanical style usu-

ally expected of machines and has caught many opponents, computer and human, off guard. In fact, Deep Junior often seemingly plays on a hunch. In February, Gary Kasparov (beaten in a match by IBM's Deep Blue computer six years ago) took on Deep Junior. The match was watched by millions on the Internet and broadcast live on international sports television. Kasparov rose to chess prominence as a Soviet junior champion in 1976, at age 12. Despite occasional losses to humans, he has held the world's number one point-system ranking since 1984. Deep Junior can calculate about 3 million moves per second; Kasparov said he can calculate the potential of about 3 moves per second at best, "but they are the best moves." The real challenge, Kasparov believes, when humans play against a computer isn't lack of brain power. "The problem is emotions. Computers don't feel the pressure, they don't get tired or hungry," Kasparov said. "But it is just that lack of imagination which gives humans the edge." After five games, the match was tied at two and a half points apiece. Kasparov opted to draw in the last of six games rather than risk losing. "I had one item on my agenda today: Not to lose," Kasparov said. Kasparov played himself into a superior position but offered a draw on the 23rd move. Deep Junior turned down the offer but presented its own draw five moves later, and Kasparov readily accepted to boos from the crowd. Kasparov said he played better than Deep Junior in the deciding game and would have pressed for a win in a similar position against a human opponent. But, he said, he feared even a tiny mistake would have been severely punished by the computer. ✎

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## Making of Gurdjieff Legacy

Continued from page 26

ence or religion? If you go to the Temple of Edfu, about 30 miles up the Nile from Thebes, you find that its walls, which date back to the Pyramid Age, speak of Seven Sages who came from the Homeland of the Primeval Ones, an island that sank during a catastrophic flood. The Seven Sages introduced a high civilization and religion to Egypt. This is a perfect match with what Gurdjieff says in the *First Series*. If we look at Egyptian religion, which I hold sprang from the Fourth Way, we see its focus was on Being and self-transformation and immortality. The Egyptians believed you have to make a soul and there was no differentiation between the spiritual and the not spiritual. All was spiritual, especially if there was self-remembering.

TGJ: But the Egyptian religion devolved into animal worship, didn't it?

WPP: Yes. Originally, animals were chosen to depict certain attributes of Being. But then, as you say, it devolved. That was why when Judaism occurred about 1,100 B.C.E., they banned all images. And Judaism doesn't believe in an afterlife. But then, over time, it rigidified into some 500-plus laws that dictated all human behavior. And, of course, they had the idea of "the chosen people." As Gurdjieff said, "Moses told them that, not God."

TGJ: Christianity believes in an afterlife.

WPP: Yes, and so does Islam. In the past, as Gurdjieff said, real religion consisted of two parts. One part taught what is to be done—that's the exterior part. And the other part taught how to do what the first part teaches—that's the esoteric part. When the esoteric part is lost then religion devolves as it unfortunately has today. It becomes all words, prohibitions and self-calming, which then rigidifies into orthodoxy and fundamentalism.

TGJ: That seems to be what we see today.

WPP: Exactly. Religion, in my opinion, is on its deathbed. After the current quagmire in the Middle East ends people will ask what was the root cause of the conflict. The answer will be fundamentalism—Christian, Jewish, Moslem. With that the new world belief becomes scientific materialism.

TGJ: Isn't it already here?

WPP: The foundations are already in place. A general de facto declaration is just



*Ouspensky, suffering from a kidney disease, remained in America during the war...*



*...while Gurdjieff met with and nourished his students all through the Nazi occupation of Paris.*



*In the last year of his life, Gurdjieff went to the newly opened cave of Lascaux, where he saw the Great Stag.*

awaiting the demise of modern religions.

TGJ: What will happen to the Work?

WPP: In my view it can easily make the transition because it's a sacred science. It can accept much of scientific materialism and be accepted by it. Most important, it can provide the necessary scale and the teaching and practices to move beyond a strict and limited scientific worldview.

TGJ: What will it take for that to happen?

WPP: Whether the Work makes the transition depends on how it responds and positions itself. That is the impetus for the trilogy. Gurdjieff bequeathed to us a great legacy in terms of his Legominism *All and Everything*, his music, movements and sacred dances, and exercises. It's for us to commit ourselves to it, make it live. That's the point of the third video *Gurdjieff's Legacy*.

TGJ: Well, that's a lot to think about.

WPP: Yes, to ponder.

TGJ: Is this the first trilogy ever done on Gurdjieff and the teaching?

WPP: Yes, *Gurdjieff in Egypt* is the first video ever made about his search. And *Gurdjieff's Mission* and *Gurdjieff's Legacy* are the first to cover the rest of his life. So the trilogy is a perfect complement to the film, *Meetings*.

TGJ: What else do you consider important?

WPP: What is important is that the trilogy is a Work project of seven years duration. We didn't do it as a commercial venture. It was our tribute to Mr. Gurdjieff and his teaching.

TGJ: Well, as a Work project, it was certainly better than digging a ditch.

WPP: No, not at all. To act with intention and not for any personal reward but for our Being is the one real value. The making of a trilogy was simply more demanding and complex and ran into years, not hours.

TGJ: Were you surprised that each of the videos won a Gold Award at WorldFest?

WPP: Absolutely! That each won a Gold Award at such a prestigious international film festival was more than any of us conceived. And that the last two videos won Gold Special Jury Awards for Outstanding Excellence ... well, for that one has to have a great deal of help, and we did.

TGJ: What kind of help?

WPP: What number Man do you take Mr. Gurdjieff to be? /