

Moveable Feasts: The Gurdjieff Work

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You cannot step twice into the same New Religious Movement.

(with apologies to Heracleitus)

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A New Religious Movement (NRM) *moves*: stasis is not on offer. The founder's pipe-dream, his grand chimera, is evangelical dynamism with canonical arrest. Muhammad, for example, would convert the world, yet cautions: 'Beware of novel affairs for surely all innovation is error.'¹ . . . In vain! Slowly and inexorably a subtle torsion—compounded of historical exigency, geographical polycentrism, changing societal norms, ideological cross-dressing, and every stripe of personal subjectivism—remoulds the NRM's credo and praxis. Its scriptural texts suffer variant exegesis; its tenets 'progressive' revisionism. Its Popes and anti-Popes and little heretics create new eddies of doctrine, new foci of influence; its oecumenical councils shuffle the very formularies of orthodoxy.

Although 'the latest study' excites every upwardly-mobile sociologist, relatively few practitioners (B. R. Wilson² comes pleasingly to mind) evince sensitivity to general patterns of NRM dynamism. Those who produce penetrative *morphological* critiques of specific Movements deserve particular congratulation. After all, the pre-requisites of an exhaustive developmental survey—specialisation, generous time-span of review, and (not least) physical and psychological entrée³ are in scarce supply. How can the poor generalist—self-excluded by his 'objectivity' from the NRM's experiential heart; lost in the labyrinth of its reflexive indexicality, without the saving thread of empathy; barred from its oligarchy's Byzantine conclaves in non-smoke-filled rooms; oblivious to a score of obscure yet passionate cogitations (variously 'resolved' by fudge or brutal Gothick triumph)—how can he decently extrapolate the resultant of inertial and applied forces? How glimpse more than foggily the multiplex politico-doctrinal hook-ups: how even conceive that (in novel exemplification of chaos-theory) a single raised eyebrow in Paris may dictate methodology in Caracas 10 years later?

Whoever has frowned his way through this catechism skirts the sociological heretical proposition that it is from *within* an NRM that its doctrinal and methodological trajectory can be plotted with optimum historical and predictive value. Who better than an 'in-house dialectician'⁴ to signal the transition from quantitative increment to qualitative metamorphosis; the *moment critique* when, so-to-say, some hopeful archaeopteryx of an NRM, by the ill-advised shedding of one proto-feather too many, surprisingly involves into a reptile.

Enough generalities! Let us now soberly test for deviation and revisionism in one specific NRM namely ‘The Work’, i.e. the spiritual movement initiated by George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff⁵ . . . Amenably small, but not minuscule; religious in temper but not format⁶; ‘new’ but no nine-day’s wonder; boasting a primary and secondary literature; and exerting a subterranean ideological and cultural influence—The Work is apt, indeed ripe, for survey. Gurdjieff himself counselled no-one to loiter in an unexamined ‘Gurdjieffianity’: “If you have not by nature a critical mind your stay here is useless”⁷.

Our basic parameters are relatively straightforward—reserving judgement on a plethora of foreign and fringe organizations, we focus on the Work’s mandated UK vehicle, The Gurdjieff Society⁸, in the 40 years between the deaths of Gurdjieff (29 October 1949) and his effective successor Jeanne de Salzmann (25 May 1990) . . . Rather more taxing is the procedural issue. The sheer breadth, depth, and cohesion of Gurdjieff’s ‘System’ (a musical *oeuvre*, a repertoire of Sacred Dances, a semantic critique, an epistemology, a mythopoetic cosmology and cosmogony, a human typology, a phenomenology of consciousness, and a practical *Existenzphilosophie*) give pause in setting on a specific index of paradigm-shift. Happily there offers a classical theological dichotomy which seems almost startlingly relevant, namely the dialectical tension between (1) personal endeavour and (2) supernal grace . . . So what, on this crucial score, did the founder himself indicate: and what is indicated by his inheritors?

The Stoic Legacy

The historian’s starting point is not what Gurdjieff, in any value-system, ‘should have’ said; or may metaphorically be ‘saying’ now to sensitives for whom he is professedly “more alive than he ever was”⁹—the issue is what he actually said. His compassion, humanity, humour, even occasional *tendresse*, are amply documented—but as the context of his didactic rigour. That unexpected title ‘The Work’ (coined in Petrograd 1916), seems itself immediately indicative; teleologically it evokes alchemy and methodologically implies virile and inescapable endeavour. “Ordinary efforts do not count”, exhorted Gurdjieff. “Only super-efforts count . . . it is better to die making efforts than to live in sleep”¹⁰. The self-same *Leitmotiv* of intense striving blazes in memoirs of early English pupils: “The keynote was ‘Overcome difficulties—Make effort—Work’”¹¹. It marries accusations by Gurdjieff’s calumniators (“He drove his charges like a Turk”¹²) with the apologetics of defectors (“I liked and continue to like the aristocratic even Nietzschean, side of the Teaching”¹³).

The fact that the traditional Gurdjieffian’s attention is, ever and again, self-mobilised for uncompromising interior *Jihad*, has licensed martial metaphor in book titles by disciples (e. g. Thomasson’s *Batailles pour le présent*¹⁴) and by outsiders (e. g. Wilson’s *War Against Sleep*¹⁵). Incontestably, Gurdjieff insisted on spartan exercises (e. g. counting in cannon; fasting; ‘Arms-sideways’) and dance forms (e. g. the *Arch-difficile*; the ‘Ho Ya! Dervish’) which challenge human potential; his so-to-say ‘Sinaic tablets’ replaced 10 proscriptive commandments with 5 prescriptive ‘*strivings*’. His personal energies he committed *à*

l'outrance and, when he died, his pupils swore fealty in terms resonating the unequivocal vibration of their master's 40 year ministry: "What struggles they will be"¹⁶.

The stringency of Gurdjieff's methodology flowed, with mathematical inexorability, from his uncompromising theodicy: his model of the universe or 'Ray of Creation'. This hierarchical cosmicization of being, with its startling involuntary *solfeggio* (*DO*minus the Lord, *SI*dera the stars, *LA*ctea the Milky Way, the *SOL*ar system etc.) remains a poetically valid and philosophically¹⁷ formidable recrudescence of neo-Pythagorean and Hermetic¹⁸ insights. Significant, however, that in the Ray's downward cascade, the ratio of grace to blind mechanicity worsens incrementally – only such a bare minimum reaching earth as may prompt and empower a few seekers' arduous ascent towards its pure and abundant source: *Hic opus, hic labor est*¹⁹. Hence, in any modern bestiary, the 'Gurdjieffian' is a running salmon, pitting his courage and activism against the lawful downward spate: a creature *par excellence* embarked on a 'contrary way' (Thomasson's *Les chemins contraires*²⁰). Precisely this paradigm softens and illuminates Gurdjieff's strange dictum that his is an orientation "*against nature, against God*"²¹.

To sum up, grace (the Godward side of election, justification and sanctification) is, for Gurdjieff, the modest handmaid of human will. Admittedly his system offers a minority of men prevenient grace in their implanted hunger for latent perfection; and subsequent grace in the magnanimity and mediation of schools of consciousness and being. Here one cheerfully concedes a whiff of synergy, a peppercorn of semi-Pelagianism (quantifiable, in fact, within terms of Gurdjieff's resurrected arithosophy). But gratuitous, omni-accessible, and invincible grace? Poetry's perfervid theophany: "Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke?"²² Not Pygmalion likely! . . . Such then the stoic legacy, which on Gurdjieff's death passed onerously into the worldwide stewardship of his closest and most senior pupil Jeanne de Salzmann.

The Thirty Years War

In the magnetic individuality of Mme Henriette H. Lannes (Mme de Salzmann's chosen representative and plenipotentiary in England for 30 years) the traditional Gurdjieffian ethos of effort was personified and guaranteed. It was vibrantly present in demonstrations of Gurdjieff's Sacred Dances (Fortune Theatre, 1950; St Jame's Hall, Gloucester Terrace, 1961; Rudolph Steiner Hall, 1962). It informed a bewildering range of ancillary activities from a marionette theatre to a Work-oriented study of science . . . Above all, effort was the *sine qua non* of Mme Lannes' group work.

Her spiritual summons, translated into countless practical and diurnal challenges, was not posited in any framework of humanistic psychology or New Age eupsychian therapy but on its traditional ground of Gurdjieff's cosmological model (see, for example, her paper "Organic Life on Earth: Its Place and the Influences Acting on It and Us", 4 Dec. 1971). That she instigated moments²³ involving confrontative physical challenge in Gurdjieff's line of 'super-effort' is undeniable; yet it was not through ordeal, through prodigies of asceticism, through *Sturm und Drang* that Mme Lannes manifested. In dramatic, interactive exchanges, conducted with ruthless compassion, she brought a *teaching of individuation*, wherein each pupil was

granted unique specificity, both as *merde de la merde* and as candidate for ‘self-perfection in the sense of being’; a teaching which elevated the taste of ‘I am’ from cheap egotism to an essential presence replete with noetic content.

Nor, of course, was Mme Lannes alone. Throughout this long formative period all authoritative Work voices endorsed, without a shred of reservation, Gurdjieff’s canon of effort, striving, and self-reliance. It furnished the express idiom, verbal and kinetic, of a succession of exacting Movements teachers (Rose Mary Nott, Solange Lubtchansky, Nicole Egg, Marthe de Gaigneron). In these very terms Mme de Salzman maintained her personal notebook: “Such is my struggle: a struggle against the passivity of my thought. A struggle without which nothing more conscious . . . could be born”²⁴ (1958). In these very terms Peter Brook introduced his biographical film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*: “Gurdjieff’s life points us to another struggle . . . the struggle to *be*”²⁵ (1976). In these very terms Henri Tracol (an eminent Gurdjieffian) commended to the searcher: “A voluntary concentration on *struggle* – a struggle for which he himself is the ground”²⁶ (1979) . . . Such was the consistent and amply traditional tenor of The Gurdjieff Society’s 30-year primary epoch, which closed decisively at 10 p.m. on Wednesday, 28 May 1980, when H. H. Lannes died.

Amazing Grace

London’s grieving members took heart from unchanging group modalities (venue, format etc.). Continued visits by the revered teachers Henri Tracol and Maurice Desselle – and above all Mme de Salzman’s on-going supervision – seemingly augured doctrinal and methodological stability. Yet the augury misled. The Work’s familiar form increasingly delivered a novel content: *Plus c’est la même chose, plus ça change*. Individualised teaching was out, general doctrine in; the wood was everything, the trees nothing. Fronting the new doctrine was a oligarchy-led modulation of idiom from active to passive voice: the pupil no longer ‘remembered himself’ but ‘was remembered’; no longer ‘awoke’ but ‘was awoken’. Pupils did not, need not, could not, work: they were ‘worked upon’ (even while they literally slept!).

These startling propositions advanced with formidable intellectual refinement by French teachers of palpable integrity, left questions. Who could deny, and who fulfil, the residual demand for a subtle interior attunement? Who felt untouched that the elderly apologists of the new quietism paradoxically criss-crossed the globe, stinting no evangelical effort or personal hardship? . . . Even so, the traditional Work paradigm was undeniably *bouleversé*: Yang converted to Yin; Krishna to the Gopi girls; Prometheus to Ganymede; *Jiriki* to *Tariki*, Ignatius Loyola to Miguel de Molinos.

However perverse seems an etymological reading of ‘tradition’ as betrayal (Fr. *Trahison*), the iconic Gurdjieff, avatar of effort, now necessarily fell to be deconstructed by his eponymous organisations. Thus, at a time when the crypto-Gurdjieffian journal *Parabola*²⁷ continued celebrating a vast pantheon of religious, mythic, and legendary figures, Dr Michel de Salzman

(Mme de Salzmänn's son) warned of Gurdjieff himself that, "there are no golden legends to be built around him."²⁸ Then, if not legend, perhaps sober history was admissible? Seemingly not: Gurdjieffian historicity was equally unwelcome in Paris because "rather idolatrous."²⁹

Effectively discarded with both the 'heroic' and historical Gurdjieff was the entire apparatus of his *Systema Universi*: the Ray of Creation, the Table of Hydrogens, the Step Diagram, the Food Diagram, the Enneagram, etc. They and their unwelcome implications simply vanished from politically correct discourse. With this final solution to the problem of the Work's effort-saturated cosmological matrix (enunciated by Gurdjieff, promulgated by P.D. Ouspensky, meditated by Maurice Nicoll, extrapolated by J.G. Bennett and Rodney Collin, and cherished *inter alia* by H.H. Lannes) the pupil's presumed new experience of 'being worked on' and 'being remembered' was posited in a mystical illuminism, which hinted encouragingly at a supernal 'look of love'³⁰ – albeit not specifying its presumably divine, demiurgic, or angelic provenance. In a doctrinal corollary of seismic implications, fusion with this supernal source replaced individuation as the pupil's goal.

However cloudy at the theological level, the new grace-paradigm was lent exotic methodological specificity. In regular communal 'sittings' the highly energised 'love from above' professedly entered the pupil's subtle body through an 'aperture' at his crown (cf. *Kundalini's* 'Lotus of a Thousand Petals') as he waited with eyes closed in still, sustained, and intensely refined attention. With each vital breath (cf. *Prâna*) this transforming energy ducted itself 'arterially' down the spine (cf. *Shushumna*) into the sexual zone (cf. *Svaadhishthâna chakra*) and thence up again to exit between the eyebrows (cf. *Ainâ chakra*). Though the French teachers scrupulously eschewed Yogic terminology, its inescapable redolence sat incongruously with Gurdjieff's fierce strictures against Indian religiosity in general (a "bordel for Truth"³¹) and *Kundalini* in particular.

The grand trophy of revisionism was Gurdjieff's mythopoetic *magnum opus*, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. That this book marshalled Gurdjieff's profoundest insights; that he himself, over decades, honed the English text refining its nuances and cadences; that he saw it into publication; that generations of Gurdjieffians had accorded it quasi-scriptural status – was now outweighed by a single fatal defect. Grace did not suffice to render intelligible the author's deliberate stylistic opacity: the reader's confrontative effort was required – and effort was *passé*. With such a temerity as might cheerfully paraphrase Joyce's *Ulysses* (or Homer's), it was resolved that *Beelzebub's* future readership be not summoned to the textual level, rather the text be reduced to a dilettante or *Lumpen*-Gurdjieffian comprehension level. A suitable American team, mandated by Mme de Salzmänn herself, contrived to "clarify the verbal surface"³²; to make "the reading smoother; the material seem lighter, more approachable"³³. In 1992 the bowdlerised version was published and 'hyped': Gurdjieff's authentic text jettisoned; objection made light of.

Watch This Space

Then, all in all, what had happened? And why? A tradition's thirty years' staunch conservatism, then abrupt deconstruction, by diametric inversion of logocentrism, begs analysis. Does explanation lie in dialectic's mystique of the identity of opposites: in the latency and co-substantiality of grace within any dispensation of striving? Or had paradox (beloved of every Gurdjieffian) simply run amuck? Or again, had that clandestine infusion of orientalism into Gurdjieff's body of ideas suddenly attained dialectic criticality?

To personify these questions merely sharpens them. The overwhelming majority of rank-and-file 'Gurdjieffians' – albeit now populating a landscape littered with the toppled monuments of their master's unequivocal teaching – proved models of adaptation. For them, the Society's own recognisances evidently licensed any responsible spiritual teaching offered under its aegis: they saw no deconstruction, heard no deconstruction, spoke no deconstruction; indeed their own vocabulary of experience quickly acquired by osmosis the newly 'correct' idiom. As above, so below . . . The tiny sensitised minority fell into two camps: those who expediently rationalised the new 'part line' (e.g. "The unquestioning acceptance of tradition of course can secure for us the peace of mind which frontal lobotomies are said to purvey"³⁴) and those who lamented it. This second constituency's deep disquiet was veiled; group loyalties, hierarchical organisational structures, patterns of sanction and patronage, and, above all, a well-founded awe of Mme de Salzmänn muffled dissent.

Gurdjieffian institutional 'democracy' being (like virtually all NRMs) purely cosmetic, the Work's post-1980 cultural revolution in Britain was instigated not by its 'Red Guards' but by its 'Great Helmswoman'. Jeanne de Salzmänn was an active and formidable 90, and her London delegates Tracol and Desselle in their 70s, when all three commenced dispensing the new doctrine unanimously, simultaneously, and in manifest good faith. Given the Work's ethos of symbiotic paternalism, explanation was neither demanded nor volunteered. The oligarchy's oblique rationalisations were tendered only as intermittent sub-texts to group pronouncements; that Gurdjieff himself had rejoiced in inconsistency; that mutability of form characterises his way; that tradition relies on inner vibration not exterior semblance; that recourse to striving brings diminishing returns to the point of counter-productivity (cf. Charles Baudouin's 'law of reversed effort') and is hence suited only to beginners.

The commitment and cohesion of The Gurdjieff Society's teachers, members, and candidate-members render them a force wholly disproportionate to their numbers (approx. 600 in London). Even Gurdjieff's bitterest modern critic concedes that "many people not infrequently endowed with real intellectual and spiritual potential continue to follow his groups"³⁵. As an operative, illuminist school, The Society surely has few if any peers in contemporary Britain. Well and good . . . but, beyond facile nominalism, *what today are The Society's specifically Gurdjieffian credentials?* Two only are self-evident and they are crucially important: firstly its teaching layer embraces virtually all surviving Britons who studied directly under Gurdjieff, and secondly it keeps triumphantly alive the choreographic repertoire of his Movements³⁶.

Nevertheless, the vast residuum of the Gurdjieffian *oeuvre* seems – after scarcely 40 years – already overcast by his own sombre observation, that *every* religious movement’s trajectory eventually “deviates from its original direction and goes . . . in a diametrically opposite direction still preserving its former name”³⁷.

Jeanne de Salzman died on 25 May 1990 aged 101, having heroically given her last reserves to the Work’s future. But what future? Paris’s tenacious hold over *matériel* and ‘orthodoxy’; the existence of an extensible dynastic line (through Dr Michel de Salzman); and the current well-meaning series of international, oecumenical conferences³⁸ – all these portend cohesion. Yet has not the wholesale and hubristic revisionism of the 1980s, culminating in today’s gauche ‘improvement’ of Beelzebub sown the dragon’s teeth of schism?³⁹ Whenever a movement’s apostolic successors visibly cease to be guardians of the tradition, then, sooner or later comes some slouching Luther. For the value-free sociologist, his advent would be merely a matter of restimulated professional interest, but for Gurdjieff’s “sons, whether by blood or in spirit”,⁴⁰ incisive polarization would be a calamity. That any *true* Gurdjieffian communion (however dilated in space and time) must pivot on the teaching, writing, and example of G.I. Gurdjieff, is hardly an extravagant or inflammatory proposition. Its re-espousal seems, to certain informed sensibilities, not only metaphysically apt but urgently politic.

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¹ *The Forty-Two Traditions of An-Nawawi* (No. 28). Tr. Bishop, Eric F. F. *The Moslem World*. Mass.: Hartford Theological Seminary, 1939.

² Wilson, B. R. “An Analysis of Sect Development.” *American Sociological Review* 24, 1959: p. 3-15.

³ Certain modern sociologists (cued perhaps by Georg Simmel) heuristically ‘enter’ specific NRMs. See, for example, Dr. Eileen Barker’s “Confessions of a Methodological Schizophrenic.” *Research Bulletin* (Univ. of Birmingham, Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture, 1978); reworked as “The Professional Stranger: Explaining the Inexplicable in the Study of a Deviant Religious Group” (L.S.E., Univ. of London, 1981). Populist movements present such ‘participant-observers’ easy targets nor are pseudo-initiatic movements (e.g. Freemasonry) difficult. However, a validly hierarchical or initiatic NRM (e.g. the Gurdjieff Work) will detain the sociologist in its exoteric periphery. Consider Leavitt, Darrell. “A Case Study in Normative Integration: The Transformation of a Gurdjieff Group.” (Montreal: Concordia Univ., 1976).

⁴ Dialectic—an epistemological tool forged by Heraclitus; addressed to ‘the sacred’ by Plotinus, Eriugena, Eckhart, Boehme et al.; the engine of Hegel’s tortuous theodicy; evoked by Toynbee in his religico-teleological historiography; implicit in Barth’s ‘crisis theology’; and rehabilitated as an empirical, sociological paradigm by Georges Gurvich—promises special insights into the morphology of NRMs. Gurdjieff, too, postulated a dialectical ‘Law of Three’.

⁵ George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (b. Alexandropol 1866, d. Paris 1949). For lucid reportage of his ‘System’ see Ouspensky, P. D. *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949). For his life see Moore, James. *Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth*. (Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1992. Reissued with a new introduction by the author as *Gurdjieff: a biography*, Element, 1999. For an overview of ‘Gurdjieffianna’ see Driscoll, J. Walter, and The Gurdjieff Foundation of California. *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography*. (New York: Garland, 1985).

⁶ Despite Gurdjieff’s theomorphic model of man and sacred model of the universe, the Work is neither a religion by profession (“We are not trying to found a church or sect”—Ouspensky, *The Daily News* (London), 19 Feb. 1923) or by socio-theological criteria: the Movement has no liturgy, creed, or formal apostolic structure.

⁷ Gurdjieff: Aphorism No. 27 q. *Views from the Real World: Early Talks in Moscow, Essentuki, Tiflis, Berlin, London, Paris, New York and Chicago As Recollected by His Pupils*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973:p. 283.

⁸ The Gurdjieff Society arguably dates *de facto* from December 1949, when, at 46 Colet Gardens, London W14, Mme J. de Salzman presented Mme H. H. Lannes to combined English groups (initially constituted by Ouspensky, Jane Heap, and J. G. Bennett). By 6 October 1955, when it took *de jure* status as The Society for Research into the Development of Man Ltd., J. G. Bennett had broken away. The more indicative name The Gurdjieff Society Ltd. was adopted by special resolution on 17 June 1957.

⁹ Salzman, Michel de. "A Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature." *Parabola* (New York) 3 Aug., 1980: p. 96. Revised in *Gurdjieff: an Annotated Bibliography* by J. Walter Driscoll and the Gurdjieff Foundation of California, New York: Garland, 1985, p xxv.

¹⁰ Ouspensky, op cit.: p.232.

¹¹ Young, James Carruthers. "An Experiment at Fontainebleau: A Personal Reminiscence." *New Adelphi* I (1), Sept. 1927, p.34. Reprinted in *The Gurdjieff International Review* (Palo Alto) I (4) Summer 1998.

¹² Perry, Whitall N. "Gurdjieff in the Light of Tradition." *Studies in Comparative Religion* (Bedfont, Middlesex), Part I: 'The Background' VIII (4), Autumn 1974: p.227. Also published with the same title, by Perennial Books, 1978, 104p.

¹³ Pauwels, Louis. *Gurdjieff*. Douglas, Isle of Man: Times Press, 1964: p.338. Individuation as propounded philosophically by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) relies on ideals recognizable within the traditional Gurdjieffian paradigm, namely ruthless self-cognizance, integrity, will and stoicism. Gurdjieff himself was entirely unimplicated in the Nietzschean movement, and his robust life contrasts with Nietzsche's narcissism and invalidism. Nevertheless, a prior grounding in Nietzsche demonstrably predicated an approach to Gurdjieff. His chief theoretician P. D. Ouspensky alludes to Nietzsche both in his 'Superman' (1911-1929) and 'Eternal Recurrence and the Laws of Manu' (1912-1934). A. R. Orage, Gurdjieff's principal expositor in the U. S. A., wrote *Friedrich Nietzsche: the Dionysian Spirit of the Age* (Edinburg, London: T. N. Foulis, 1905) and *Nitzsche in Outline and Aphorism* (Edinburg, London: T. N. Foulis, 1907). Margaret Anderson, author of *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) featured Nietzschean studies (by George Burman Foster) in her *Little Review*. Gurdjieff's private secretary Boris Ferapontoff was a convinced Nietzschean.

¹⁴ Thomasson, Henri. *Batailles pour le présent: Journal d'une expérience, 1947-1967*. Lyon, France: Etudes et Recherches Psychologiques, 1974, 255p. In English as *The Pursuit of the Present: Journal of Twenty Years in the Gurdjieff Work*. Translated by Rina Hands. Amersham, Bucks, England: Avebury, 1980, 205p.; Aurora, Oregon, U. S. A: Two Rivers Press, 1980.

¹⁵ Wilson, Colin. *The War Against Sleep: The Philosophy of Gurdjieff*. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian Press, 1980, 95p.

¹⁶ Bennett, John G., and Bennett, Elizabeth. *Idiots in Paris: Diaries of G.G. Bennett and Elizabeth Bennett*, 1949, Gloucestershire, Daglingworth Manor: Coombe Springs Press, 1980: p 110.

¹⁷ Gurdjieff's model of the universe addresses audaciously the 'ghost in the machine' dilemma of Cartesian dualism; bridges the discontinuity between creation and an ultra-transcendent Creator (the 'Wholly Other' of Kierkegaard and Barth); and eschews, conversely, the puerilities of interventionist *Gott mit uns* theism. It aspires to reconcile the suffering of sentient beings with God's putative benignity by denying His omnipotence at creation's periphery (God Himself cannot beat the Ace of trumps with the two of hearts).

¹⁸ Gurdjieff's coded and inconsistent indications as to the provenance of his 'System' offer superabundant scope for speculation. His contentious citation of the Central Asian 'Sarmoung Monastery' is discussed in Bennett, J.G. *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*. London: Turnstone Books, 1973: 62-73 and passim, and in Moore, op. cit.:31f and passim. His cosmology and cosmogony seem more plausibly indebted to ancient European esotericism: here Neo-Pythogorean, neo-Platonic, and Hermetic sources appear favoured over Gnostic and Christian because of the latter's ontological dualism and (crucially important within the context of this article) their paradigm of salvation through supernal grace. For a scrupulous and insightful differentiation of these European currents see Faivre, Antoine, and Needleman, Jacob eds. *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*. New York:

Crossroad, 1992, especially Chap. 1: Faivre, Antoine. "Ancient and Medieval Sources of Modern Esoteric Movements."

¹⁹ Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), *Aeneid* VI 126.

²⁰ Thomasson, Henri, *Les chemins contraires. Journal II: Un itinéraire dans l'enseignement de Gurdjieff*. Lyon, France: Etudes et Recherches Psychologiques, 1981.

²¹ Ouspensky, op.cit.: 47.

²² Thompson, Francis. 'The Hound of Heaven' *New Poems* 1897. In its celebration of an invincible grace, which demands only recognition and surrender, this effusive poem resonates the curious contemporary inversion of Gurdjieff's teaching. Thompson (1859-1907) was educated for the Roman Catholic priesthood and his mysticism is redolent more of the 17th than the 19th century. He died of consumption exacerbated by starvation and alcoholism.

²³ When, on 23 September 1957, in their new West London centre, The Gurdjieff Society dedicated their studio for Sacred Dances or Movements, the tone was set by a protracted session of the Spartan exercise 'Arms-sideways'. The groups' initial (1963-65) efforts to establish a craft centre, near Windsor, entailed patterns of strenuous late-night and all-night physical labour. Participation was invariably voluntary.

²⁴ Salzmänn, Jeanne de. *Notebook* (entry 23 July 1958) q. Panafieu, Bruno de, ed. *Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: Texts recueillis par Bruno de Panafieu*, France: Les dossiers H, Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1992: 13f.

²⁵ Brook, Peter q. Moore, James. *The Guardian*, 20 July 1976:10.

²⁶ Tracol, Henri, "Reflections on What is Specific to G's Teaching." *The Gurdjieff Society Annual Report 1979-80*.

²⁷ *Parabola: the Magazine of Myth and Tradition*. Quarterly, published by the Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition, Inc., 656 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

²⁸ Salzmänn, Michel de, loc. cit.:96.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Within the Gurdjieffian literary *oeuvre*, the basis for such a gratuitously salvific and Pentecostal spiritualisation is supplied not in canonical works but by the heterodox and eclectic J.G. Bennett. See his theories concerning 'The Great Work' and *l'arousia* (Christ's Second Coming in glory) as elaborated in *The Dramatic Universe* (London: Hodder & Stoughton). Note especially Vol. II, 1961:232: "The vertical unitive energy is manifested as Cosmic Love. This is a holy power which enters Existence from Above . . ." This passage intriguingly foreshadows Jeanne de Salzmänn's final, oral teaching. See also *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. III, 1966:100.

³¹ Bennett, op.cit.: 68. For Gurdjieff's explicit strictures against Kundalini, see Ouspensky, op.cit.: 220. For an autobiography bearing out Gurdjieff's critique, see Krishna, Gopi. *Kundalini the Evolutionary Energy in Man*. London: Stuart & Watkins, 1970. For the Hindu psycho-physiological system, implicitly invoked in recent Gurdjieffian 'sittings', see Danielou, Alain. *Yoga: The Method of Re-Integration*. London: Johnson Publications, 1949. For an ingenious Gurdjieffian apologetic of their current praxis see Ravindra, Ravi. "Gurdjieff et l'Enseignement de Krishna," Panafieu, op.cit.: 191-99, Extensive contact between Hindu gurus and senior Gurdjieffians finds only partial reflection in cognate literature, examples being: Sri Ramana Maharshi (Ethel Merston); Mahesh Prasad Varna 'The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi' (Dr Kenneth Walker and J.G. Bennett); Anandayami Ma (Olga de Hartmann and Thomas Daly); Sri Anirvan (Lizelle Reymond); Sri Govindananda Bharati 'The Shivapuri Baba' (Olga de Hartmann and J.G. and Eliz. Bennett).

³² Editor's 'blurb' to Gurdjieff, G.I. *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. New York: Viking Penguin; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Arkana, 1992.

³³ Thompson, Chris. *Parabola* (New York) XVIII (1), Feb. 1993: 98. Thompson was actively engaged in this contentious revision which he favourably reviews from a standpoint of ostensible impartiality.

³⁴ *The Gurdjieff Society Annual Report 1986-87*:22, contribution by 'W.N.'.

³⁵ Perry, op. cit.: 211.

³⁶ For an encapsulation of the provenance, rationale, and history of Gurdjieff's Movements, see Moore, op.cit.: 351ff: Note 13 'The Sacred Dances'. Because the Movements are cherished as the Gurdjieffian canon's 'immaculate heart', their choreographic integrity enjoys privileged exemption from contemporary revisionism.

In their execution, however, the new grace paradigm has brought a (précis-defying) shift from ‘doing’ to ‘let do’. Despite this, it has proved virtually impossible to expunge Gurdjieff’s paradigm of confrontative effort from certain vigorous dances for men.

³⁷ Ouspensky, *op.cit.*: 129.

³⁸ Jeanne de Salzmänn’s ascendancy over a worldwide ‘commonwealth’ of disparate Gurdjieffian organisations ensured a fragile supra-constitutional cohesion until her death on 25 May 1990. The accentuated need to harmonise Work dispensations (not least in the Americas) currently sees her son Dr Michel de Salzmänn emerging as the convenor of an on-going series of international conferences (Windsor 1991, Amsterdam 1992, Windsor 1993, New York 1993) attended by ‘responsibles’ from long-established and new centres.

³⁹ A widespread and deeply felt reaction against the revision of Gurdjieff’s major work, undertaken unilaterally by The Gurdjieff Foundation (New York), first found voice in Feb. 1993, when the leader of the Oregon groups, Mrs A.L. Staveley, promulgated to senior Gurdjieffians worldwide a critique entitled: “A Protest Made in Sorrow on the Revision of Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson.” In a future article I hope to address *in extensis* the important issues raised by this revision and its reception.

⁴⁰ Gurdjieff, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963: 49.