

# MORE EXCITING ADVENTURES WITH GURDJIEFF

SCIENTIFIC ADVICE ON THE POLITICS OF LIFE  
by

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Last week, I reviewed the life of George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff. Motivated by a self-imposed spiritual mission, he devoted his enormous energies to the foundation of the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, to make available to serious seekers the wisdom he had discovered in the East. This knowledge, based on fragments of ancient teachings integrated by him into a coherent system rivaling modern mathematics in its formal beauty, is described in numerous books by his students---P.D. Ouspensky, K. Walker, C.S. Nott, F. Peters, M. Nicoll, and others---as well as his own books. Rather than paraphrase secondary sources in this small space, I will give here my translation of Gurdjieff's own introduction to his ideas, originally presented in a brochure describing the Institute.

## PERVERSION OF MAN'S DEVELOPMENT

Due to subtle cultural dynamics man has changed from the normal condition in which he should be living, in harmony with his real nature and his environment. Although modern civilization has opened vast horizons of technology and science, its one-sided development has deprived man of certain essential faculties and hereditary privileges, preventing his harmonious and balanced development.

individual, separately formed, individually educated, and non-cooperating: one thinks, one feels, and the third acts only by automatic reflexes. Far from working in harmonious cooperation as intended by nature, these three habitually frustrate the plans of each other. This realization leads to the conclusion that modern man is not master of himself.

The system of self-observation taught at the Institute clearly demonstrated that modern man never acts of his own accord, but only in response to external irritations. He does not think, but something thinks for him; he does not act, but something acts through him; he does not create, but something is created through him; he does not achieve, but something is achieved through him.

## THREE CATEGORIES OF IMPRESSIONS

In a newborn child, the three centers may be compared to blank recording tapes. Perceptions of internal and external events are recorded in sequence, according to the nature of the events and of the distinct centers. The three tapes later produce all kinds of mental associations in various combinations. What is called "reason" is the concentration of the results of impressions formerly perceived, and the stimulation and repetition of this provokes different kinds of associations. The recorded impressions have three sources, and are subject to three different influences. One category of association is formed by involuntary impressions, external or internal. The second category is formed by voluntary impressions and active thinking. The third category is formed exclusively by contemplation, that is, from impressions of impressions, etc.

## THREE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The recording of impressions in three categories causes the diversity of three determinate states of consciousness. The methods of the Institute definitely establish the existence of these states, and their origin in the three categories of impressions. One of the states, which is the highest and most desirable for man, is based exclusively on the third category of impressions. The second state is based on the second category. The third state, mistakenly called the "waking state" in ordinary parlance, is based on the first category of involuntary perceptions and accidental impressions received from the environment (conditioning.)

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separate centers the need to blend with the others, in order that their functions may be harmoniously united. Only by this development can education bring the different centers to the same level, to work together, and to provide an extraordinary level of consciousness. Beyond this first task, each center requires a separate education, adapted to its type and degree of development relative to the others. Thus, the work of educating each person must be strictly individual. Mal-functioning of the centers increases with age, and their correction requires a constant and determined struggle.

## PEDAGOGIC TECHNIQUES

From traditional teachings, as well as recent experiments, it has been established that a person cannot carry on this struggle alone. Work on himself, whether by exercises, meditation, breathing, diet, or fasting, will not help at all. Indiscriminant application of these techniques, without regard for individual needs and peculiarities, is not only useless but harmful. For the human machine is always in mechanical equilibrium, and for every change there is an equal and opposite reaction, which must be foreseen and countered. To avoid undesirable consequences in working upon one's self, it is necessary to submit to the discipline of special methods under the direction of an experienced teacher, and to develop new facilities.

## THE INSTITUTE

The "Institute for Man's Harmonious Development according to the system of G. Gurdjieff" aims at the discovery of these facilities, which are essential for