

A CASE STUDY IN NORMATIVE INTEGRATION:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF A GURDJIEFF GROUP

Darrell G. Leavitt

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ABSTRACT.

DARRELL G. LEAVITT

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Over an eighteen-month period, a small interest group, a Gurdjieff reading circle, slowly changed into a cohesive value group whose normative goals reflected Gurdjieff's ideas and whose authority extended into the personal lives of its members. This transformation occurred in phases, each transition marked in part by the resolution of interpersonal conflicts and in part by an increasing affirmation of group norms. There is a natural tension in Gurdjieff's philosophy between individual and collective approaches to the discovery of truth and this tension had its correlate in group interactions. Individual and group values conflicted, resulting in the departure of marginally involved members, but also in greater cohesiveness of remaining members. More and more frequently, the group engaged in activities supportive of group norms and values, which, stylized and ritualized, acted as a plausibility structure which, in turn, legitimated the group's alternative definition of reality. This thesis is a field study of the process of integration, the transformation from interest to value orientation in a Gurdjieff group.

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I.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a sociological case study of the development of a Gurdjieff group. What initially began as an interest group concerned primarily with reading and understanding Gurdjieff's ideas was transformed over a two year period into a value group characterized by a strong adherence to meanings, by the adoption of Gurdjieff's philosophy, and by a certain "we feeling" or feeling of intimacy and commitment to the group. The transformation of this group was closely related to the working out in practice of the theoretical tension which exists in Gurdjieff's writings between the role of the individual and that of the group.

As a form of "Neo-Gnosticism" Gurdjieff's philosophy places emphasis on the individual act of "gnosis" or immediate, personal, spiritual self-knowledge. Both Gnostics and Gurdjieff claim that only through such knowledge of oneself is it possible to "transcend"¹ the mundane and realize one's own selfhood. Self-knowledge requires an individual act of volition and personal discipline. Yet, Gurdjieff also suggests that a man cannot awaken on his own, that he needs the help of others like him who wish to pursue the same aim, and that he must enlist the aid of one who knows what it is to "awaken". Thus to follow Gurdjieff's teaching

is to seek self-knowledge at once through individual endeavor and through group activities, where one is guided by others.

In the Gurdjieff group which I selected, tensions arose between members who adhered to this individual emphasis of gnosis and others who associated more closely with group mores. The precipitating factor for the surfacing of this underlying disparity in sentiments and interests was the institutionalization of authority relations in the group. The tension resolved itself primarily, although not exclusively, in terms of a collective orientation.

The Gurdjieff group began meeting in May of 1973 in a small town not far from Montreal, Quebec. They shared at first only an interest in the "work" of George Gurdjieff. With the exception of one person they were all new to the work so that meeting once a week gave them the opportunity of reading, discussing, and familiarizing themselves with his ideas. Then, over an eighteen month period, what began as an interest group was transformed into a value-oriented group.

The group's history to date can be differentiated into four stages of development: the "Formative", the "Second", "Third", and "Fourth" phases. The "Formative Phase" lasted from May, 1973, until mid-August of the same year. (see Appendix III). The group was small in size with a highly intellectual focus and there were very few interpersonal

conflicts or altercations. At the end of this Formative phase an incident in mid-August, an interpersonal conflict, led to the temporary cessation of meetings. The Second phase lasted from November, 1973, until March, 1974. It was marked by a rather large number of participants at its beginning, yet a steady drop in membership. Also there occurred a comparatively large number of interpersonal conflicts as the group was generally divided into those who resisted the change in authority and wished to remain a reading group, and those who accepted the new authority relations and wished the group to become a more committed Gurdjieff group.

The group size grew from its low point at the end of the Second phase yet began to decline again near the end of this Third phase. In this period there occurred fewer interpersonal conflicts than in the previous phase and the focus of the group was more concentrated toward the Gurdjieff ideas. It was here that there first developed heightened expectations and obligations toward the group. This shift toward group obligations reached its height in the Fourth period lasting from August, 1974, until February, 1975. Here the group became more self consciously a Gurdjieff group. Authority relations became more firmly routinized, there were very few conflicts, and there appeared a collective commitment to the Gurdjieff ideas. This collective valuation of ideas will

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be referred to as the "group meaning system". It is an objectification of shared norms and values that only became fully crystallized in the Fourth phase.

The ideal typical distinction between an interest and a value group derives in part from Max Weber's analysis of types of social action: "Zwekrational" being rational action in relation to a goal, and "Wertrational" being rational action in relation to a value². Interest orientation corresponds most closely with "Zwekrational" while value orientation corresponds more closely with "Wertrational". An interest oriented group refers to a group which is "task oriented", that is, the action of the group is distinguished by its rational orientation to discreet individual ends "when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all taken into account and rationally weighed"³. In contrast a value group is distinguished by the self conscious commitment by individuals to some absolute value of aesthetic, ethical, or religious nature, the meaning of which does not lie in the achievement of a result ulterior to it, but in the valued cause itself.

The interest group, as a consequence of its rational orientation toward discreet ends (i.e. utilitarian nature) is usually characterized as a loosely bound gathering where participation involves only a partial commitment by the individual. The individual is not influenced by the group outside the sphere of his shared interest. The group is a

means of accomplishing a task but exercises no other authority. An interest group, therefore, is not especially cohesive and the functional integration which exists is utilitarian in nature: the group's unity serves a specific purpose and only that purpose.

For example, a college classroom, a discussion group, a committee, or a baseball team may perform important functions for the individual, but beyond a functional role, the group demands little involvement. After class, after a discussion, or after a baseball game participants disengage from these relationships and assume other roles that are discontinuous and generally unrelated to the particular group. This does not imply that there is no overlap from one role performance to the other, but merely that it is at a minimum in an interest group. Similarly, the claim that the group makes on an individual's behavior is limited and well defined. One's behavior is generally not scrutinized after the group disperses-- behavioral expectations relate only to the particular task.

A value group, as a consequence of its self-conscious orientation to ultimate values, is generally extremely cohesive and intimate. Certain instrumental and teleological values take on a central importance for both the individual and the group as a whole. Therefore members tend to be involved in a total way. Such groups are characteristically

quite pervasive in their influence over individual participants. Members tend to be involved in a total way. The group acts as a referent through which to understand their reality. Highly important to the individual, the value group extends its authority over a broad range of issues. Finally, there develops a strong group loyalty and fundamental concern for the quality of communication, which fosters a normative integration along lines of shared values and beliefs. The group meets exclusively to affirm that commitment.

Some value groups include therapy sessions, revolutionary, and religious organizations. In each case the group makes judgements on issues outside its immediate sphere of relevance. Therapy patients often try to make sense of their everyday problems by relating back to their experiences and discussions in previous sessions. Revolutionaries identify themselves as such and measure external events by group slogans and interpretations. Similarly, religious cults are central to their adherents' self definition and to their world views as well. The value group has a pervasive influence over participants lives. A normative integration both represents and shapes members' reality. The member of a therapy group begins to perceive pathologies, adjustments and abnormalities that have to be worked through and he acts accordingly. The revolutionary changes his behavior

to conform to his ideology. The member of a religious cult allows the beliefs of his cult to influence how he should respond to ill will abounding in "this world".

Loyalty in a value group is based on a conviction that both at the individual and group levels goals will be realized through adherence to group norms. Thus the group takes on a prime relevance for individual members. Involvement in the revolutionary, therapy, or cultic group entails the inclusion of a maximum of the individuals roles. In a therapy group all social reality is relevant to the health of participants. In a religious cult close personal attention is paid to the individual to insure his spiritual salvation. For the revolutionary, as for the others, the quality of communication and interaction becomes a central focus for his new value orientation.

There are other groups which cannot be so easily identified within either pole of the ideal type framework. For example, trade unions may exhibit a dominant saliency of either utilitarian concerns (interest orientation) or a commonly held absolutistic philosophical perspective (value orientation). The union might be functionally integrated based on the pragmatic interest of the protection of workmans' rights. While there may not exist any strong normative dimension, nonetheless there could be strong feelings of comradeship and group loyalty. While the scope of involvement might be

relatively limited, the intensity could be quite strong. The degree to which one might consider a particular trade union to be more of a value than an interest group would depend upon the extent to which there exists ultimate group values within which both individual and group goals are singularly realizable. This is not to imply that the two types are mutually exclusive, however. - A trade union may exhibit varying degrees of both orientations at the same time.

Initially the Gurdjieff group was an interest group. Members met to read and discuss the Gurdjieff philosophy. The solidarity and participants' involvement was limited and directly related to their task orientation, reading, and discussing the Gurdjieff philosophy.

Subsequently, the group developed into a value oriented circle, where members' lives were understood through the prime context of the group values. The Gurdjieff group's legitimate authority extended beyond its range to include personal issues. Identification and loyalty to the group strengthened. The quality of communication, rather than its content, became a central concern. The final sign of normative integration was the emergence of a group meaning system of shared values, goals and beliefs which were primarily derived from the Gurdjieff philosophy. The group met to affirm a commitment to those values.

The transformation from an interest to a value group occurred within the content of both: (1) a conflict between

two major orientations: individual and collective orientations; and (2) differential reactions to the institutionalization of authority in the group. This demonstrated first, the manner in which particular theoretical polarities in an ideational system can find their counterparts in the sentiments of group members; and, second, the dynamic interdependence of sentiments and forms of interaction in small groups⁴.

Addressing the first issue, a theoretical polarity of individualism- collectivism relates primarily to the issue of how truth is discovered. Individualism is the theoretical position that "truth" is learned subjectively. In this perspective premises commonly held between persons become irrelevant, yet potential barriers to the individual's self affirmation of truth. Collectivism is the theoretical position that truth is a group appropriated quality. This perspective stresses universal, objectively identifiable truths that go beyond the individual. Individual cognition is viewed with suspicion, capable of error, on the sole grounds that the group is the means within which truth is appropriated.

While the Gurdjieff group remained a functional interest group, there were conflicts over individual and collective orientations. Two problems were particularly important: the degree of centrality of the group in im-

parting goals, and the degree of concern for shared norms within the group. Degree of centrality refers to whether the group is seen as an essential or non-essential means of goal achievement. If non-essential, then we might expect minimal commitment from the individual. If the group is essential we might expect priority placed on cooperation. The second problem concerns the fostering of a common milieu. To one extreme is the desire for common goals and values; to the other extreme is an avoidance of their development.

Thus we find three dimensions associated with ideal typical constructs of individualism and collectivism: first, the means of appropriating truth, second, the concern for the centrality of group rather than individual goals, and last, the desire to foster common norms.

Keeping the above analytical frameworks in mind the ultimate question to be addressed in this thesis is: what factors were responsible for the transformation from an interest group into a value group? In addressing this question I find that normal processes occur in the group's development, such as the institutionalization of authority relations, the routinization of activities, and the sedimentation of shared sentiments. These help to explain the normal evolution of the group but not the transformation into a value group. The significant change in the orienta-

tion of the group is explained by the development of a comprehensive, personal, value system, a value system which both defined and legitimated a mood of commitment in the group.

Note on Methodology:

The method used for this study was that of participant observation. The particular variant closely resembled the suggestions of Severyn T. Bruyn's The Human Perspective in Sociology⁵. Engaging as fully as possible in the data under investigation allowed the optimal chance of perceiving values, meanings and sentiments as understood by group members themselves. The subsequent recording of salient points in conversations or interactions provided the data from which inferences were drawn, which in turn directed further observations.

It is not nearly so problematic to be selective in observing and recording data as it is to be aware of the particular criteria used for that selection. These criteria reflect the researcher's own interests, motivations, and varied systems of relevance. The criteria for this research were: (1) interest in determining if and to what extent there was a dimension of shared values and norms and if so what was its content; (2) what was the nature of activities engaged in; (3) what was the nature of the Gurdjieff philoso-

phy and other texts used by the group; and (4) what was the particular relationship between theory and praxis in the group.

Analyzing this data then led to the generation of inferences. Theoretical splits in Gurdjieff's "Phenomenological Therapy" had a correlation in differential orientations toward the group. Departures of members was closely tied into both their sentiments toward the change in authority, and their attitude toward the group becoming a more committed Gurdjieff group. Group activities appeared supportive of group values and sentiments.

Throughout this thesis the discussions, activities, and interactions of the group are described by generalizations relating to the group as a whole, its shared orientation to action, for example, or its shared interpretation. These generalizations largely refer to the "core" members; that is, those who were most active in the group and who were seen as such by themselves and other members. In addition they refer to instances where there were no major differences in opinion or action expressed in the group as a whole. Certainly there is a danger here of reifying the group as if there existed a "group mind", outside of the action or thought of concrete individuals. This is not what is implied. In order to avoid reification repeated examples of interaction are given and significant differences of opinion or action are pointed out.

Pseudonyms have been used throughout in order to protect the private lives of those individuals who are mentioned.

Initially, field notes for this thesis were prepared in conjunction with a group research project on "New Religious Movements in the Greater Montreal Area"⁶. My participation in the Gurdjieff group began in May, 1973, and since October of that year I attended the weekly meetings regularly, attempting to write down my observations of the group. This is the primary source of my information. Immediately following each meeting, or early the next morning, I recalled as best I could the events of that meeting. I attended about sixty group meetings and in addition I had innumerable occasions to speak individually with group members while outside of the regular meetings. These too became a source of data as field notes. Therefore, the access I had to data was quite wide in terms of time spent in the group and in separate meetings with individuals.

As a part of the broader research project I completed group survey forms, papers identifying why people joined, what maintained a participant's interest, and what might cause him or her to leave the group. In addition a short history of the group was written and I asked for group members reactions to it. On the basis of these observa-

tions I then began to write my descriptive account of the group. As a case study, this thesis is not intended to test any particular theoretical proposition, but to illuminate the sociological factors involved in the qualitative transformation of a small group.

Footnotes

¹The term "transcendence" is defined here in a manner consistent with both Gurdjieff and Gnosticism. It refers to the successive giving up of worldly attachments accompanied by the approximation of more objective (impartial) self-knowledge by successively approaching higher realms of consciousness.

²Max Weber Theory of Social and Economic Organization (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), pp 115-118.

³Max Weber, p. 117.

⁴This latter issue is addressed in: George Homans, The Human Group (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1950)

⁵Severyn T. H. Bruyn, The Human Perspective in Sociology: the Methodology of Participant Observation (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966).

⁶Sir George Williams University; Department of Religion, 1973; Research project funded in part by Quebec Government.

II.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF GURDJIEFF

The Gurdjieff philosophy describes the nature of man and his life on earth. With a view toward "transcendence", Gurdjieff depicts man as a conditioned ("mechanical") creature, "enslaved", but capable of transcending his "mechanicality" through self-awareness. In this "prescriptive" or "therapeutic" self-knowledge in Gurdjieff's thought we find an important duality of emphasis on the individual and on the group.

This chapter will describe Gurdjieff's philosophy. Without a general understanding of the scope of his views, which acted as the focal point for the meetings of the group, the interactions of its members are seen in half-light. Furthermore, the tension between Gurdjieff's emphasis on the individual and on the group has a theoretical correlate within the development of group solidarity.

The philosophical framework for Gurdjieff's thought is the issue of the evolution of man's consciousness.¹ Gurdjieff presents his view as contrary to accepted scientific notions, which holds that consciousness is evolving. Having depicted man as a machine, subjected to extraneous forces and incapable of independent thought or volition, Gurdjieff suggests that

any changes taking place in humanity as a whole (what would be called evolution by contemporary standards) are accidental, unconscious processes. He terms this "mechanical evolution", and contrasts it to the possibility of man's solitary consciousness of his position and awareness of his own potentialities.

"Real evolution" consists of the expansion of certain psychic capabilities, the presence of which distinguishes an individual from humanity as a whole:

Humanity neither progresses nor evolves. What seems to us to be progress or evolution is a partial modification which can be immediately counter-balanced by a corresponding modification in an opposite direction.²

This is the basis for the correct view of human evolution. There is no compulsory, mechanical evolution. Evolution is the result of conscious struggle. . . . The evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness. And, 'consciousness' cannot evolve unconsciously. The evolution of man is the evolution of his will, and 'will' cannot evolve involuntarily. The evolution of man is the evolution of his power of doing, and 'doing' cannot be the result of things which happen.³

The notion of man's potentiality within his mechanical existence is the underlying theme throughout the Gurdjieff system. Man is an incomplete being. Beyond his limits man cannot transcend without a qualitatively different conscious effort.

Gurdjieff's philosophy of evolution may be analyzed in four parts: (1) Philosophical Anthropology; (2) Descriptive Psychology; (3) Phenomenological Therapy; and (4) Gurdjieff and Gnosticism. Philosophical Anthropology refers to Gurdjieff's

description of man's particular circumstances or relationship to his world given certain cosmic laws. Descriptive Psychology depicts the psychological state of contemporary man. Phenomenological Therapy concerns itself with means for transcending man's particular situation. The section on Gurdjieff and Gnosticism examines Gurdjieff by comparison with Gnostic speculation.

(1) Philosophical Anthropology

The philosophical anthropology of the Gurdjieff system addresses itself to man's situation on earth given a cosmological framework (see Appendix I). For Gurdjieff the study of the universe and of man are inseparable:

It is impossible to study a system of the universe without studying man. At the same time it is impossible to study man without studying the universe. Man is an image of the world. He was created by the same laws that created the whole of the world. By knowing and understanding himself he will know and understand the whole world, all the laws that create and govern the world. At the same time by studying the world and the laws that govern the world he will learn and understand the laws that govern him.⁴

What Gurdjieff calls the "law of three" posits a fundamental ordering of the universe. The earth's position is the lowest within the "Ray of Creation", where mechanical elements are paramount. Humans have the option of behaving mechanically or transcending their nature. This so-called "Cosmology" acts

as a background for Gurdjieff's system, but as such it was generally not the focus of discussion or interest by this Gurdjieff group (see Appendix I).

The concept of transcendence in Gurdjieff relates to "states of consciousness". In his terminology, man is "asleep". Sleep is the first and lowest state of consciousness. It is a state of inactivity and suspension of daily consciousness in order to replenish the body's energies, according to Gurdjieff, "a passive state in which man spends a third and very often a half of his life."⁵ The second state, or "waking state of consciousness" is that state in which "men spend the other part of their lives, in which they walk the streets, write books, talk on lofty subjects, take part in politics, kill one another, which they regard as active and call 'clear consciousness'. . . ."⁶

Gurdjieff suggests that in certain important respects the first and second states of consciousness are not essentially different:

In order to understand what the difference between states of consciousness is, let us return to the first state of consciousness which is sleep. This is an entirely subjective state of consciousness. A man is immersed in dreams, whether he remembers them or not does not matter. . . Then a man wakes up. At first glance this is a quite different state of consciousness. He can move, he can talk with other people, he can make calculations ahead, he can see danger and avoid it, and so on. It stands to reason that he is in a better position than when he was asleep. But if we go a little more deeply into things, if we take a look into his inner world, into his thoughts, into the causes of his actions, we shall see that he is in

almost the same state of sleep as when he is asleep. And it is even worse, because in sleep he is passive, that is, he cannot do anything. In the waking state, however, he can do something all the time and the results of all his actions will be reflected upon him or upon those around him. And yet he does not remember himself. He is a machine, everything with him happens. He cannot stop the flow of his thoughts, he cannot control his imagination, his emotions, his attention. He lives in a subjective world of 'I love', 'I do not love', 'I like', 'I do not like', 'I want', 'I do not want', that is, of what he thinks he wants, of what he thinks he does not want. He does not see the real world. The real world is hidden from him by the wall of imagination. He lives in sleep. He is asleep. What is called 'clear consciousness' is sleep and a far more dangerous sleep than sleep at night in bed.

There is no essential difference for Gurdjieff between sleep and the waking state. He refers to both as "sleep". Everything that "befalls" a man, all that is done by him, all that is done to him, all of this "just happens". In the same way that rain falls as a result of certain changes in atmospheric pressure and temperature, all of man's deeds, thoughts, actions and feelings result from external influences. Man is simply the mechanism through which a concatenation of forces are manifest.

One of the implications that Gurdjieff draws with regard to this "chief feature of a modern man's being",⁸ sleep, reflects man's knowledge of himself and his world. He asks: what knowledge can a sleeping man have? Gurdjieff claims that most people do have a basic understanding of what knowledge means; and they do understand the possibility of different levels of knowledge. Yet what they do not understand is the

relationship of knowledge to "being" or the existence of different "levels of being".

Commonly, says Gurdjieff, "being" means "existence", and lack of being means non-existence; "levels of being" do not appear in traditional analysis. Just as a mineral's level of existence is different from that of a plant, individual humans differ in being. In fact, he asserts, "the being of two people can differ from one another more than the being of a mineral and of an animal"⁹ (my italics). Gurdjieff claims that one's knowledge depends upon his level of being and that without a change in being much of the knowledge that is accumulated is of little or no use to man. One can draw an analogy from practical activity: man cannot understand how to fix an automobile unless he has both the technical facts (knowledge) and the experiential ability (being). Outside of such more practical matters, Gurdjieff suggests that in general understanding depends upon this relationship of knowledge to being. Ordinarily knowledge is equated with understanding, yet Gurdjieff tries to make it clear that the two are quite different. Further, he suggests that an overdevelopment of either area leads to an undesirable yet common situation:

If knowledge outweighs being a man knows but has no power to do. It is useless knowledge. On the other hand if being outweighs knowledge a man has the power to do, but does not know, that is, he can do something but does

not know what to do.¹⁰

Gurdjieff states that the correct relationship of knowledge to being results in understanding:

Knowledge by itself does not give understanding. Nor is understanding increased by an increase of knowledge alone. Understanding depends on the relationship of knowledge to being. Understanding is the resultant of knowledge and being. And knowledge and being must not diverge too far otherwise understanding will prove to be far removed from either. At the same time the relation of knowledge to being does not change with a mere growth of knowledge. It changes only when being grows simultaneously with knowledge. In other words, understanding grows only with the growth of being.¹¹

Now we return to Gurdjieff's question: to what extent can one speak of the knowledge of a man who is "asleep"?

Gurdjieff suggests that the answer to this question has to do with levels of being. If one really wants knowledge then he must first of all consider awakening; that is, how to change his being.

Gurdjieff depicts seven possible levels of being for man. Man number one, two and three are all seen as being mechanical or determined men who operate primarily on a physical, emotional, or intellectual plane. Men four through seven are those who have, in one way or another, begun to transcend their mechanicality and are more conscious of themselves and of the forces impinging on them.

Gurdjieff depicts "man number one" as physical man, an individual within which movement and instinctive functions predominate while emotional and intellectual factors are sub-

servient. Likewise "man number two", emotional man, is viewed as being on the same mechanical level of development yet his emotional functions predominate the movement, instinctive and intellectual functions. Lastly, "man number three" is also at the same level of development: for him the intellectual functions predominate over the movement, instinct, and emotions. Regardless of their type, numbers one, two and three are all at the same level of development. That is, they are all within the "mechanical circle of humanity". All men are born as number one, two or three. Real development of being takes place in the direction of number four.

Man number four is depicted as one who has begun to transcend his mechanicality:

only as a result of efforts of a definite character. . . Man number four already stands on a different level to man number one, two, and three; he has a permanent center of gravity which consists in his ideas, in his valuation of the work, and in his relation to the school. In addition his psychic centers have already begun to be balanced; one center in him cannot have such a preponderance over others as is the case with people of the first three categories. He already begins to know himself and begins to know whither he is going.¹²

The depiction of man numbers five, six and seven in Gurdjieff's and Ouspenski's writings for the most part goes only as far as to suggest an increase in objective self-knowledge and unity in man number five; the beginnings of the development of higher powers of objective consciousness in

man number six, and in man number seven we find one "who has reached the full development possible to man and who possesses everything a man can possess; that is, will consciousness, permanent and unchangeable I, individuality, immortality, and many other properties which, in our blindness and ignorance, we ascribe to ourselves."¹³ From man number four² up we have a progressive freeing of the subjective elements in knowledge and the approximation of "objective knowledge."

For Gurdjieff the possibility of transcendence rests on a clear perception of man's present state. Gurdjieff's Descriptive Psychology fulfills that function by presenting a comprehensive description of the psyche of man.

(2) Descriptive Psychology

In his descriptive psychology Gurdjieff elucidates what he sees as the "peculiarity" of the psyche of contemporary man. "Mechanicality" of evolution is here more thoroughly discussed with regard to the individual, rather than to man in general. Man's lack of unity or centeredness became the focus of Gurdjieff's "mechanicality" concept.

Gurdjieff begins with man as a "three brained being":

Our principal error is that we think we have one mind. We call the functions of this mind 'conscious'; everything that does not enter this mind we call 'unconscious' or sub-

conscious. . . the activity of the human machine, that is, of the physical body, is controlled, not by one, but by several minds entirely independent of each other, having separate functions and separate spheres in which they manifest themselves.¹⁴

Gurdjieff speaks of these three minds as "centers", the moving center, the emotional center, and the intellectual center. The moving center concerns itself with control over the bodily functions such as flexing and relaxing of muscles. The emotional center governs the emergence of feelings and sensations. The intellectual center is that "mind" of the human that performs mental activities viewed as something separate from emotions and bodily functions. Each center has a specific range of operations, all of which comprise the harmonious total machine.

At times these functions conflict. One center wishes to do the work of another, although areas of competence for each are defined:

At the same time as we watch the work of the centers we shall observe, side by side with their right working, their wrong working, that is, the working of one center for another: the attempts of the thinking center to feel or to pretend that it feels, the attempts of the emotional center to think, the attempts of the moving center to think and feel.¹⁵

Gurdjieff suggests that while one center can work for another in certain cases, sometimes one center will try to take over work which it is incapable of doing adequately. Negative interference might include, for example, a situation in which the emotional center introduces into the normal

functioning of the intellectual center unnecessary nervousness. Gurdjieff's example, as follows, is:

mechanical reading or mechanical listening, as when a man reads or listens to nothing but words and is utterly unconscious of what he is reading or hearing.¹⁶

Not only do centers interfere with each other's correct functioning, but in ordinary man there is little or no communication between centers. As a result of this dysfunctional silence, no center has a grasp of what the other is doing.

The separate, independent minds or centers of man are compared to the organization of a "hackney carriage" consisting of carriage, horse and coachman:

The body of a man with all its motor reflex manifestations corresponds simply to the carriage itself; all the functionings and manifestations of feeling of a man correspond to the horse harnessed to the carriage and drawing it; the coachman sitting on the box and directing the horse corresponds to that in a man which people call consciousness or mentation; and finally, the passenger seated in the carriage, and commanding the coachman is that which is called 'I'.¹⁷

Rooted and widespread abnormal methods of education, Gurdjieff concludes, account for the utter absence of an "I" in contemporary times.

Of the three minds which do exist, each forms its own idiosyncratic needs, habits and tasks, according to Gurdjieff's system. The driver (mind) is an ignorant fellow who occupies his time with fantastic daydreams, chasing after cooks and housemaids and frequently drinking to dull his mind. And the horse (emotions); says Gurdjieff, serves to demonstrate

the one-sidedness of contemporary education:

Thanks to the abnormal conditions around it, the horse has never received any special education, but has been molded exclusively under the influence of constant thrashing and vile abuse.

It has always been kept tied up; and for feed, instead of oats and hay, there is given to it merely straw which is utterly worthless for its real needs. Never having seen in any of the manifestations towards it even the least love or friendliness, the horse is now ready to surrender itself completely to anybody who gives it the slightest caress.

The consequence of all this is that all the inclinations of the horse, deprived of all interests and aspirations, must inevitably be concentrated in food, drink, and the automatic yearning of the opposite sex; hence, it invariably veers in the direction where it can obtain any of these.¹⁸

The carriage, as symbol, becomes to Gurdjieff the dilapidated frame. Although it is maintained by a self-lubricating mechanism intended for travel on rough terrain, its parts often get rusty and very hot from the friction of the movement. Assisting in the deterioration of the carriage, the coachman has neither knowledge nor concern for the greasing of his cart.

Nor does the driver know his horse:

The wrong system of education existing at the present time has led to the coachman's ceasing to have any effect whatever on his horse, unless we allow the fact that he is merely able by means of the reins to engender in the consciousness of the horse just three ideas -- right, left and stop.¹⁹

This lack of unity between the independently operating minds has its parallel in the lack of unity between separate identities. Man, as we know him, has no permanent and single "I". His "I" changes as quickly as do his thoughts, feelings

and moods. In reality man is always a different person than he was a moment ago:

Man has no permanent and unchangeable I. Every thought, every mood, every desire, every sensation, says 'I'. And in each case it seems to be taken for granted that this I belongs to the whole. . . .In actual fact, there is no foundation whatever for this assumption.²⁰

Gurdjieff posits the existence of "hundreds and thousands" of small separate "I's" of which most are entirely unknown to one another and even hostile and contradictory to each other. The alternation of I's and their individual struggles for supremacy trace to external influences. The exigencies of the moment stimulate a particular "I" which for that moment perceives itself as the whole man. Then at the next moment another "I" is elicited which sees itself as the whole man. Nothing can control these interchanges which Gurdjieff refers to because man does not even notice that they take place; he lives always in his last "I",

This explains why people so often make decisions and so seldom carry them out. . . .A small accidental I may promise something, not to itself, but to someone else at a certain moment simply out of vanity or for amusement. Then it disappears, but the man, that is, the whole combination of other I's who are innocent of this, may have to pay for it all his life. It is the tragedy of the human being that any small I has the right to sign checks and promissory notes and the man, that is, the Whole, has to meet them. Peoples' whole lives often consist in paying off the promissory notes of small accidental I's.²¹

What allows for the existence of a multiplicity of contradictory I's is what Gurdjieff calls "buffers". Analogous to chemical buffers, or buffers on railway carriages, they are

mechanisms that "soften the results of shocks and render them unnoticeable and imperceptible."

If a man were to feel throughout his life all the contradictory I's, Gurdjieff writes, contradictions of thoughts, opinions, feelings and actions, then he could not live calmly. He would feel that he was mad. Man must either destroy the contradictions or cease to feel them. Because he cannot do the former, buffers are involuntarily created in him in order to lessen the trauma connected with feeling one's own contradictions:

Buffers lull a man to sleep, give him the agreeable and peaceful sensation that all will be well, that no contradictions exist and that he can sleep in peace.

'Buffers' are appliances by means of which a man can always be in the right. 'Buffers' help a man not to feel his conscience.

As Gurdjieff sees it, everything for a man "happens", he cannot stop the flow of his thoughts, he cannot control his emotions, his imagination, his attention. Since he lacks unity, that is, he has no one central mind, his is continually pushed and pulled by external forces to these separate locales. Man is deceived. He sees himself as one, but he is a plurality of contradictory I's. A paradox exists in that each externally elicited "I" takes itself to be the whole yet there is no I independent of these external circumstances and capable of "serving witness" to this progression of identities. In his ongoing experience man's identity is simply the last accidental

"I".

Even in the light of the "chaotic" condition of man's psyche Gurdjieff was not nihilistic, nor apathetic, nor pessimistic. He suggests that recognition of the "horror of the situation" allows a possibility of transcendence.

(3) Phenomenological Therapy

Ordinary men do not know themselves, yet they presume that they do, writes Gurdjieff. This presumption is responsible for their "sleep". The first condition necessary for awakening is an awareness of sleep:

For most people, even for educated and thinking people, the chief obstacle in the way of acquiring self-consciousness consists in the fact that they think they possess it, that is, that they possess self-consciousness and everything connected with it; individuality in the sense of a permanent and unchangeable I, will, ability to do, and so on. It is evident that a man will not be interested if you tell him that he can acquire by long and difficult work something which, in his opinion, he already has. On the contrary he will think either than you are mad or ²³ that you want to deceive him with a view to personal gain.

For Gurdjieff there are two states of consciousness beyond those of "sleep" and the "waking state". The first is "self-consciousness" or consciousness of one's being and the second is called "objective consciousness", a "state in which man can see things as they are".²⁴

According to Gurdjieff, only a limited number of people

are capable of such a journey. To begin in "the work", one must be, in Gurdjieff's terms, a "Good Householder". A

Good Householder is one who is

First, in regard to Being, . . . a responsible and decent person. He must not be a tramp or a lunatic. . . A good Householder is a man who has fulfilled his duties in life in a responsible way. . . (a man who is) capable of dealing with the ordinary difficulties and problems of human existence.²⁵

Self-observation becomes the only way to examine mechanicality. In self-observation all of one's available energies are invested in an effort to record and observe with impartiality, rather than to analyse:

In trying to analyze some phenomenon that he comes across within him, a man generally asks: 'What is this? Why does it happen in this way and not in some other way?' and; he begins to seek an answer to these questions, forgetting all about further observations. Becoming more and more engrossed in these questions he completely loses the thread of self-observation and even forgets about it. Observation stops. It is clear from this that only one thing can go on: either observation or attempts at analysis.²⁶

Observation at first is a recording, a collection of data concerning the workings of the machine. Yet, Gurdjieff writes, "observation, or 'recording', must be based upon the understanding of the fundamental principles of the activity of the human machine."²⁷ Observation has to begin with the recognition in oneself of the divisions of functions, intellectual, emotional and moving. The activity of the human machine is in some way controlled by one or a combination of these minds. Having clarified the difference between the in-

tellectual, the emotional, and the moving functions a man must immediately refer his impressions to this or that category.²⁸ At first, man must take note only of those observations about which he has no doubts whatsoever. Then, he must reject all vague or doubtful cases, in order not to misunderstand his own observations.

Next, Gurdjieff suggests that man observe his habits. All of the three centers have their habits. Yet, "in order to see and 'record' them, one must somehow establish a distance, if only for a moment."²⁹ Gurdjieff's notion of the struggle against habits thus is crucial to his gnostic philosophy:

So long as a man is governed by a particular habit, he does not observe it, but at the very first attempt, however feeble, to struggle against it he feels it and notices it. Therefore in order to observe and study habits one must try to struggle against them. This opens up a practical method of self-observation. It has been said before that a man cannot change anything in himself, that he can only observe and 'record'. This is true. But it is also true that a man cannot observe and 'record' anything if he does not try to struggle with himself, that is, with his habits. This struggle cannot yield any direct results, that is to say, it cannot lead to any change, especially to any permanent and lasting change. But it shows what is there. Without a struggle a man cannot see what he consists of. The struggle with small habits is very difficult and boring, but without it self-observation is impossible.³⁰

Permanent change of habit is impossible, but even a mechanical, temporary alteration disengages one from his habits in such a way that the habit becomes a novel object. The habit now becomes the object of reflection.

In the absence of what Gurdjieff calls "self-remembering" there can be no practical (objective) results from this struggle with habits. Ouspenski relates the following incident. At a group meeting Gurdjieff asked all of those present to respond to the question: "What is the most important thing that we notice during self-observation". The responses varied. Some were unable to control "an incessant flow of thoughts". Others had difficulty in distinguishing between the work of the separate centers. Gurdjieff appeared very displeased with the answers. He replied:

'Not one of you has noticed the most important thing that I have pointed out to you,' he said, 'That is to say, not one of you has noticed that you do not remember yourselves. . . You do not feel yourselves; you are not conscious of yourselves. With you, 'it observes' just as 'it speaks', 'it thinks', 'it laughs'. You do not feel: I observe, I notice, I see. Everything still is noticed, 'is seen'. . . . In order really to observe oneself one must first of all remember oneself. . . only those results will have any value that are accompanied by self-remembering. Otherwise you yourself do not exist in your observations. In which case what are all your observations worth?'³¹

Ouspenski describes this act of self-remembering graphically as follows:

A) Observer \longrightarrow Object

B) Observer \longleftrightarrow Object

In the first case, A, the observer, directs his attention toward the object -- a one-headed arrow. Yet, at the same time he tries to remember himself and his attention becomes divided -- a two-headed arrow, B -- one part of it directed

toward the effort of observation and the other part of it directed back toward the subject. Self-remembering is depicted as a division of one's attention. One is engaged in the perception of the world, but also simultaneously aware of one's own existence at the moment of perception.³²

Self-remembering follows from the notion of a differentiation between "essence" and "personality" and the need for a follower of Gurdjieff, after a certain stage in his work, to see this distinction in himself.

It must be understood that man consists of two parts: essence and personality. Essence in man is what is his own. Personality in man is what is not his own. 'Not his own' means what has come from outside, what he has learned, or reflects, all traces of exterior impressions left in the memory and in the sensations, all works and movements that have been learned, all feelings created by imitation -- all this is 'not his own', all this is personality.

The real person, the person that remains after Personality is removed, is the Essence.³⁴

Gurdjieff suggests that a man can evolve only to the extent that he can first begin to distinguish between personality and essence. Second, he must allow the essence to grow at the expense of personality. Most of the time, Gurdjieff says, personality is active and essence is passive, but this was not originally so:

A small child has no personality as yet. He is what he really is. He is essence. His desires, tastes, likes, dislikes, express his being such as it is. . . . But as soon as so-called 'education' begins personality begins to grow.³⁵

Afterwards essence becomes relatively inactive while the newly acquired personality takes over. For man's "real"

nature to emerge, however, Gurdjieff states that this relationship between personality and essence must change. The main obstacles to essence lie within the personality, once again, buffers, the main barrier to awareness. To repeat, buffers allow man the illusion of unity, consistency, calm. If they were to be destroyed all at once, even if possible, then the man himself might well be destroyed. In order to prevent self-destruction Gurdjieff advises two precautions. First, a "Real I" must begin to form. This "Real I" develops naturally through long and consistent self-observation and self-remembering. Gradually one begins to differentiate between his involvement and his awareness of that involvement. It is that passive awareness of involvement that Gurdjieff calls "Real I". Through its development man ceases to identify himself so closely with what he sees.

Gurdjieff's "therapy" consists in man's realization that he is "asleep", man's acquired distinction between essence and personality, and man's self-observation and self-remembering to "free himself from a thousand petty attachments and identifications which hold him in the position in which he is."³⁶ Gurdjieff stresses the individual effort to attain a level of impartiality. Gurdjieff repeatedly rejects blind adherence to philosophical or religious teachings, in favor of self-awareness, and self-study. Very few men have been able to open themselves up to their own experiences in this fashion.

Most "contented themselves with other peoples' fantasies."³⁷

Yet, Gurdjieff further states that "one man can do nothing." He claims that there are certain forces (which he refers to as "Kundulini") which operate in man in order to keep him asleep. He likens man's sleep to a state of hypnotism. How can man awaken?

Theoretically he can, but practically it is almost impossible because as soon as a man awakens for a moment and opens his eyes, all the forces that caused him to fall asleep begin to act upon him with ten fold energy and he immediately falls asleep again, very often dreaming that he is awake or is awakening.³⁸

What is necessary for a man to awaken is a "good shock".³⁹ Consequently, there must be someone to administer the shocks, someone who has already awakened. Yet,

Those who are able to help put great value on their time. And, of course, they would prefer to help, say, twenty or thirty people who want to awake rather than one man. Moreover, . . . one man can easily deceive himself about his awakening and take for awakening simply a new dream.⁴⁰

For although some may fall asleep there would be a chance that one might awaken and shock the others: "If several people decide to struggle together against sleep, they will wake each other. . . . One man alone cannot see himself, but, when a certain number of people unite together for this purpose they will involuntarily help one another. It is commonly characteristic of human nature that a man sees the faults of others more easily than he sees his own. . . ."⁴¹ Thus Gurdjieff says that members of a group actually serve

as mirrors in which the individual sees himself, and that they could not see themselves without a group. The group acts as an "alarm clock" for men who wish to awaken but who by themselves are unable to.

The role of a Gurdjieff teacher is critical. Lacking in any "real will" one must first submit to the will of a teacher who knows what it is to awaken. Gurdjieff differentiates between three types of instructive influences: A, B and C influences. "A" influences are those existing in ordinary life. "B" influences are "higher influences" which were created by more conscious individuals, such as philosophical or religious texts. "C" influences are those which come directly from a higher being. Gurdjieff suggests that it is only when a man becomes accessible to "C" influences that the possibility of his real growth begins:

The moment when the man who is looking for the way meets a man who knows the way is called the first threshold or the first step. From this first threshold the stairway begins. . . . Only by passing along this 'stairway' can a man enter the 'way'.⁴²

We find that duality exists in Gurdjieff's phenomenological therapy. The direction of man's effort to transcend his mechanicality, on the one hand, requires impartiality in self-observation. "One's own facts" that one must realize are peculiarities of his personality. One must decide once and for all to be "merciless" with himself and not avoid stark perceptions of habits no matter how aversive they may be. One

must not be content with the "fantasies" and observations of others. Yet, on the other hand, Gurdjieff also claims that an ordinary man cannot be objective about his own behavior. Man needs a teacher and a group which also wishes to awaken in order to keep him from self-deception.

The crux of the duality is in the combination of necessities: independence in observation and dependence on a group. Man must beware the Scylla of others' fantasies and the Charybdis of self-deception. Because of factors impelling man to sleep he needs both a teacher and a group of persons. Gurdjieff's philosophy thus emphasizes both individualism and collectivism.

It is this duality between the individual and the collective in the "prescriptive" component of Gurdjieff's thought that is crucial in the development of this small Gurdjieff group.

(4) Gurdjieff and Gnosticism

Gurdjieff's philosophy is prescriptive; it seeks to release man from his enslavement to the world, to "awaken" him, and to release his dormant spiritual essence. Gurdjieff's thought is therefore in the tradition of the theological and philosophical systems of Gnosticism, which flourished in

Hellenistic culture at the time of early Christianity. Both are dualistic, eschatological, syncretistic and both strongly emphasize "knowledge" as a means of attaining salvation.⁴³

In Gnosticism man's captivity on earth results from his ignorance about his true origin and his slavish love for sexual and other hedonistic pleasures. To overcome captivity it takes the special intervention of a messenger from the Light, the "transmundane God", to awaken the spark in man and reveal to him the true nature of his situation. The "transmundane God", seeing that his "son" is enslaved by the powers of Darkness, sends a messenger with the "call". Without divine intervention there would be no hope for inner man. The divine messenger is a necessary mediator. Through mediation the act of "gnosis" occurs and the inner man awakens and begins an ascent through successive spheres of demonic powers, giving up corruptions of his worldly "possessions". The result is unity with Light, or the "transmundane God".

The Gnostic message is an allegorical statement indicating the direction in which a man may escape enslavement. A parallel between Gnostic speculation and Gurdjieff's philosophy is concern for salvation (evolution), but also a genesis of the universe, a less radical dualism between Light and Darkness, a "sleep" or captivity of man on earth, an eschatological concern for the escape of inner man from the powers

of Darkness, a necessary ascent of man through seven spheres, and man's reunion with the Light.

Gurdjieff's cosmology is his allegory of man's predicament. The images of "sleep", "prison", and "enslavement" describe man's attachments to this world. The possibility of transcendence derives from a divine substance (pneuma or essence), which, alienated from its source, leads both Gnostics and Gurdjieff to suggest interventions of the Light, or Creator, in the affairs of the universe.

For Gurdjieff the intervention from higher realms comes from his notion of "influences". "B" influences are inadequate because their message has been interpreted, dogmatized and adulterated by those who later inscribed it. "C" influences, direct contact with knowledge from a higher source, are transmitted by a man who "knows the way". Man's receiving of "C" influences is the act of gnosis itself. Gnosis is a fundamental modification of man's situation and not merely theoretical in nature.⁴⁴

The necessity of "C" influences is, in Gurdjieff, the importance of friendship and guidance by a teacher who "knows the way". Because man himself lacks will, he must fall under the influence of one who has will, in order to ascend.⁴⁵

This concept of "C" influences, based on a theory of the transformation of higher energies, is heavily influenced

by Gnosticism. The pneuma within man awakens. The divine messenger is a vehicle through which man is initially made aware of the "terror of the situation". It is only through this divine intervention that either the Gnostic or the Gurdjieffian can begin to perceive his situation correctly.

Gnostic "eschatology" and ascent toward the divine bears comparison to Gurdjieff's "phenomenological therapy". For a man to transcend the banalities of the world he has to be prepared to give up in successive stages aspects of his worldly nature (his personality). These exist in the form of identifications, egoism, and vanity. After having given these up, what is left is man's essence, that part of man that is outside of the corruption of environmental influences. This release from identifications in Gurdjieff's system corresponds in Gnosticism to the allegorical taking off of unpure garments, or returning to the Archons of each level the "contribution" to man's psyche.

Hans Jonas states that in a later stage of gnostic development:

... (though no longer passing under the name of Gnosticism) the external topology of the ascent through spheres, with the successive divesting of the soul of its worldly envelopments and the regaining of its original acosmic nature, could be 'internalized' and find its analogue in a psychological technique of inner transformations by which the self, while still in the body, might attain the Absolute as an immanent, if temporary, condition: an ascending scale of mental states replaces the stations of the mythical itinerary: The dynamics of progressive spiritual self-trans-

formation, the spacial thrust through the heavenly spheres.⁴⁶

Gurdjieff's description of seven levels of being, like Gnostic ascension through levels of Archons, is the requisite letting go of psychic impediments. Just so, both systems depict a correlated universe. The further one is from the Light or Creator the more is one engulfed in Darkness or mechanicality. Man is benumbed; he has no "center", he is driven by dark (mechanical) forces of vanity, indulgences, seeking of pleasure. "Real morality" of course transcends the particularities of custom and habit and belongs to a "transmundane" (objective) level of existence.

There are differences, as well as similarities, between Gnosticism and the Gurdjieff philosophy. Unlike Gnosticism, Gurdjieff's system is not radically dualistic. While mechanicality is an evil within supposed duality, Gurdjieff claims that there is nothing "evil" about mechanicality. Mechanicality, for Gurdjieff, is not demonic, as is "heirmarmene" for Gnostics.⁴⁷ Using the Law of Three, Gurdjieff states that affirmation needs negation and that the two in turn need the presence of a neutralizing force for a transformation to occur. Bennet suggests that it is the presence of this third force in Gurdjieff's writings that distinguishes it from Gnosticism.⁴⁸ It is perhaps more accurate to claim the dichotomy of consciousness and mechanicality as a polarity

rather than a duality.

Second, Gurdjieff's prescription for transcendence differs from Gnosticism through his emphasis on the need for a group. While sharing with Gnosticism its emphasis on individual gnosis, Gurdjieff claims that a man cannot awaken without a group. While the gnostic lays full stress on individual apprehension in order to avoid the "deceit" of the world, Gurdjieff claims a man would deceive himself if he did not have a group.

Certainly, Gurdjieff is Gnostic in a number of important ways, but his rejection of the Gnostic theological dualism and his stress on the need of a group prevents us from regarding his philosophy as wholly Gnostic. Perhaps it is the similarly syncretistic nature of both systems that has allowed for the parallels in doctrine, each trying to extract the most essential aspects from a wide variety of theological and philosophical disciplines.

NOTES

¹This chapter will rely on P. D. Ouspenski's In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of An Unknown Teaching (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949). Ouspenski, Gurdjieff's major pupil, quotes Gurdjieff extensively in order to introduce his master to the western world. Gurdjieff's major works, because of their difficult style, are not directly used here.

²Ouspenski, p. 57.

³Ibid., p. 58.

⁴Ibid., p. 75.

⁵Ibid., p. 141.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 143.

⁸Ibid., p. 66.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 67.

¹²Ibid., p. 72.

¹³Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁷G. I. Gurdjieff, All and Everything; First Series: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), p. 1192.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1195.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 1200 ff.

²⁰Ouspenski, p. 59.

²¹Ibid., p. 60,

²²Ibid., p. 155.

²³Ibid., p. 147.,

²⁴Ibid., p. 141.

²⁵Maurice Nicoll, Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspenski (London: Vincent Stuart, 1964), I, 165 ff.

²⁶Ouspenski, p. 106.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 109.

²⁹Ibid., p. 111.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 111-12.

³¹Ibid., pp. 117 ff.

³²Ibid., p. 119.

³³Ibid., p. 161.

³⁴Nicoll, III, 1059.

³⁵Ouspenski, p. 161.

³⁶Ibid., p. 219.

³⁷G. I. Gurdjieff, Merald of Coming Good: First Appeal to Contemporary Humanity (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 14.

³⁸Ouspenski, p. 220.

³⁹This notion of a "shock" derives from Gurdjieff's "Law of Octaves"; see Appendix I on Gurdjieff's Cosmology.

⁴⁰Ouspenski, p. 221.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 221 ff.

⁴²Ibid., p. 201.

⁴³This analysis relies most heavily on Iranian and Hermetic branches of Gnosticism as discussed by Han Jonas in The Gnostic

Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961); Edwin Yamauchi's Pre-Christian Gnosticism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973); and Robert Grant's Gnosticism and Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). Briefly the main points in Gnostic philosophy are: the genesis of the cosmos, separating a portion of light from the Light; the consequence of this separation or fall into "darkness" as witnessed by man's captivity on the planet Earth; the intervention of Light into the "world of darkness" by means of the divine messenger; the call of the messenger for the "pneuma" in man to awaken; man's response to this call and the pneuma's progressive ascension through levels of demonic powers; the eventual outcome being reunion with the "transmundane God".

⁴⁴Perhaps it is more correct to suggest that Gurdjieff's notion of "understanding" more closely correlates with gnosis in that understanding carries with it an experiential component.

⁴⁵This notion derives from Gurdjieff's law of octaves.

⁴⁶Jonas, p. 165.

⁴⁷"Heirmarmene" is the name for the evil force through which the Archons keep man enslaved; see Jonas, p. 43.

⁴⁸John G. Bennett, Gurdjieff: Making a New World (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 279-80.

III.

THE GROUP

(1) Formative Phase

I met Ernie in my last months of undergraduate work on a coffee break at the snack bar. Ernie was a 42 year old artist and art director of a local institution. He was taking courses at the university and we had mutual friends. As many of our interests in psychology coincided, we developed a friendship quickly and met frequently to chat over coffee.

It was some time before I made a connection between Ernie and Gurdjieff's ideas, which he never discussed explicitly. It was only after asking the source of the psychological theories which we discussed that I heard him mention Gurdjieff's name. I then set out to find some of his writings. Not being able to find his major work, All and Everything, and being warned by Ernie that it was a challenge for anyone unfamiliar with what he called "the work", I was content to find a simplified version of Gurdjieff's major ideas in works by another Russian philosopher, Ouspenski, with whose In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching I began.

I read Ouspenski's book with a good deal of interest, that is, until I came across the more difficult and confusing

cosmological aspects of Gurdjieff's philosophy. His ideas were quite contrary to contemporary scientific theory. Yet, I did find reasonable Gurdjieff's psychological treatises concerning man's psyche and the general nature of relationships in society. There seemed to be a remarkable resemblance between these parts of Gurdjieff's theories and behavioral psychology.

When I discovered that Ernie met in a group periodically at his house in order to discuss Gurdjieff's ideas I decided to attend. There were five persons at the first meeting: Ernie, Bruce, Miles, Carl and Ted. Ernie had been attending and leading Gurdjieff groups for twenty years. He had expressed his wish many times to understand more clearly the practical aspects of Gurdjieff's philosophy which he summarized by the notion of "real friendship". I surmised that this meant that he had some greater personal commitment than is usual between two persons, but it was vague as to just what he meant.

The others present, Bruce, Miles, Carl, and Ted were all students at the university. Bruce was twenty-one, majoring in Behavioral Science. Previous to his attendance at group meetings, we had a conversation at the library in which he expressed his interest in Gurdjieff. He said he had read a few books in which Gurdjieff's ideas were mentioned and that he was reading Ouspenski's In Search of the Miraculous.

Miles was twenty-four, a major in Physical Sciences and also a part-time carpenter. Apparently he had known Ernie for a few years and had read some of Ouspenski's books. I had not known him previously. Carl was a twenty-six year old student majoring in Sociology. I had seen him in the library and snack bar where he talked frequently about his interest in Scientology. He had begun reading Ouspenski and claimed that it was more relevant than his readings in Scientology. He told me that he was searching for a "higher kind of experience" and felt that it would be found through the Gurdjieff ideas. Ted was a senior psychology major. He had become interested in Gurdjieff after having met Ernie at the university.

At the first meeting I was the last to arrive. It was about a half hour ride through rolling hills to Ernie's house. I still recall my apprehension as I arrived. What should I expect? As I walked into Ernie's house he, Bruce, Miles and Carl were seated on the floor around a small marble table in front of the fireplace. They had begun reading but paused when I arrived. Ernie introduced me.

Ernie poured me a coffee and began to explain that they had been reading one chapter a week from Ouspenski's In Search of the Miraculous, and were presently reading from the third chapter. He asked me if I would object to their continuing as they had already begun reading aloud. I, of course, consented.
(Fieldnotes; May 15, 1973)

After reading aloud Chapter 3 of Ouspenski, the four

began to discuss their reactions to it. Gurdjieff had just described his idea that man is a machine, governed by the mechanical action of many contradictory and independent

"I's":

Man such as we know him, the 'man machine', the man who cannot 'do, and with whom and through whom everything happens, cannot have a permanent and single 'I'. Man has no individual I, but there are, instead, hundreds and thousands of separate small I's, very often entirely unknown to each other. . . Each minute, each moment, man is saying or thinking 'I'. And each time his 'I' is different. Just now it was a thought, now it is a desire, now a sensation, now another thought, and so on, endlessly. Man is a plurality. Man's name is legion. (Ouspenski, p. 59).

In responding to this reading Miles stated that he was not quite sure about what Gurdjieff meant by that statement:

If he means it to be interpreted literally then it means all of us are worse than being schizoid. I can't accept this because it would mean we're all crazy and I think most of us here are sane, normal people.' Ernie replied that an important point in Gurdjieff's thought was the notion of relativity: 'Sure we're all as sane as most, but what are society's criteria? How do they decide? . . . Gurdjieff says that there are other more objective criteria. He says that none of us are really aware of ourselves because we're always involved, identified with remembering the past or anticipating the future. Our only real moment is now, but we never live that moment. He says that we're machines responding to any stimuli that our attention happens to gravitate towards.'

Miles replied: 'Yes, but just because I happen to respond to stimuli does that mean that I'm a machine?'

Ernie: 'Yes and no. Yes, you are a machine, but no you don't have to be one if you can be present to your reaction to the stimulus. If you see your reaction then the 'you' that sees isn't involved in the reaction. That's really you, the part that can impartially observe your reactions.'

(Fieldnotes: May 15, 1973)

This kind of theoretical clarification and discussion of Gurdjieff's ideas was the dominant characteristic of early meetings. Ernie, Bruce and Miles during this Formative phase had at one time or other mentioned to me their interest in better understanding the Gurdjieff philosophy. Carl, who claimed to be interested exclusively in experiencing a "higher state" was the only exception. He had related to me his drug experiences which he felt could in some way be reproduced through group meetings.

The meetings during the Formative phase maintained this same character throughout. Individuals met once a week in order to re-read and discuss a chapter per week from Ouspenski which they had read on their own during the week before. After discussion, the meeting usually ended. Occasionally a few persons would stay later for more coffee and further discussions on more informal topics. Yet this was more the exception than the rule.

A meeting took place in late June in which the group read from Chapter 6 of Ouspenski. In it Gurdjieff discusses the effort of self-observation and suggests fruitful directions for a novice to pursue. His first suggestion is that a man begin to observe the different functions of "centers". Yet to be able to do this he must be able to lay aside the results of all previous experience; i.e. all of what one had previously considered himself to be. Gurdjieff suggests

that a way of doing this is through the struggle with habits. So long as a man is governed by a habit then he cannot see it, yet the minute he attempt to struggle against it he notices the power that it has over him.

After the reading of the chapter was finished there was a short period of silence that was interrupted by a statement Bruce made: 'I wish that I could understand what Gurdjieff means by 'struggle'. It's interesting. . . Do you think he's saying that if I have a particular habit and if I fight it then I'd have a more objective perception of it? If so then I must be doing something wrong because I'm always fighting some habit that I don't like?' Ernie replied: 'I don't think that's what he's saying, Bruce. Think of it this way. Who is it that resists the habit? Is it you?' Bill: 'Well, I don't know. . . I mean it's a part of me anyway that doesn't like it so I stop.' Ernie: 'But, who says: 'I don't like it'? Is that you, or your reaction? . . . The thing is, we're always fighting a habit we don't like but we don't do it, it does it. One part of our personality wants to get rid of another part. That's not what Gurdjieff means by struggle with habits.'

Ernie continued that to struggle with a habit presupposed a conscious entity -- otherwise it was not a 'conscious struggle'. It was merely a 'repetition of the repression of everyday life.' He went on to state that what he felt was important for the group at this point in their 'work' was 'not to fight with habits but to learn to observe them more impartially.' Miles added that he agreed with Ernie: 'how could you fight with a habit when you don't yet know what the habit consisted of?'

(Fieldnotes; June 10, 1973)

Although the group learned about the Gurdjieff system largely from Ernie, theme by theme, an "individual-meditative" approach predominated throughout this phase. Repeatedly the emphasis was on encouraging a "presence" to oneself, or an awareness. Kenneth Walker, in the Teachings of Gurdjieff,

refers to this as an "awareness of a function". What it appears to mean is an "inner presence" of one's personality; i.e. a 'recording' or collecting of data on oneself outside of value judgments. In the clarification and discussion of readings the dominant focus of attention was on impartial "observation" or "being present".

The Formative phase ended as a consequence of an altercation that took place after a mountain climbing trip. In addition to the five members, Sandra, Roslyn and Melanie, three new members also attended. Sandra was Ted's wife, Roslyn was Miles' girl friend and Melanie was Ernie's girl friend. On the way down the mountain, because of Roslyn's walking and joking around with Ernie, Melanie became jealous of Roslyn. Miles entered the ensuing argument and as a result Melanie became angry at Ernie. She returned home with Miles and Roslyn, while Ted, Sandra, Bruce and Carl all rode in Ted's car.

On the way home Ernie suggested that perhaps it would be best not to meet again for awhile in order to "let things settle". Bruce replied that he thought it was a good idea, because in addition fall classes would be starting and they would have to examine their schedules to determine the best time to meet. As it turned out the group did not meet again until early November. At that time Miles and Roslyn had ceased attending meetings. Miles has henceforth become an

instructor in Transcendental Meditation and Roslyn a teacher.

(2) Phase Two

After a three month lapse the group again began to meet but with a noticeably different composition and orientation. In early November there were twelve members, as opposed to the original five, and only four of the first group had remained, Ernie, Bruce, Carl and Ted. The new members were relatively unfamiliar with both the Gurdjieff philosophy and the particular way that the group had been previously oriented, and thus the stage was set for new antagonisms between those who wished a more cohesive Gurdjieff group and others who resisted that change. Also, certain differences in orientation toward the philosophy were taking shape. As a result of antagonisms the group quickly lost members (with most of the recently arrived ones leaving) and a new sense of commitment toward the group began to emerge.

The first meeting that I attended during this period was on November 11th. I arrived at Ernie's house at 2 p.m. and found that there were quite a few people there whom I did not know. Merle was a 24 year old college student whose major was biology. He had known Ernie for over a year and had developed an interest in Gurdjieff. Judy, a 23 year old

music major, came with Merle out of curiosity, she said.

Nancy was a 24 year old liberal arts graduate who was at that time working in the computer center of the college.

She had met Ernie at the college and, having no particular interest in the Gurdjieff ideas, was simply curious about

what took place at the group meetings. Joel was a 25 year old college student and bartender who came with Nancy. Bob was a 22 year old college student majoring in psychology.

He was Bruce's roommate and began to attend in November as a result of Bruce's encouragement. Bob told me that he had read some of Ouspenski's work and found parts of it interesting. Peter was a 23 year old college graduate (psychology) who had just obtained a job with an "outreach" mental health agency.

When I arrived at the meeting I was rather surprised to see that things were not as they had been. Rather than everyone being seated around the coffee table waiting to begin a reading there was a lot of activity taking place. Most of the women were in the kitchen preparing a meal while the men were on their way outdoors to help Ernie put "Posted" signs on his property. I participated in the latter, walking a couple of hundred yards down a dirt road nailing signs to fence posts and trees and talking mostly with Carl. He related to me the new courses he was taking at the college and the new apartment he had moved into.

When the men returned to the house, the food had been placed in the oven and coffee was prepared. Everyone sat around the table while coffee was served. After about fifteen minutes of numerous conversations between each other, Ernie suggested that the group read together from Gurdjieff's Meetings with Remarkable Men. Everyone agreed to do so. The reading dealt with a "remarkable man" that Gurdjieff had met called Father Borsh. (Chapter 3). Near the end of the chapter Gurdjieff recounts ten

principles that Borsh suggested were necessary to instill in a man when he reached responsible age so that he would become a "real man and not a parasite."

A debate ensued after the reading as to whether or not Father Borsh's principles had any merit. While Bruce claimed that they sounded as if they were "pretty out of date", Alain and Merle claimed that Father Borsche's ideas came from a different epoch so that they should be careful in interpreting his words as they might nowadays be used.

(Fieldnotes; November 11, 1973)

After this short discussion the meal was served by the women. Again, this surprised me in that there had never been a meal served at the group meetings. During the meal there was little or no discussion. After the meal both Carl and Bob left. Bob claimed that he had courses to prepare for the following day and Carl said that he had to get up for work early in the morning. During the remainder of the meeting, members drank coffee and beer, and the focus of the meeting tapered off to many dyadic conversations.

Even as early as this first meeting there were certain significant differences from the previous period. The size of the group had more than doubled and the composition had become more heterogeneous in terms of interest in the Gurdjieff philosophy. There were a number of motives for attending, some of which had little to do with Gurdjieff. Nancy related to me her desire to get together with a group of people and stated no particular interest in Gurdjieff. Similarly, Judy claimed to have attended out of curiosity because of Merle's

interest.

This disparity of interests between core and new members and within the core membership caused interpersonal value conflicts. Because conflict situations tend to bring to the surface underlying disparities in value orientation or interest, it is important to draw attention to both the nature of the conflict (degree of intensity or severity) and the issues involved.

On December 8 at Ernie's house an agreement was reached. The group would become more serious about determining the relevance of Gurdjieff's ideas. Basically, core members were the ones who agreed to this, as those more marginally involved rarely spoke.

Bruce expressed concern for the fact that he wanted to really find out, as opposed to just talking and thinking about ideas. He wished that the group become a 'work' group. Ernie stated that just the fact of his knowing his efforts were intellectual might be an encouraging sign. 'But, even that act of knowing one is intellectual might be an intellectual act.' This developed into a discussion of 'understanding' and its relationship to 'being' and knowledge. Ernie stated that a 'man number three' (intellectual man) could only understand something requisite to his level of being. Bruce agreed saying that he felt there was a difference between knowing that something is the case and being aware of himself in the present tense: 'knowing is kind of after the fact, while really being aware is watching as it happens.' (Fieldnotes; December 8, 1973)

This discussion of intellectual knowledge and experiential knowledge led to an agreement by the core members to become "more serious" in their efforts. It was this deter-

mination to be serious-in trying to become a "work" group that acted as the background to a conflict that took place at the next meeting.

At the meeting on December 15 after having read aloud for a short period of time, the group began to discuss what "consciousness" meant.

Ernie made the remark that the idea was one thing but really getting close to its meaning at a practical level was quite another. It was at this point that Carl made a comment: 'All you need is another drink, Ernie!' To which Ernie replied: 'Now look Carl, we're all busy people. We come here with a purpose and that is to work on ourselves. Work is a very serious thing. If you want to play then that's your business, but I'll tell you very bluntly, don't try to get me to play games with you. If you think that our purpose here is to drink and play games then you're very mistaken!'

Carl: 'I really didn't mean anything by it. It was just a joke.'

Ernie: 'That's your problem Carl. For you, it's just a joke because you don't know how to be serious. I don't come here to play games though.'

Carl: 'I didn't mean anything by it! It was just a simple statement.'

Ernie: 'The point is, Carl, that time is precious, and we all have to make time for this meeting. I can't waste it on silly games that you might want to play in order to titillate yourself! I'll work whether or not you play, but you haven't the right to ruin it for the rest of the people in the group!'

(Fieldnotes; December 15, 1973)

After this, the conversation was dropped and they went on to discuss different issues.

This appears to be the first instance in which efforts by certain persons in the group to develop more self-consciously into a "work" group were opposed by others who did not wish

that it do so. Although the group had agreed at previous meetings to approach work with a new seriousness, Carl appeared to some members not to be abiding by that agreement. ("Carl's not wrong or anything. . . It's just that I wonder if he takes this as an important thing," Bruce said in a discussion we had at a later time.)

A factor involved in this altercation had to do with Carl's particular orientation toward Gurdjieff's ideas. He had read Ouspenski, and some of Krishnamurti's works. He particularly appreciated certain elements in Krishnamurti's writings that degraded teachers, teachings, and groups as different forms of socialization or dogmatic instruction. Similarly he adhered strongly to Gurdjieff's notions that an individual must find out for himself, and that no one can do his work for him. Given this individual orientation toward Gurdjieff's ideas, Carl felt in conflict with group agreements or "constraints" on his own freedom. He said to me that his main concern was in re-creating a "peak experience" that he previously had "and not in becoming a disciple."

Ernie's effort to sanction Carl was an overt expression of an underlying group norm that the core group at least hoped to establish. The core group concurred in seeing Carl's "mistaken attitude" as the source of conflict. Yet this implicit affirmation of "seriousness" had the opposite effect for more marginal members. Most of those with whom I spoke

felt that Ernie had been "unrealistic" and "too harsh". This incident signalled the beginning of a split in the group regarding the importance of collective obligations and aspiring toward becoming a "work group". While on the one hand a general agreement had been reached in the group which placed a value on collective obligations, on the other hand a resistance toward the obligations was set up.

This appears to be one of the earliest instances in which individuals confronted one another at the level of value with regard to expectations for behavior in the group. Carl's attitude seemed to Ernie to deviate from what Ernie considered appropriate given the group's previous agreement. This could remain at a latent level until the joking action forced Ernie to agree or disagree with the individualistic Carl. This disagreement was itself a sign of changes that had taken place between meetings of the first and second phase.

Both the tendencies of an increased group expectation and its opposite, an increase in individual expressiveness had become evident. It is as if one were the mirror image of the other, a growth in one causing or coinciding with a growth in the other. This tension between group obligations and individual freedom was to become more pronounced as group norms slowly developed and the group underwent a transformation from an interest group into a value group.

At the following group meeting the conflict between Ernie and Carl was discussed. While Sandra, Doris and Ted felt that Ernie had been a bit too harsh with Carl, Bruce expressed his feelings differently. He related to Carl's avoidance of "negative emotions", and his stated wish to re-create through his group involvement a previous drug experience. Carl said that he had experienced a "higher state" and wanted to repeat it.

Ernie replied to Carl that he could not bring back an experience from the past no matter how valid it was. He claimed that for Carl to do so would only get in his way of trying to experience the present moment. Bruce agreed, 'instead of dealing with 'what is' Carl is trying to shape his present situation with how it should be.'

Carl said emphatically that his experience was 'real' and that he saw nothing wrong with using his memory to help him regain it. Again, Ernie asserted that if Carl 'just stay in his memory' then he could never 'experience reality anew'. 'Hell, if you just want some kind of reinforcement you can find that anywhere.' Carl appeared very anxious with a defensive smile, but not wishing to discuss it anymore, he remained silent and the issue was dropped. I had distinctive feeling that there was an irreconcilable difference here in terms of the allocation of value by Ernie (and the core group) and Carl.

(Fieldnotes; December 20, 1973)

On January 6 a meeting was held at Ernie's house. Bruce, Ernie, Carl, Merle, Ted, Sandra, Dennis, Tim, and Mary were present. As I arrived I noticed a wide variety of activity.

Bruce and Ernie, and Ted were sitting at the coffee table discussing the issue of self-observation. Ted stated that he had difficulty in becoming clear in his perceptions. Ernie replied that being clear was something that had to be developed and in the meantime all

Ted could do was to be aware of his lack of clarity. . . even that was a step in the right direction.

Sandra, Dennis and Tim had just come back from a short walk. As they entered the house Sandra went into the kitchen to make coffee. Dennis and Tim went back outside to split some wood for a fire. Joel and Merle were on the far side of the room away from the coffee table. Merle had challenged Joel to an arm wrestling contest. They both lay on the floor switching from one arm to the other and jokingly challenging each other.

Dennis and Tim returned inside with the wood. While building a fire they discussed the use of a mitre box for making picture frames. Dennis then invited Tim to join him in Ernie's shop where he would demonstrate with Ernie's mitre box. They went out to the shop through the kitchen just as the coffee was ready. Sandra placed the pot of coffee on the small coffee table near the fire and returned again from the kitchen with cups. In about fifteen minutes everyone was at the coffee table ready to begin a reading.

(Fieldnotes; January 6, 1974)

A wide variety of activities such as this became a common characteristic of this period. While there was a general focus on readings, no strict routine was followed. Often many activities would be going on while only a few of the more interested members (mostly core members) discussed ideas. This made meetings appear fragmented and lacking in common direction.

It became increasingly apparent during this phase that there was a wide diversity of individual orientations toward the group. Some wished to become a "work" group more actively. Some wished to remain a reading group. Others considered the meetings as an opportunity to socialize. For example, Carl's frequently expressed interest to create a "peak experience", Nancy's desire to get to know other members better,

Bruce's concern for knowing more about Gurdjieff, and Joel's interest in getting to know Ernie better because their jobs were in close proximity to each other, were characteristic of a variety of motivations. Similarly, Merle stated once that he wanted to determine if there was anything useful in Krishnamurti's writings which he had just recently discovered.

The difference in attitudes toward the group did not affect the choice of readings, in which there was a common focus, although there was also a wide range of material. It may be recalled that in the Formative phase the group read only from Ouspenski's In Search of the Miraculous, and in a sequence that was dictated by the order of the book itself. Every week the chapter would be read. Thus the group received a representative sampling of all of Gurdjieff's ideas (that is, in so far as one could regard Ouspenski's work as representative). In contrast to the Formative phase this second phase did not exhibit the same organization in the reading materials. Yet while materials did come from a wide variety of sources², the thematic orientation was consistent. The group meeting of January 27, for example, had awareness as its topic.

Those present included Bruce, Doris, Ernie, Carl, Melanie, and Ted. After coffee the first reading was an article from the "Journal of Transpersonal Psychology" in

which Daniel Goleman³ discusses the ideas of Gurdjieff.

At a point near the end of the article Goleman states that the purpose of the act of awareness is control. This point was contested by Ernie. He said that this was a misinterpretation of Gurdjieff. As Ernie interpreted it, the purpose of awareness was not control, but "an awareness of that which does the controlling." He referred to this as "a passive awareness".

Bruce agreed and responded by saying that he had just read something from 'The Bhagavan Maharshi' in which a similar notion was expressed. He asked if anyone objected to his reading it and none did. The reading was a conversation between Maharshi and one of his followers. Merle suggested that he and Bruce each take one part of the script. Bruce read the follower's part while Merle read Maharshi's responses.

It begins with the follower asking how could he obtain a semblance of 'objective consciousness'? If he studies the Great Bhagavan might that not help him? Maharshi replies that the follower is his own guru, the God he searched for was within him. In order for him to be more conscious he must know himself: following the Bhagavan would do him no good if he did not realize that the answer lies within. Bruce continued to read a parable in which Maharshi again stressed the same point, that a person searching for truth might be helped by a teacher but ultimately he was alone. Bruce then stated that a prior reading from a few weeks before expressed much of the same message.

(Fieldnotes; January 27, 1974)

He was referring to a selection out of Krishnamurti's First and Last Freedom:

'You cannot find truth through anybody else. How can you? Truth is not something static; . . .'⁴

'If you would discover anything, you must be free inwardly which is obvious. Are you free by shaping your mind in a particular way you call discipline? . . . The first requirement, not as a discipline, is absolute

freedom. . . .⁵

These readings in the second phase concentrated on inner meditative approaches. Emphasis fell on an inner apprehension of truth. Disciplines, dogmas, and following teachers were all in one way or another depreciated in favor of individual efforts. All of these are relatively consistent with certain of Gurdjieff's notions regarding the necessity of individual "awakening". Similarly, these readings are consistent with notions emerging in group discussions throughout this period stressing an "inner presence" or "passive awareness".

This emphasis on an "inner presence" (implying a subsequent depreciation of behavior) accompanied a growing concern for group obligations. As group norms increased in strength, conflicts developed between those members who supported norms and others who either in the unfamiliarity with the Gurdjieff philosophy or lack of interest had different priorities. Some confused the meditative approach to consciousness with a more "utilitarian" individualism. In other words, mistaking the notion of "inner freedom" for an assertion of the right of individual freedom in an external sense. Certain individuals, when confronted with group expectations found themselves in opposition to this "constraining" force.

In early February an incident took place in the group

that was central to understanding the group's subsequent development. A conflict occurred between Nancy and Ernie. Nancy was a marginal member, since she came to the group late. She had not been previously acquainted with any of Gurdjieff's ideas nor with the manner in which the group interacted. She had not conferred with anyone in the group about their purpose in meeting and she came to the group with expectations (as she later explained to me) of "socializing".

At the group meeting of February 10 the agenda was discussed. Core members were concerned with a lack of concerted direction in the group. Did the group wish to pursue a certain direction? What direction would that be? Carl said that he had been reading from Yogananda, which he felt was promising. Ernie mentioned his reading of Surat Shabd Yoga and said that he understood it to be discussing the same issues as Gurdjieff, although in different terms. Bruce mentioned that he felt the same way about Zen Buddhism. Nancy then questioned why the group's activities had to go in an intellectual direction: Why not go mountain climbing together? She said that she had just been climbing with a number of people and that it had given her a sense of "commonness of purpose" or togetherness that she felt was lacking in the Gurdjieff group. She said that the readings in the group prevented people from really getting close.

Ernie disagreed with her statement. He asked her to clarify what she meant by a feeling of togetherness. Nancy replied that she felt because everyone was doing the same thing and had a common goal that a sense of shared purpose was there. Ernie then asked her what she thought the difference was between climbing a mountain and reading. 'What is it about climbing a mountain that's more conducive to this togetherness that you talk about? Why can't that same thing take place in trying to understand a reading?'

Nancy began to smile uneasily and shifted her position on the floor. Her manner of responding, and eventual impasse in explaining herself led me to interpret her as being self-conscious and defensive for the remainder of the interaction. Ernie again asserted his request for her to clarify. Her inability or refusal to do so became an issue which he confronted: 'If she was making a suggestion to the group but then could not explain it then of what use was it?'

Ernie told her that he thought she was being phoney. She replied that she thought he was the phoney. Accusations were exchanged for a few minutes, then there was a short period of silence. Ernie said why he thought that the group met ('to discuss and relate to ideas of consciousness'). There was again a period of silence after which Ernie stood up, went into the kitchen and began to prepare dinner. The group sat rather quiet for a minute, then conversations began on issues unrelated to the interaction. (Fieldnotes; February 10, 1974)

We have in this altercation an instance of the confrontation -- an individual adhering to emergent group norms (one has the obligation toward the group to be honest) with particularistic orientations, orientations toward action. Nancy's suggestion of a mountain climbing trip was perceived by Ernie as contrary to the purposes of the group. Nancy's refusal or inability to state a rationale for her suggestion made it appear even more inappropriate with regard to the emergent goal of becoming a "work group".

That it was Ernie who chose to request a clarification from Nancy is interesting. Why had everyone else (especially those who perceived themselves as core members) remained silent? This issue was discussed at the following meeting:

While Bruce, Carl and Merle stated that they did not want to 'hurt her feelings', no one else in the group made a comment. The group then discussed the issue of not being honest with each other out of a fear of either not being accepted or out of reluctance to confront another. Mary stated that by confronting another person 'you could do him harm'. Bruce replied that there was a lot of difference between a malicious intent and a wish to be honest. He continued that if it were malicious then it would mean purposefully harming the other person, yet if one was trying to be honest, then it might do more good than harm. Ernie agreed saying that it was important for people in the group to learn how to be honest with each other but not in order to harm them. Yet, he added, if a fear of harming leads to lying then that results in only 'superficial relationships.'

(Fieldnotes; February 17, 1974)

This discussion made more apparent the conflicting orientations towards the group. On the one hand, based on an agreement of the December 8th meeting to become more serious about ideas there began to emerge group norms and expectations concerning how the group should be were it to become a "work group". Members should be honest with themselves and each other, and they should take the ideas more seriously. These were the first rudimentary group norms. Yet these emergent norms and expectations were neither particularly strong, nor universally accepted by the group members. Certain members did not care to transform the group from its interest orien-

tation into a more firm value orientation. Some had no real interest in the Gurdjieff ideas while others felt group obligations infringed too much upon their individual rights (for instance certain members said that they had the right to not be honest). Thus conflicts that took place in this period of the group's existence were particularly intense as compared to those of other periods. Because parties in the group differed regarding goals, interests, and understandings of the Gurdjieff philosophy this phase was characterized by a particularly wide range of activities and a number of personal conflicts. These conflicts occurred between core and marginal members, yet also within the core membership itself. There was yet to arrive a consensus between those who regarded themselves as core members.

This conflict situation between Nancy and Ernie marks a shift from the second to the third phase. The size of the group over the four month period from November to March changed from its high point in November of twelve to a low in March of seven. Those who left the group were newer or marginal members. The increasing desire by some members to become a "work" group was the primary occasion for the departure of others. As an emphasis on group obligations became more apparent, those objecting to it either ceased to express that or ceased to attend group meetings.

Throughout this second phase the dominant thematic

orientation had been the "inner meditative" approach. While readings were taken from a wide variety of sources, there was a stress on the central role of individual effort to "be present". This was to change in the following phase where notions in Gurdjieff's philosophy stressing the need of the group and intersubjective affirmation came to the fore.

(3) Phase Three

The period of time from March, 1974, through late August, 1974, marked the third phase in the development of this Gurdjieff group. The beginning of the differentiation between the two phases was the point at which many members left and a strikingly different orientation in the meetings began. Increasingly there were shared assumptions about reality which acted as the context within which more concordant forms of group interaction took place. After gaining three members midway through this period there was again a sharp drop in membership. As in the second phase a correlate of this decreased membership was an increasingly solidified desire to become a "work" group and an increased strength of group norms and values.

Increased commitment by group members took on significance in the regular practicing of a sensing (meditation)

exercise. Here the involvement in the group assumed a new dimension: not only talking about, but actively engaging in activities conducive to "work". This structural change in activities adversely affected new group members who did not wish to make that degree of commitment. A further commitment was made by the group to inquire into the possibility of attending "sacred dances" (movements) classes, at the end of this phase. This was a sign of the group's advancement toward self-conscious adherence to Gurdjieff's philosophy. Also a change in the thematic orientation ensued with an emphasis on the necessity of a group for "awakening", as opposed to the predominantly individual orientation of the previous phase.

The first group meeting of this phase occurred on March 3, 1974:

It was immediately apparent that the whole atmosphere of the meeting was more directed and less conflicting than the last several meetings. Upon arriving at Ernie's house I found that Bruce, Doris, Merle, Carl and Ernie were all sitting around the coffee table waiting to begin the meeting. When I entered Ernie was commenting on how the previous altercations had 'taken the group off it's path.' He said it was interesting how even one person who had a 'negative attitude' could redirect the whole group. He likened the group's path to that of the side of a pyramid: 'Everyone is really on the same path here. Maybe one is ahead of another, but so far as the overall path is concerned everyone has the same steps to take.' He continued that if one person were to get off of the path then others on both sides of him might also lose sight of their goal. Merle related to this by saying that if it were so, then group members could benefit by helping each other toward that goal. There was a short discussion, then Ernie suggested

that the group read from a chapter in Gurdjieff's
Meetings with Remarkable Men.
(Fieldnotes; March 3, 1974)

He began reading, and then passed the book on as everyone took turns. It was the chapter on "Professor Skridlov" that he read. Gurdjieff relates his travels with a Professor Skridlov through Kafiristan. In a settlement called "Afridis" Gurdjieff and Skridlov accidentally met a monk of Greek origin called Father Giovanni. They became so overwhelmed by what they learned from Giovanni and other brethren of the monestary they visited that they stayed for six months, at which time they left "not because we could not have stayed there longer or did not wish to, but only because we were finally so overfilled with the totality of impressions we had received that it seemed as if even a little more would make us lose our minds." ⁶ Gurdjieff and Skridlov separated after leaving, yet at a later date they met again. Gurdjieff recounted their last meeting in Kislovodsk, Russia, where they had decided to climb Mount Bechow. They had just arrived at the summit of the mountain when Gurdjieff noticed that the professor was crying. Skridlov said that since they had met Father Giovanni he had frequently found himself crying hysterically at just the sight of anything "majestic". While before he had been only egoistically concerned for just his and his children's welfare, their meeting with Father Giovanni had convinced him that

there existed a certain "something else". This "something else", he claimed, had to be the goal of any more or less thinking man because it could give him "real values" rather than the usual "illusory goods" of society.⁷

Bruce began the discussion by suggesting that the kind of relationship Skridlov was able to develop with himself was 'what we in this group ought to strive for.' He said that if members in the group could learn to become 'more real' and honest with each other, then they had taken the first step toward 'real work'. Ernie agreed saying that to build a relationship with oneself on such a 'firm foundation' was really what the work was all about.

The discussion then focussed on how the present meeting had been different than previous meetings. Jim suggested that the meeting was 'more open' than previously. There was a short discussion of what it meant to become a work group. The conversation focussed on the issues of seeing oneself impartially and relating more honestly with each other. After the discussion, Doris, Melanie and Ernie began to prepare a meal. During the meal there was very little discussion, after which point everyone left to go home.

(Fieldnotes; March 3, 1974)

Again, the change in the nature of the group meetings was apparent. More concordant discussions and a lack of interpersonal antagonisms related primarily to the fact that marginal individuals had left the group, leaving behind mostly those members who shared the desire to become a work group (the only new person in the group at that time was Doris who was extremely quiet). While Carl continued to have his differences of opinion with the group as a whole he became reserved and did not express them. In speaking with him privately he mentioned frustration with the readings and dis-

cussions. He wanted to achieve a "higher state" and felt that they helped him in no way toward that goal. In group meetings however this underlying antagonism remained unexpressed.

The next group meeting was on March 10. The same individuals were there in addition to Joel, whose attendance became more sporadic and eventually ended. (He found himself siding with Nancy in the confrontation she had with Ernie. This made him feel uncomfortable at subsequent group meetings.) This was the first meeting in which the group together did a "sensing" or meditation exercise. While it had been discussed and demonstrated once before by Ernie in January, 1974, not everyone had been there and the same degree of interest had not been generated. The exercise generally involved the passing of one's attention over various parts of the body while progressively relaxing and sensing it. It was an exercise that Ernie had learned through the Gurdjieff Foundation in New York.

After the exercise the group discussed difficulties that they had encountered in trying it. This discussion was followed by a reading from the last chapter of Gurdjieff's Meetings, entitled "the Material Question". It deals with Gurdjieff's efforts to give financial support to the Foundation that he had established. In it he attributes his money making ability

primarily to his uncommon and healthy education:

The most characteristic educational procedure of my first teacher was that as soon as he noticed that I was becoming familiar with any particular craft and was beginning to like it, he immediately made me give it up and pass on to another.

As I understood much later his aim was not that I should learn all sorts of crafts but should develop in myself the ability to surmount the difficulties presented by any kind of new work.⁸

In the discussion that followed,

Merle stated his interest in the passage in that it correlated closely with what he had read from Ouspenski: You can see where Ouspenski relates to the same thing but in a different way. Somewhere in In Search of the Miraculous he talks about the confining effects of education. . . , how it prevents people from seeing in new ways. Wouldn't it be something if there were schools that would just teach us how to learn?

Ernie replied: 'Just teach us how to learn? . . . that's what the purpose of a group is.'

Bruce: 'I think Ernie's right. . . . If we could learn to be more honest with each other then the inabilities that, say, I might have. . . someone could help me to see.'

Ernie: 'That's a big thing, Bruce. . . where we could learn to be friends enough to really be honest with each other. If we don't have that here then what have we got?'

(Fieldnotes; March 10, 1974)

A short discussion followed between Ernie, Bruce, Merle and Doris about what it meant to become a work group. The notion of friendship resurfaced frequently as a dominant goal. The statement was made that to become real friends would mean the same thing as becoming more conscious.

The following meeting was on March 31. They met at Ed's house in the late afternoon. The text that was read was The Crown of Life, by Kir Pal Singh.⁹ In the reading

the group found many difficulties in the form of terminology. Translating the terms of "Surat Shabd Yoga" into those of Gurdjieff's philosophy presented a problem. It was a coincidence that at the end of that reading the author himself began to address the issue. He said that up to a certain point a system was useful in helping one to make directed efforts, rather than random guesses. Yet, Kir Pal Singh continued, after a point in one's personal development systems could become limiting rather than helpful. He drew an analogy between this and the use of a ladder: just as the ladder should be left behind after it has served its function, so too with a systematic approach to consciousness.

Al began the discussion: 'I think in a way that's what I do. I see myself doing something, and instead of staying with it, I'll find myself thinking about it like I understood it.' Ernie mentioned that he was interested in what Al said, and that if they were all to consider their experiences then they would see the same thing. He then asked Al: 'What is consciousness, anyway?' Al replied that for him consciousness was a process of looking at himself uncritically. He said it didn't happen to him that often, but that it was the only way he could express it in words. Ernie then responded that the imprecision of words was unfortunate, yet a more distressing factor was our usually unconscious acceptance of the word for the thing that it represents. He added that it might be helpful if they all could discuss what they individually meant by the term 'consciousness'.

Bruce stated that for him consciousness meant a certain 'inner taste' whereby he knew the truth of his observations. Ernie said that for him it meant affirming his existence and that it always had to be a new effort. Doris said that for her consciousness meant a 'presence' to her emotions and feelings. Ted said that consciousness for him would mean being able to be new to himself. These

various ways of understanding what consciousness meant were discussed for nearly twenty minutes. Ernie asked Bruce to clarify what he meant by 'inner taste'. Bruce replied 'there's a certain awareness that I am some way separate from my involvement. Ernie replied: 'But who is that? Who is it that can be present to yourself?' There was a long period of silence. Al replied, 'It's hard to tell. It might just be a part of his personality. One 'I' could be observing another 'I' and think that it's awake when it might all be in the personality.'

Bruce: 'I know what you mean, and believe me, most of my work is like that. But this is a different kind of thing that's hard to put my finger on.'

Al: 'I'm not saying that you're not waking up, Bruce. I'm just saying that a lot of times when I think I'm awake it's all just happening in my personality.'
(Fieldnotes; March 31, 1974)

This discussion indicated that Al was willing to make a comment on Bruce's experience and a dialogue was set up so that they could learn from each others' experiences. The core group increasingly encouraged its members to share personal experiences. This was not characteristic in the second phase and is seen as crucial in the formation of the group meaning system, and also indicative of a shift toward intersubjective validation of experiences and ideas. A certain level of consensus or shared purpose was beginning to develop here. It was the wish to know what consciousness was. It was expressed to some extent as a shared language that would become more fully concrete in the last phase of interaction.

A conflict took place on May 12 which demonstrated this emergent consensus. At a meeting that was held at Ernie's

house. Bruce, Doris, Ernie, Al, Sandra, and Ted were present. The group read from Thomas deHartman's Our Life With Mr. Gurdjieff. They had just arrived at the point in the book where Gurdjieff was relating to the deHartmans what it meant to make a "super effort". Thomas and Olga deHartman, having just decided that they would follow Gurdjieff no matter what transpired, suddenly found themselves on a long journey by foot across the Caucasus mountains from Essentuki to Sochi, Persia. On this journey Gurdjieff put them through extreme emotional and physical hardships. He conveyed to them that in order to pass over this "ladder of obstacles" they would be forced to make what he called a "super effort".

In discussing the notion of super efforts, Al began to tell the group about observations he had made of himself a couple of days before. He had been sitting in a bar with a friend, who, he claimed, was quite an insincere person, when, because of the nature of the conversation, Al noticed that his whole body tightened up out of anger toward his friend. Al said that he had to make a super effort to remain seated. In expressing a feeling of anger toward his friend, Al clinched his fists and stomped his feet on the floor.

Sandra was sitting at the table on the floor with her back partially turned toward Al. Apparently she had been only marginally interested in listening to Al while she was still eating the meal that had been prepared. When she heard Al's feet contact the floor she turned toward him and looked at him with a grimace as of disapproval. Al looked surprised and uncertain as to what to do. He looked down toward the floor and didn't say anything. No one spoke for what seemed to be a long time.

Then Ernie asked Sandra what she had meant by her look. Sandra's initial reply was that she hadn't meant

anything but was just looking. Bruce asked Al how he felt and Al stated that he had been baffled by her look. Sandra replied that she was irritated. She felt the whole incident was being blown out of proportion. She said that she had not been aware of any rejecting look on her part. However, Bruce, Ernie, and Al all replied that it had looked like a rejecting look to them. Sandra appeared irritated but didn't say anything more. Everyone continued to eat and the conversation shifted to another issue.

(Fieldnotes; May 12, 1974)

This conflict pointed in two directions. The first was the nature of the conflict and the second was the nature of the individual's relationship toward the collectivity. In complete contrast to value conflicts of the second phase this conflict between Al and Sandra was an issue conflict. While they had both been irritated by the situation there appeared to have been a degree of consensus within which the interaction took place. This general level of consensus was identified as "friendship". Sandra and Al were both interested in remaining (or becoming) friends above and beyond these differences that occurred between them. They both expressed this in conversations that I had with each of them subsequently. Sandra said that even though she may have looked at Al in a disapproving way she liked him and wouldn't want him to think otherwise based on what she had done. Al said that he understood her reaction but felt that the most important thing was that they should be frank with each other.

The second factor of importance in the conflict was that group members felt that Al and Sandra had an obligation to the

group and to each other to clarify their positions. This was a relatively new factor in group interactions. Group members claimed that not only would it be helpful if she expressed her true feelings, but that she had an obligation to. The fact that she never confronted Al directly with her feelings is not nearly so important as the request that the group made that she do so. This was a significantly different kind of request from experiences in previous phases of the group's development, and it is crucial in understanding the formation of a shared symbol system.

Throughout May and June the group frequently discussed issues relating to the question of validation. On the one hand there was a general adherence to the abstract philosophical principles of Gurdjieff's system, yet there was also a point where self-affirmation was regarded as important. The question became: what is valid?

At a group meeting of July 7, a reading of Thomas deHartman's Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff served as a catalyst to questions about the validity of ideas. The issue that deHartman dealt with in this particular reading was "faith". Ordinary faith, he asserted, was blind adherence to dogma and was essentially harmful to an individual. The group interpreted this to mean that a person might believe in an assertion only because of the status attached to the person making the assertion. By contrast, a faith in the truth of one's own con-

scious feelings "is the knowledge of feeling" different from "dogmatic faith that must be held for the fear of the tortures of Hell."¹⁰

The group interpreted these statements to mean that a realistic type of faith was founded on a "direct conscious presence to one's own truths": a faith in which one uses as an experiential referent the awareness of his own subjective state. This issue of faith and evidence was discussed at some length and carried over into future meetings.

Notions of friendship beginning to emerge in the third period, provided a shared norm for self-validation of ideas. But there was a problematic duality for individuals. To apply the Gurdjieff ideas to life was "to find out for oneself". Yet, in light of this there were also readings, discussions, and developing friendships in a group -- what was their role? How could members find a balance between the seemingly contradictory notions of self-affirmation and intersubjective affirmation? . . . of the importance of finding out for oneself, yet the need for a group? It was not until the final phase of the group that a partial resolution of this tension was obtained.

In contrast to the second phase this third phase was characterized by much more dialogue. With some exception, dialogue produced little antagonism or conflict. Certainly the departure of numerous individuals who had been marginally

involved was a major factor in this. Most of those who wished for the group not to develop into a work group had left. Yet, additionally, there was a stronger valuation of the ideas by group members. Increased commitment, a manifestation of this, could be seen in concern for meditation and discussion of it. An escalation of activities would take place when at the end of this phase group members began to attend "Gurdjieff Movements" classes in Montreal. This increased commitment was accompanied, however, by a sharp decrease in group membership.

Only one new member, Gail, started to attend at the latter part of this phase, while Sandra, Al, Merle, Melanie and Carl stopped coming. Sandra related to me that she quit going to group meetings when she found that she was really not interested in becoming so involved in ideas. She admitted having come to meetings originally because Ted came. Al left the group in late August when he mentioned that going to movements classes made it all much more serious and he wasn't sure he wanted to be that serious. Merle left midway through this phase when he expressed his loss of interest in the ideas. Melanie left claiming that the group wasn't that relevant to her life anymore. Carl left after expressing his desire not to go to movements classes. He later found a job that took him away from the area.

As the group developed into a more self-consciously

value-oriented Gurdjieff group and the strength and incidence of group norms and obligations increased, those who were not convinced of the legitimacy of these changes left the group.

The next group meeting was held on July 14. Two visitors, Jeremy and Beth attended the meeting. Jeremy was a 24 year old law student, who having become interested in Ouspenski, asked if he could attend a group meeting. Beth was his girl friend who came out of an interest in the people she knew at the meeting.

The group read aloud that day from Raphael Lefort's Teachers of Gurdjieff. After forty-five minutes of reading they began to discuss Lefort's critical assessment of the work. He claimed that after Gurdjieff died in 1949 the work had gone to pieces. Lefort claimed that it had become nothing more than a static endeavor to discover what was essentially a lost teaching. Ernie disagreed with Lefort. Ernie said that from what he had seen both at New York and on Ouspenski's farm in Mendum, New Jersey the work was 'anything but dead'.

The group next discussed a point in the reading where Lefort related an experience he had with one of Gurdjieff's teachers. While discussing with a sheik the particular arrangement of stones in the construction of a holy temple. Lefort inquired as to just what that particular arrangement could mean. The sheik replied that even if he were to tell Lefort of its 'real meaning' it would do him no good: the knowledge would not be understood by Lefort because he did not have the requisite 'level of being'. The sheik continued that if Lefort was on a journey merely to worship Gurdjieff or the teachers of Gurdjieff, or to mimic their ideas and teachings then he might just as well terminate his journey. There was nothing meaningful that Lefort could learn through the imitation of even a master. The only way that he could truly develop consciously, said the sheik, was if he could make the effort to look within himself to discover who he was and what it was he was seeking.

Ernie started the discussion by claiming it was 'this same effort' that made the group more than just dogma. He said that individuals were there to learn about themselves, not to develop a religion. Bruce mentioned the point of individuals having preconceptions and finding it difficult to be open. Jeremy stated that he felt that he did have a kind of dogmatic faith. Ernie asked him what that was and Jeremy replied that he had a faith that consciousness would help him grow as a person. 'That' said Jeremy 'is a kind of blind faith.' Ernie then replied that if Jeremy were in a group with Gurdjieff and said that, then he would be told to leave: he would be told that he must find in himself some reason to pursue that particular path, and if he could not then there was no reason for him to be there. He was simply an 'immature kid wasting his time.'

Jeremy didn't respond. He remained quiet for the remainder of the meeting.

(Fieldnotes; July 14, 1974)

He told me at a later date that he felt anxious and upset that Ernie would say that to him. He felt it to be a personal criticism that was not justified. After that meeting Jeremy attended only two more meetings.

Because of the nature of the momentum that was building toward work and its implications in terms of individual behavior, many persons left either unable or unwilling to take part in what was emerging. It became more difficult for new members to adjust to pressures placed on them by core members supportive of the developing norms.

In discussions with all of them (with the exception of Carl whom I could not find) they at later dates expressed or implied their dissatisfaction with the way things were and their inability or unwillingness to meet group expectations. It was the increasingly value-oriented manner in which the group was evolving which made for the context within which

these departures can be viewed.

Any "periodization" of the development of a group is at once arbitrary and useful. The utility of dividing group behavior into phases rests in theory. How do the development and concretization of group norms serve to shift an interest group to a value group? Given this theoretical interest, then a shift toward a set of ideas becomes a criterion for differentiation. Thus the third phase of the group, ending in September, when the group had made the significant collective commitment to attend movements classes, in conjunction with the increased relevance of the meditation exercise, marked a new dimension of group commitment to activity. This increased practical commitment was indicative of increased evaluative commitment to the ideas.

This third phase saw an increase in collective obligation along with a heightened commitment to the ideas. Stress on the need for a group and conversations of a dialogue form were contingent on the emergence of a crystallized group meaning system. Shared meaning was the context within which subsequent interactions can be understood.

(4) Fourth Phase

The fourth phase of the group lasted from September

1974 until February 1975. Because of heightened commitment to "real work" a number of individuals left the group at the end of the third phase. Heightened commitment in the form of activities (meditation exercise and "movements") and interaction included both dialogue and concordant conversations and a pre-dominance of issue (as opposed to value) related conflicts stemming from a more fully concrete value system. It is with the full development of this group meaning system that the group developed a value-oriented cohesiveness. The group became Gurdjieffian.

As of mid-September the size of the group had stabilized at five: Ernie, Bruce, Doris, Gail, and Ted. It would remain at this point until December when Al returned and in January when two new members joined: Jake and Larry. The character of the meetings had again changed to the point where the centrality of focus was not on the readings so much as on the quality of interaction. Developing group norms stressed the point of one's obligation toward the group for more openness, honesty and clarity of expression, all seen as means for the attainment of the group goal of becoming "real friends".

On September 3 the group meeting was held at Bruce and Doris' apartment. After all five members arrived they began to read aloud from Views from the Real World, a book of Gurdjieff's lectures as reconstructed by some of his pupils.

In chapter 5 Gurdjieff makes reference to his distinction between the three centers or minds in a man: the thinking, the moving-instinctive, and the emotional centers. He states that in order to view more thoroughly one's own subjectivity one should practice thinking what he feels and feeling what he thinks. In this manner one might have the opportunity of not being just involved in the thought or the feeling, but he can check one center against the other center, as it were.

Bruce stated that he was not at all clear as to what he thought Gurdjieff meant by this checking of one center by another: 'Couldn't it all be done while one is still asleep?' Ernie agreed that the reading was not at all clear. 'Who is it,' said Ernie, 'who is doing that checking? Are you 'waking up' through that experience or is it merely a mechanical process, an identification? Who is it, anyway, who does that?' Gail said that she often thought about her feelings. Especially when she felt as if she had abused someone, she thought a lot about it. 'Sure,' said Bruce, 'but what makes these thoughts different from analysis? How do you know it's not just in your personality?' Gail replied: 'Oh, I'm not claiming that I had some fantastic experience in higher consciousness. . . . I'm just saying it's happened before that I did something I later regretted and when I thought it out, I wasn't so anxious about it afterwards.'

'Okay,' said Bruce, 'but isn't that just a way of making yourself feel better about it? . . . You might feel uncomfortable with something you did and then to get rid of that discomfort you talk to yourself about it. That doesn't mean you're waking up!'

Ernie added, 'The important thing is that we have to be more precise about what this means for us; what does it mean to have a thought about a feeling? Does it mean just that, or does it mean that I witness both my thoughts and my feeling. I'm not my thought. I'm not my feeling. But 'I' is the place which can be aware of my thoughts and feelings and not be identified with it.'

The group then continued to discuss this point: was this what Gurdjieff meant by 'inner separation'? How does one do this? This then led into a discussion of different experiences that individuals had had while

doing a morning meditation exercise.
(Fieldnotes; September 3, 1974)

A new quality in conversation could be seen here. What had begun as clarification of objectivity was related to something personal, at which point the claim became questionable. The questioning was pursued for some time. Bruce initially requested a clarification of Gurdjieff's notion of checking one center by another and asked whether it couldn't occur in sleep. Ernie replied that it was worthwhile considering who it was that did the checking and whether the individual was waking up in the process. Here Gail related to a personal experience that she had: when she felt she had abused someone. She thought about her feelings frequently. It was at this point that Bruce questioned Gail's claim: "Sure, but what makes these thoughts different from analysis? How do you know its not just your personality?" Gail, in a slight manner replied that she wasn't claiming any "fantastic experience in higher consciousness" but simply that by thinking out behaviors that she regretted, it would make her feel less anxious about it.

This is the point at which there was a significant change between this and the previous (third) phase.¹¹ Group support existed in this fourth phase for Bruce to continue to question Gail's claim: "Okay, but isn't that a way of making yourself feel better about it? . . . That doesn't

mean you're waking up!' Had this interaction occurred in the previous phase then the discussion would probably have broken off before this last statement by Bruce. There had not existed such group support in the form of expectations in the third phase, expectations sufficiently strong to encourage Bruce to pursue his criticism of Gail. He had already stated that he disagreed, yet group norms reinforced Bruce's further comment. Also, following Ernie's comments the whole group pursued the issue. This continued investigation indicated a more mutual effort than previously had been noted.

Further group meetings during this period served to illustrate the "obligatory" nature of certain group norms. On October 23 a group meeting was held at Bruce and Doris' house. The reading was from a chapter in Krishnamurti's Flight of the Eagle. It had to do with what he views as a human traditional impulse toward violence. He claimed that we become violent, but because our culture advises us that we should not be that way then we are forced to deny that aspect of ourselves that was violent. Krishnamurti views this as the ultimate of violence toward oneself. The group discussed this based on a statement that they do violence to themselves as individuals by relating to consciousness in "superficial" ways. An example that was offered of this had to do with a mechanical compulsion to do the

meditation exercise.

In relating to this conversation Bruce said that as trivial as it may have sounded to him when he was young, there was a certain saying he learned in childhood that he today found very relevant: 'You can't have your cake and eat it too.' After saying this no one responded. It was the kind of uneasy silence where you do not want to be critical or harmful yet you know that just by your silence you are being that way, yet, you are still incapable of saying anything.

Bruce also was quiet and looked down toward the floor. Ernie asked Bruce if he was experiencing discomfort. Bruce said that, yes, he could see a part of himself was extremely critical of what he had just said in that he could not make it appear as a real 'gem of wisdom'. Doris said that Bruce had not said anything for him to be critical of. Bruce said that in a way he agreed but that part of his personality wanted it to sound good. When it did not come out that way, then he became very critical of himself.

(Fieldnotes; October 23, 1974)

What took place was a personalized discussion of how Bruce felt. Though embarrassed and self-critical, Bruce felt enough group support to let his feelings be known. This was one of the first indications in this phase of the development of more intimate ties between group members: Bruce did not hide his feelings. This also serves as an empirical indicator of the existence of group support for the expression of personal feelings. The expectation was that Bruce not pretend to be that which he was not.

More instances of individuals in the group attempting to deal more openly with personal issues became characteristic during this period of the group. A similar instance took place in November 23 at a group meeting. Doris, Ernie and

Bruce had been taking a graduate psychology course together and were at the meeting discussing their opinions.

Doris stated that the class made her uncomfortable. Although she wanted very much to speak in the class, she was unable to because of her 'self-criticism'. She said she wanted very much to talk but was afraid that what she said would not be seen as intelligent. Bruce, and then Ernie both told her that they wanted very much to hear what she had to say. Bruce added that he knew in a way what she was talking about because he felt the same thing in the group. He found himself wanting to talk but afraid that it might not sound as intelligent as he would like it to. Bruce said that if she would for just a minute 'let go' of her self-criticism then she would probably be able to talk in an intelligent way because she would not have to deal with its distraction. Ernie agreed saying that as long as she was critical of herself then she would find herself unable to speak in any setting.

(Fieldnotes; November 23, 1974)

This dialogue is instructive in two respects, the collective affirmation of certain theoretical issues (group meaning system) and the increased degree of intimacy or personalism between members. In the first instance, 'Doris' self criticism became a shared experience, in the sense that through her expressing it others in the group compared it to their own experience. They expressed the same feelings of apprehension regarding self-assertiveness and through individually relating this they collectively rendered the notion of "self-criticism as an obstacle" more valid. It became evidence intersubjectively, for a particular interpretation of an experience, thus, making for more legitimacy regarding this group norm (e.g. "If they see this too, then

there must be something to it.")

Second, a shift in the group was witnessed by its encouragement for Doris to raise issues regarding her own insecurity. Bruce and Ernie attempted to dispel in her any feeling that the group was critical of her. This indicated the development of a certain level of support between them. (There is the assumption here that she would not have expressed her feelings if she had anticipated criticism from the group.) This was an indication of the further affirmation by the group of the expression of individual feelings. Again, evidence of the solidification of a shared group value (group meaning system).

In December Al started to attend group meetings again. Shortly thereafter two new members also began to attend: Jake and Larry. When Al stopped going to the group at the end of the third period he stated it was because of the increased "seriousness". When he returned he stated that he was interested in "not losing the ideas" which, in his time away from the group, he found more relevant to his life than before he left.

One new member, Jake, was a 24 year old college student who had known Ernie for a year. He had read Ouspenski and stressed a desire to know more about it. The other new member, Larry, was a 22 year old college student. The group had

contacted him through an ad that he had placed in the college student newspaper stating that he was interested in finding a group or person who knew something about Gurdjieff. On finding that he had read Ouspenski and wanted to learn more, he was invited to attend group meetings.

The group meeting of January 22 was held at Doris' house. After coffee Ernie began to read from Views in the chapter entitled "Separating Oneself from Oneself". It dealt with the creation of a "third force," or "consciousness" as a factor growing out of personality and "feeding essence". After a number of members expressed confusion over the difference in style of presentation they all began to discuss what "inner separation" meant.

Bruce expressed his view that 'inner separation meant that he was able to see in a relatively impartial way the workings of his personality: 'it's as if I am separate from my personality because I'm not only involved in it. I see my involvement'. At that point Jake walked in the door. He carried an armful of books stating he had just returned from the school but had to use Doris' phone for an inquiry about buying a car. This changed the focus of the meeting as the group waited for Jake.

At this break in the discussion Ernie asked Al what he had been reading lately. Al replied that he had been reading from Carl Jung's collected works. He said he was interested in Jung's notions of the 'collective unconscious' and 'archetypes' and was trying to compare them to Gurdjieff's system. Bruce asked Al if Al thought he could 'wake up' through Jung's work. Al did not respond. Ernie then said that if Al could not remember himself through reading Jung then it would do him no good.

Al replied that he understood what they were saying but felt that he was at a certain point in his work on himself where he felt that he could not deceive himself as he had in the past. Bruce objected, stating 'if we are

most of the time asleep then how could we help from deceiving ourselves?' Ernie started to speak, then Al interrupted him saying that he had been misunderstood.

Ernie then asked Al if he knew what his motivations were when he interputed Ernie. Al quickly replied: 'No, but it wasn't egocentric, I know that.' At that point everyone in the group laughed at the paradox of Al's defensive response while at the same moment denying egotism. Al laughed also and replied that he had been defensive there but it was because he had been misunderstood. What he had meant by his original statement was merely that it was harder for him to deceive himself as much as he had in the past.

The group continued to discuss this interaction until Doris suggested that they practice movements. At this point the meeting was over. They then practiced Gurdjieff 'movements' and afterward left. (Fieldnotes; January 22, 1975)

Using the September 3, October 23, and January 22 meetings of this fourth period, we find that a certain orientation to meaning predominated. In addition to more personal discussions, there were therapeutic and practical concerns. At the September 3 meeting the topic of different centers led to Gail's remark about her own experience. Bruce and Ernie both commented, making their work more practical. Similarly, at the October 23 meeting the discussion of meditation exercise indicated a dominant concern for evaluating what members did in their exercise. Last, at the January 22 meeting at which "inner separation" was discussed, the practical side of it was emphasized. In each case a personal, practical and therapeutic orientation was evident. Here there was more concern for the "how" than the "what", more of a concern for relating to experiences in a practical vein than

relating to ideas primarily.

Throughout this Fourth phase the dominant orientation toward meaning focussed on the "phenomenological therapeutic" aspects of the Gurdjieff philosophy, with emphasis on the practicality of efforts to awaken, and approaches to remembering. This concern for therapeutic or prescriptive aspects of Gurdjieff's philosophy has as its implicit ideological background value statements regarding the nature of reality, the nature of self and the nature of social interactions (capricious reality, multiplicity of personality, social interactions as mutual gratification). In order to arrive at the point of consideration of action, a group has to have dealt first with (implicitly or explicitly) an evaluation of the nature of the situation. It is this "presupposed dimension" in orienting to and coordinating action that is seen here as the group meaning system. It is in addition a major factor supporting the claims here of a shift in the group toward a value orientation. That is, a shift within a group which is more self-consciously adherent to a particular value and belief system and which meets in order to affirm that commitment.

The remainder of the group meetings maintained the same character. They were typically small and characterized by a heightened collective commitment to the Gurdjieff system; their activities (meditation exercise and movements) and their

shared group meaning system persisted. The particular composition of that group meaning system is important for understanding the final evolution of the group.

NOTES

¹Kenneth Walker, A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching (London: Fletcher and Son, 1969).

²See J. Krishnamurti, First and Last Freedom (New York: Harper and Row, 1975); T. deHartman, Our Life With Mr. Gurdjieff (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964); H. I. Khan, The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), I; K. Singh, Crown of Life (Delhi: Hero Printing Press, 1965); J. Krishnamurti, Flight of the Eagle (New York: Harper and Row, R. Lafort, Teachers of Gurdjieff (London: Gollancz, 1966); M. Nicoll, Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspenski (London: Vincent Stuart, 1964); J. Krishnamurti, Education and the Significance of Life (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); and his You Are the World (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

³Daniel Goleman, "The Buddha on Meditation and States of Consciousness," Part II: "A Typology of Meditation Technique," Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, IV, No. 2 (1972), pp. 190-3.

⁴Krishnamurti, First and Last Freedom, p. 152.

⁵Ibid., pp. 160-1.

⁶G. I. Gurdjieff, All and Everything, Second Series: Meetings with Remarkable Men (New York: Dutton, 1963), p. 244.

⁷Ibid., pp. 245-6; See Appendix II.

⁸Ibid., p. 251.

⁹Singh.

¹⁰DeHartman, p. 69.

¹¹For instance, compare this with the March 31, 1974, meeting. Al's criticism of Bruce was mentioned but not pursued beyond that point; or with the different degree to which interpersonal differences were pursued in the May 12, 1974, meeting.

IV.

EXCURSUS: GROUP MEANING SYSTEM.

The term group meaning system has been used to refer to shared norms and values, expectations, and sentiments that crystallized in the fourth phase of the group's existence. This section of the thesis will describe the core members' understanding of these norms and values which can be seen in their conversations, conflicts and attempted resolutions of conflict.

In most respects a derivative of the Gurdjieff philosophy, the group meaning system was an aspect of group expression through which group members collectively recognized a sense of purpose and meaning behind their experience. It is one form of evidence that as of September, 1974, the group had become a value-oriented group with a definite focus, goals and assumptions that differentiated it from its previous interest orientation.

The group meaning system consisted of three related elements, descriptive, evaluative and prescriptive. The descriptive element functioned as a cognitive account of the nature of social reality. The evaluative element built on this representation of social reality with a differentiation

between levels (of consciousness) to be sought (goal statements) and those to be avoided. Through the prescriptive element group members' expectations suggested behaviors that adherents could adopt in order to realize goals.

Clifford Geertz suggests that religious symbols provide general conceptions of the world, the self, and social relations (a model of social reality) and distinctive mental dispositions or "templates" (a model for social reality).¹ In a similar manner the group meaning system not only interpreted social and psychological realities but to some extent created or shaped social reality for group members.

(1) Descriptive Dimension

By the fourth phase core members of the group had come to share self-consciously several assumptions about the nature of typical social relations. These assumptions which were referred to by adherents in different ways included:

- 1) that social relations occurred capriciously;
- 2) that people, in general, including group members, often interacted mechanically; furthermore, that people were absorbed in the mechanical reaction in ways that aggravated differential feelings of anger and disappointment; and that most people, including

group members, were unaware of this mechanicality;

- 3) that since a person was a composite of many selves, he might at different times act in quite different and often contradictory ways.

These assumptions, while derived chiefly from Gurdjieff's writings, found expression also in Krishnamurti's works. For example, the mechanical nature of thought in Krishnamurti,

Surely thinking is a reaction. If I ask you a question, you respond to it -- you respond according to your memory, to your prejudices, to your upbringing, to the climate, to the whole background of your conditioning; you reply accordingly, you think accordingly. . . .²

Mechanical thought which leads to mechanical action has its final result in a chaotic society. The group frequently referred to Ouspenski's statement:

And if one machine is unconscious, then a hundred machines are unconscious, and so are a thousand machines, or a hundred thousand, or a million. And the unconscious activity of a million machines must necessarily result in destruction and extermination.³

Often in group interactions core members would express their adherence to these assumptions. One experience in the group which exemplified the capriciousness, their term for reality, took place on December 9, 1974. At a group meeting held at Ernie's house members discussed a conversation that had taken place between Jake and Larry. The group analysed what they saw as Jake's habitual way of speaking rather authoritatively on issues that he knew little about. A conflict ensued in which Ernie commented as follows, drawing on Gurd-

Gurdjieff's notion of man's mechanicality:

'Jake is a bullshitter. He wants everyone to believe that he's cool. He would say anything at the right moment to get someone to admire him. He's compelled to play the rôle.'

Bruce: 'I don't really think that Jake does it, in the sense of being aware of himself. I think he's involved and it just sort of... takes over in him.'
(Fieldnotes; December 9, 1974)

This line of discussion continued, indicating that the core group's interpretation of the incident was that it "just happened", that Jake had reacted "mechanically". That is, Jake was not "conscious" of his actions. He was merely acting out his need to feel important and admired. Consistent with Gurdjieff's descriptive psychology, "it" did it, not Jake, but his personality which took over, so to speak, for the whole of him. In essence he was a mechanism through which such forces as personality acted without his awareness.

Another assumption, expressed in an instance of group problem analysis, was that man's confidence that he knows himself actually prevents him from attaining self-knowledge. In one meeting, Ted was attempting to relate a personal problem. A friend of his had recently returned from Micronesia where he had been a Peace Corps representative. Understandably, Ted found that much of his friend's conversation in the subsequent months focussed on his experiences while stationed there. Ted's problem was that he was becoming increasingly impatient with what he saw as an over-abundance of "war stories".

yet he was not certain of the best way to confront the friend with his impatience and still retain his friendship which he valued.

When he brought this up at a group meeting, Gail asked him if he had ever considered why he was so impatient. Ted replied that he did not know why -- it was simply a case of becoming tired of the stories. She suggested that rather than arguing or competing with the friend, Ted perhaps could try to "just be quiet" inside and observe how he was acting. She added that he was probably very identified and involved and if he could study that involvement rather than just believing in it, he might better understand the nature of the problem. Gail's point was that as long as Ted believed he understood clearly his motives vis-a-vis the friend, he closed himself off to any discovery of himself in that situation. This point coincides closely with statements made by Gurdjieff concerning the relationship of self-knowledge to one's assumptions about oneself.

Similarly, the issue of the mechanicality of interpersonal relationship found expression in the group at a meeting held in January, 1975. Doris had for a number of weeks felt some hostility toward Ernie concerning both his encouragement for her to talk more in the group, and his open expression of thoughts regarding personal issues between her and Bruce:

Ernie said that he knew she was angry and that he was disappointed about her having to put on a facade of 'everything is just dandy'. He asked her why it was that she could not let it out, why was she so hesitant to let him know how she really felt?

Doris replied that she felt no hostility toward him. Ernie replied that she was lying. She again said that she had no anger for him and he replied that he felt it was unfortunate that even there at a group meeting, where they were trying to become more 'essential friends', she could not be honest. He said he knew the reason for her unwillingness to speak up was that she wanted to be accepted and she was afraid that if she did get angry, she would not be accepted. At this point Doris started to cry and then left the room.

Ernie said that Doris was not aware of herself at all, that she was involved (identified) and this manifested itself in the form of anxiety over self-image. Al responded in agreement: Doris did seem very nervous, but perhaps she really was not upset originally but became bothered by the fact that Ernie kept insisting that she was upset. To this Ted replied that Bruce ought to be able to decide the issue: 'Hell, he knows her better than any of us.'

Bruce replied that he had for some time been aware of an underlying antagonism that Doris felt toward Ernie and that he simply felt she was unable to express it: 'But whether she's involved or not isn't as important as whether she recognizes it and whether she can be honest about it. She knows that she's mad, but she just doesn't want to admit it.'

Then Ernie replied:

'But, that's the important point. Don't you see? If she can't be honest with us here, where can she? It's like this, if I can't be myself here, then where can I?'

The conversation continued in this vein until Doris reentered the room about five minutes later. When asked if she was still upset, she replied that yes, she was, but that it was hard for her to express it. At that point the discussion was discontinued.

(Fieldnotes; January 20, 1975)

Three themes central to the meaning system can be seen to have been operative here. First, there was the belief in mechanicality. The interpretations that were

variously made in the group concerning Doris' behavior (with the exception of one) all stated that she was identified, involved, or not aware of herself. Second, the norm that "she should be conscious of her reactions" was also evident in the majority of the interpretations. Last, her inability to be aware of her own behavior was interpreted as a "barrier" in her relationship to individuals and to the group as a whole.

This incident shows the conflict between the individual meditative approach (which was common in the second phase of the group) and the already developing notions of honesty as a means of furthering friendship. This collective normative value stressing the individual's obligation to the group to express his/her feelings was the sign and the essence of the shift from individualism and impersonality of the second phase to the stronger group norms of the third.

(2) Evaluative Dimension

The evaluative dimension of the group meaning system concerned norms to be achieved (goal statements) and those to be avoided (or not stressed). Four major themes have normative significance:

- 1) Self-knowledge was distinguished from self-control,

the former being realizable only through "submission to oneself".

- 2) "Real friendship" was contingent on self-knowledge and central to further inner evolution.
- 3) A long range goal was "knowledge of the miraculous", a knowledge of the nature of social reality in its totality.
- 4) To be free of attachments, involvements and identifications is a prerequisite for the above goals.

Related sources for these themes were Gurdjieff's writings, on the one hand, and Krishnamurti's on the other. On the distinction between self-knowledge and self-control, the group frequently read the following passage:

Most of us criticize in order to shape, in order to interfere; it gives us a certain amount of pleasure. . . (but) what brings about the unfoldment of the self so that you begin to understand it is the constant awareness of it without any condemnation, without any identification. There must be a certain spontaneity; you cannot be constantly analysing it, disciplining it, shaping it.

"Coming new" to an experience was related to "knowledge of the miraculous", another important theme taken from Krishnamurti:

This is the difficulty, because most of us are incapable of being passively aware, letting the problem tell the story without our interpreting it. We don't know how to look at a problem dispassionately. . . . Therefore we approach a problem, which is always new, with the old pattern. The challenge is always the new, but our response is always the old; and our difficulty is to meet the challenge adequately, that is, fully.⁵

On numerous occasions in the group core members referred to these principles. Through interaction these became expectations for members to make efforts or to behave in a particular manner. Differential commitments to these themes was a source of the conflicts in the second phase, and those who adhered most strongly to them became the core group.

A discussion held in April of 1974 expressed the expectation that group members learn to "submit to themselves", not control or criticize, in order to gain self-knowledge:

Carl was relating to the group his inability to deal with what he termed 'negative emotions'. He did not become explicit about them however, because he felt that he could not deal with them effectively. He said that everytime they came up he would try everything he knew to avoid them. His complaint was that he was tired of avoiding them and wanted to 'get rid of them completely.'

Al and Bruce both responded by saying that he was so critical of these aspects of himself that he could never achieve a position of understanding with regard to their dynamics. Al stated that if Carl really wanted to know more about these emotions then he had to accept them as a part of his personality and learn how to observe them in a more open or uncritical way. Bruce said, 'often we accept as our own only those things which we are most proud of while denying the existence of those parts of ourselves which we would rather not be there, when we do that we come into conflict with ourselves.'

Ernie added that the only lasting solution to Carl's dilemma was to thoroughly submit to himself 'as is' and 'without the wish to change'. He felt that if Carl had the desire to discover himself then he could learn to see the mechanism involved and not be a slave to it anymore. He said that acceptance of himself, as he was, was the most important effort that Carl could make.
(Fieldnotes; April 15, 1974)

The goal of friendship was referred to frequently

as a necessary component of real growth. In a meeting held on January 22, 1975, while discussing different reasons for wanting to be more conscious Bruce said:

'What are we here for anyway? I mean if we can't be friends then what's the use of consciousness? To develop powers? To become more clever? I mean why do we want to be more conscious? . . . to impress someone that we're intelligent?' Ernie added: 'This is something everybody's got to figure out for himself. Do you remember when Gurdjieff said that they made a sheep conscious? What did they do with it? They ate it! In other words consciousness, alone, without friendship or conscience is useless.'
(Fieldnotes, January 22, 1975)

Group members felt that the act of submitting to others was required for the realization of the group's goal of becoming friends. Core members portrayed friendship as a "sacred responsibility": to be a "friend indeed" required unbending consciousness and conscientiousness. If a real friendship existed, then ego would take Alter's problems as if they were his own, and each would make special efforts not to abuse the sacred importance of this relationship, as the group conceived it.

The group felt the development of friendship also implied the development of "real conscience". Here, conscience was seen in contrast to "subjective morality". It was seen as independent of the socio-cultural influences and and subjective nuances of particular groups of peoples. The group portrayed it as a more universalistic conscious feeling of respect for life, and affective correlate to the cognitive

aspect of clear consciousness or awareness.

A conversation between Jake and Doris took place in December 1974, when identification was discussed, a conversation that illustrated the group's understanding of the concept. Jake started by telling Doris that he still felt regretful about what had happened the previous week between himself and Larry. Doris replied that she did not know whether he felt that way because of what he had done or because he had been criticized for having done it. She added that the important thing was his relationship to himself. Jake asked her, "What do you mean?" and Doris replied,

I mean, you're identified now with worrying about what happened, trying to find some way of interpreting it so that you'll feel alright about it. Right? But, the important thing isn't whether you see yourself as right or wrong, it's whether you can 'wake up' now. I mean, you're so identified about that, . . . well, . . . when you're like that you can't really see yourself clearly.

This form of attachment or identification the group called "inner considering". This meant a strong concern for one's self-image leading to an obsessive consideration of another's assessment of him. ~~The group~~ agreed that in this identification all of one's attention was engulfed in the act of anxiety over self-image, and no inner center existed, making it impossible to see one's own involvement.

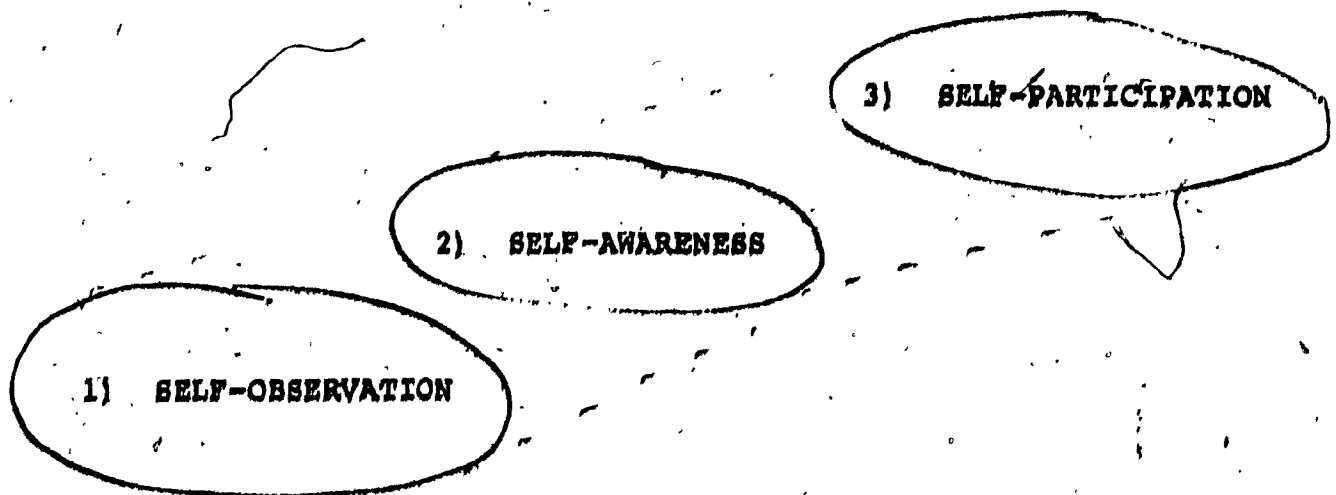
While the many forms of identification and attachment are problematic and ever present--they are a part of "ordinary life"--nonetheless the group suggested that they could not be

dealt with by avoidance, repression or other defensive postures. The defense itself was seen as a mechanical gesture based on a wish to change. In order to cease this "seeking-to-be-other-than-that-which-one-is" the inner life of the individual had to be emphasized, along with awareness of and submission to "that-which-one-is (no matter what that might be).

3) Prescriptive Dimension

Core members also shared some common prescriptive expectations for the achievement of group goals. The group saw an "effortless effort" as the same effort that was to allow one to achieve goals and be able to deal more successfully with identifications and involvements.

At one point Ernie suggested that members think about gaining knowledge in terms of three moments: self-observation, self-awareness, and self-participation. By the fourth phase core members had found this conceptualization helpful in representing different moments of work. These moments in the approach towards "self-transcendence" could be graphically represented below:



These were referred to by the group as moments rather than stages or steps in the path to avoid implications as to their inherent separability or linearity. While this is the order in which they were suggested, they were presented as being cumulative rather than successive:

- 1) Self-observation as a first step was distinct from introspection or analysis; furthermore, self-observation was necessary for inner growth.
- 2) Self-awareness followed yet could be contiguous with self-observation. It was the first point at which there existed a qualitative change; the realization of group goals was contingent on self-awareness.
- 3) Self-participation was projected as another qualitative change of being where the individual might have for the first time been able to behave in a more autonomous/non-contingent manner.

To an extent these moments of the prescriptive dimension of the group meaning system found theoretical legitimation

within the writings of Gurdjieff and Krishnamurti. Yet approaching the third moment the evidence becomes more nebulous.

The core group maintained that in ordinary self-observation one became identified with one's own labelling of personal experience and lost touch with the "here and now". Inner separation was a technique suggested by core members to use in self-study. A passage from Krishnamurti illustrated the group's interest in this issue:

In all our experiences, there is always the experiencer, the observer, who is gathering to himself more and more or denying himself. Is that not a wrong process and is that not a pursuit which does not bring about the creative state? If it is a wrong process, can we wipe it out completely and put it aside? That can only come about when I experience, not as a thinker experiences, but when I am aware of the false process and see that there is only a state in which the thinker is the thought.⁶

The second moment, self-awareness, presupposed a certain effort at self-observation. In addition, group goals became potentially realisable through self-awareness. A technique through which self-awareness was approached was that of "self-remembering". As the core group expressed it self-remembering allowed one to see that "he was alive". It allowed him to "collect himself" and affirm that he existed outside the triviality of his attachments. A reading that was frequently cited by the group in reference to "the certain something" involved in a different experience of reality was an excerpt from Gurdjieff's Meetings with Remarkable Men

(quoted at length in Appendix II).

At the third moment, self-participation, procedural or prescriptive issues became indistinguishable from evaluative or goal statements. Yet little stress was placed on this moment by group members. They said that prematurity of efforts "to do" could destroy or retard much of what they had gained through self-observation and self-awareness.

The group suggested that to affirm one's existence one had to break the hold of identification. If the limited amount of attention that man had was used up by identification, then one was left with nothing for oneself. Yet, by contrast, if one was involved and could manage to become aware of himself, then simply because of a limited attention span (energy), that positive act of affirmation of existence robbed that involvement of the energy that it needed to maintain itself. Rather than rejecting or repressing involvements, the group suggested an affirmation of one's inner life which would allow the involvement to simply "fall away" out of neglect or insufficiency of attention.

These notions of self-observation, self-awareness and self-participation were often expressed in group interactions during the fourth phase. While the notions of self-observation and self-awareness were frequently referred to, that of self-participation was more implicit, more of a long-term goal.

After the incident of October 23, reported above, Ernie

asked Bruce if he was able to observe himself in that situation:

Bruce replied that yes, he could see that he was self-critical and he didn't like it.

Ernie replied that if he didn't like it, then he wasn't really seeing it. He said that if Bruce could really see his discomfort then he wouldn't judge it in any way. He would just see it as it was: 'Real observation means that you are present to your behavior. . . you are passively aware but not judging or analysing it.' (Fieldnotes; October 23, 1974)

Similarly, the notion of self-awareness was referred to as prescriptive for core members. On January 19, 1975, Al discussed an experience he had at movements class. In becoming aware of himself he said it was as if everything he was doing was going on outside of him. It was like seeing a movie picture of himself. He continued, that when he started to think about it, to try to hold on to it, he lost it. This made him feel that "in order really to be able 'to be' you've got to be aware of yourself."

An event in January, 1975, illustrated the way in which the group goals about self awareness were viewed. Bruce, Doris, Ernie and Al were at Bruce and Doris' apartment and at one point in their discussion Ernie began to address questions to Doris regarding his interpretations of her way of relating. He asked her if she was aware of her aggressive way of relating to him at that moment. She said yes, she was. At this point Al suggested to Doris that he felt she was not really aggressive

but that she was just agreeing with Ernie. Doris said that she was not just agreeing, whereas Al continued to say that he felt she was. A rather heated altercation then developed between Al and Ernie, each accusing the other of being mistaken and not seeing "really" what had taken place. They left each other shortly thereafter without resolving it.

Bruce, Doris and Ted discussed it at a later date. They all felt that it would take "extraordinary efforts" on the part of both Al and Ernie if they were to prevent this altercation from severing their relationship. They claimed that hostility had been growing between Al and Ernie for some time and now that it had surfaced it would either have to be dealt with or they would have to cease being close. They had no idea as to how the outcome would be but knew that a resolution one way or the other would be apparent by the next meeting at which time Al and Ernie would be face to face again.

A resolution appeared before the meeting. At the meeting Al mentioned that it took a lot of effort for him to talk to Ernie. He had wanted to, but he felt a "competitive personality thing" and wanted first to hear from Ernie that he was wrong. Al said it meant a lot to him that he could finally become aware of this in himself and could decide to be sincere with Ernie "no strings attached". Similarly, Ernie said that he too had been involved, but the important thing was that each

of them could become aware of and not rationalize and justify his own behavior.

This incident illustrated the importance of this notion of friendship which was seen as only being possible through self-awareness. The notion of self-participation, contrary to self-awareness, was only occasionally mentioned in the group. Yet it retained the status of a long-term goal statement. It usually arose when core members discussed what it would mean "to do" in a spontaneous way -- outside of external influences.

The delineation of these moments in the prescriptive component of the group meaning system is only in its most general sense linear. The group suggested that as one began to observe himself in an increasingly uncritical manner; his sleep was shaken. Then, with sufficient data in the form of observations of himself and his direct experience he was encouraged to affirm in himself his more essential or inner nature. The inner place was an experience of an existence in him of a "certain something" that went far beyond his everyday self. With the ability to affirm his existence he was asked to begin to consider "real conscience", "external considering" and becoming a "real friend". The general linearity of his process was presented as its increased awareness and eventual decreased mechanicality. Eventually, the group suggested, one would "be able to be", and one could

take a more active relation to his environment through the transcendence of his personality. Yet, rather than strictly linear, the process was depicted as cumulative. Awareness implied a constantly renewed effort at self-observation and "being present to one's existence". Through this process of becoming new to the moment, members claimed a person was more capable of dealing with identifications or involvements that would ordinarily foster his continued sleep.

Through the collective construction and affirmation of these values and beliefs over time the group transformed itself from its early stages of an interest group into a specific value-oriented group. What had begun as a casual meeting in order to read and discuss certain ideas transformed into a definite value-oriented meeting in which individuals met to discuss and affirm commitments that they had developed concerning certain values and concerning the group itself.

NOTES

¹Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Culture System," Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966).

²Krishnamurti, First and Last Freedom, p. 97.

³Ouspenski, Miraculous, p. 52.

⁴Krishnamurti, First and Last Freedom, p. 202.

⁵Ibid., p. 97.

⁶Ibid., p. 108.

V.

TRANSFORMATION OF A SMALL GROUP

The evolution of this Gurdjieff group can be analyzed as the institutionalization of informal relations and the development of a meaning system as a legitimating apparatus for these standardized relations. At the same time that institutionalization occurred there was a shift from an interest group to a value group. My concern is with this latter shift. Why is it that the group did not remain an interest group as institutionalization took place?

Homans and Merton¹ have analyzed processes that take place in the development of groups. Among them they regard the interdependence of sentiment and interaction, and the solidification of authority relations as normal. In the analysis below I suggest these normal group processes have taken place, but that other factors intervened. What might have been an ordinary formalization of relations and activities in the group in fact became not only more institutionalized but significantly altered in orientation. The group's task orientation itself changed into a strong value commitment. I will analyze these processes below and account for the additional factors which were crucial in the group's shift into a value group.

Robert Merton differentiates a group from a non-group with the "objective criteria" of interaction frequency and the "subjective criteria" of members' definitions. During the

earliest phase a shared interest in Gurdjieff fostered a sentiment of co-operation between group members sufficient to cause regular meetings. Frequent and regularly scheduled meetings in conjunction with members' self conscious definitions of themselves as group members identify the group as a group, rather than as a collectivity or social aggregate².

Homans claims that when a group forms, the behavior of its members never holds to the first pattern. Elaborations and complications of the pattern beyond the demands of the original situation brings changes in motives, activities, interactions, and even in the organization of the group itself³. One of these changes lies in the area of authority.

The Institutionalization of Authority

To suggest that the group existed as a group, is the same as to say that there existed some form of authority. I consider a communication "authoritative" if it is accepted by a member as influencing or governing his/her action. That is, it is either overtly approved (seen as proper), or it is endured without protest. If, for example, Ernie suggests that the group read from a particular book while Bruce overtly agrees and Carl remains silent, then both Bruce and Carl's responses are regarded as being in effect supportive of Ernie's suggestion. Such a pattern of authority in fact developed from the first interactions in the group.

In the initial phase group members shared an interest in learning Gurdjieff's philosophy. This produced a ranking of individuals.. Ernie, having been in Gurdjieff groups for nearly twenty years became the leader.. The directing of questions and conversations toward Ernie, and the subsequent expectation that he was responsible for answering those questions reinforced his social rank.

Robert Merton⁴ suggests that two mechanisms are generally at work to create authority in groups: (1) the location of particular individuals at the nexus of lines of communication and (2) the expectation by both leader(s) and members of the group that those in authority positions have a distinct responsibility for what goes on in the group. Both mechanisms were crucial in Ernie's assumption of a leadership role in the group. His authority was both a socially-induced (others expected it of him) and an individually motivated role requirement (he himself expressed his feeling of responsibility).

In Ernie's role as task expert during the first phase of group development his range of authority was limited to intellectual issues: he was expected to comment on and clarify ideas. This changed in the second phase. There developed two sub-groups within the group: one arguing that the group as a whole should strive to become a work group, and the other arguing for a variety of other goals. The increased interest toward becoming a "work" group encouraged Ernie to exercise his authority in order to achieve that end.

In the second phase the nature of Ernie's leadership changed from that of a task expert to that of a sanctioning agent: confronting deviation from the goal of becoming a work group. The successful extension of Ernie's authority to act as a sanctioning agent can be inferred from the eventual departure of both Nancy and Carl and the approval, or the acceptance without protest of Ernie's actions by those remaining in the group.

A subsequent change of authority in the group came with Ernie's appointment of Bruce as secretary of the group mid-way in the third phase. By delegating a certain amount of authority to Bruce (for example having group members contact Bruce if crucial decisions hadn't been made by the end of a meeting), Bruce was placed near the center of the web of communication. The increase in his authority can be seen in conversations during the third and fourth phases when Bruce more actively took the initiative in confronting other individuals to maintain group norms.

The Inter-dependence of Sentiment and Interaction

This change in authority in the group can be seen as part of the broader issue of the mutual dependence of sentiment and interaction in a small group⁵. The original sentiment shared by the majority of members in the first phase was an interest-informed co-operativeness. In order to achieve their mutual goal the members supported these authority relations which

were conducive to that interest.

Following the first phase the new pattern of authority relations appeared. This extension of authority into a sanctioning agent was a major cause of a bifurcation in the group. On the one hand, those who regarded the extension of authority as legitimate intensified their interest in becoming a work group. However the same extension of authority led other group members to seek out other goals. They wished that the group not become a work group. Ernie's sanctioning of group members created a polarization of reaction toward Ernie and toward the desirability of changing the group.

In particular, the conflicts between Ernie and Carl, and between Ernie and Nancy served as points of discussion in which different sentiments appeared. Individuals in the group became more intent in justifying their own positions with respect to authority, creating a substantial polarity in the group. The point at which this polarity became a single value orientation was near the end of the second phase when a number of persons who rejected Ernie's authority departed from the group.

This demonstrates the dynamic inter-dependence of sentiment and interaction. On the one hand the majority of those who rejected Ernie's authority departed from the group. The combination of the discussion by remaining members of those departures, and their justification of their position caused intensified sentiments toward the legitimacy of their cause.

This treatment of the development of authority and the interdependence of sentiment and interaction can be seen as relevant to the development of any group. But the additional factor which accounts for the evolution of a value group is the adoption of an extensive value system.

The Solidification of a Comprehensive Value System

Near the end of the third phase broadly shared sentiments took on a more important role. Claims made by the meaning system were much more embracing in that even behaviors outside of the group became scrutinized. Essentially all of a member's life experiences became relevant points of discussion in the group. This shift in concern signals the shift from an ideological to a religious group.

Clifford Geertz characterizes a religious system by its ability to establish basic moods and motivations in its adherents⁶. An ideological system, on the other hand, refers to a cognitive map of a problematic social reality which is systematically selective and distortive⁷. On this basis we can view the group meaning system as more of a religious than an ideological culture system. To identify it in this manner makes it easier to understand problems which arose in the relationship between the group and its external environment.

The meaning system of this Gurdjieff group is in sharp contrast with values in the larger society. Of particular relevance is the value placed on "functional rationality" by western culture⁸.

Berger, et. al., describe what they term the "symbolic universe of modernity", referring to a particular network of definitions of reality that permeate modern society. Paramount among these is the element of "functional rationality". Stating that this element stems primarily from technological and bureaucratic advancements they suggest that: "Functional rationality means, above all, the imposition of rational controls over the material universe, over social relations, and finally over the self"⁹. Karl Mannheim makes the same point in Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction. Defining functional rationality as the coordination of action with reference to a definite goal, he concludes that

"a particular type of rationalization which is most intimately connected with functional rationalization of conduct (is)... the phenomenon of self rationalization.

"By self rationalization we understand the individual's systematic control of his impulses..."¹⁰

Both Berger, et. al., and Mannheim claim that the pervasive impact of functional rationality in modern society results in a priority placed not only on the imposition of control over material, but over social relations, and most importantly over the self.

The Gurdjieff group, however, rejects this value placed on functional rationality. As this rejection of the notion of self control became more fully accepted by group members they attempted to experience and to observe themselves. Instead of trying to control and manipulate feelings and actions they encouraged each other to try to develop a passive "presence"

to their personalities. As a result, group members tried to let all of their behaviors take place without control or manipulation.

This is a sharply different emphasis between the group meaning system and the broader cultural values. The "inner presence" that the group encouraged in participants was a qualitatively different sort than that of control. In the former case one attempts to let his automatic manifestations take place and just passively observe them, while in the latter one attempts to change his behavior in order to meet his or others normative requirements. One attributes significance to the broader socio-cultural expectations while the other regards them as largely irrelevant.

As group members took more seriously the notion of inner presence potential problems existed not only in the fulfillment of expectations in the external environment, but also in coping with the alternation between competing value systems. As this Gurdjieff group developed, its group meaning system became developed as a counter definition of reality, increasing the degree of alternation for individual participants. At earlier points in the groups development this problem was not evident. Not only did the groups influence not extend beyond the periodic meetings, but also its values did not conflict strongly with broader socio-cultural definitions.

The emphasis on self observation meant that individual participants were likely to make their own self-typification and their typifications of others more the object of reflection.

Attempts to stereotype or categorize themselves and each other were continually confronted. This confrontative nature of interaction in the group along with its size also made the interpersonal clarification of individual motives become more prevalent. These factors made the potential for conflict greater as some were striving for an increased level of intimacy in the group, while others resisted such an emphasis.

As a value orientation developed in the group, requests for the expression of personal feelings became more prevalent. The degree to which individuals actually abided by this expectation depended upon the extent to which they could defuse any potential threat. Within the Gurdjieff philosophy and the group meaning system potential threats could be defused through self observation. In the act of self observation the personality was depreciated as a mechanical, conditioned entity that was essentially alien from the real individual. By suggesting the potentially separate existence of a "real self" that could be "witness" to one's personality, the process of self observation and the sharing of observations in a group were rendered less threatening. If a person is told that his personality is not correct in its assumptions about reality but that he is not identical with that personality, then it allows him the psychological and emotional distance to investigate this claim. Such a distancing process is contingent upon the acceptance of the claim of an inner self separate, or potentially separate, from the personality.

Some members had accepted this legitimating assumption

and could be less anxious in observing or revealing their particular beliefs and feelings. Yet others, whether out of their lack of familiarity or rejection of the premise of an inner self, perceived the inquisitive nature of the group as a threat. Finding their self understanding being called into question, and finding no legitimation for that, their response was to confront or withdraw from the group. As one faction of the group increasingly emphasized the obligatory nature of the sharing of personal feelings, members found themselves more and more in conflict. This disparity in orientations finally grew to the point that a decision had to be made to stay and abide by the group expectations, or leave. A number of members, not finding emergent group norms legitimate, nor willing to abide by them, left the group.

An additional factor, beyond the value conflicts both within the group and between the group, and its environment, which is crucial in understanding the group's development is the ritualization of activities. As a supporting activity ritual functions to make particular values uniquely real and thereby reinforce the very values from which it derives.

Ritual and Plausibility Structure

A philosophy promising the possibility of self realization and spiritual self knowledge may have been enough to initiate an interest group, just as shared beliefs and values may have

been enough to perpetuate the interest group beyond its initial stages. However, neither was sufficient to legitimate fully the process of alternation between competing and contradictory world views that ensued with the increased value commitment to the Gurdjieff ideas. For such a sharp break with the dominant values of a culture there was needed a "plausibility structure"¹¹; a set of social processes conducive to the alternative definitions and evaluations of reality.

Even in the light of theoretical and personal legitimation regarding certain group norms and values, the pervasive strength of broader socio-cultural values remained a concern for the group members. Other value oriented cults deal with this problem by isolating the movement and its participants from the constraints of the society in which it exists (Zasen, the Ashram, the Krishna temple). Gurdjieff intended that his "fourth way" not isolate man from his ordinary life as do most cults. He claimed that by engaging in life fully rather than rejecting life could one transcend that which he was. For Gurdjieff groups, unique from other groups, this presents a particular problem: how to maintain a value commitment to the Gurdjieff ideas in light of consistent criticism of the ideas from outside of the group.

The development of a particular plausibility structure solved this problem. A counter reality and a counter identity was available. This plausibility structure consisted of work activities and more intimate inter-personal relationships.

The first of these activities was the meditation exercise. As of the third phase all members (excluding new members) performed the meditation exercise. Doing the exercise validated certain work notions, for example that one lacks any unified "I" or consciousness, by demonstrating to participants their lack of attention. Conversations relating to the exercise also became an important vehicle through which counter definitions were maintained. By the fourth phase the group was attending Gurdjieff movements classes. As a social base movements classes further clarified or reinforced the ideas for participants both in the activity and through the discussions.

By meeting more often group members became more intimate through sharing personal experiences. By the fourth phase there existed on the average three activities a week related to the work: the regular meeting, the movements class, and a practice session for movements. This presented both a temporal and a qualitative impact. The time spent with group members increased while the quality of relationships changed. Members began to express their personal feelings toward each other which both increased the social bond between them and further legitimated certain group goals and values.

Beyond the mere existence of increased group activities these activities underwent a qualitative change. They became increasingly regularized and ritualized. Ritual is here viewed as stylized or stereotypic behavior symbolic of underlying beliefs and values of a people. Ritual is a means through which

individuals identify themselves with a particular field of meaning. Yet, over time the acting out of the ritual becomes an intrinsically valuable, reality defining, self authenticating experience¹².

While in earlier phases of the group the sensing exercise, attempts at self remembering, and readings were activities merely entertained, as out of curiosity, by the fourth phase these and the movements classes became increasingly regularized and of central symbolic significance for the individual. No longer were they viewed as merely potential means for the realization of certain goals, but as higher experiences in themselves. Through the meditation exercise members could participate in a counter reality and a counter-identity consistent with the Gurdjieff field of meaning.

In this manner group activities became reality defining mechanisms. This regularization and stylization of activities in the group only became evident in its fourth phase. Through the activities members not only identified with, but further strengthened group norms and values. Clifford Geertz refers to such ritualized activities as forms within which shared cultural sentiments take on an increased aura of facticity¹³. By collectively engaging in activities participants validated the alternation to a different order of consciousness than that of everyday consciousness. Through ritualized activities members learned to orient themselves to an inner self which transcended the personality. The increased stylization of these activities was a further indication of the groups.

shift toward a value oriented group.

Returning to the question that was posed at the beginning of this chapter (i.e. why the shift to a value group?) I find that the answer lies in an area beyond, yet including the issues relating to the process of formalization. The institutionalization of authority, the routinization of activities, and the solidification of shared sentiments are not adequate to explain this shift. These in and of themselves could describe to some extent the development of many groups that weren't value groups in their final state. In fact well defined authority relations, and very structured activities are a keymark of certain formal organizations (e.g. bureaucracy) that best fit the model of an interest group.

The overriding factor which made for the development of this group into a value group was that all three of these processes took place within the context of a comprehensive and personal value system that was not only significantly at variance with the broader culture but was also reinforced by the very ritualized activities which it itself identified and defined. By addressing themselves to a wide variety of issues of both personal and social significance the members made claims that were both extensive and all embracing. The descriptive notion of man's mechanicality made reference not only to the individual, groups, and to society itself, but also to the universe as a whole. The extensiveness of this meaning system can be inferred from its ability's

to tie together moods and motivations to notions of what is real or what is important in group members lives. This is the earmark of a religious as opposed to an ideological culture system and also that which ultimately explains the groups transition.

As part of the process the high level of commitment to this religious system created interpersonal conflicts and departures from the group, encouraging remaining members to justify their continued involvement. This justification, extreme in nature, made for a situation in which group sentiments were quite vulnerable. Here a plausibility structure of standardized and ritualized activities and interactions made for a certain air of authenticity or facticity of shared values. It was the concatenation of all of these factors, within the context of a comprehensive value system, which led to the development of a value oriented group.

NOTES

¹George Homans, The Human Group (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1950); Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1964).

²Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 339-340.

³Homans, The Human Group, p. 109.

⁴Merton, p. 286.

⁵Homans, pp. 181-187.

⁶Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Culture System", in Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed: Michael Banton (London: Tavistock, 1966.)

⁷Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Culture System", in Ideology and Discontent (New York: Free Press, 1964) ed: D.E. Apter.

⁸Peter Berger, Bridgett Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness (New York: Random House, 1973); Karl Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1950). Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958)

⁹Berger, et. al., p. 202

¹⁰Mannheim, p. 54.

¹¹Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), pp 144-145.

¹²This theory of ritual is borrowed from Frederick Bird, "A Comparative Analysis of Rituals Used by Some Contemporary 'New Religious' and 'Para-Religious' Movements", presented at the Annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. (October, 1975).

¹³Geertz, "Religion as a Culture System". pp 24-35.

VI.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis an interest group was defined as a functionally integrated utilitarian or task oriented group. It was characterized by participation limited to a small number of activities, by a range of group authority limited to specific issues, and by a social cohesion based on impersonal factors. A value group was defined as a normatively integrated group oriented toward ultimate and absolute values. Participation in a value group is quite extensive and group authority is pervasive over a broad area of issues and activities. Value groups in general attempt to realize certain goals which are viewed as beneficial not only to the group as a whole but also to individuals in particular. It is this commitment to shared goals which generally accounts for a high degree of social cohesiveness.

The overall development of the particular Gurdjieff group studied has been analyzed as a shift along this ideal typical dimension of interest verses value orientation. At the outset utilitarian interest and limited involvement by members prevailed. Then, as certain members self consciously sought to develop into a "work group" there was an increase in the range of authority which the group claimed. This was accompanied by an increase in normative expectations placed on individual members.

Different reactions to the institutionalization of authority precipitated value conflicts which increased the

solidarity and normative integration of the group. This was reinforced by both the departure of numerous dissenting individuals from the group and the subsequent attempts by those remaining to understand these departures. A further increase in the normative integration of the group could be inferred from the increase in "work" related activities in the later phases.

Much concern has been given here to philosophy, meaning systems and values. One cannot study a group of persons without closely following the beliefs and values that both express and shape their relationships with each other and to the world. This is particularly so with regard to para-religious cults that offer alternative definitions to everyday life. Those definitions and the manner in which they link the participants has relevance to the study of such a group's cohesion.

The more that the group's definitions of reality are at variance with the broader socio-cultural context, the more the problem of maintenance becomes apparent. Up to a point ideological or theoretical legitimation helps to maintain the marginality of such a group. But, without social base to reinforce the shared commitments, those commitments are vulnerable to the influences of dominant social processes. If individuals do not spend all of their time in the group, then alternation between competing definitions of reality (everyday life and group life) becomes

potentially problematic. The more the individual identifies himself with the group and internalizes group norms, the more troublesome is the transition between the group and the outside world. Participation in a marginal value group increasingly becomes a problem of competing world views (or competing aspects of self). For the marginal cult it becomes a problem of defining and maintaining boundaries. In this group the creation of a plausibility structure served such a function.

The plausibility structure consisted of social relationships within which broader normative institutions were relaxed or placed in abeyance, and an alternate normative system was reinforced. The social constraints of the broader culture were made relative by the prescriptive concerns for self-observation and inner separation. In order to gain more "self-knowledge", as described by Gurdjieff, participants removed themselves from broader social evaluations of behavior.

A latent consequence of the collective affirmation of this individual gnosis, or spiritual self-knowledge, was the creation of what might be called a "family surrogate", an alternate set of primary relationships. Individuals were encouraged to be "themselves" and to engage more freely in self disclosure. As the group became a frame of reference for individual members it developed as a place where problems from the outside world could be effectively solved. Perhaps the appeal of such para-religious groups lies in

their ability to present an environment in which there exists a sense of personal concern and familial intimacy seen as lacking in everyday relationships.

As a "family surrogate" a relaxation of broader social norms encouraged individuals to behave with less concern for the consequences of their action. One could engage in behaviors that on the "outside" might be negatively sanctioned. One could be more spontaneous without the usual fear of disapproval. Group members took each others' problems as their own. This interdependence created an organismic whole within which decisions and actions were undertaken only with the whole group in mind. All questions of evaluative significance were related back to or placed in the context of the group.

The group allowed the members to gain a sense of confidence in themselves. As a "family" it helped members deal with the capricious events of their everyday life. A level of understanding was attained in which communication became "abbreviated" based on common sentiments.

Indeed it was the existence of comprehensive group norms and values that differentiates the development of this group from the ordinary development of an interest group. Institutionalization of authority and routinization of activities in themselves are not sufficient to explain the transformation into a value group. Only when these are seen as proceeding within the framework of an all encompassing and personal value system does that transition become understandable. The activi-

ties and authority in the group were both defined and legitimated through this value system. This point is crucial.

Yet this was by no means a one way process. The plausibility structure, a social base of shared and ritualized activities made it possible for the meaning system to be maintained as alternative definitions of social reality. Continued ideological adherence to an alternative value system necessitated a plausibility structure within which these values could be fostered. To expect group sentiments of this strength and comprehensiveness to continue without the additional support of group activities would deny the close inter-dependence of these elements in a small group.

Theoretically an analysis of the present situation of this group appears quite circular. On the one hand it is the value system in its all encompassing and reality defining nature which is responsible for the solidification of authority and the routinization of activities. On the other hand, the alternative value system, once adopted and religiously held to by the group, can not be maintained without a social base or plausibility structure of ritualized activities and interactions. This analysis clearly demonstrates the dynamic inter-dependence of activities, sentiment and interaction. A comprehensive value system defines the direction in which activities and forms of interaction become routinized, while the latter act back to reinforce that same value system; the result- a value oriented small group.

Generalisability of the Study

There is a question as to what extent these findings are relevant to the study of other groups. On the one hand the general issues of the institutionalisation of authority and the routinisation of activities are common to most groups. On the other hand the issue of alternation between group and everyday life is perhaps less common, with the exception of similar para-religious cults.

Of particular relevance to the study of small groups is the development of authority relations, and its effect upon the structure and functioning of the group as a whole. The increased extension and solidification of authority relations led to a bifurcation in the group because there were substantially different orientations toward certain common values. Certainly all small groups that are oriented to a body of common values will experience different interpretations of those meanings. Just what degree of disparity in interpretations a group can tolerate and still normally develop more solidified authority relations is a question worthy of further study.

One factor which permitted quite different interpretations of the meaning system in this group was that both sub-groups could obtain ample justification for their position from within the Gurdjieff system itself. In fact while both stressed individual self realization the seriousness

with which they aimed at approaching that goal differentiated the two groups.

On the one hand there was a casual approach in which the group was seen as just one among other possible occasions within which to gain individual fulfillment. Individuals developed their own forums within which to realize Gurdjieff's values. This could be interpreted as a utilitarian emphasis. The goals of self-knowledge and self awareness act as means for the accomplishment of perhaps other culturally defined goals (such as being successful, gaining prestige, etc).

On the other hand, there was a very serious concern for "work" in Gurdjieff's terms. Here the group was seen as necessary and the prevalent mood was one of commitment to the system. In order to realize goals a general model was formulated for all to follow. The goals of self knowledge and self awareness became ends in themselves.

The crucial factor for understanding conflict and transition in this group was the existence of an all encompassing theoretical position. Being extremely broad in scope the system allowed for quite disparate interpretations, or adherence to only segments of the system.

Another issue, that of alternation between group and everyday life is only applicable to other small groups to the extent that their norms and values are at variance with those of the larger society. For example, a small trade union might develop a high degree of normative integration, yet these norms might remain relatively consistent with or reinforce

those of the broader culture. Problems that might arise here would not be from alternate and competing world views but from different vested interests within a particular view.

There is also a question as to the extent to which these findings are applicable to other para-religious, spiritual or growth cults. On the one hand the analysis of the group's development from an interest into a value-oriented group is unique. Most para-religious groups are already value-groups: they have a well-established symbol system and plausibility structure. This Gurdjieff group developed from a minimally-integrated group of persons casually interested in esoteric ideas into a highly integrated "work group". It therefore had to establish for itself that which other groups already possess.

In a general sense most para-religious groups exist as value groups either possessing a clearly articulate meaning system to which the novitiate is expected to conform, or having a small core of dedicated members around which there exist activities and meetings of various degrees of commitment. In the first case, witnessed by Scientology or Krishna Consciousness groups, a fully established belief system and plausibility structure predate the entrance of members. Here the initiate must adjust to or conform with "a strict, conservative but ecstatic interpretation of a school of Hinduism"¹ or undergo the complex initiatory procedures and technical language of Scientology. In either

case a strongly devotional attitude is reinforced as adherents are expected to learn and abide by the doctrine as presented. In so doing the participant expects to "become clear" or take place in the "transcendental ecstasy" of Krishna.

In the second case, represented here by a Yoga or Baha'i group, there exists a core of extremely devoted adherents and successive levels of less committed persons. As an initiate to a Yoga group one can, within limits, choose the extent of his involvement. Various exercises, breathing, diet, meditation, and philosophical classes exist within which students are asked to "accept what they believe and experience to be true, and leave the rest."² One's own particular level of commitment is contingent on his interests, and if he wishes the opportunity is there for him to penetrate into the inner circles. Similarly, the newcomer to a Baha'i group can participate in "fireside discussions", take part in monthly feasts and devotional meetings, but he/she can largely choose the extent of commitment. At the center lies the "Spiritual Assembly", the governing body, while the weekly discussions are filled with peripherally involved or inquisitive members.³

As contrasted with these two types, this Gurdjieff group began as an interest group, loosely organized with no belief system, and evolved into a value group with a definite set of shared values and sentiments. Rather than demanding adjustment to a preestablished doctrine or pro-

viding multivarious levels of commitment, this group began with people merely interested in a particular philosophy and evolved into a group possessing a strong value orientation. In this sense the study of this group was unique to most other para-religious groups. Most are already value oriented.⁴

The study of para-religious and spiritual cults finds broader relevance when placed within the context of the "modernization of consciousness"⁵ and the spiritual crisis of western man. Man's search for meaning is perhaps not new to our epoch, yet the "quest for community", the search for viable interpersonal relationships is peculiarly endemic to modern industrialized society.⁶ Rapid technological and social changes have thrust today's man into a pluralization of life worlds and a relativization of ethics and knowledge. Functional rationality has permeated man's relationships to his environment, to his social relationships, and most crucially to himself. This has led greater numbers of people to search for alternative forums within which to find meaning in their lives. This Gurdjieff group is a particular example of a group of persons attempting to deal with these problems, and in so doing, developing into a Neo-Gnostic cult attempting to transcend the "mundane" world.

NOTES

¹Robert S. Ellwood, Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973), p. 169.

²Ibid., p. 239.

³Ibid., pp. 275-81

⁴A recent study by Susan Palmer of a Shakti group in Montreal is perhaps another exception to this general rule. While many of the group's values were derived from reading Gurdjieff, the group itself was instrumental in creating its own definitions. A variety of orientations was witnessed in the group from a therapeutic use of bio-feedback and classes on meditation and movement to a commitment to the philosophy of Shakti. Susan Palmer, "Shakti: A Study of a New Religious Movement" (M.A. thesis, Department of Religion, Concordia University, 1976).

⁵Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness (New York: Random House, 1974).

⁶Robert Nisbet, The Quest for Community (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

APPENDIX I

GURDJIEFF'S COSMOLOGY

In Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson¹ Gurdjieff relates his understanding of the genesis of the universe. He claims that in the beginning when nothing else existed but endless space, only the Creator existed with his arch-angels on the Holy Sun Absolute. At that time the Sun Absolute was maintained by the system "Autoegocrat" which meant it was autonomous. At one point the Creator perceived that his Sun Absolute was very slowly diminishing in size due to the destructive impact of time ("The Great Heropass"). In order to counteract this threat the Creator altered the two major laws of world creation and maintenance: the Law of Three (Triamazikamno) and the Law of Seven (Heptaparaparshinok). He set these laws into motion creating the division of the Universe into seven orders of worlds.

Through this process Gurdjieff claimed that the factor of mechanicality was introduced; a diametrical opposition to Divine Will was set in motion. The Ray of Creation serves as a representation of the separation of the Divine from the mechanical. As one descends the Ray each successive world is under the influence of more mechanical laws.

In the act of creation a mistake was made by certain Sacred Individuals. The path of orbit of the planet Earth

and the comet "Kocndor" crossed causing a collision. Resulting from this collision, two fragments flew off into space. Being concerned that one of these fragments, the moon (Loonderperzo) could cause damage to the delicate balance of the solar system, Ors, the Creator deemed it necessary for the planet Earth to maintain the moon in its orbit. Mankind became the mechanism through which "sacred vibrations" were sent to the moon to maintain its orbit.

Upon further investigating the state of affairs on the Earth, it was decided that if man were to evolve normally, to a state of "objective reason", then he might prematurely perceive the real cause of his existence (maintenance of the moon) and being convinced of his slavery, he might destroy himself. In order to prevent this, the Creator implanted an "organ Kundabuffer" in man which made man see reality "topsy turvy" and caused him only to seek pleasure and enjoyment in life.

When the danger of man's self-destruction had passed, this organ was removed. But, again, a mistake was made. Because this organ had existed in man for many generations, certain "malignant properties" continued to exist after its removal. The consequences of this are described as:

All kinds of egoism, self-love, vanity, conceit, adulation, and all that we regard as fundamental defects of character and at all times have agreed to treat as unworthy of man.²

Gurdjieff most frequently refers to these mechanical properties in man as "sleep". He claims this state is the opposite of consciousness. The implication is that man is in prison. Man has no knowledge of the true nature of his existence nor does he care. He lives by mechanically determined attractions (and repulsions, the prime characteristics of which are pride, conceit, vanity and self-love.

The basic ordering principle of Gurdjieff's cosmology is the Ray of Creation. It is represented graphically as follows:³

Absolute	0	1
All Worlds	0	3
All Sun	0	6
Sun	0	12
All Planet	0	24
Our Planet	0	48
Moon	0	96

The Ray of Creation is for Gurdjieff the basis of a philosophy. We find "cosmic laws" stem from the structure and relationships existing between the planets. Viewing these cosmic laws as givens, Gurdjieff structures not only his understanding of the Universe, the world and man as they are, but also his conception of discovery of how they might be in the future.

The seven levels of the Ray of Creation represent seven different orders of existence. A qualitative difference in levels of existence stems from a quantitative difference in the number of laws governing each level. Beginning at the "Abso-

lute" we find only one force or one law; at the next (that of "all worlds") we find three orders of laws, in the following 12 orders, then 24, then 48 and finally at the Moon 96 orders of laws.

Gurdjieff suggests that the "will of the Absolute" is only manifested in the immediate world created by it, that is, in World 3:

Further on, in Worlds 12, 24, 48, 96 the will of the Absolute has less and less possibility of manifesting itself. This means that in World 3 the Absolute creates, as it were, a general plan of all the rest of the universe, which is then further developed mechanically. The will of the Absolute cannot manifest itself in subsequent worlds apart from this plan, and, in manifesting itself in accordance with this plan it takes the form of mechanical laws.

Each successive "world", as one descends the Ray of Creation, is further removed from the will of the Absolute and is under the influence of more mechanical laws. This means that for example, on the earth we are under the influence of 48 mechanical laws or as Gurdjieff puts it, "in a very remote and dark corner of the universe."⁵

"The Sacred Triamazikamno",⁶ the "law of three", assists an understanding of this Ray of Creation. According to this cosmic law, every phenomenon is the result of the combination of three different and opposing forces: the first force is called "active" or positive, the second force is called "passive" or negative, and the third, "neutralizing". Active and passive forces could be compared to thesis and antithesis of the

Hegelian dialectic, yet unlike this dialectic the presence of two opposing forces is not sufficient to result in resolution or synthesis. Gurdjieff states that the presence of a third force is necessary. "Neutralizing force is the intermediary between active and passive forces."⁷ The presence of this third force is seen as a necessity: "It is only with the help of a third force that the first two can produce what may be called a phenomenon."⁸

Returning to the Ray of Creation we find that Gurdjieff posits a unity of the three forces in the Absolute:

...in the Absolute, as well as in everything else, three forces are active: the active, the passive, and the neutralizing. But since by its very nature everything in the Absolute constitutes one whole the three forces also constitute one whole. . . The idea of the unity of these three forces in the Absolute forms the basis of many ancient teachings - consubstantial and indivisible Trinity, Trimurti-Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, and so on.

These three forces of the Absolute then create lesser worlds which depend entirely upon the will of the Absolute for their existence. In each of these worlds the three forces again act, yet the situation is different than in the case of the Absolute trinity: where the three forces formed an indivisible whole.

and possessed one single will and one single consciousness. In the worlds of the second order the three forces are now divided and their meeting points are now of a different nature. In the Absolute the moment and point of their meeting is determined by their single will. In the worlds of the second order, where there is no longer a single will but three wills, the points of issue

are each determined by a separate will, independent of the others, and therefore the meeting point becomes accidental or mechanical. The will of the Absolute creates the worlds of the second order and governs them, but it does not govern their creative work, in which a mechanical element makes its appearance.¹⁰

Continuing we see that the worlds of the third order (All Suns) are created by three forces which act semi-mechanically, no longer dependent directly upon the will of the Absolute but upon three mechanical laws. Thus, the number of laws governing the worlds of the third order would be the three semi-mechanical laws issuing from the previous order, plus three of its own, resulting in six laws. Likewise the worlds of the fourth order are the result of the combination of forces previously (6 and 3), plus three of its own, resulting in twelve mechanical laws. The pattern continues on past our earth with 48 mechanical laws to the moon with 96.

Gurdjieff suggests that the nearer the particular order is to the Absolute the fewer laws will govern it, and the further the particular world is from the Absolute the more laws (forces) there are and the greater the mechanicalness. A qualitative difference in levels (or orders) of existence is posited as stemming from a quantitative difference in the number of forces (mechanical laws) acting on that level. As one ascends the Ray of Creation one finds less forces determining the existence of the particular level and therefore

less mechanicality.

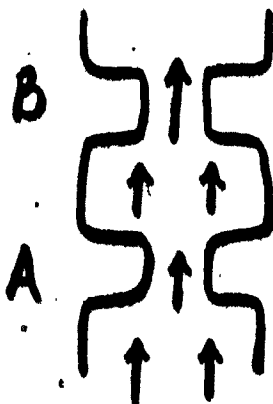
An additional factor in Gurdjieff's cosmology which helps us to understand the Ray of Creation within the original context of the possibility of evolution (ascension) is what he calls the "law of Seven foldness" or the "law of octaves". In order to clarify this law Gurdjieff asks us to consider the universe as consisting of vibrations, all intensities, issuing from various sources and colliding. . . . He states that according to the view of contemporary science vibrations are continuous or uniform. That is,

vibrations are usually regarded as proceeding uninterruptedly, ascending or descending so long as there continues to act the force of the original impulse which caused the vibration and which overcomes the resistance of the medium in which the vibrations proceed. When the force of the impulse becomes exhausted and the resistance of the medium gains the upper hand the vibrations naturally die down and stop. But until this moment is reached, that is, until the beginning of the natural weakening, the vibrations develop uniformly and gradually and, in the absence of resistance, can even be endless.

Gurdjieff rejects this principle of the continuity of vibrations, claiming that ancient knowledge had a better understanding of vibrations based on the principle of discontinuity: vibrations develop not uniformly but with periodical accelerations and retardations. The force of the original impulse becomes alternately stronger or weaker. At a certain point a change takes place in the original impulse (which had been acting in a uniform manner) and

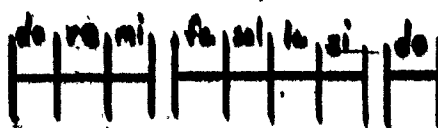
the vibrations, so to speak, cease to obey it and for a short time they slow down and to a certain extent change their nature or direction. . . After this temporary retardation, both in ascending and descending, the vibrations again enter the former channel and for a certain time ascend or descend uniformly up to a certain moment when a check in their development again takes place.¹²

Naurice Nicoll¹³ in attempting to clarify this same issue represents it graphically as such:



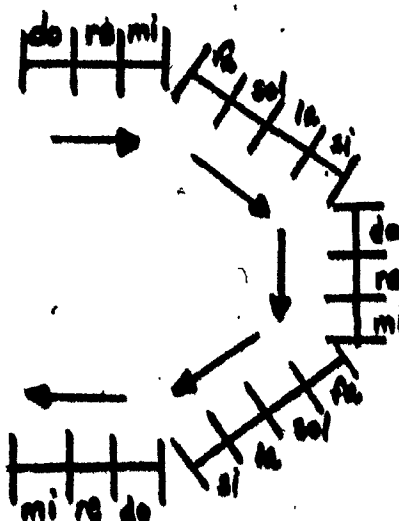
The constrictions at points A and B represent the points at which retardation takes place.

Gurdjieff states that this cosmic law is represented by ancient schools in the form of an eight point musical scale as follows:¹⁴



with the points of retardation (or constriction) being between the intervals "mi-fa" and "si-do" (as suggested in the chart). It is at these intervals (mi-fa and si-do) that Gurdjieff

suggests that in addition to the retardation, a deviation from the original direction takes place. This leads to the possibility of the original line of force in time engendering its own opposite:¹⁵



Using this law of octaves as a paradigmatic example Gurdjieff suggests that this is in fact a cosmic law. After a certain period of energetic activity in one direction fatigue sets in and compromises are made in terms of that direction. The line continues to develop, but now in an altered direction. Again at a certain point another deviation from the original direction takes place:

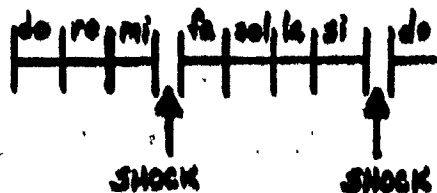
The same thing happens in all spheres of human activity. In literature, science, art, philosophy, religion, in individual and above all in social and political life, we can observe how the line of development of forces deviates from its original direction and goes, after a certain time, in a diametrically opposed direction, still preserving its former name.¹⁶

This law of octaves finds meaning within the context

of the Ray of Creation in the following way. First, it is suggested that in order for an octave to develop in a consistent direction it is necessary for something to take place at the interval to prevent its deviation. This is where the notion of a "shock" comes in: Observation of consistently developing octaves

establishes the fact that if at the necessary moment, that is, at the moment when the given octave passes through an 'interval', there enters into it an 'additional shock' which corresponds in force and character, it will develop further without hindrance along the original direction, neither losing anything nor changing its nature.

If there is the requisite shock existent between the interval mi-fa, then the line of force will continue to develop in the same direction:



Second, Gurdjieff suggests that the Ray of Creation is itself a "cosmic octave" and the first complete example of the law of octaves:

The Ray of creation begins with the Absolute. The Absolute is the All. The All, possessing full unity, full will, and full consciousness, creates worlds within itself, in this way beginning the DESCENDING world octave. The Absolute is the do of this octave. The worlds which the Absolute creates in itself are si. The 'interval' between do and si in this case is filled by the WILL OF THE ABSOLUTE. The process of creation is developed further by the force of the original impulse and an 'additional shock'. Si passes

into la which for us is our star world, the MILKY WAY. La passes into sol our SUN, the solar system. Sol passes into fa--the planetary world, And here between the planetary world as a whole and our earth occurs an 'interval'. This means that the planetary radiations carrying various influences to the earth are not able to reach it, or, to speak more correctly, they are not received, the earth reflects them. In order to fill the 'interval' at this point of the ray of creation a special apparatus is created for receiving and transmitting the influences coming from the planets. This apparatus is ORGANIC LIFE ON EARTH. Organic life transmits to the earth all of the influences intended for it and makes possible the further development and growth of the earth, mi of the cosmic octave, and then of the moon or re, after which follows another do--NOTHING. Between ALL and NOTHING passes the ray of creation.¹⁸

Gurdjieff presents to us an evolutionary schema within the ray of creation based on the principle of octaves. He suggests that our earth is on the end of the ray of creation, the "growing end" of the branch being the moon, and that

The energy for the growth, that is for the development of the moon and for the formation of new shoots, goes to the moon from the earth, where it is created by the joint action of the sun, of all the other planets of the solar system, and of the earth itself. This energy is collected and preserved in a huge accumulator situated on the earth's surface. This accumulator is organic life on earth.¹⁹

Gurdjieff claims the moon is in a process of warming so that it may one day be like the earth. The medium through which higher energies descend the ray and feed the moon is organic life on earth. Everything on the earth that is living (plants and animals) sets free at its death a certain amount of energy, the impact of which is to bring warmth to the moon.

The fact that the moon "feeds" off of the earth places

certain constraints upon life on the earth. Gurdjieff suggests that this dependency of the moon on humanity makes for a reciprocal dependency of humanity on the actions of the moon. Ouspenski likens organic life on earth to a clock mechanism and the moon to the weight of the clock:

The gravity of the weight, the pull of the chain on the cogwheel, set in motion the wheels and the hands of the clock. If the weight is removed all movements in the mechanism of the clock will at once stop. The moon is a colossal weight hanging on to organic life and thus setting it in motion.²⁰

Within this context of the evolution of the earth within the ray of creation and taking into account the law of octaves we find that an "additional shock" is necessary between mi (earth) and fa (planetary world) so that "planetary radiations" can influence the earth. In other words, for the earth to come under "higher influences" and not just "feed the moon" this mi-fa interval must be bridged. Organic life on earth has that function of being the "additional shock" necessary at this point.

NOTES

¹George I. Gurdjieff, All and Everything, First Series: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 744-810.

²J. G. Bennett, Gurdjieff: Making A New World (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 252.

³P.D. Ouspenski, In Search of The Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1949), p. 82.

⁴Ibid., p. 84.

⁵Ibid., p. 81.

⁶G. I. Gurdjieff, Beelzebub, p. 138.

⁷Maurice Nicoll, Psychological Commentaries on The Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspenski, I, (London: Vincent Stuart, 1964), p. 72.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ouspenski, Miraculous, pp. 78-79.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 79.

¹¹Ibid., p. 123.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Nicoll, Psychological Commentaries, p. 121.

¹⁴Ouspenski, Miraculous, p. 125.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 131-132.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 85.

²⁰Ibid., p. 95.

APPENDIX II.

PROFESSOR SKRIDLOV

The following quote from Gurdjieff's Meetings With Remarkable Men represented for group members the character of self-remembering. As a symbolic representation of a goal state its frequent use at group meetings indicated a shared sentiment.

We sat down on a rock and began to eat. Each of us, spellbound by the grandeur of the scenery, silently thought his own thoughts.

Suddenly my glance rested on the face of Professor Skridlov and I saw that tears were streaming from his eyes.

'What's the matter, old fellow?' I asked him.

'Nothing,' he answered, drying his eyes, and then added: 'In general, during the last two or three years, my inability to control the automatic manifestations of my subconsciousness and my instinct is such that I have become almost like an hysterical woman.'

'What has just happened, has happened to me many times during this period. It is very difficult to explain what takes place in me when I see or hear anything majestic which allows no doubt that it proceeds from the actualization of Our Maker Creator. Each time, my tears flow of themselves. I weep, that is to say, it weeps in me, not from grief, no, but as if from tenderness. I became so, gradually, after meeting Father Giovanni, whom you remember we met together in Kafiristan, to my worldly misfortune.'

'After that meeting my whole inner and outer world became for me quite different. In the definite views which had become rooted in me in the course of my whole life, there took place, as it were by itself, a revaluation of all values.'

'Before that meeting, I was a man wholly engrossed in my own personal interests and pleasures, and also in the interests and pleasures of my children. I was always occupied with thoughts of how best to satisfy my needs and the needs of my children.'

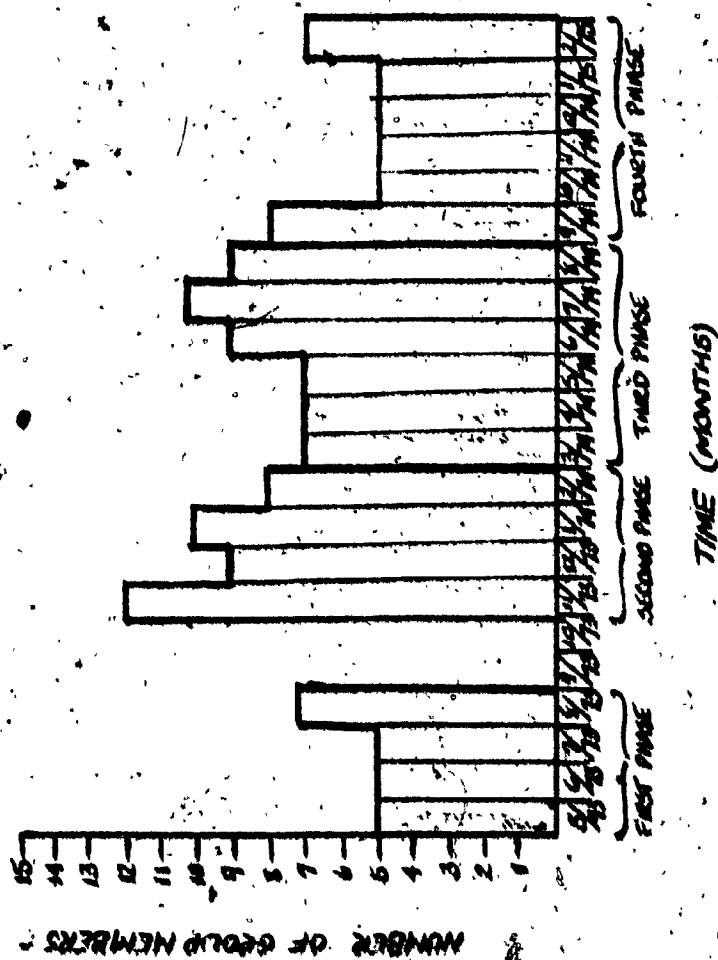
'Formerly, it may be said, my whole being was possessed

by egoism. All my manifestations and experiencings flowed from my vanity. The meeting with Father Giovanni killed all this, and from then on there gradually arose in me that "something" which has brought the whole of me to the unshakeable conviction that, apart from the vanities of life, there exists a "something else" which must be the aim and ideal of every more or less thinking man, and that it is only this something else which may make a man really happy and give him real values, instead of the illusory "goods" with which in ordinary life he is always and in everything full.¹

NOTE

1. G.I. Gurdjieff, Meetings with Remarkable Men (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1969).

APPENDIX III.
GROUP SIZE OVER TIME



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