

THE EXPERIENCE OF LAWS in AN EVENT

A talk by J. G. Bennett 1974

At the International Academy for Continuous Education at Sherborne in England, men and women came for ten months to learn how to work on themselves. From time to time everyone taking part in one of these courses would work together at a practical task. These events were called 'special exercises' not because the tasks were in any way unusual, but because the aim was to organize them not from outside through instructions and leaders, but from inside through the sharing of a common vision. They provided much material for understanding. In this example, the task was in the garden and what was drawn out of it was how the workings of the law of three could be seen in such an event. In what follows, the 'we' are those who participated in the event and the reader must suppose himself or herself to be within the group.

When we do these special exercises, we meet together in this room and commit ourselves to working for the next five or six hours at a certain task. This means that we are putting ourselves in the position of the affirmative force. We ask ourselves, 'Shall we do this?'. When we reply, 'Yes, we will do it', this is the affirmation with which the action begins. When we go out to the job, physically or mentally or in whatever way, the situation we find ourselves in front of represents the denying or passive force. What holds it all together is the work that we do; not only the external activity, but also the inner work on ourselves and the act of working together.

When we are in front of something to be done it presents itself to each one of us in different ways. For some of us, the task in the garden is seen as a creative challenge and we want to accomplish something, make something of the day and help produce a specially good event for everyone. There are some who see in it an opportunity to make a special contribution, through some new idea or a special skill. At the other extreme, some of us will have a negative attitude. Those will look forward to a miserably hard time when everything will be difficult and filled with the things they do not want to do.

There are all kinds of ways in which the denying force can be seen as negative. We can be apathetic about what is to be done and then all the affirmation is used up in lasting out the task, living from moment to moment. Or, we can feel that the task will not let us sleep in peace, that it will spoil our day, but at the same time we feel that we have an obligation to do what we can, no matter how disagreeable it is to us. We are resentful, but we accept that is how things have to be.

Some people will feel that they have a special knowledge to do with the soil and the plants and this will enable them to shine and dominate over others. Others who do not have this vanity may still see that, whether they wish to or not, they will be forced to assert themselves and help give direction to others. A quite different set of people may feel that the task is an aid to them in their inner work. They will submit to the situation and go along with

it willingly. This is to do with the feeling we can have about working with the soil: that, although it can be very laborious, it is a way to help us come to a right relationship with the earth. Others may feel the task as a threat, because they do not know anything about this sort of business of the soil and are afraid that they will mess things up. They feel out of place and not connected with what is going to happen. Or, if there is not this personal threat, we may still fear that things will go wrong, the group will not be able to work together or mistakes will be made. This does not mean that we run away, but it is the attitude we carry into the work.

We may feel that we do not know what to make of it at all and we feel bewildered and confused, but not only does it not always result in something going wrong, in my experience I have found that very often if I start out very fully aware of confusion and bewilderment the thing works out very well. It is quite possible to start out with such an attitude, with this feeling that it is a very foggy day, so to say, that we do not really understand what is demanded of us, and nevertheless arrive at a very clear and positive result.

Whether we are positive or negative in our attitude to the task, and in whatever way we look at it, there is something that comes and impinges on our lives and with which we have to come to terms. This is what characterizes the second force.

There is a passage in the chapter on Purgatory where Gurdjieff speaks about all the 'shades of denial' of the second order forces in relation to all the 'shades of affirmation' in the Holy Sun Absolute; and this would seem to be comparable to what we are discussing. For each of the shades of denial which can be seen in the task there is a corresponding shade of affirmation. But there is one important difference between what Gurdjieff describes and the situation we are looking at. In our situation it seems that affirmation and denial are both conditioned, which is in contrast to the unconditioned impulses of Gurdjieff's description. There is something else besides. Gurdjieff makes it clear that the denial of the second order forces is called forth from the affirmation of the Holy Sun Absolute. In our situation, it is the task or second force that appears to be initiating and our various affirmations arise in response to it. We have to ask this question: can we make a free affirmation in the face of this task and, if we can, how is it to be done?

In any real situation there is not just one law operating and there is not just one quality of triad. There is a series of interlocking triads, each of which has some influence on the others. The quality and influence any given triad has is dependent not only on the quality of the first and second forces, but above all, on the quality of the third force. The work that we do in this situation carries the third force. Whether our affirmation is free or whether it is determined, some work will get done. But if our affirmation is on a mechanical level, the quality of the results will not be able to be on a high level. It might all work out in a completely accidental way. In ordinary life when we have some task in mind, we only carry it out as planned if the circumstances fall out right. If something goes wrong, we forget about it or we change it entirely. It all comes out in a haphazard kind of way because the affirmation and the denial are so conditioned that the outcome depends on the influence of other triads altogether.

Very often the way things work in the world is such that in order to ensure that some sort of tolerable results are achieved there must be some form of external authority imposed. An example is in the military hierarchy where the orders coming from above take the role of the affirmation and the people under command take the role of the denying force (their performance is the third force). The quality of affirmation they can bring to bear is no longer so important because the imposed affirmation supplies all the 'drive' that is

needed. When it is like that work can have no essential character; it will be mechanical. Though it is true to say that the third force always comes from some other dimension, the first and second forces must be compatible with what it is if a triad is to form. So long as the first and second forces are mechanical, no triad can be formed of a high order.

The third force always brings something unexpected. In our situation of facing the task in the garden there is present the aim that we have to work on ourselves, to work together as a group and to learn how to work for the work itself. This can change the whole character of our affirmation in front of the task.

When we come together in this room, I put in front of you this task which we can undertake together. And I speak to you in the name of the work and this can make it possible for a completely different triad to be operating, where the work itself is the initiating factor. If we are not able to be open to this, then for us it is just the same as if I were paying you to do this work, or if I were bullying you into doing it, or persuading you to do it or something or other like that. But if we are able to be open to this at this moment, then everything changes. Then, when I say to you, 'This is what we can do today' then, because I am able to speak not from myself but from the work and because all of us can see that we have come into this room together in order to work in a different way, to work with the work present for us, then something quite extraordinary can take place. Then the work enables us, a hundred people with quite different points of view, quite conflicting outlooks - some of us finding it very exciting and others disliking it very much - enables us to stand before this task and commit ourselves to it freely. Then the ones who like it affirm it not because they like it but because they have come here to work: and equally, the others although they very much dislike this sort of physical work, because they are able to come to this from the work, they are now able to commit themselves to quite independently of their own feelings about it. Perhaps there have been, there are, us many different attitudes to this task, to this work in front of us, as there are people; but because we have been able to expose ourselves at this moment to the action of the work, we are then able to make a free affirmation that will enable us to go out and become the active force in front of this field. For this point of openness is a moment of free choice, which enables us to say, 'Yes, we will do it. We decide on this, we commit ourselves to this: that we all go out into the field from this common decision, this common commitment'.

We are not talking of submitting to the inspiration of a leader, who will lead us to do great things, even die, for the sake of a cause. The problem is that it looks as if it is just the same. We start to believe the *work* is some great cause that we are asked to join, something tangible and easily understood that is being put before us. All of that is a mistake.

Maybe for a long time you will only take my word about this, or believe me, when I tell you that we come here in *the name of the work*, without being able to see for yourselves what this signifies. The purpose of an inspiring speech is to produce at the end a feeling that we understand the high ideal to which we are being asked to commit ourselves. What is involved in working for the work is totally different. The working of the work is quite beyond our ordinary perceptions. It will enable us to do the task in a different way, but it has nothing to do with whether we are inspired or not. The work will actually help even though it is invisible. This corresponds to what Ouspensky said about the working of the higher centres in man.

These centres are capable of quite different perceptions and modes of action to those that we know. We are not aware of them because our ordinary centres are operating incorrectly and inefficiently. If all this is true, we have a way of testing it. We can go into this task together and see whether a different sort of action comes about by the results that are

achieved. Then we will be able to recognize that, even though we were not aware of it, something higher in us was able to affirm the undertaking in a way that could not come either from accident or from anything that corresponds to being inspired.

3 – 2 – 1

FREEDOM

We have come here with something in us wishing to work. Through the efforts we have made to separate ourselves from ourselves, it is possible for us to participate in a genuinely free affirmation. What opens this up in us is initiated by *the work*. It is the working of the triad of freedom, 3-2-1, an intervention from a higher world which has placed us under the working of a higher law. This we can understand through the working of genuine decision in us. As we are, we have no will or 'I'. This does not mean that will never works in us and decision is totally impossible for us: but when we recognize the working of our own will, it has the same taste as the triad of freedom. An act has been made of which we ourselves are unaware and yet the whole of us is affected and committed to a course of action. As far as we can see, nothing that we have thought or experienced has brought us to this point of affirmation and yet there is nothing random or accidental about it: somewhere within and beyond our reach we have affirmed this undertaking and we have then been moved to action.

It can even come about that this affirmation comes from beyond our own 'I'. Then this 'I' is the representative or instrument of the work and it is the work which is behind the answer we find in ourselves, Yes, we are committed. In the genuine act of will, our ordinary nature is the denying force.

Even with the little experience that we have had of this different way of working at a task together, many of us have come to recognize that something really does operate that is distinct from our ordinary way of doing things. It has nothing to do with the external activity, nor with anything prepared from the outside. As we are, we do not see where this different quality comes from. It is very close to what Gurdjieff talked about as the sacred emotions. These sacred or positive emotions have nothing to do with the disorder and tumult of our ordinary emotional states. They only come into our lives when things are right and they can find a place. There can come, for example, a kind of confidence that things will go as they should which has nothing to do with 'positive thinking' or anything artificial like that; neither has it anything to do with a state of excitement or self-congratulation. This is what Gurdjieff means by conscious hope. Or we may find in ourselves a feeling of really caring; & commitment to the Job completely divorced from any concern with praise or blame; a state of quiet determination, which is genuine wish. We can feel within ourselves a kind of impartial assent to all those around us: again, something that is quite independent of our attitudes, good or bad, our reactions, our likes and dislikes of various people; something in which we feel ourselves really connected with everyone. This is a taste of love. Then there is the feeling that we can let go because something more able than our ordinary selves can take a hand. In this right kind of non-passive submission there is real acceptance.

The minute we let ourselves get stimulated by such things, we lose it all. Even what we directly experience is not the sacred emotion itself, but its 'spill over' into the workings of our ordinary selves. When we try to make something out of such inner events, we put ourselves away from them. Worst of all is when we approach the task with the attitude of mind. Well, what way shall I do the task today? Am I going to do it from faith or love? This makes it all rubbish. We presume that we have the third force in our pockets and we can take it out and out of six inches of it to work with. It is so totally unlike this. It is unpredictable. It is not even open to what we call our understanding. The third force comes from another dimension and if it is pure and essential then it can bring something of the qualities we have referred to. If we are to be open to its action, we must learn not to act as if

we were able somehow to initiate its working. Failure to do this has the result that it all becomes entangled in the workings of the personality and the possibility given to us of working in a new way is totally wasted. All we can then experience are the habits and reactions that have formed during the course of our lives. When it is like that, the third force is nothing but the results, the visible results, of what we do. It then serves only as a linkage with other triads and everything is used up externally: we can gain nothing from it of lasting benefit.

If we have come to a free affirmation, what then? We go out into the field and look at it and start to work. We need to remind ourselves of the decision that has been made and that it is from the work. Then something of this free, non-identified quality can be imparted to what we are doing.

At the end of the time, two different things will have happened. There is the visible change: we have separated the roots and the weeds and so on from the soil and removed them to another place leaving the soil behind. We are free to do something with this land which was not possible before. Before, it was just a piece of waste land choked with matted roots and some of the soil had gone sour. Now, we have opened it up, let the air into it and it can become fertile once more. A new cycle of growth can begin; but we are free to decide what will happen next. We can do nothing and let it go back to its weed state; or we can get a crop from it, with gardeners selecting the crops, planting, tending and harvesting them. To get this freedom of choice, we had to do the work on the land. This is what has been released as a result of the action between the first and second forces, between our energy, skill and attention and the field. This freedom is the third force.

2 - 1 - 3

EVOLUTION

We have separated the fine from the coarse, not only outwardly but also *inwardly*. We have tried to keep coming back to the freedom of the affirmation with which we were helped to begin; we have tried to work consciously instead of mechanically. The *work* has been there to help us remember. Gurdjieff said, The energy spent in conscious work is immediately converted for further use: while that spent automatically is lost for ever. Now we have a potential in ourselves that was not there before. There is a further effort we can make: not to let this energy produced in us be sucked in by the personality to produce a cheap satisfaction. We need to stop at the end and collect ourselves and remember our aim; and in this way make it possible to store away something of this state to help us work in the future. As the wasteland has been made into a potential garden, we have been made nearer to our human potential.

What is it that the land brought to the situation? It was because of this piece of land that needed to be cultivated that the task was possible. If we had talked about clearing land without having any land to clear then our affirmation would have amounted to nothing at all, or less than nothing, because it would all have been dreaming. It is only the second force that makes the situation a realistic one. We need the denying force; without it we can do nothing that is real. There is the popular saying: bring oneself down to earth; have one's feet on the ground. Just as our transformation can only arise from our nature as it is, so the transformation in the garden can only arise from its nature. This particular piece of ground had very good soil in it which at one time had been specially imported. With our experience of the other parts of the grounds, we could appreciate how free this area was of stones. At one time, it was intended to be used to produce all the vegetables needed by the great numbers of the household attached to the estate. Without all of this, it would not have been possible to produce such a change as we did in such a short time. This piece of ground can become a kitchen garden again because the potential was in the land itself.

1 – 2 – 3

INVOLUTION

Now something can happen there. Seeds can be planted. We ourselves cannot make the seeds grow. The growth of seeds comes from the fertility of the land and from the potential in the species of the seeds. What we do in the situation will be dictated by the needs of the plants themselves: when to plant, how to plant, what hoeing is needed, how much water and when to harvest. To realize the new potential, we have to start from the land itself and from the nature of the seeds that are planted in it. So, although we have chosen this particular piece of ground to work on, and hoped to come to some quality of work through this task, without the potential in the land all of the effort would have been useless.

As well as the affirmation bringing us towards this work on the land there has been another process right from the start: the field realizing its potential through us. This second process begins with the soil itself as the second or denying force. The ground cannot clear itself: the seeds cannot plant themselves and they cannot tend themselves. But their potential brings something about. If we look at what happens from the point of view of the affirmative force the ground is passive; but if we look at it from the point of view of the second force what we are doing is to respond to its needs. The first process, where an active power works on a less active material or 'ground' is called involution. The movement is from a higher level of intelligence and activity to a lower one. This is fairly easy to see. What is more difficult to see is the contrary process of the realization of potential which we call evolution. We look at the field and all we see is an inert material: we see with the eyes of the physical world or the world of bodies.

According to Gurdjieff these two fundamental world processes - involution 1-2-3 and evolution 2-1-3 - are always intermarried. The upward movement and the downward movement always go together. Through involution, the creative source comes into the world and descends through the various worlds, being divided and limited on the way. Through evolution, there is a rising up through the various worlds, consolidating and unifying on the way. Both of the two fundamental movements go towards the freedom of the third force.

It is very important for us to learn the taste of evolution because it is the fundamental process of our work, our own return to the Source, our own going from having many wills and no 'I' to having a single will and our own 'I'. It is illustrated by what happened to us in going through the special task together. At the beginning everyone sat and listened while what was to be done was described and it is very likely that everyone saw it differently. Some people will not have grasped what piece of land was being talked about. Others will not have grasped what was to be done. Others still may have had a clear picture, but what actually happened will have turned out otherwise. Even when we got to the site, everyone had different pictures as to whether it could be done or could not be done, or as to what standards we could hope for in doing it. But as time went on, those who took part could see that they were looking at the task in the same way as each other; because there was this commitment to the work all of us tried to come back to the aim. We were able to notice what other people were doing and we were able to come back to a vision of the task as a whole.

2 – 3 – 1

IDENTITY

When, at the end, we came together, we were able to be aware not only of the factual wholeness of what we had done together, but also that a kind of wholeness had been realized amongst us as a group. It is not something easy to pin down and point to and we should not try. Some people feel it one way and others another way and what all of us touch in our own fashion is not something we can reach out and catch hold of. It is the real beginning of a group consciousness. As time went on during the work, we could feel something of this

grow and it only began to arise after a certain period of concerted effort. But, over the weeks, we have become aware that each of these special events contributed towards the realization of our unity. In this last task, we had an added factor in that we were concerned not only with doing a certain quantity of work also with doing it to a certain quality.

The women were asked to put their attention on how well things were done, how they were finished; while the men were asked to concentrate on the quantity, so that enough was done. We had various aids for remembering our inner aim. At the same time as there was a movement towards unity amongst us people, there was a similar movement within the field itself. Initially, some parts were in good condition while others were in a very bad state. At the end, there was a piece of ground which could be seen as one whole. It had acquired the potential of a garden. We people had come from our state of being separate, with different ideas and attitudes, towards a group consciousness; the land had come from its state of waste and chaos towards being one field ready for planting.

The movement towards unity also brings in the law of identity, 2-3-1. What it is to be oneself is very different in the existential and in the essential worlds. Similarly, we find our identities in what we know or have acquired automatically from our environment through what has happened to us. If we see how hollow and empty that kind of identity is, we see that the true identity of a man is not in such externals. True essential identity is I Am which is said from the whole of us, from what we really are. It can only be said when the work is inside us. Individuality does not arise from external differences, but from being able to act from our own initiative. Sometimes, when we do something like this special exercise, we can get a taste of this real identity. Such identity does not arise fortuitously from our interaction with the world, but from the *work* coming inside us. If we bring the *work* into the field, or if it is somehow or other brought into what we do there, then we can find ourselves, find the group as a whole and find the field as a whole. We were able to shift and change jobs so that everything could go forward together and converge towards the moment when we could look and say, It is finished.

Identity moves in quite a different way from Involution and evolution alone. It does not come just from above or just from below. It is the unity of involution and evolution and emerges when there is a right conjunction of the descent of the enabling power from above and the ascent of the efforts that are coming up from below.

When interaction 1-3-2 is right, everything can be connected with everything else.

1 - 3 - 2 INTERACTION

in any task there is an interaction between the worker and his tools and between the tools and the materials: but we came to something more than that. People realized that they could give up the tool they were using to someone else and take another tool. There was a free exchange of spades and shovels, rakes and barrows and so on. People took on half a dozen different jobs during the time so that the whole thing could go forward properly. This can only work when there is a spirit of service; but we did not come to it by saying to ourselves at the beginning, Now we are going to serve the work. As we are, we have no will and cannot 'do' anything. We simply tried to do what we could do in this way of working together and somehow we became open to what it means to serve. This openness was inside us, not something grafted on from the outside by what we thought or by what someone told us or by some rule or discipline. Then all the interactions are held together by the work itself.

The way of holding things together by the Imposition of some external authority is inherently unstable; and it only lasts as long as the authority has power. When the work is inside us, there is no need of external authority. This is the situation described by Gurdjieff

when he talks about the organization for man's existence established by Ashiata Shiemash: old forms of authority virtually withered away as men began to live according to the promptings of conscience, according to the Inner dictates of self-perfecting in which everyone shared.

We cannot overcome our separateness unless we are open to the work and this openness is not something we can set up and determine. When the work is present it is the reconciling force between all of us and between everything. The denying force is then no longer the thing that keeps us apart. Everyone of us is able to make his or her own contribution according to skill, energy and awareness. The outer, visible result and the inner, invisible result are in harmony.

3 - 1 - 2

ORDER

Where there was disorder, order has come. We have taken out the disturbing factor of the weeds and the roots. If we go on to the next stage and turn the field into a garden, then this order will be augmented. The gardeners will decide what crops to plant; they will mark out the rows in which the seeds will go and they will plant the seeds. They will look after the growing plants and do what is needed. As a kitchen garden, this piece of land will have its own law, its own order. It has to be planted; what is planted must be put in at the right time and in the right way; it must be kept reasonably free of weeds, and so on. There will be a pattern to which we will have to conform and if we fall any way along the line the state of order will collapse. Order does not maintain itself and if we neglect the garden it will fall into disorder and lose the potential that it has.

In the law of order 3-1-2, the third reconciling force is in the position of initiative. It is the vision of the garden that can be made and we can let ourselves be guided by this vision when we go out to work on the field. Such a vision is not something in our minds alone, or our feelings or our bodies; it is in the whole of us and through it we can really enter into the pattern of what is to be done. The vision is given to us by the work and it is not something that we produce out of ourselves. What we have to do is try to work on ourselves and to remember our aims.

The six fundamental laws include everything which makes the world work; but to see these laws we not only have to have a great deal of experience, we also have to be able to approach this experience in a non-habitual way. It is not enough to take the experience we have had no matter how rich and varied it might have been, and try to identify the various laws in it. That does not get us beyond theory. What is needed is that we enter into the working of the laws at the time they are in operation, participating in them with the whole of ourselves. This can be done by recapitulation, looking back over an event, but then we need to be able to relive the substance of the experience in ourselves. It is not enough to have memories about what we did; and it is utter nonsense to start saying to ourselves, Ah yes, there I was under such and such a law.

The ordinary centres are Incapable of understanding the law of three. It requires the higher centres. Because of this, we may totally fail to recognize the working of the higher laws and feel that nothing significant has happened to us.

WORLD 96

In this special task, some of us will have been touched by influences *from different worlds*. As long as we are living under the negative laws of World 96, everything that happens to us is distorted. If we go out to work on the field in the grip of some negative state we will be unable to make use of the opportunity to learn how to work in a truly human way. But we are living together here under special conditions and we are surrounded by all sorts of reminding factors. We will have

heard about negative emotions and the importance of not expressing them; and at certain times we will have struggled with ourselves when we found ourselves in a negative state. There will have been moments of seeing when we saw how we were instantaneously, without thinking, as if a snapshot had been taken. All of this will have helped to establish in ourselves a new set of associations, so that when we find ourselves negative there is something that can remind us to struggle. Eventually we will find that although the negativities do not decrease in intensity, they decrease in duration; and there will come a new attitude in which we recognize that they are not at all a part of our nature, but something completely undesirable that we have to learn to divest ourselves of. When this attitude is firmly established, it is a great liberation.

WORLD 48

World 96 is spoken of in all practical teachings connected with man's possibilities of transformation. The negative laws can rob us of everything. Including the results of our efforts to work on ourselves. They make us lose contact even with the material reality around us. In World 48, we can function and there are possibilities open to our inner nature; but if we fail to make use of the opportunities we have of making contact with the world or with ourselves, we fall completely into the dream state; and sooner or later we are bound to come under the laws of delusion. As long as we live in sleep, we must expect to suffer nightmares.

WORLD 24

If we persist in struggling with our negativities, a point comes when the work becomes more centred on freeing our sensitivity from automatisms and we are able at times to notice what we are doing and to be aware of what is going on around us. This is when we come under the laws of World 24. After several weeks of working together, we are able, for short periods of time, to experience things in a fully human way. We are also beginning to *get* the taste of what it is to get things going, not from our own functions and attitudes, but from the work. We have been under the Illusion that we were responsible beings; that we could 'do'. Now we begin to see that as we are we have no real control over what happens. To become responsible beings, we have to learn how to be responsive to higher laws. Working as we are together under these special conditions, we can get a taste of the working of higher laws which otherwise would be almost Impossible. Here in this school there have been many people who have made real efforts to work on themselves; and because of that we are able to draw on a pool of higher energy which enables our efforts to be successful. We can even get a taste of being under the laws of world 12 and can be astounded at accomplishing things in ourselves that ordinarily we would have thought quite Impossible. When such a thing comes. It is a very dangerous moment. We can throw it all away in a flash by becoming excited about what has happened. Or, if it has been an experience in which we really saw ourselves for what we are, we can all too easily fall into a state of criticizing ourselves that is equally destructive.

In the truly natural world, World 24, we have a real presence. When we paused to recollect ourselves and the aim we had it could happen that we became more substantial and even that we were able to recognize this *ha!* in ourselves. Everything was more 'real' to those moments: ourselves or own physical presence; the other people around us; the soil; the air and so on. For some this was very clear; for others it was something they could not hold on to very easily. For others, again, this state came to them spontaneously as they were working. Suddenly, there was this, Here I am. Here is this earth, these weeds. Perhaps we were able to become aware of the whole event, what the other people were doing, of the beginning and the end. This realm of real personal experience is itself only a shadow of something higher, something beyond: the realm in which the decision was born in us to commit ourselves to this task, to accept the work. No one can make this decision for another. It comes from the realm of will which in hidden behind our experience. As we are, we cannot escape the limitations of our own nature.

Our whole experience of working at the task will have been imprinted by the pattern of our character. Each one of us learnt something separately, understood something separately. How it was in one person will be different from how it was in another. We only come together under the laws of World 12, when we can. all be connected together and with the inner significance of what we were achieving with the land.

WORLD 12

What we have called 'group consciousness' is the taste we have, at the very limit of our awareness, of the finer energies at work in us as a group. It has nothing to do with whether we like the other people or dislike them; or whether we think about them or touch them, are near to them or far from them. What is concentrated is the cosmic energy of consciousness, which is universal.

Working together in this place, something can come about that forms a bridge to the unconditioned world of individuality, World 12, from the world of essence, World 24, in which we are aware but separate from one another. All that we may know is that something is different: that what we thought was Important is no longer important; that what we, personally, are doing and experiencing no longer matters to us in the way that it did. Wherever we are, whatever role we are playing, we see that it is the same for everybody. If we try to get to this perception by telling ourselves about It, or by trying to feel It, all we do is to get in the way. It comes about in us by some other route. As soon as we try to get hold of this unconditioned working, everything is dead again. We have to keep our attention on what it is that we can do. It is supremely important that this higher working can touch us, but we cannot own It. Through the taste, we can begin to see that it does not matter what experiences we are having or what role we are playing; what matters is the work which comes from somewhere beyond all that and in which everyone is the same, neither better nor worse.

WORLD 6

We have nothing that can sustain us in World 12. What then of the world beyond. World 6 ? in this world everything we know disappears. There are not people, tools, soil; not time or space or number; there is only the Whole, undivided. Here are the purely essential laws. It is the world in which decision is not about anything. The pure triad of creative action 1-2-3 is totally unconditioned. It is unimaginable; but it is really there, creating and sustaining all of the existence within which we find ourselves and our labours. We can picture to ourselves the moment at which we came together and before any task had been brought forward. Already then, there 'was' a reality. The power to undertake a task was present in us and in our gathering together. Before any thought of what to do had arisen in us, there was a creative act.

. Of course, we have immense difficulty of talking about any of those things, because 'before' and 'after' do not really apply to the essential laws. All we can gather from our experience is the sense of something behind all that we do, even the highest things that are done through us. We have to learn how not to work for the sake of external results, or for the sake of Interesting experiences. We have to learn how to work in order to pay for our arising and existence. If we work and something comes to us, we must be able to make the additional effort so as not to squander what we have received. One day, this will enable us to come to see things through the perspective offered by a higher world. Very high energies are accessible to us in this school and people can come to some very remarkable experiences; but it will all be for nothing if they do not learn how to put the work first and their personal satisfactions second.

I can remember very vividly how this sort of thing happened to me when, as a young man, I was at the Priore with Gurdjieff. My body was ill, but despite the great discomfort I

was having, I forced myself to work at some exhausting movements we were doing under the midday sun and there came a moment when there was an influx of a higher energy. My state was completely transformed and for a day I had an experience of the inner reality that I never could have come to through my own unaided efforts, an experience of the higher energies which are, in reality, what makes work on ourselves possible. This sort of experience was possible because a school is a reservoir of these higher enabling energies. Afterwards, of course. It was not for many years that I came to have another experience of this kind; and we may experience the working of a very high law once and then not come under it again for a very long time.

Once again, however, I must stress that what is important is not that we try to have certain kinds of experiences, but that we come to realize the necessity for working on ourselves. In the end, the good states and the bad states balance themselves out over the course of our lives, and what really counts for us is not the quality of the particular state we are in at any given moment but that we come to be responsible beings, that we come to this realization that reality is work. I say this to help you remember that we have to learn how to approach such a task as working in the field in the right way, not in terms of what sort of experience it will be for us, either good or bad, but in terms of learning how to use it as an opportunity for pursuing our work on ourselves. Coming to this attitude, really being able to understand the ultimate importance of this approach to things, is much more important than whether we experience a very high state when we are at work or not. Then we find that we are able to commit ourselves to making efforts irregardless of whether we seem to benefit or not, and then we neither become identified if we do not experience some 'good' state, nor excited and wasteful if we do, because we have begun to work not for any reward but for the sake of the *work* itself.