# DuVersity 44 Summer 2017

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#### THE MYSTERY OF SELF REMEMBERING

**Avrom Altman** 



Figure 1. Hermes and filius regis, engraved by M. Merian.<sup>1</sup>

While sitting on my zafu one morning, the Self-Remembering Exercise (see full description and instructions, pp. 10-11) arose as an invitation. I worked with it for several weeks, and then we used

the Self-Remembering Exercise as the morning meditation at the Gurdjieff Movements Gathering in Corfu, Greece, June 3rd-10th, 2017. For the first few days, we focused on the initial stage of preparation. Each of the following days, one of the three "Openings" was added. Ultimately, we worked with the entire Self-Remembering Exercise on the final days of the Gathering. The feedback was immediate and positive. Research to explore the exercise's antecedents in philosophical and experiential inquiry led to the following findings.

In texts related to alchemy, among the many symbols related to the *prima materia*, one finds that mountain symbolizes "the place where the *prima materia* is to be found." In writing about the *prima materia*, Paul Levy stated that "the *prima materia* in its lead-like aspect contains . . . a downward movement into the depths of our being."

In Psychology and Alchemy, Carl Jung wrote,

Etymologically alchemy means "dark earth" and earth is one of the thousand names given to *materia prima* by such alchemists as Basilius Valentinus, who believed that the earth-spirit, itself nourished by the stars, "gives nourishment to all the living things it shelters in its womb . . . ." The world soul (*anima mundi*) that permeates the whole fabric of being brings all its elements together. Alchemists visualized matter as spiritual, and spirit as material. The distinction into matter and spirit was actually only a matter of degree: from the crude and gross to the subtle (*subtilis*), though the essential ingredients were there all along, lying dormant, waiting to be discovered by an adept on the path to self-actualization.<sup>4</sup>

## Levy indicated,

The *prima materia* is a quantum phenomenon, in that it is of an indeterminate nature of open-ended potentiality, and contains within itself both the poison and the medicine. The more virulent the poison, the more powerful are its potential healing qualities. Accomplished alchemists are able to transmute the poison into healing nectar.<sup>5</sup>

In his essay, "Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon," in which he included the alchemical illustration in Figure 1, Jung referenced Hermes, the messenger with the King's son (*filius regis*). They are atop the mountain. Hermes, as a god of transitions and boundaries has the ability to cross borders as an emissary from unknown terrain and, though that can disrupt homeostasis in the known terrain, he seeks union in a "chymical marriage from which arises . . . new light . . . like no other light in the whole world." As discussed below with reference to Gregory Bateson's conception of systems and Ron Kurtz's proposition regarding our needing "options at the barriers," information must cross boundaries within a system for the system to reach maximum potential. At the same time, information crossing boundaries undermines homeostasis. In Jung's work, the caption for the figure states that "another mountain of India lies in the vessel, which the Spirit and Soul, as son and guide, have together ascended." Jung commented, "The two are called spirit and soul because they represent volatile substances that rise up during the heating of the *prima materia*. To Related to the premise of this article, Jung wrote, "The greater the tension, the greater is the potential. Great energy springs from a correspondingly great tension of opposites."

The tension and potential, the poison and the medicine, the options at the barriers accompanied by heat and energy, are a link to what G. I. Gurdjieff called the "sly man's pill," as discussed by P. D. Ouspensky¹² in his seminal book, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, where he noted it as the "2nd conscious shock"¹³ and "sacrificing one's suffering."¹⁴ In our bodies, emotions, and thoughts impressions may be automatic and crude and lead to powerful identification or they can remind us to open to the finer impressions of sensing, feeling, and awareness. The stronger the identification, the more difficult it is to swallow the "sly man's pill," as the divergence between the crude impression and the subtle impression is great. The strength of identification of the coarse impression is a powerful magnet for the attention.

#### Levy wrote,

Spiritually speaking, freeing the spirit which is imprisoned in matter is to not identify with our thoughts, but to simply recognize their insubstantial, dreamlike nature and allow them to effortlessly transform, dissolve and spontaneously self-liberate of their own accord. A thought-form is like a whole, self-contained universe. When we identify with a thought-form's contents and point of view, we become absorbed in and incarnate that particular dreamlike universe in a way that limits our creative freedom. Our creative spirit has then seemingly become trapped in matter; as we've unwittingly used our creative power against ourselves in a way that binds us. Recognizing the illusory and yet, reality-creating power of our thoughts allows us to create with our thoughts, instead of being created by them. Recognizing that we never experience this moment except through the creative imagination empowers us to transform our experience of ourselves, and, by nonlocal extension, the whole universe.<sup>15</sup>

When accomplished at moments of great identification, Self-Remembering, then, is the "sly man's pill" and blends life, love, and light within the mountain.



Figure 2. Licht:Liebe:Leben (Light:Life:Love). The motto of German philosopher, theologian, and poet, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). 16

Rosicrucian texts indicate that light, life, and love (see Figure 2) are key elements that appear repeatedly. The following is from *The Way: A Text Book for the Student of Rosicrucian Philosophy*, written by Freeman B. Dowd: "The watchword . . . used by no other Order in the world and coined by Dr. Randolph as Grand Master, more that seventy years ago were Light, Life, and Love as the three most desirable things man could wish in life." Dr. Lonnie Edwards of the Rosicrucian Order AMORC stated, "While Light, Life and Love are part of all that we experience, they are often veiled by our attention to the mundane. The mystic's intention is to remove, one by one, these veils so that a greater realization will appear." 18

In The Secret Stream, Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical Society, wrote,

As the first Rosicrucians stated: "God hath most certainly and most assuredly concluded to send and grant to the World before her end . . . Light, Life, and Glory as the first Man Adam had." Love's incarnation is a cosmic event. Love enters creation, becomes flesh, penetrating the entrails of matter to become all in all. Love enters, not for the comfort of skin-bound human beings, but for the sake of the cosmos.<sup>19</sup>

In the Self-Remembering Exercise, the order of Light-Life-Love as seen in the graphic at the top of this article becomes Life-Love-Light. This reflects the difference between the theistic, top-down nature of the Rosicrucian and Anthroposophical view of the human condition and the experientially based nature of a phenomenological view of the human condition. In practice, the sequence is as follows: Begin with the arising of and work with sensing in the body, followed by the arising and work with finer feeling, and culminating with the arising of work with awareness itself. This sequence is found in the "circulation of the light" as indicated in The Secret of the Golden Flower, 20 translated by Richard Wilhelm with commentary by Jung, and indicated in the Circulation of the Light Morning Exercise taught by J. G. Bennett at Sherborne during the 10-month, 2nd Basic Course in 1973. Keeping Bateson's 6th criterion (see below) of hierarchy21 and Bertrand Russell's hierarchical structure of the "theory of logical types"22 in mind, awareness is introduced in conjunction with, but is not synonymous with, thought, given that thought so easily induces identification and constriction of the field of awareness. This propensity for identification when thinking partially derives from and is magnified by the existence in our language of the word "I," which induces us to believe it represents something real and lasting. The Self-Remembering Exercise reflects the potential in understanding the limitations of Cartesian dualism represented in Descartes' dictum, "I think, therefore I am,"23 which separates mind and matter and in which thought supersedes physicality or emotion. The exercise also reflects the potential in understanding and working with Cartesian anxiety and the longing for ontological certainty, both of which amplify identification and defend against uncertainty and hazard. In The Dramatic Universe, Volume 1, Bennett wrote,

Conscious experience faced with hazard is a state of need, and need confronted with uncertainty as to its fulfillment is dramatic. Therefore we may speak of a *dramatic universe*, thereby drawing attention to the character which all existence acquires through the presence everywhere of relativity and uncertainty, combined with consciousness and with the possibility of freedom.<sup>24</sup>

In our life, this work—the cultivation of consciousness and freedom—takes place at moments of identification and constriction of the field of awareness, moments when hazard and uncertainty are powerful forces. The Self-Remembering Exercise is practice for these moments. In the Self-Remembering Exercise, we open to mystery: that of our own existence and experience and the unknowable Mystery of which we are a part and a reflection.

Cultivating freedom at moments of identification points to possible exoteric, mesoteric, and esoteric interpretations of working with "likes and dislikes" which Bennett wrote about extensively and exhorted his students to focus on, including in *Deeper Man*.<sup>25</sup> The exoteric interpretation places beginners squarely in front of their automatisms and habits and identifications. The mesoteric phase focuses attention on the horns of the perennial internal dilemma and encourages the student to bear the heat of the tension within the Divided Self, to use Bennett's formulation, <sup>26</sup> in order to develop being. Finally, the esoteric phase is the transmutation of coarse impressions and the digestion of finer impressions which being incarnate makes possible. This is the 4th Way—a way in the world—a place in and part of the sea of impressions that Maurice Merleau-Ponty called the "Flesh" (see p. 6 and p. 8 below), providing opportunity to transmute the coarse into the fine and bring life, love, and light into the mountain.

The Self-Remembering Exercise is within the realm of perception in the here-and-now. Turning to phenomenological philosophy leads to further insight and the writings of Edmund Husserl and Merleau-Ponty are particularly relevant. Husserl discerned an inescapable affinity, or affiliation, between other bodies and one's own. By an associative "empathy," the embodied subject comes to recognize other bodies as other centers of experience, other subjects. His growing recognition of intersubjective experience, and of the body's importance for such experience, ultimately led him to recognize a more primary, corporeal dimension, midway between the transcendental "consciousness" of his earlier analysis and the utterly objective "matter" assumed by the natural sciences. In *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, Husserl wrote that this was the intersubjective world of life, the *Lebenswelt*, or "life-world." 30

Merleau-Ponty rejected Husserl's lingering assumption of a self-subsistent, disembodied, transcendental ego. He posited that as the body is our very presence in the world, and the body alone enables relations with other presences, then the body itself is the true subject of experience. Merleau-Ponty's reconceptualization of Husserl's work is elucidated in David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*:

Merleau-Ponty begins, then, by identifying the subject—the experiencing "self"—with the bodily organism. It is indeed a radical move. Most of us are accustomed to consider the self, our innermost essence, as something incorporeal. Yet consider: Without this body, without this tongue or these ears, you could neither speak nor hear another's voice. Nor could you have anything to speak about, or even to reflect on, or to think, since without any contact, any encounter, without any glimmer of sensory experience, there could be nothing to question or to know. The living body is thus the very possibility of reflection, of thought, of knowledge. The common notion of the experiencing self, or mind, as an immaterial phantom ultimately independent of the body can only be a mirage: Merleau-Ponty invites

us to recognize in *The Visible and the Invisible*, 1968, "at the heart of even our most abstract cognitions, is the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself."<sup>31</sup>

He opens the possibility of a truly authentic phenomenology, a philosophy which would strive, "not to explain the world as if from outside, but to give voice to the world from our experienced situation within it, recalling us to our participation in the here-and-now.<sup>32</sup>

As we return to our senses, we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations borne by countless other bodies—supported, that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down graphic slopes, by owl wings and lichens, and by the unseen, imperturbable wind . . . a profoundly *carnal* field, as this very dimension of smells and tastes and chirping rhythms warmed by the sun and shivering with seeds. It is, indeed, nothing other than the biosphere—the matrix of earthly life in which we ourselves are embedded . . . . The biosphere is experienced and *lived from within* by the intelligent body—by the attentive human animal who is entirely a part of the world that he, or she, experiences.<sup>33</sup>

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty began to write about the collective "Flesh" which "signifies both our flesh and the flesh of the world."<sup>34</sup> This concept is a bridge to the writing of depth psychologists Jung and James Hillman. In *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung wrote that "the *prima materia* is a living paradox in the flesh . . . our flesh" and that "it was clear to the more astute alchemists that the *prima materia* of the art was man himself."<sup>35</sup> Jung also wrote, in "On the Nature of the Psyche," that the task is to bridge "the seeming incommensurability between the physical world and the psychic."<sup>36</sup> Jung himself attempted to bridge this "seeming incommensurability" in his concept of the psychoid nature of the archetype when he wrote, "Psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and . . . are in continuous contact with one another, and . . . it is . . . probable that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing."<sup>37</sup> Our present knowledge does not allow us to do much more than "compare the relation of the psychic to the material world with two cones, whose apexes, meeting in a point without extension—a real zero-point—touch and do not touch."<sup>38</sup>

In *The Thought of the Heart*, Hillman, a student of Jung's and developer of archetypal psychology, wrote,

Here begins phenomenology: in a world of ensouled phenomena. Phenomena need not be saved by grace or faith or all-embracing theory, or by scientific objectiveness. They are saved by the anima mundi, by their own souls, and our simple grasping at this imaginal loveliness. The *ahh* of wonder, of recognition. The aesthetic response saves the phenomenon, the phenomenon which is the face of the world.<sup>39</sup>

The development of thought and inquiry from Rosicrucian mysteries through philosophical phenomenology to modern depth psychology can be contextualized by the systemic approach of Bateson, who wrote,

We deal with the products of the world's tendency to generate parts out of wholes made up of units connected together by communication. It is this that makes the body a living thing, which acts as if it had a mind—which indeed it does.<sup>40</sup>

In *Mind and Nature*, Bateson stated that there are certain qualities or characteristics of any system that can be said to have a mind. He described these qualities through a list of criteria. He thought this same set of criteria applies both to the human mind and to nature. Nature, as he defined it, has a mind. Nature acts intelligently. Bateson's set of six criteria describe any system that has mind.

The first criterion: "A mind is an aggregate of interacting parts or components." Commenting on this first criterion, Kurtz wrote, "Minds are made up of parts organized into wholes . . . . If you just think about parts into wholes . . . . you'll see that an incredible number of systems . . . all exhibit that quality. Parts into wholes. Atoms into molecules. Stars into galaxies." 42

The second criterion: "The interaction between parts of mind is triggered by difference." About this criterion, Kurtz wrote, "The parts communicate . . . . Parts organize into wholes through communication and information . . . . They are in relationship . . . . Such integration is in the best interest of the organism, the impulse towards becoming whole is strong and present in all living systems." 44

The third criterion: "Mental process requires collateral energy." 45 Kurtz commented, "Energy is collateral. Information is the important thing. What is important about minds . . . is how they process information . . . . A different type of consciousness evolves when mind information and mind are primary . . . . Minds are information systems." 46

The fourth criterion: "Mental process requires circular (or more complex) chains of determination."<sup>47</sup> With regard to this criterion, Kurtz (2007) stated, "Systems with mind have feedback loops. They are non-linear, iterative, creative, diverse. They have parts that communicate, that talk back and forth . . . . A system with mind has its own internal organization. It will adjust to what you do."<sup>48</sup>

The fifth criterion: "In mental process, the effects of difference are to be regarded as transforms (i.e., coded versions) of events which preceded them." Regarding this criterion, Kurtz wrote, "You're taking your experience and you're organizing it . . . . At some levels . . . you can change the way you encode your experience. So . . . we organize our experience and . . . it implies that we can change the way we organize our experience." 50

The sixth criterion: "The description and classification of these processes of transformation disclose a hierarchy of logical types immanent in the phenomena." 51 Kurtz reflected,

The whole self is a higher organizational level than either the mind or the body. A whole mind is a higher level than conscious or unconscious. It's important not to confuse one level with another. You are not your thoughts, you are not your body. . . . At some level, you are the whole universe. 52

This systemic view is a lens that clarifies and amplifies the import of what Merleau-Ponty wrote in *The Visible and the Invisible*, where he stated,

The Flesh is the mysterious tissue or matrix that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its own spontaneous activity. It is the reciprocal presence of the sentient in the sensible and of the sensible in the sentient, a mystery of which we have always, at least tacitly, been aware, . . . that both the perceiving being and the perceived being are *of the same stuff*, that the perceiver and the perceived are interdependent and in some sense even reversible aspects of a common animate element, or Flesh, that is *at once both sensible and sensitive*.<sup>53</sup>

Following up on the concept of reciprocal presence and the relation of the sentient and the sensible as proposed by Merleau-Ponty, Kurtz, developer of Hakomi Somatic Psychotherapy wrote, in *Body-Centered Psychotherapy: The Hakomi Method*, "We need to attempt to work constantly at the interfaces—at the barriers—the barriers between."<sup>54</sup> He indicated that our work is at the barriers between belief and experience, image and emotion, symbol and meaning, bodily experience and meaning and belief, and that we must work to maintain awareness while "constantly crossing and staying as close as possible to the interface."<sup>55</sup> He indicated that we must "create options at the barriers."<sup>56</sup>

Jung writing of Hermes seeking union,<sup>57</sup> Merleau-Ponty stating that the collective Flesh "signifies both our flesh and the flesh of the world,"58 Jung stating that the prima materia is "our flesh,"59 Bateson's sixth criterion implying "the whole self is a higher organizational level than either the mind or the body,"60 and Kurtz's exhortation to create "options at the barriers"61 compel one to explore the nature of Self-Remembering as indicated by Gurdjieff in his dictum, "Remember yourself always and everywhere" (see Figure 3). Creating "options at the barriers" is precisely what the Self-Remembering Exercise potentiates. Barriers serve systemic purposes and are consistent with the tendency of all systems and organisms to maintain homeostasis. Furthermore, the permeability of barriers within us is constrained by the automatic functioning of our sensory, affective, and cognitive processes. Each contains the potential to be more permeable than when subject to constriction through identification. Activating this potential is the "sly man's pill," 62 using the very nature of automatism and identification to elicit Self-Remembering and to transmute "poison into healing nectar," or, as Ouspensky wrote, "it is the transformation of negative emotion" into positive emotions . . . possible only with long work on self-remembering."64 In All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, Gurdjieff wrote, "The whole-of-us and the whole of our essence, are, and must be, already in our foundation, only suffering."65 Gurdjieff indicated that we must work with this suffering when he wrote about "Disputekrialnian-friction." This friction generates inner heat and energy. Bennett wrote that "the concentration of . . . energies requires the formation of a suitable vessel. This means our being must be strong enough to contain them without danger."<sup>67</sup> Jung wrote of "separating the prima materia . . . into the active principle . . . and the passive principle . . . which were then reunited in personified form in the *coniunctio*." <sup>68</sup> Depth psychologist Craig Chalquist wrote that coniunctio is "an alchemical operation that combines two chemicals to produce a third, different chemical . . . which generates the reconciling." The trick is to create options at the barriers—to swallow the sly man's pill—to be awake to, allow, and enter

moments when "openings occur which can be realized acts of will"<sup>70</sup> to actualize the "reconciling force,"<sup>71</sup> which, as a transubstantiated result, represents a "transformation of being"<sup>72</sup>

This is a path in the world—not as a fakir, monk, or yogi, but rather a 4th Way. We can build our exploration upon the shoulders of alchemists such as Faustroll and Levy, of Rosicrucians such as Dowd, of Anthroposophist Steiner, of phenomenologists such as Husserl and Merleau- Ponty, of depth psychologists Jung, Hillman and Chalquist, of psychotherapists such as Kurtz, of systems theorists such as Bateson, and, finally, of Gurdjieff and his students such as Bennett, to turn inward within this mountain that is our body toward the portals of Life, Love, and Light. We invite, bear, and allow the inner action of the blending of energies: the Mystery of Self-Remembering.

Holy-Affirming,
Holy-Denying,
Holy Reconciling,
Transubstantiate in me,
For my Being.<sup>73</sup>

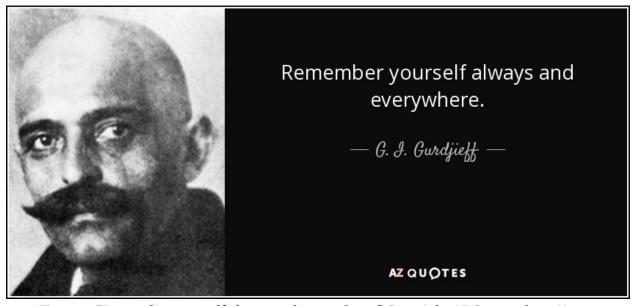


Figure 3. "Remember yourself always and everywhere." Copyright AZ Quotes, http://www.azquotes.com/quote/770730<sup>76</sup>

# The Self-Remembering Exercise

#### **Background Information for the Self-Remembering Exercise: Stages of Sensation:**

- 1. Mountain Sensation: Relaxation leads to the sensation of our mass—our whole mass, like a mountain; the direction is downward. In "Gurdjieff and the Further Reaches of Self Observation," Dennis Lewis described this stage of sensation as the "compact sensation of the weight and form of the body."<sup>74</sup>
- 2. Life Sensation: The energy experienced when our blood stimulates the life in the nerve endings in the skin—like electricity—the direction is upward. Lewis described this stage of sensation as the "tingling sensation of the totality of one's skin."<sup>75</sup>

#### **Preparation for the Morning Practice: 3 Stages of Preparation:**

- 1. Relaxation flowing downward from top of head to feet.
- 2. Sensing filling upward from bottom of feet to top of head.
- 3. Relaxation flowing downward on exhalations and Sensing filling upward on inhalations.

#### The Morning Practice: The Self-Remembering Exercise:

# The First Opening:

#### Life in the Mountain.

We can sense. We are always sensing or not sensing.

Not sensing has two forms.

- A. No sensation.
- B. Automatic sensation like pain. Identification.

Opening to the Mystery of Sensing.

The Inner Action is Opening.

Open to Sensing. How Open to Sensing Can I Be?

Allow the Inner Action of Opening.

Life in the Mountain.

#### The Second Opening:

#### Love in the Mountain.

We can feel. We can have Feeling.

From our chest to our throat, we can be open to the unknown. Open to the Mystery.

We can feel Wish, Hope, Confidence, Acceptance,

and Love (Empathy and Compassion for all living beings).

We are always feeling or not feeling.

Not feeling has two forms.

- A. No feeling.
- B. Having strong emotions like sadness or pride. Identification.

Opening to the Mystery of Feeling. The Inner Action is Opening.

Open to Feeling - How Open to Feeling Can I Be?

Allow the Inner Action of Opening.

Love in the Mountain.

#### The Third Opening:

#### Light in the Mountain.

We can be aware. Aware that we are aware.

Conscious. Witness and Witnessing. Seeing.

We are always aware or not aware.

Not being awake has two forms.

- A. Not being aware of anything.
- B. Caught in thoughts, images, stories. Identification.

Opening to the Mystery of Awareness. The Inner Action is Opening.

Open to Awareness. How Open to Awareness Can I Be?

Allow the Inner Action of Opening.

Light in the Mountain.

#### The Self-Remembering Exercise (Blending):

#### Life, Love and Light in the Mountain.

Open to Sensing, Feeling, and Awareness simultaneously.

**Open** to all three **Now**.

Let the results of the Inner Actions of the Three Openings Blend.

When they are Blending -

This is Self-Remembering.

#### Notes on practicing the Self-Remembering Exercise:

- sharing questions and observations. It assists one not to complicate matters by the imposition of personal interpretation of instructions. If it is not possible to be with an instructor or with others, keep in mind that the Preparation for the Morning Practice should be your focus until well established. In fact, the Preparation can be utilized as a stand-alone morning practice that prepares us well to meet the day. While working with the Self-Remembering Exercise, any one of the Openings, or the blending of the Openings, if you feel disoriented, ovewhelmed, or afraid, immediately stop and simply reestablish the Preparation. Do not stand if disoriented, overwhelmed, or afraid. Allow your system to settle and your breathing and heart rate to become normal. Become aware of the room you are in and your contact with the ground. Then stand and meet the day.
- 2. The Self-Remembering Exercise is intended as training to potentiate encountering hazard, uncertainty, and identification in our daily life and, simultaneously, self-remembering an act of will in the moment. It is intended to assist us to recognize and use our life as grist for the mill of our transformation.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Matthaeus Merian, engraver. Hermes and *filius regis*, from Lambspringk's "De lapide philosophico" (On the Philosopher's Stone), 1625, fig. XII, in *Musaeum Hermiticum* (Frankfurt: Apud Hermannum à Sande, 1678), 365. Accessed August 13, 2017, http://www.e-rara.ch/cgj/content/pageview/2044755.
- <sup>2</sup> Lyndy Abraham, quoted in, *Pataphysica 4: Pataphysica e Alchimia* 2, ed. Dr. Faustroll, (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2006), 240.
- <sup>3</sup> Paul Levy, "The Prima Materia," *The Sacred Art of Alchemy*, last modified 2010, http://www.awakeninthedream.com/the-sacred-art-of-alchemy, par. 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. Gerhard Adler & R. F. C. Hull, Vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (2nd edition), ed. Herbert Read et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), par. 444.
  - <sup>5</sup> Levy, "The Prima Materia," par. 7.
- <sup>6</sup> Carl G. Jung, "Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon," trans. R. F. C. Hull, Vol. 13 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (2nd edition), ed. Herbert Read et al., 129–180 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), par. 161.
  - <sup>7</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (London: Hampton Press, 2002), 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Ron Kurtz, *Body-Centered Psychotherapy: The Hakomi Method* (Mendocino: LifeRhythm, 2007), 8.
  - <sup>9</sup> Jung, "Paracelsus," plate B6.
  - <sup>10</sup> Ibid, plate B6, caption.
  - <sup>11</sup> Ibid, par. 154.
- <sup>12</sup> P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 1949), 50.
  - <sup>13</sup> Ibid, 188-193.
  - 14 Ibid, 274.
- <sup>15</sup> Paul Levy, "The Lapis-Christ Connection," *The Sacred Art of Alchemy*, accessed August 13, 2017, http://www.awakeninthedream.com/the-sacred-art-of-alchemy, par. 6.

- <sup>16</sup> Georg Cantor Gymnasium. *Schulchronik: Signaturen de Zeit* (School Chronicle: Signatures of the Time). Accessed August 14, 2017, http://cantor-gymnasium.de/schulchronik/index .php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=169:sprueche&catid=25:das-gcg&Itemid=1
- <sup>17</sup> Freeman B. Dowd, *The Way: A Text Book for the Student of Rosicrucian Philosophy*, (Quakertown: Wentworth Press, 2016), 10.
- <sup>18</sup> Rosicrucian Order AMORC's Facebook page comment, January 26, 2011, accessed August 13, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/Rosicrucian.Order.AMORC/posts/194200147257180.
  - <sup>19</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Secret Stream* (Sussex: Steiner Press, 2001), 8.
  - 20 Ibid, 7, 16, 98-107.
  - <sup>21</sup> Bateson, Mind and Nature, 86.
- <sup>22</sup> Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, *Principia Mathematica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 37.
  - <sup>23</sup> Quoted in Bateson, Mind and Nature, 203.
- <sup>24</sup> John G. Bennett, The Dramatic Universe: The Foundations of Natural Philosophy, Vol. 1 (London: Hodder, 1956), 20.
  - <sup>25</sup> John G. Bennett, *Deeper Man* (London: Turnstone Books, 1978), 100.
  - <sup>26</sup> Ibid, 80-84, 106, 148.
- <sup>27</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alfonso Lingis, ed. Claude Lefort (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 66.
- <sup>28</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960), 19.
  - <sup>29</sup> Ibid, 19.
  - <sup>30</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 19.
- <sup>31</sup> David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books 1996), 45.
  - 32 Ibid, 47.
  - 33 Ibid, 65.
  - <sup>34</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible*, 66-67.
- <sup>35</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, Vol. 14 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. Herbert Read et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), par. 513.
- <sup>36</sup> Carl G. Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," trans. R. F. C. Hull, in Vol. 8 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. H. Read et al., 159–234 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), par. 440.
  - <sup>37</sup> Ibid, par. 440.
  - <sup>38</sup> Ibid, par. 418.
- <sup>39</sup> James Hillman, *The Thought of the Heart* (Kassel: Eranos Foundation Ascona–Eranos Conference, 1981), 164.
- <sup>40</sup> Gregory Bateson and Mary Catherine Bateson, *Angels Fear: Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), quoted in Kurtz, *Body-Centered Psychotherapy*, 31.
  - <sup>41</sup> Bateson, Mind and Nature, 85.
  - <sup>42</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 34.
  - <sup>43</sup> Bateson, Mind and Nature, 85.
  - <sup>44</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 34.
  - <sup>45</sup> Bateson, Mind and Nature, 85.
  - <sup>46</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 35.
  - <sup>47</sup> Bateson, Mind and Nature, 86.
  - <sup>48</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 36.
  - <sup>49</sup> Bateson, Mind and Nature, 86.

- <sup>50</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 36.
- <sup>51</sup> Bateson, Mind and Nature, 86.
- <sup>52</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 36.
- <sup>53</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible*, 66–67.
- <sup>54</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 31.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid, 31.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid, 34.
- <sup>57</sup> Jung, "Paracelsus," par. 161.
- <sup>58</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible*, 66–67.
- <sup>59</sup> Jung, Mysterium, par. 513.
- <sup>60</sup> Kurtz, Body-Centered Psychotherapy, 36.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid, 34.
- <sup>62</sup> Ouspensky, *In Search*, 50.
- <sup>63</sup> Levy, "The Prima Materia," par. 7.
- <sup>64</sup> P. D. Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way* (New York: Knopf, 1959), 228.
- <sup>65</sup> George I. Gurdjieff, *All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (London:

# Routledge, 1950), 372.

- <sup>66</sup> Ibid, 802.
- <sup>67</sup> Bennett, *Deeper Man*, 23.
- 68 Jung, "Paracelsus," par. 157.
- <sup>69</sup> Craig Chalquist, A Glossary of Jungian Terms, accessed August 13, 2017

http://www.chalquist.com/writings/jungdefs/, par. 63.

- <sup>70</sup> Bennett, *Deeper Man*, 160.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid, 114, 141.
- 72 Ibid, 23.
- <sup>73</sup> Gurdjieff, All and Everything, 752.
- <sup>74</sup> Dennis Lewis, *Breathing Into Being: Awakening to Who You Really Are* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2009), 32.
  - <sup>75</sup> Ibid, 32.
  - <sup>76</sup> From collection of Gurdjieff quotes at AZ Quotes.

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# REMEMBERING COOMBE SPRINGS

# Salamah Pope

Reading Lambert Hughes's article "Coombe before Subud" (reprinted in SCAN, Summer 2017) evoked my own memories. How I got there in the first place was due, I see now, to a series of synchronicities – but I'll spare you those. I was 19 years old in March 1954 when a friend gave me a flyer advertising some lectures by John Godolphin Bennett at Conway Hall (or was it Dennison House?) not too far from the big Victoria train station in central London. They were called, if I remember rightly, "Man and his Place in the Universe" – or something equally grandiose. But I was intrigued, so I'd travelled into town from the outer suburbs, by bus, tube train and another bus, to get to this unknown Conway Hall. And, when I finally got there, the beautiful woman selling tickets at the door wouldn't let me in. "It's full", she said, without a flicker of expression on her face. "Come back next week, a little earlier."

Obediently (I was obedient in those days) I left, and began the long trudge back to the bus stop in the dark and rain. A hundred metres or so along, though, it occurred to me: Damn it, I don't want to go all the way back home now, having come this far! So, I turned around and went back to the hall. "There's a friend of mine in there," I said (honestly) to the dragon at the door, "I'll just go in and tell him I can't join him." She nodded coldly, so I went on in to try and find Hugh Pope amidst the crowd. She was right: the hall was absolutely packed.

Surprisingly – because I'd only met him once before, and wasn't too sure I even remembered what he looked like – I found Hugh. And he, gentleman that he was, gave me his seat and went to stand at the back.

So I stayed, and listened to "Mister B" (as I learned to call him later), talk about life, the universe and everything: and what we could do to try and become *more* than what we ordinarily are: to fulfill ourselves, and live a different quality of life. This, in short, was called The Work - with a capital T and capital W - which was a system of self-development devised originally by George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, a Greek-Armenian. As a young man Gurdjieff had traipsed around Central Asia in the late 1800s visiting various schools in search of hidden wisdom. He then began teaching this psycho-spiritual Work, capital W, in Moscow, where he was joined by Peter Damien Ouspensky, a Russian scientist and philosopher. Together Gurdjieff and Ouspensky came up with a System (capital S) of [I quote] "Work on Oneself". In 1917, though, they had to leave Moscow to avoid being caught up in the Bolshevik communist revolution. Gurdjieff went to Paris, set up an ashram in Fontainebleau just south of Paris, while Ouspensky settled in Virginia Water in England. Word spread and, by teaching "The Work", both gathered pupils – and, before they died, Bennett, who was a mathematical physicist of some repute, had been taught by both of them. So now he was teaching their methods himself at Coombe Springs in Kingston-on-Thames just outside London. And, after attending all six of those weekly lectures in Conway Hall, I went down to "Coombe" – as it was called- early one Sunday morning in May 1954 for the first time.



The entrance on Kingston Hill impressed me. Tall decorative wrought-iron gates opened on to a red-tiled Lodge and a long gravel driveway lined with trees and shrubs leading up to the main house. This large and decently shabby old mansion was, I learned later, Edwardian. Its facade was quite impressive, too; long ago it had

been painted white, and was covered in a few places by ivy and other climbers. There were a lot of big windows on two storeys and big double front doors, painted blue, stood open. Beside the house there were gravel pathways leading off to the left and right on to lawns, with more trees and bushes beyond. Further along the driveway up a gentle slope were several other buildings, originally, I suppose, stables and servants' quarters. Also white and equally shabby externally – but attractively so – these housed a pottery, other workshops, stores and some living accommodation.

Still further off the road were the "New Building" and the "Fishbowl", in which people lived or stayed for weekends. The latter was a huge square pre-fabricated building once housing laboratories put up and used during World War II by the British Coal Board, which had requisitioned the place to avoid the bombs dropping in London. (This, I think, was where Bennett – and also, incidentally, Fritz Schumacher for a short while – had worked: and hence Bennett had been in a position to buy the whole estate after the war ended and the government took its offices back to London.) So this ex-laboratory, which above waist-height was entirely glass windows, was now the Fishbowl – because until people put up a terrible variety of curtains (this was post-war, remember) you could see from one end of it to another and into all the different partitioned spaces.

"The New Building" was quite another kettle of fish. This had been specially built by the Institute: because once Bennett had acquired the property he'd set up The Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences with some other Gurdjieff and Ouspensky group members. But soon even the Fishbowl with its new residents had not been enough to

accommodate the growing number of people who wanted to live at Coombe or visit for weekends, so the ugly – but practical – two-story red-brick New Building with twelve bedrooms, bathrooms and a sauna had been built.

There were a few other things I remember: a pleasant summer house overlooking the main lawn; near that was a raised, formal rose garden enclosed on three sides by a privet hedge (the fourth side was open to the house.). There were a couple of teak benches in there for brief rests between jobs. Bennett loved this rose garden – he used to get it professionally pruned every two years or so – we ignorant plebs weren't allowed to touch them!

To one side of the Fishbowl was a long shallow artificial lake, remains I learned later of another laboratory building like the Fishbowl; out of this drained a stream, meandering back down through a grove of bamboos toward the road – with a substantial wooden bridge over it which had been built as one of Bennett's projects.

Down almost beside the road but well inside the boundary fence were the two ancient spring houses from which Coombe Springs had its name. These two-small red-brick buildings,



perhaps a couple of hundred metres apart, had been built by Cardinal Wolsey in the time of King Henry VIII, to supply his palace at Hampton Court with fresh water. (I don't know if people were poisoned drinking this, but the pipes which took the water all the way down Kingston Hill and across the river Thames were made of lead.) Water still bubbled into at least one of these small square buildings, which were only (at a guess) about two metres by two metres in area; this smallness, though, was dignified by the height and the Tudor decoration of the superstructure. I never went into the further one of these twin buildings as it was boarded up and semi-ruined, but inside the other one, set into the floor surrounded by tiles was a smallish lead-lined bath. This must have been quite deep, though, as I know Bennett used to go down there sometimes and dip – or stand – in the cold spring water – even during the winter.

Another unforgettable feature of the place were the trees. One venerable oak, planted at the time of Wolsey, spread its enormous arms out across the main lawn. And, one sunny day, hot and exhausted from digging in the vegetable garden, I flung myself down in its friendly shade. Lying on my back and looking up into the branches I noticed a black bird directly above me and, almost as if I'd asked for it, down came a splodge of bird shit, smiting me warmly in my left eye. (Incidentally, "Looking at someone out of the left eye" was Gurdjieff-speak for a sexual come-on.) As I said, that ancient oak tree was unforgettable – in more ways than one.

Another feature of Coombe, way at the back – I believe the whole place was about five acres – were the vegetable gardens and a shed or two, in at least one of which (a large, brick one!) lived Trevor Gawen the head gardener and his lovely wife Janet and their three small children.

Whether we lived at Coombe or we just visited, we all worked, all the time, it seemed to me, at whatever and wherever we were told to,. One of the senior pupils I remember fondly was an Australian, Donald Neal, who organized rosters and lists of what needed doing, or whatever project Bennett wanted done, and appointed people – residents and visitors alike – to do them. So we worked in the gardens, in the kitchens, the office or the house itself, on what Bennett wanted done. And all the while we had to do our inner exercise: the thing he had set us to do in his brief Sunday morning talk.



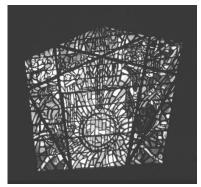
But I haven't finished with the physical Coombe yet! And the most important building – in my opinion – was one we all built together: the Djamichunatra. In the past, Bennett had visited some Sheikhs and gurus in West Asia, not once but several times, and had eventually been told that his home would one day become the place for the receiving of the new World Teacher. Even before this Gurdjieff himself had told Bennett that he was to look to "the Dutch Indies" (now Indonesia) for the next development of The Work. So Bennett had persuaded the Institute Council members to go ahead with financing and building a *tekke* [a dervish or Sufi lodge or place of worship - ed] a suitable building for this "new Work" which would also be used for the Movements.

An Architects Group was formed to design this, with Robert Whiffin in charge; Bob was an experienced architect with his own country practice, whereas the rest of them were either students – as was Hugh my husband – or fairly recently qualified. Bennett wanted it to be nine-sided, based on the Enneagram, and gave them a vague brief: so some of them had a go at coming up with a design. In the end, the model Richard Burton produced was obviously the right one. Working

drawing were properly drawn up and another Australian, a structural engineer named Jan van Sommers who'd came to Coombe with his wife Ann, to live, somehow kept it all together. But almost everyone worked on building the Djami.





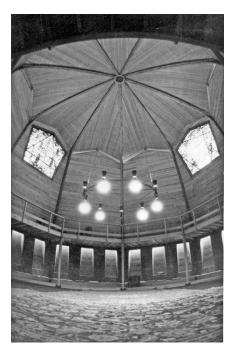


The three stained-glass windows. The left shows the seven stages of ascent and the right the zodiac. In the middle is the one based on the enneagram with the four figures of the Gospels (Lion, Bull, Man, Eagle) and the immanent (dove) and transcendent (eyes) God.

It had nine specially-pebbled concrete base-walls to about a couple of meters high, with three sizeable, sloping "slots" or niches in each wall, all of which let in diffused light from outside. Above three of the heavy, thick concrete base-walls were three huge pentagonal stained-glass windows designed and made by Rosemary Rutherford depicting in glowing colours symbolic figures, creatures and other symbols. The upper part of the six remaining walls was wood, and, from their nine high corners, nine hefty sloping wooden beams spanning the interior space, met up in the centre. This created a support for the gently peaked roof which, over layers of insulation, was covered in nine petals of copper sheeting. The building had to be made "to last a hundred years" Bennett told us, and he oversaw – and did himself – quite a lot of the heavier concrete work. (Even I, who was working in the office by this time, did a stint at weekends. And, being skinny, had the job of crawling inside the wooden formwork of the concrete – to oil it, so that, after it had set, it could be scraped to produce an attractive pebble finish inside.) But we all worked on building the Djami, a lot of the time.

Another of its symbolic features was the underground entrance. There was indeed a pair of large doors at ground level, but Bennett wanted us normally to go into the Djami "from below". So to the left (north) of the big main doors there was a stairway leading down to an underground entryway and foyer, where there was a pegged cloakroom in which we left our coats and shoes. "You have to go down before you can come up," Bennett told us several times.

Inside the Djami the three big stained-glass windows up above us, together with the nine niches lower down, let in a pleasant, peaceful light. And along all the walls at sitting height, running right around the edge of the floor space, was a simple, continuous wooden bench with some kind of heating system hidden inside it.



Interior of Djami as completed in the 6os

When the building was finally finished, I think sometime in late 1957 or early 1958 [actually it was in the mid-6os – ed.], it had its own very special atmosphere. As Bennett had remarked once, coming in to a room when some of us had been working on the plans late into the night, "There is Work present in here; I can feel it." Well, that certainly applied to the interior of the Djamichunatra. We had all – I think I can say this for everyone who worked on it – that we had all struggled to remember ourselves and tried to be conscious of what we were doing. In my case, I failed, frequently, to remember: but the presence of others, especially the older more experienced pupils, (and, intermittently of Bennett himself) somehow helped to bring us back to the immediacy of what we were doing: not only physically but inwardly too – of The Work exercises we had been set by Bennett.

And what were these exercises? It might have been to be constantly aware of our breathing, or to watch, as if from a distance, what our hands were doing: in other words to focus our attention on our hands; self-observation was a necessity, a

large part of the Gurdjieff and Ouspensky system of Work – work on ourselves, that was. Another exercise was to watch what was going on in our minds, rattling along in what we learned to call "associations", useless thoughts leading non-stop on, one from another. Yet another exercise was to notice ourselves "considering": which meant seeing why and how we did things while **considering** all the time what other people were thinking of us.

All this, in conjunction with sometimes sheer hard labour, kept Coombe quiet – and really rather serious. And occasionally, perhaps once a month or so, you'd hear a great shout of "STOP!!! Echoing around the place: and we had instantly to stop, freeze – *immediately* – whatever we were doing at the time. This, too, was one of Bennett's teaching tools: to show us, yet again, however we were in ourselves at that particular moment, how "present" we were – or were not. In other words, it showed us how *conscious* we were of being in the Here-and-Now (or were we, more likely, unconscious? – "asleep" as Gurdjieff's called it.)

We also absorbed Gurdjieff's idea of "the terror of the situation" – meaning that we, tiny human beings adrift in a vast and unknown universe, had little hope of achieving either self-development or happiness or any kind of "being" that might continue after death. So, we learned to live with the idea of preparing to die – and not "die like a dog" which was what, we were told, happened to people who did no Work on themselves".

As for these inner exercises which Bennett used to set us early every Sunday morning, after lunch he would hold court, still sitting at the large carved dining table in the big bay window with some of the older more experienced pupil who were either on the Institute's Council, or were Bennett's senior pupils, or both. We, the lesser mortals, sat around the rest of the dining room. six or eight to a scrubbed wooden-toped trestle table, and over coffee (always excellent coffee), were

joined by the cooks and those who had served the food. Now was the time for us to relate our little experiences – and Bennett would comment. Or, if we dared, we might ask a question.

In addition to these special working Sundays, there were plenty of other activities. For a start, there were fortnightly Group Meetings, often on Saturdays, led by some of the older pupils. The various groups all had been given letters: I was put into Group B along with a handful – perhaps around fifteen – of other people who had attended the same lecture series in London that I had; our leader was Rina Hans, a bright, breezy self-confident well-built woman who wore quite startling clothes. I found her very impressive and learned to trust her completely.

Once a year each Group had a party. Usually upstairs in Bennett's study, where he would preside. The food was even better than usual and – very unusually – we were given a shot of alcohol, I think the same Armagnac brandy Gurdjieff had used with them in Paris.

However, the first thing Rina Hans taught us in B Group was the "Preparation". This was what is today called "meditation" – I don't know why but we were told not to called it that. We learned to sit on the floor either cross-legged or on our heels for half-an-hour every morning, to relax, going round the body parts focussing our attention on them in turn, perhaps with some mantra or inner exercise in mind, such as "Lord, open my heart", which was to "prepare" ourselves for the day ahead. Occasionally a whole group of us did our "Preparation" together with Bennett, downstairs in the sitting room.

After I'd gone down to live at Coombe (though at first still working full-time in central London) I was invited – instructed, really! – to join a small group of resident youngies who, once a week, did their morning Preparation upstairs with Bennett in his study. I suppose we were the young turks of Coombe in those days of the mid- fifties. It was of course a privilege – but, to get there at 5.30 am on cold dark winter mornings wasn't always easy. But after that, there and then Bennett would answer our probably naive questions gently and kindly: whereas sometimes on Sundays he could be quite caustic in shooting down pompous, insincere or otherwise invalid comments or questions. And so we came to love and trust Bennett – "Mister B", as we called him, even to his face – his insights about us and our fragile fragmented selves, and his guidance and his judgements.

Another random (in the sense it wasn't scheduled regularly) activity was the readings of *Beelzebub*, the first volume of Gurdjieff's writings, sometimes in the evenings after dinner; this was



Pak Subuh (Bapak) and John Bennett

read – more or less stumblingly – by one or other of the senior pupils or very occasionally by Bennett himself.

And now I see I've left out a description of what Bennett looked like – which was actually pretty impressive. But first I should describe the lovely old house where so much of such importance (to me!) happened, because Bennett was an ever-present presence in it. (When he wasn't digging in the garden or pushing wheelbarrow loads of turf or earth around the estate – working even harder than we did – an excellent example for us young ones.) Anyway....

come in the big blue front door of the main house into a cool, mosaic-tiled lobby, out of which on your right is the men's cloakroom and the two kitchens; the "top kitchen" was for storing crockery, glassware and cutlery, etc and was where the women washed up. The men did not escape: down a few steps was the big "back kitchen". where not only was all the cooking done but the men had to wash up all the huge dirty saucepans and utensils the (usually women) cooks had used. At the time I was there, Lilli Hellstenius, a strong white-haired woman from Sweden, was the main cook and menu-maker, ruling the kitchen with a masterly hand.

Again, as you come in the front door: first thing on your left are the noticeboards – crucial to any community – and then you walk on and turn left into the main reception room. This was a large open sitting area with tall windows reaching to the corniced ceiling, and draped with floorlength brocade curtains. The room was filled with chintz-covered sofas and easy chairs scattered around it. This, with its semi-carpeted, parquet-tiled wooden floor, opened to the hall, off which led the music room with its grand piano, the admin office, and the large dining room at the end of the corridor (at the other end of which were the kitchens). Also off the hall was the main staircase, a simple but quite splendid polished wood affair, and beside it a passage-way leading to the back door and the West Wing with its smaller rooms and a second, smaller staircase. The whole impression somehow you got was of a pleasant but somewhat faded grandeur.

Upstairs, at the top of the main staircase were, in clockwise order: a big bathroom, a bedroom boasting a purple carpet for special guests, then a substantial dressing room (which housed the Bennetts' archives and – much later when I became Bennett's secretary, me and my typewriter. Next to this was old Mrs. Bennett's big beautiful pink-toned bedroom; Bennett's lovely large, green-walled study, and finally his bedroom. All these rooms looked out either on to the entrance drive or over the gardens; Bennett's study, as well as a bay window overlooking the rose garden and lawns, had a set of French windows giving on to a balcony on which was a pigeon coop – and a flock of pigeons, which he fed when so inclined. By the time I arrived Polly, old Mrs. Bennett, was disabled; she never left her bedroom and had, I suppose, some form of dementia. She was some twenty years older than Bennett and had also been, in her time, a fervent followed of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. I believe they met in Istanbul but am not sure; I heard she'd presided over the whole of Coombe Springs, intimidating people, especially those who didn't work hard enough or pull their weight in the community.

Because a community was what Coombe was. Bennett was not only our teacher, our guru in The Work, but our father-figure – at least for those of us who were young – alternatively stern and intimidating or roaring with laughter at our puny efforts – and failures – to do what he wanted us to be able to do. But, overall, deadly serious, about teaching us how to observe ourselves and strive toward self-creation.

We did know what we were supposed to be doing, because occasionally there were lessons – hints, more likely – during Group meetings or working Sundays, of the theory or philosophical structure of The Work. For instance, we ourselves were either Man number one (based in the physical body) or Man number two (based in the feelings) or Man number three (based in the mind). Bennett, we assumed, was Man number four, in whom all these functions had come together. (There were certain books we were not allowed to read: Rodney Collin Smith's *Theory of Celestial Influences* was one I remember.) In hindsight I suppose Bennett didn't want us to fill

our heads with ideas, with theory; in any case we had little time to read as we were all pretty busy, all the time.

Bennett was not one for regular routine, and every now and then there was something very different on the menu. Once some of the senior pupils put on a performance of *The Life of Ivan Osikin*, at Christmas another year there was fancy-dress party. And once Bennett got some of us to act out something that just emerged from within us; later, "Improvisational Drama" became the rage in San Francisco, and spread. Bennet had got us doing it years earlier.

I said Bennett was our father-figure – and he certainly was to me. (He even looked rather like my father.) He was a large man: tall, with a big frame, and he usually wore well-worn tweed jackets with leather patches at the elbows, corduroy trousers and an assortment of brightly-coloured workingmen's flannel shirts (and the occasional clashing tie). I think the more respectable Gurdjieff leaders thought he was a bit of a maverick. Although four or five other couples in the Work (not Coombe types, though) actually helped Bennett pay for Bapak's travel tickets when the time came, some of the others certainly reacted almost with horror when he invited the Indonesians to England in 1956. The very idea of some "New Work", I suppose, didn't go down very well in other Gurdjieff groups. And when Bapak gave Bennett the name of 'Mustafa', which he never ever used, he might have been thinking of their reactions to that?

In any case, to me, Bennett seemed larger than life. At one stage he was a bit pudgy around the waist – but this disappeared when he decided to climb Mt. Blanc in the Swiss alps and went into intensive training. In fact most things seemed intense about Bennett: he seemed to me to do everything at full throttle, as it were, and although he was very good-looking it was a kind of deep sincerity, a solidity and an inner-authority which was almost tangible that most impressed us all. In Eliot's term, he was no hollow man.



Movements class outside on the lawn

Which association leads me on to Pierre Elliot, Bennett's nephew, another active, attractive and long-time follower of The Work, and one of Bennett's chief henchmen. Pierre was half French, and a teacher of Gurdjieff's dances - yet another activity we did very regularly at Coombe. "Movements", as they were called, done to haunting music, were the sacred dances that Gurdjieff had either found somewhere in his travels in Central Asia or created himself. To me these

Movements were the best part of The Work; I enjoyed learning them, practising them and doing them within a group, usually in the dining room once a week in the evenings or at weekends when all the tables and chairs had been moved out. Or sometimes for special occasions we drove up to London, to Collette Gardens in Kensington, where ballet studios were rented by non-Bennett Gurdjieff groups. Once I remember Mme Jeanne de Salzman (who took over the French groups when Gurdjieff died in 1949) visited us there – and, it seemed to me, inspected our performance

with a not-too-pleased eye. (Do you remember, as a child, trying to rub your tummy in circles with your left hand and at the same time patting your head rhythmically with your right? It wasn't easy – until you got the hang of it. Well, some of the Movements were a grown-up, far more sophisticated version of that.) And while your body was doing the sacred dances, the Movements, there were of course internal exercises to do at the same time; "splitting one's attention" was another key idea – and an invaluable *practice* – inherent in the Gurdjieff and Ouspensky Work.

This reminds me of Bapak in Munich in 1964, sitting in Ruth Gruson's house, chatting to a few people (including my husband and I and our new baby Richenda in a Moses basket). The television was on, and someone asked Bapak if he might turn it off. "If you must", said Bapak with a smile, "but really you should be able to do **both**: listen to the conversation and also to the television." This example of splitting one's attention is merely one illustration of how useful, I personally, found The Work – and have done, ever since; also how similar it was in some ways to things we picked up by osmosis from Bapak's behaviour and in his talks.

At the end of May 1957, though, when Bapak first brought the SuBuD spiritual latihan to the West, and a few days later moved down to Coombe Springs (after we'd all spent days painting and refurbishing the West Wing for the Indonesians!) some things did change. Some, not all. Bennett asked Bapak what to do about the activities at Coombe, and Bapak, we heard, had said, Just carry on as before. So, in some ways we did. We went on with our Group Meetings, Sunday working days, the Movements and our daily morning Preparation - until it became obvious that we could now reach the state we'd hoped to achieve by it, in just a few minutes instead of half-an-hour. People began to smile; everything – including The Work – seemed to become lighter. Things didn't seem so solemn, so deadly serious; even "the terror of the situation" seemed to have been diminished by the new Work. Instead we began to feel happy sometimes: the latihan was so very very different from The Work we had been trying so hard to do. It was almost ludicrous to struggle so hard to remember oneself in such a serious vein when the latihan lived in us all the time and could be summoned at any moment. For the first time I, I think along with all the other young ones at Coombe, either living or visiting, felt there was Hope in life. For some of the older ones it was not so easy, though; perhaps they had been in the Gurdjieff Work for so long that they could not feel the effects of the subtle energy of the latihan within them as easily as we younger ones did.

I have to say I took to the latihan like a duck to water. There was one stumbling block; we had been told almost nothing about the latihan before we were Opened to it – and in the Gurdjieff work there was never a mention of God, or angels, or anything like that. I had actually been brought up by my parents to be a good atheist. So when Bapak gave a talk to the women a week or two after he'd arrived, and talked about God a lot, I was shocked. What on earth had this lovely new Work, this exercise (the latihan) got to do with God? But I was so hooked on it, it could have been called Green Cheese and I wouldn't have cared. Thick as I was, it took me several years finally to admit to myself that, yes indeed, this *had* to be God in the latihan.

Even so, and as Lambert Hughes, in his article "Coombe Before Subud" mentions, many of the exercises, concepts, principles and practices of The Work stayed with me – and, even in old age, still do. So I owe Bennett a huge debt of gratitude. But Coombe itself was changed forever, turned upside down when Bapak arrived, and word got out – spread by many of those following the Gurdjieff and Ouspensky system – that "a new form of Work has come" and literally hundreds of

people began coming down to Coombe regularly. Hugh and I never saw the end of Coombe Springs; Bapak had advised us to go to California, and then on to South America. We never got to South America but we did emigrate to California, leaving Coombe in March 1959. I had learned so much there, and loved the place so much.

# Lifting up the Process Enneagram©

#### by Richard N. Knowles & Claire E.F. Knowles

#### **Introduction:**

Many of you reading this Newsletter have seen earlier articles about the work Richard N. Knowles & Associates do to broaden the understanding and use of the Process Enneagram©--regarding solving complex problems. It is a powerful tool to help people deal with complex problems in a way that enables them to focus their conversations in a disciplined way, listening, learning and opening up their understanding of the processes of how they interact so that they can discover who and what they are and help them to see how and why things happen as they do. As we work with people using the Process Enneagram©, the people engage with each other opening up their understanding and insights. They discover the people with whom they need to be connected and experience the release of energy and make the commitments needed to accomplish their work quickly and well. Trust and interdependence build.

For over 25 years we have conducted hundreds of workshops with various organizations in manufacturing, marketing, health care, government and social services. We have successfully worked with businesses and groups in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, China, Malaysia, Italy and the United Kingdom addressing problems like improving safety performance, creating more humane workplaces, reducing workplace violence, improving customer service, mergers and acquisitions and addressing other various organizational challenges, including how to increase effectiveness. A few practitioners are using the Process Enneagram as well as writing about it. For example, Beverly McCarter and Brian White, in their book *Leadership in Chaordic Organizations*, state that the Process Enneagram is the bridge between complex adaptive systems theory and practical application.<sup>1</sup>

# Our recent work with the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education Leadership Institute (AKEPT)

The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education is working hard to lift the quality of education for their whole country to a higher level. They have already embarked on their 15-year plan to do this. Already, they have made considerable progress based on surveys comparing universities on a global basis. Several universities are among the top 50 universities in the world.

As part of their effort, Claire and I were invited by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education to come to Kuala Lumpur on May 22-25, 2017 to work with AKEPT to introduce the Process

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Beverly G. McCarter and Brian E. White, 2013. *Leadership in Chaordic Organizations*, Boca Raton, FL. CRC Press. ISBN 978-1-4200-7417-9.

Enneagram©. The people with whom we met were extremely friendly and helpful in every way. They were open and interested in learning to work this way and seemed very comfortable with this way of working. We worked closely with Professor Dr. Mohamad Kamal H.J. Harun, FASc, (Director of AKEPT), and Assoc. Professor Dr. Mohd Rushdan Bin Mohd Jailani (Deputy Director of AKEPT). Everyone spoke English quite well. We adapted to their Muslim Sunni culture in the way we dressed and behaved. It was recommended that Claire be covered from her neck to her ankles and wrists with no open-toed shoes. I wore a necktie most of the time and dressed in my blazer or black suit. All went well.

In our seminars and workshop we worked with about 75 high-level academic people like provosts, deans and professors. I talked about the background of the enneagram and my development of the Process Enneagram. They were very interested in its depth, the leadership processes and transformational processes embedded in it. No one argued about it or resisted what we had to share. Instead, they were intrigued with the model and its potential.

There were, however, lots of questions. For example, Claire spent a portion of her time allotment explaining the importance of paying attention to repetitive patterns—because those in Leadership roles have a duty to enhance the positive patterns that are happening within one's realm of leadership, and to lift up and address those patterns that may be negative. People craved hearing more and wanted to learn more about identifying recurring patterns in their worklife. So Claire took them through an exercise to further hone their skills to identify patterns in their own professional/personal worlds, and in turn, to be more effective in their respective leadership role.

Claire then shared how she has used the Process Enneagram in various situations. This part of



her presentation was to provide some experiential learning. First, they observed the outcome of a previous workshop conducted with the Western New York Women in Higher Education on becoming more effective and in developing better networking and mentoring processes. She showed our Malaysian audience how each point on the Process Enneagram developed and what the final Process Enneagram map looked like. She emphasized that the Western New York Women in Higher Education have sustained this work for about 10 years. She then reviewed with the people a workshop that we had done for the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, Graduate School of Business & Management, State University of New York. (We had worked with a group of small business entrepreneurs to help them think through the sorts of things that they needed to think about to

improve their individual businesses. In this prior work we had each person answer, for themselves, questions we posed at each point so they could understand their particular work better.) As Claire spoke to the Malaysian audience she asked each of them to make notes for themselves, as they essentially went side-by-side with an entrepreneur; but their task was to answer the questions specific to their own work, in the present moment. They quickly were able to see how the Process

Enneagram worked. While there are many questions asked--it is the answers that are given that

bring it to life--a way of seeing one's own situation, as complex as it may be, in a holistic way.

Next, we had the group move from the conference room to another room with circular tables with 8 chairs around them. We then spent about 2 hours having each table work on this question:

"How do we incorporate and use the Process Enneagram into our educational processes?"

Claire and I walked among the tables coaching and



answering questions about the process, showing them how the various points of the Process Enneagram interacted and were connected. A number of them struggled with the idea of "process" and the movement within the Process Enneagram figure. Ultimately, the Process Enneagrams that were developed at each table had lots of similarities. The exercise was twofold—to give them experiential learning for constructing a Process Enneagram on their own collective work, and to see how the constructive dialog that unfolds during the process provides essential learning.

The final morning with AKEPT, Claire and I met with the Director, Assistant Director and three other people who are going to write the Process Enneagram training module for AKEPT. We reviewed the output from the various groups from the previous day's workshop on incorporating and using the Process Enneagram. Claire and I then helped them to consolidate this work into a single Process Enneagram map. They found this to be very exciting, as the collective voice was evident.

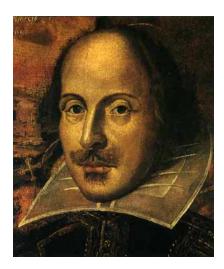
After Claire and I returned home we developed several model Process Enneagrams using example questions at each point to help them to look at various challenges they have. (If you would like to see these examples, please contact Dick Knowles at <a href="RNKnowles@aol.com">RNKnowles@aol.com</a>. We are pleased to share them as they help to illustrate the type of questions one would ask for addressing specific situations.)

The Director indicated that the first work he wanted to address was the challenge of selecting vice chancellors for the universities based on academic and leadership qualifications and to avoid political considerations. Claire and I put together a model Process Enneagram to help them get a boost in their work on this topic. They have reported that is quite useful for them to get going.

The interest in this work and their receptivity to the Process Enneagram was very gratifying and exciting. These people are sincere and dedicated to improving their educational system and are making good progress. We are pleased to have made a difference for them.

#### **SHAKESPEARE**

#### Michael White



"When I had reached the end of the first play, I stood like one who, blind from birth, finds himself suddenly blest with sight by a beneficent Providence...I realized that my existence had been infinitely expanded." Goethe (P 163)

Shakespeare is a revolution in awareness, an awakening to a new expanded sensibility, one that sees beyond the confines of the little self in which we live our mundane lives into a deeper self, an inner self that encompasses an expanded horizon with a new geography, new colors in the evening sky, new terrains to explore. Suddenly the rules of propriety, the rules of society, the rules of tradition, the rules of orthodoxy are exploded and there is a realization of the burdensome fetters that the keepers of the

rules had imposed, how the self had been in a dungeon of their making, enslaved and imprisoned and that war must be waged on them. It is something that you can feel, whose meaning can only be conceptualized in poetic language, a literal vision cannot capture it, the meaning must be felt in the body, must be lived by the whole self before it can be expressed by the mind.

In Shakespeare's theater the history of the world lays before us, strung on the invisible threads of time at the intersection where free will confronts the reality of a larger multidimensional whole. Our vision is so shuttered, our fetters so binding that it takes a dramatic encounter with an expanded reality to allow us to see what had been hidden, shrouded by the clouds of education, of the indoctrination of governments and legislatures. When he speaks through his characters we sense a kinship that liberates us from the confines of these limited perspectives. He is able to represent human nature, even nature itself, with a deeper camaraderie such that we cannot help but sense it in ourselves. It is the gift of art, to touch into an authentic human feeling that reaches deep into our humanity to free us from the restraints and artificiality imposed and imprinted by parental and educational authorities, by the purveyors of the status quo. He sees around out pettiness, sees that good and evil depend on one another, are two sides of a whole and look entirely different depending which side you approach it from. We think we live, we do not live, we merely exist, the arbiters of good taste are asleep, buried deep in a grave of their own making, unable to see outside the confines of their own shadowy lives.

So much has been written about Shakespeare, decade after decade in a never-ending plummeting stream that it is presumptuous to think of saying more, yet it is irresistible. How can we stop. The noblest of accomplishments is self-knowledge which, by virtue of its own reflection into personal awareness necessarily provides intimate insight into the minds of others. For once one steps behind the mirror individuality falls away to allow what it is to be a self to be revealed and this is no different for you than it is for me. The artist, the poet, has an innate talent for this and refines the ore of personality to derive the precious metal that is inherent in it. The universal

human nature is the precious gemstone hidden in the deep cave of our consciousness guarded by the dragon of our individual self.

The poets, in expressing their vision, allow us to share in the fullness of their awareness of the world, they make the world transparent so we are released from the confines of virtue and vice. They speak to an inner sense, not the eye, not the intellect, not the emotions, but to something more perceptive, more direct, unmediated, intuitive, which often to the eye, to the intellect, to the emotions seems strange, even incomprehensible. Yet it is from this inner sense that creativity springs, and originality takes on a new meaning, not as an expression of something new, but as something so common, that it touches each person, so universal that it cannot be ignored, something that stirs the imagination, a homecoming where we feel strangely at ease, totally relaxed and at peace with what had previous been a contradiction, a contrariness that had been disturbing but is now accepted as a necessity. And all that had been hidden, repressed and concealed in our personal history, is revealed without guilt or shame as something human all too human lurking in the human heart as a necessity that can be revealed frankly and without inhibitions, as another part of the experience of being human. From now on nothing need be hidden. It is the work of art, of poetry, to reveal all the secrets of the heart with confidence and fidelity, eloquently as revelation in which all beings participate. When interest and attention are directed toward the inner self then all humans are alike and all humans can accept one another without prejudice true to the life of each person. Shakespeare epitomizes the dynamics of human nature in a person who appears before us on the stage, as we ourselves, appear on the stage of our own lives, caught in the dilemmas of desire

Shakespeare's reach goes beyond the psychology of the self into the furthest reaches of the imagination where it is inhabited by prophets, oracles, madness, omens, fairies, ghosts, witches and sorcerers. These bits, which we now look on as magical realism, are accepted into his world as manifestations in the mind which, like all of human nature, he expresses as drama, vital, genuine and concrete to the characters who experience them. And the poetry of it is that every action between individuals is symbolic, is a symbol of an action that anticipates or holds within itself another action which must inexorably follow from it.

# THINKING - WORK - DOING

#### **Anthony Blake**

The word 'thinking' can be thought of in various ways, for example: just what passes through my head; focusing on the future with intent, or reasoning about what is true. Thinking can be felt as painful, a useless pursuit or the acme of human existence. There are countless feelings and interpretations. An established modality of thinking is in philosophy, usually considered as something detached from action where one is given time to reflect on universal questions under such headings as epistemology – how do I know? – ontology – what really is? – and theology – what makes reality real?

Both East and West have traditions of reflecting or meditating on truth, though they may differ markedly. They might be associated, though not identified, with Buddhism on the one hand and Christianity on the other. The point is to think as directly as possible on knowing the truth. Thus, for example, we find Descartes exercising doubt in a way that the three modes of epistemology, ontology and theology are combined. Eastern meditation might centre on 'emptiness'. Both ideas of doubt and emptiness are significant.

Putting aside the extremes of philosophy, the very same questions concern us all. But we have to add, 'if we can stop to question'. We have to draw back from life, try to see the wood for the trees and question ourselves. However intermittently, weakly, or confusedly our attention is we all have a search for truth, or the question of *what is real?*. Intensive and sustained effort in this direction can go very far. Shiva Puri Baba said that if we persist in asking,' what is the meaning of life?' we will come to see God. The physicist Paul Dirac discovered antimatter through questioning the mathematics of the electron without leaving his room.

But, for the most part, especially about questions which deeply disturb us such as who or what we are, we come to an impasse. The sense is that we have to do more than merely think to really know. There are abstract things that can be surely known, such as in the proofs of mathematics

Hamolinadar by Bob Jefferson

which provide certainty in their own terms. But not such things as who or what am I?

In the story of Hamolinadar recounted in Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales*, this philosopher of ancient Babylon pursues the question of whether man has a soul to the point of despair. He abandons reason – the reason he has been using – because it gets him nothing substantial. In Beelzebub's story, he then flees into the countryside to 'grow maize', interpreted by Bennett as 'work on himself'. We do not know how he then fares.

The recognition of thinking as being inadequate in itself is built into Gurdjieff's remarkable explanation of understanding as a fusion and

harmonisation of three kinds of intentionality (a word deliberately chosen over the old term 'centre') associated with thinking, feeling and acting. In Bennett's descriptions thinking can follow or obey the *will to see*, feeling the *will to be*, and acting the *will to do*. These three modalities of will have to be realised in and by practice (through both effort and surrender). We are not considering how this is done because it entails a direct and individual process and realization.

When the will to see is exhausted in thinking the will to be can come into play (but the ultimate goal is for them all to come together).

We identify this transition with beginning to 'work on oneself'. Work on oneself concerns being and, pragmatically, is centred in the feelings. In crude terms, we take our ideas 'personally': enter a realm where what is real is what is actually *coming to be in us*, in our flesh and blood so to say, the meeting of our will and our existence. We do not 'think about' because the act of thinking works in the present moment.

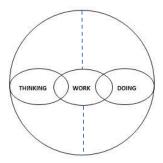
We could picture this in terms of *making experiments* in ourselves. Something like experiment is needed to enable us to pass from the realm of possibilities, beliefs and abstractions to the real. As Gurdjieff promised Ouspensky, in the realm of work 'there will be facts'. And, to echo scientist Feynman,' I can only understand what I can create' - and add the words, 'in myself'. To understand: what I am, my being, must change.

Most people project their thinking outside of themselves so that they themselves do not have to face changing who or what they are. These projections create a world of delusion. We need to bring it all 'home to roost 'as it were: here and now in the present moment. Going into the present moment with purpose is to work on oneself. I test my beliefs in my very existence. This is a kind of intentional existentialism.

But, however deep work on oneself goes it is not the end. It appears that some people find their inner work empties, falls vacant. Maybe Bennett went through this in the 1950s when all his efforts seem to come to nothing. Perhaps this is the 'dark night of the soul' as described by St John of the Cross.

We thus come to what Gurdjieff described as the supreme goal of the human individual, which is *to do*. One way of looking at this is to say that,' Well now I am sorted out, this is the time to get on with the job'. What is the job? – it is what is needed to be done. Who decides what is needed? If we call it God, it is to say nothing but still something. Working on oneself is then a distraction, just as dwelling on one's own virtues distracts from love of God.

Many people recognise how authentic acts do not involve thinking but appear spontaneously, without planning or analysis. We want to make the further step of saying that they do not require consciousness of self, as work on oneself demands. In the third realm of doing, consciousness can be understood almost as an *aberration*, a glitch. There is an inexplicable realisation, almost impossible to articulate. 'Doing the will of God' is a wrong form of expression: it is that, what we can call God *does us in the doing*. Bennett once defined the real work as 'perfection of doing'. Action is primary and no longer effort. But the three – thinking, working and doing – are as one: 3 = 1.



**Objective Present Moment**