

Publishers' Note (Coombe Springs Press, amended by Anthony Blake)

The chapter references in this Introduction to *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* refer not to the published version but to another in J. G. Bennett's possession. After his death it was decided to print the Introduction as he wrote it, without alteration. Here, it is slightly amended. Bennett's Introduction refers to various 'books'. As Gurdjieff himself outlined the Three Series of writings, there were three books in the First Series, three books in the Second and there were to be four books in the Third. The extant version of the Second Series does not show any sign of division into three books and, it appears, Gurdjieff wrote only notes for the second and third books of the Third Series - which he later destroyed - and nothing for the fourth. References to 'books' are put into brackets { } to alert the reader that we do not know what they actually indicate, but also to suggest they can simply be ignored. Bennett only refers to Book I and Book IV, which makes it all the more enigmatic. Items in square brackets [] are our additions.

Introduction to *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*

John Bennett

“My last book, through which I wish to share, with other creatures of Our Common Father similar to myself, almost all the previously unknown mysteries of the inner world of man which I have accidentally learned.” Gurdjieff wrote these words on the 6th of November 1934 and in the next few months did indeed put on paper some very powerful ideas. Six months later, on May 6th 1935, he stopped writing and the book was never completed. This alone will account for the need to provide an introduction to the present edition which Gurdjieff's family has decided to publish.

No one living is competent to unveil the state of Gurdjieff's mind when he decided to give up writing and even thought of abandoning all that he had started in Europe and America and return to Russia. Few remain of those who were with him in Russia at the time of the Russian Revolution, and most of those are his nephews and nieces who were children at the time. Pupils and friends who have written about him have for the most part recorded their own experiences without attempting to penetrate his. In this book, he reveals many secrets of his own inner world and tells us of some of the most significant experiences of his strange life.

No one could meet Gurdjieff and fail to be influenced by his extraordinary presence. My first meeting with him fifty-three years ago in Constantinople changed the entire course of my life. I went twice to his Institute in Avon in 1923, but did not see him again until 1948. In the last two years of his life, I spent a great deal of time with him, and he entrusted me with a variety of missions. He gave me the typescript of the present book and asked me to “make it suitable for reading”. He also said that it should be studied in conjunction with what he had written about Ashiata Shiemash in *Beelzebub's Tales*. (The title “All and Everything” was not in Gurdjieff's original version. He himself always referred to the ‘First Series’ of his writings as “Beelzebub”. The title “An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man” first

appeared in 1933. Previously, the title was “An Objective Criticism of the Life of Man”.)

When he died in October 1949, he left a sister, a nephew, and four nieces. They as his heirs and successors have asked me to prepare the book for publication and provide an introduction. Although the book is incomplete, they felt that they should fulfil the intention expressed in the sentence quoted at the beginning of this introduction and publish the book, first in English and later in other languages. I have, as far as possible, consulted those who could help in evaluating the material, but in accordance with the wishes of the family, I have accepted full responsibility for what has been included.

A life-long devotion to Gurdjieff and his ideas, combined with relatively little personal contact with him, perhaps qualifies me better to undertake the task than those who were closer to him personally and who are almost bound to be influenced by their private memories. I have also the advantage of being familiar with the countries of the Near and Middle East in which Gurdjieff passed the formative years of his life. Even so, I am well aware of the hazard of attempting to interpret the thoughts of a man so strange and unaccountable, both in his genius and in his way of life. One should not be daunted by hazards, nor should one do nothing for fear of making mistakes. In attempting what is beyond my power, I am doing no other than Gurdjieff himself did all his life.

Gurdjieff admired few European celebrities. He spoke of Shakespeare and Pushkin as having ruined the English and Russian languages. Tolstoi was a charlatan who became famous by accident. Our scientists and our artists since the time of the Greeks and Romans have been both intellectually and emotionally out of touch with the real world. One of the few that he unreservedly approved was Leonardo da Vinci with whom I have often thought he had much in common. Gurdjieff was outstanding in his versatility, in his readiness to experiment and take risks, and in his penetrating insight into human nature. He carried through his undertakings with complete disregard for his personal well-being and was ready to use any means to achieve his aim - providing these were not inconsistent with the aim itself of helping us to find a way out of the disastrous situation that modern man has created for himself. The present book gives us an insight into his determination to penetrate to the depth of the human problem. As the book is fragmentary and refers to many different periods of Gurdjieff's life, I shall give a short resume of the story as I have pieced it together from information provided by himself and his family.

Gurdjieff's life falls into distinct periods or phases each characterized by a dominating purpose. He was born in Alexandropol on the 28th of December 1877 while the Russo-Turkish war was in progress. Kars had fallen to the Russian Army under Grand Duke Michael on the 18th of November, but the Turks in the historic siege of Plevna in Bulgaria were

still holding out. Gurdjieff makes little mention of these events in his autobiographical writings, except to say that his family moved to Kars, then newly annexed by Russia, when he was still a small child. His childhood ended in the year 1888. He had already, at the early age of eleven, seen for himself that his life would not follow an ordinary course, and that he was compelled to find answers to questions that most people ignore.

The second phase was dominated by his search for an answer to the question 'What is the sense and purpose of man's existence on the earth?' This question gradually evolved from the curiosity aroused in him by witnessing strange phenomena, the reality of which he could not doubt, but which his elders could not explain. The period of Gurdjieff's search lasted until 1909. These twenty-one years would be almost unknown but for the account Gurdjieff gives in this Third Series. He travelled in Africa, Europe and Asia, and met individuals and communities who possessed knowledge unsuspected by most people. The 'system' which he later taught in the West is evidence of contact with authentic sources of higher knowledge.

In 1909, Gurdjieff became aware of a mission. He had learned secrets of the human psyche and of cosmic laws that he knew to be necessary for the future welfare of mankind, and he set himself the task of transmitting them to those who could use them rightly. After trying to cooperate with existing societies, he decided to create an organisation of his own. He started in 1911 in Tashkent, where he had established a reputation as a wonder-worker and authority on 'questions of the Beyond'. He moved to Moscow in 1913 and after the Russian Revolution of October 1917 to Tiflis, then Constantinople and finally to France where he re-opened his Institute at the Chateau de Prieuré at Avon, forty miles south of Paris. His avowed aim during this period was to set up a world-wide organisation for the dissemination of his ideas and the training of helpers. It ended with a nearly fatal motor accident on the 6th of July 1924.

When he began to recover from his injuries, Gurdjieff was faced with the sheer impossibility of realising his plans for the Institute. His health was shattered, he had no money and many of his friends and pupils had abandoned him. He was a stranger in Europe, neither speaking its language nor understanding its ways. He made the decision to find a new way of transmitting to posterity what he had learned about man, his nature and his destiny. This was to be done by writing. His period as an author began on the first of January 1925 and continued until, in May 1935, he stopped writing and changed all his plans.

The fourth and last phase continued until his death on the 29th of October 1949. He returned to Russia but the journey was not undertaken with a view to settling there but rather to enable him to consult with - as he put it - 'people whose opinion he respected'. The inevitability of a catastrophic

war, made the late 1930's a period quite unsuitable for a fresh start. He was faced with the need to wait until the conditions became more favourable. He returned to Paris, but no longer tried to operate on a large scale, nor did he seek publicity. Indeed, he led a withdrawn life. This was deceptive, for it disguised a very intense work with people individually and in groups. This work continued until the very end of his life. The period included the Second World War when Gurdjieff had few opportunities of meeting his pupils from outside France, so he devoted most of his attention to a small group of French men and women. The end of the war in 1945, brought a great influx of pupils and friends from all over the world. It was then possible to appreciate how much had been lost to the world by Gurdjieff's inability to keep his Institute going. There was some uncertainty as to whether his books would ever be published. His final efforts were largely directed to ensuring that *Beelzebub's Tales* should appear in several countries in the year 1950. This did occur, but meanwhile he had died leaving many an unsolved mystery behind him.

We are not concerned here with Gurdjieff's life and work as a whole but rather with the genesis and significance of the present book. To understand this we must know why Gurdjieff at the age of 48 should have decided to become a writer. Though he had read voraciously in his youth, he turned away from books before he was sixteen, having convinced himself that he could not get from books alone the knowledge he was determined to find. He was a brilliant expositor of the spoken word, but had no urge to write until after his accident in 1924. He explains his decision in {chapter 1 of Book IV}, but this accounts only for his major work: *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. He poured himself heart and soul into the writing of this book, and often said in later life that it contained all his teaching and all that he wished to leave for posterity. Why then should he have written, and left unfinished, two other books? To answer this, we must look more closely at the start of his writing period that is the end of the year 1924.

In his plans for the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, Gurdjieff proposed to organise social centres, or clubs, in which people would meet experienced teachers of his method, hear readings, listen to his music and see demonstrations of his sacred gymnastics. In this way, he hoped to bring his ideas and methods within reach of people of all social classes and of all possible types. He had found that societies formed specifically to study esoteric ideas attract only a limited range of types, too few of whom possess the characteristics required for his work. He wished to reach and help all who were capable of profiting by what he had to give. In 1923, he spoke to me of a world-wide organisation in which we were all to play our part. The Institute at the Prieuré was to be the centre, with branches in every great centre of population.

When he abandoned his grand plan, he did not give up the Prieuré. American pupils were made welcome from 1925 onwards and provided most of the money needed to keep it going. Although wholly engaged in

writing, he nevertheless still looked forward to a time when his Institute could be revived, and his writings were to play a vital part in this revival. This is the key to understanding the course of subsequent events.

Beelzebub's Tales were to be the main source of ideas, but practical methods were to be transmitted directly from teacher to pupil as they have always been. We can reconstruct the genesis of *Beelzebub's Tales* from the pamphlet, *The Herald of Coming Good*. Privately circulated in 1932, it was the first publication bearing Gurdjieff's name, and for nearly twenty years remained the only published work describing his teaching. Yet within two years of its appearance, Gurdjieff had repudiated and withdrawn it from circulation for reasons explained in the present book. *The Herald* was an appeal to old pupils for help in saving the Prieuré. The last hope of doing so disappeared in May 1935, and the purpose of the Herald disappeared with it. Nevertheless the early part of the pamphlet sheds much valuable light on Gurdjieff's own life and plans.

After describing the accident of July 1924, he says that he began experimenting with writing short scenarios which could be produced as film or ballet, as a means of attracting a new public to his ideas. One sketch had as its hero a being from another planet whose impartial but highly critical view of mankind conveyed Gurdjieff's reading of the human predicament. Looking at the sketch he saw that it could be expanded to express all his ideas, cosmological, psychological, social and historical, and also to convey prophetic insights into the future of mankind. He decided to devote himself exclusively to the task of writing this book to which he later gave the title; *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson or an Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man*. The book was to be Gurdjieff's manifesto to his contemporaries and his legacy to the future.

He worked at it intensively from January 1925 onwards, writing mostly in Armenian, his mother tongue. The manuscript was translated first into Russian and then into English by students who had remained at the Prieuré after his accident. By 1926, Gurdjieff was having the English version read aloud to groups and friends and pupils, mainly American, in order to observe the effect. He describes, in the first chapter {of Book IV} of this present book his dismay upon realising that readers not already acquainted with his ideas would understand almost nothing of the book if it were published in its then form. The description of the manner in which he overcame the almost insuperable difficulties due to his failing health and the lack of understanding of those surrounding him vividly illustrates the meaning of 'Conscious Labour and Intentional Suffering' which is the theme of Book IV. While rewriting *Beelzebub's Tales*, Gurdjieff started to write *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. This was also read aloud mainly for the benefit of American and other visitors at the Prieuré. In it he promised to reveal the secrets of man's three-fold nature in chapters of the Third Series and this promise {which is repeated in the published version} has

created a constant demand for its publication.

The Introduction and the first chapters of the Third Series [belonging to the first Book] are marked as having been written in Paris in 1933. The second and third Books were possibly written in note form but as far as I am aware, nobody alive has read them and Gurdjieff appears to have destroyed them in a moment of disgust with the reception of his work, probably sometime in 1934. He recovered his interest sufficiently to begin writing again in November 1934 when he wrote the amazing Prologue and chapter 1 {of Book IV} which is one of the most interesting parts of the present book. This was written in 1934 and in April 1935 he was already starting upon the second chapter. In this, he describes how he began to work on it at Child's Cafe in Columbus Circle, New York. When the first few pages had been written he received the news of Orage's death. This was a great shock to him because, although {Book 1 shows} Orage and he had a tumultuous relationship, Orage was a devoted and brilliant pupil, on whom Gurdjieff counted for the dissemination of his ideas, especially in the English-speaking countries.

In spite of Orage's death, he still hoped to revive the Institute and return to his earlier plan of creating an organisation through which his ideas and methods could be spread. This hope was based upon the intervention of some of his American pupils who had enlisted the interest of a very wealthy American senator from the West. Gurdjieff went to Washington on April the 23rd, 1935 in the hopes of meeting him and obtaining a large donation or loan that would be used to buy back the Prieuré. Another great tragedy then occurred to which Gurdjieff would certainly have referred had he continued his writing. This was the crash of the aeroplane bringing the hoped-for helper from the West. He was killed and Gurdjieff's hopes of substantial financial backing were finally dashed to the ground.

From the accounts of those who were with him at the time, this appears to have been a really serious blow from which he only slowly recovered. It was at that time that he made enquiries about the feasibility of his returning to Russia. When the Russian authorities made unacceptable conditions, he went to Germany and secretly made the short visit to the Caucasus and Turkestan, referred to earlier. After he returned to Paris, he did no further work on the Third Series. There is, in fact, no evidence of anything having been written after the 6th May, 1935. No doubt one reason for this was that he had intended to use the Third Series as material for the more intimate and advanced teaching of specially prepared pupils. If he was not to have an organisation, there was no longer any reason for completing it. The few people with whom he

intended to work in the future could be given what was required by direct contact with him. He dismissed his American groups, and from that time onwards until 1948, made no further attempt to re-establish his own Institute.

Although the situation had changed so radically, Gurdjieff preserved the English translation of the Introduction and {Books I and IV}. These were brought out again in 1947, when Gurdjieff's American pupils began to visit him in Paris after the long separation caused by the war. His attitude to the Third Series had changed. It was not often read aloud, but when it was there were no restrictions upon those who were permitted to hear it. It was certainly regarded as a privilege to have the typescript brought out, and if a visitor from abroad were bold enough to ask for it he was likely to be told that he could hear everything he needed in *Beelzebub's Tales*. Nevertheless, many strangers did hear it read and a few were even allowed to have copies for themselves. Whereas, on the last page of *Beelzebub*, written twenty years earlier, Gurdjieff had announced that the Third Series was to be read only to specially selected pupils, it was being read now in front of new pupils or even visitors who were not in any group. This is one of the reasons why Gurdjieff's family has decided to publish the book in response to a world-wide demand.

I want here to refer to the special place that his family occupied in Gurdjieff's life. They come from the Caucasus, where very ancient races, such as the Armenians, Greeks, Georgians and Assyrians, have, for thousands of years, lived according to traditions that regard the family as sacred. At the time of the Revolution in 1917 Gurdjieff's nephew and nieces were living in Alexandropol, the town where George Ivanovitch and most of his family were born and brought up. Gurdjieff was dearly fond of his family and although he made long journeys in Africa and Asia, he always returned home to rest and share with them what he had gained on his travels.

During the 1914-18 War, they were always constantly in dread of being invaded by the Turks, and were terrified by tales of Armenian massacres. Every time Gurdjieff visited them their courage returned, because of the confidence he inspired of being able to extricate them from trouble.

When the Revolution broke out in October 1917, the Russian Army packed up and went home, leaving the frontier unguarded. At the end of 1917, Gurdjieff brought all his surviving relatives to Essentuki, where he was installed with a group of pupils. They stayed there for eight months. When the situation in the Caucasus began to improve, Gurdjieff's brother and sisters returned with their children to Alexandropol. In 1918, while they were away, Gurdjieff's father, who had not wished to go with them, was killed by the Turks in his own house. As the difficulty of getting enough to eat was almost insurmountable, Mr. Anastasieff decided to bring his family back to the village of Baytar, situated on the Turko-

Armenian frontier close to Mount Amara [there is no listing of such a mountain in Armenia] . Their life was calm and happy until, at the beginning of 1920, the Turks invaded Armenia for a second time. Gurdjieff's sister, her husband and all but one of their children were massacred. Out of four hundred inhabitants of the village, all that remained were about thirty children, and his sole surviving nephew Valentine found himself an orphan. In the Spring of 1920 they were rescued by the Red Russian Army. Instinct and good fortune enabled the survivors to find Gurdjieff again in Tiflis. They were close to death at the time.

Soon after Gurdjieff and his group went to Turkey and the rest of the family stayed in Tiflis. By 1922, Gurdjieff had gone to Europe and settled in France. Madame Lili Galoumian was one of Gurdjieff's devoted followers and her husband was Counsellor in the Soviet Embassy in Paris. Through his intervention they obtained permission to leave Russia. First to go were Mr. Gurdjieff's mother, her daughter Sophie Ivanovna and her husband Mr. Kapanadze, Valya and Lucie. The following year they were followed by Dimitri, with his wife, Anna Grigorevna and their three daughters, Luba, Lida and Genia. Dr. Stjernwal [Stjernvall], who was Gurdjieff's closest pupil, was waiting for them when they came off the ship at Marseilles and Gurdjieff was ready for them at the Gare de Lyon when they reached Paris. Soon after this Gurdjieff took them to Fontainebleau where they lived in Le Paradou, a small house situated in the Chateau gardens.

His family had all arrived when his nearly fatal accident of July 1924 overwhelmed them. Knowing Armenian they could listen to the long talks that Gurdjieff had with his mother about his plans to commit his work to writing and his hope that his great dream would thereby be given a new chance of realisation. His wife and mother died soon after and Gurdjieff was left alone with none who could understand him. As the present book reveals the Prieuré passed through very hard times between 1925 and 1929. The children grew up strengthened by hardship and learned to adapt themselves to the many and various situations created by Gurdjieff and by the streams of visitors from abroad. They lived through the final agony of the Institute and the end of Gurdjieff's hopes for its revival.

His brother Dimitri and his family were living near the Etoile at 6 rue des Colonels Renard. Dimitri contracted cancer and died a lingering death in 1937. Gurdjieff was much attached to his brother and made every effort to find a treatment, but once again was obliged to abandon hope. After Dimitri's death he moved into rue des Colonels Renard where he lived to the end of his life twelve years later.

From time to time he went to America with schemes, some practical, some fanciful, for making money. He kept in touch with his faithful American followers but did little with groups either in America or France. He saw a

great deal of his nephew and nieces whom he undertook to train in his own way by practice rather than theory. He used to show them how it was possible to overcome their own weaknesses and how to behave with people. It was thanks to this discipline that they learned to understand people and to achieve independence in life. Gurdjieff insisted upon the importance for a man to be capable of adapting himself to every possible situation. He was himself extraordinarily clever and skillful in everything that he undertook. He taught Valya and his nieces how to prepare the dishes of nearly all the countries of Asia. In general, he began by giving an example, but even when he asked them to prepare something without demonstrating how to do it, he never gave any explanations. In fact, he detested all explanations, which prevent people from understanding what they are doing. He said simply, "Do this or that", or "Prepare this and that for me tonight". Whoever it might be had to guess what it was he meant and how he wanted him to act. If he did it well he was complimented but if he made a mistake he could be the object of a terrible manifestation of fury. This only happened rarely because his near ones very quickly learned to note what it was he wanted and how he wanted it done, and very often they could guess what he needed without his even needing to tell them.

After his death in October 1949, the family were lost and bewildered. They owed him so much and their attachment to him was very great. Though they were so close to him, they did not know how to continue their uncle's work. He had bequeathed so much to them in the form of his books and music and teaching, but he did not transmit the rules whereby they should be utilized. They dimly realised what a gigantic heritage had been left to them, but they did not know how to continue to develop his doctrine and his teaching. He had taught them not by theory but by practice. They knew that he had arranged for publishing his great book *Beelzebub's Tales*, but the rest was in the air.

The family were well aware that it was Gurdjieff's intention that everyone should be given the opportunity of studying and profiting by his teaching. He wanted his books very widely published and not confined to a small number of people. As his family were well aware that the book itself is not complete when they entrusted to me the task of editing this edition, they asked me to select, from copies of lectures given by him at various times, three or four that would be of value and interest to the general reader as well as filling in some of the gaps in the book. It is hoped that it will be possible later to collect all the notes that have been taken of Gurdjieff's extraordinary lectures and talks with his pupils and publish them as a final tribute to his work.

This Third Series is a strange work. It contains a direct and yet profound statement of the obligations which man must fulfill in order to deserve the name of man - 'a being made in God's image'. It gives a limited number of psychological exercises of little practical use unless they are placed within

the framework of the entire method. What remains is largely a candid self-revelation, an extraordinary account of Gurdjieff's own handling of his pupils and of his own personal problems. He writes about himself with the same merciless self-criticism which he applies to the life of man in general in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. It is not a diary, nor is it an autobiography. The book consists of a succession of pictures of certain periods of his life and more particularly of events in his life which had a decisive influence upon his own development and upon his plans for fulfilling his mission. He uses the device of 'flash-back' linking events seven or even forty years apart in a 'present moment' that is the core of his experience. He refers quite freely to his mistakes, to his own defects and to what he did to overcome them. On the other hand, he also claims for himself very extraordinary powers; claims which could largely be substantiated by those who knew him and were able to see for themselves that many of the phenomena that he writes about were in fact within his power to produce. It has been for me and many others a great encouragement to see that even such an exceptional man had to deal with personal problems no less common-place than those that we all have, and that he had his periods of discouragement and near despair, his periods of exalted hopes and confidence of fulfillment. He received extraordinary help from the spiritual masters he met in the East, who clearly were, almost to a man, convinced that he was destined to accomplish a lofty mission.

The Third Series, is however, much more than a personal self-revelation; it has a clear message which completes the more general picture presented in *Beelzebub's Tales*, and to a certain extent in *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. This message is that man can fulfill his destiny and achieve the purpose for which he exists here on the Earth, only if he is ready to suffer and make sacrifices. He must be prepared to sacrifice the comforts and the satisfactions of ordinary life for which most people live, and he must do so in a very special way.

The title of the book, *Life is Real Only Then, When I Am* is more significant than appears at first sight. The life of an ordinary man, as Gurdjieff sees it, is no more than a dream life. He lives and dies in a dream, and insofar as he continues to exist after death, this is still only a dream existence. And because it is a dream life, it has no permanence and leaves nothing permanent behind it. As our sleeping dreams dissolve in waking, so does our dream life itself have no substance to it. In order to have a real life both inwardly and outwardly, a great transformation has to take place and for this transformation a great price has to be paid. This price is expressed as 'conscious labour and intentional suffering', which I would render as 'service and sacrifice'. We have to be prepared to serve first of all the cosmic process in which we are involved, we have to serve the welfare of our neighbour and we have also, perhaps most significantly of all, to serve posterity, to prepare as far as it is in our power a better future for mankind.

Intentional suffering is distinguished, {particularly in Book IV}, from voluntary suffering or the suffering that one imposes upon oneself. This latter kind of suffering for Gurdjieff had no great value for our spiritual development, although it may be indispensable for achieving external aims including the prolongation of life. Intentional suffering means to undertake a task for the benefit of one's fellow creatures knowing full well that this task will expose us to hostile forces, to the need to make sacrifices and to bear the unpleasant reactions and manifestations of other people. Gurdjieff understood this very well and managed to convey to those who tried to understand his ideas, that anyone who sets himself to serve his fellow men must have his eyes open to the bitter consequences. He will attract towards himself hostility, trouble, and the need to make sacrifices. He must not expect a reward, nor even gratitude; nor must he look for visible and tangible results. He must do his work because it is the right thing to do. This precept which belongs to any system of objective morality is converted by Gurdjieff into a way of life which is the path towards one's own reality. Only when one has followed this path a certain distance does one begin to see what the world of illusion is, and to perceive another which is the real world hidden within this one, as we are hidden in our bodies. But in order to enter that world and to live in it, one must have acquired that something which is one's own 'I AM'.

{In Book I,} Gurdjieff draws the distinction between knowing oneself, by self-observation, by self-study, and all kinds of theoretical investigations and by practical exercises which belong to the exoteric stage or novitiate of the work, and understanding oneself in terms of the inner process by which one's own will is awakened, by which one is able to say I Wish, I Am, I Can. "I can because I can wish". These very telling phrases occur in the fourth chapter [Third Talk]. In Book IV {?}, he goes deeper and very much further. There he shows how it is possible for us to turn the negative forces to positive account. By this we enter the esoteric stage which leads to initiation. The true meaning of service and sacrifice begins to appear. Here Gurdjieff emphasises the need for balanced work acting upon all parts of our being both natural and spiritual.

He illustrates this in a very simple way by describing situations in which things have gone wrong. This is done by the lecture talks that form the greater part of the first book. He describes the way in which the work of the groups that Orage had organised in New York on the basis of self-observation had gone wrong, and explains how he set about to change this, by turning their attention directly to the real work of transformation of energies through one's attention, through one's experience of the I Wish, I Am, I Can. He also makes sharp references to the failure of the various attempts that had been made to imitate his work by followers of his ideas who had been dispersed as a result of his accident in 1924, using, as he puts it 'bits here and bits there' in order to provide a basis for some kind of organisation which they were to lead. This is how groups came to be formed in various countries and he shows how each of these,

through being too narrowly based, had in one way or another come to grief.

The final chapter which is entitled “The Inner and Outer World of Man”, is, sad to say, left incomplete at the very moment when Gurdjieff might have revealed to us the innermost secret of his own work. He insists upon the importance of understanding the way in which our life can be prolonged so that our task on this earth can be completed. In the early part of this chapter he gives hints how this is to be accomplished, but he stops at the point when the method is about to be revealed. Gurdjieff was working on this chapter up till the sixth of May 1935, and did no further writing after he received the disastrous news of the plane crash [of his hoped for financier].

This ended the writing phase of Gurdjieff’s life. He has left it on record that at this moment, when life had ceased to interest him, he had discovered the secret of prolonging it as long as required. He refers many times, not only in this last chapter {of Book IV}, but also in the first book, to the appalling state of his own organism as a result of several nearly fatal accidents including three gunshot wounds compounded by a succession of illnesses, and the constant overwork and strain to which he had been exposed. He asserts that under any ordinary circumstances he would have died about 1930, and tells us that he had found the secret of prolonging his life by the right use of intentional suffering. He lived for another twenty years and I, myself can vouch for extraordinary power he had over his body. Any ordinary man would certainly have died from the frightful accident which he suffered in August 1948. We who were present during the following days could see that he brought to bear some means of keeping his hold on this world until he was satisfied that his task had been finished. It was only when he was finally satisfied with all the arrangements for the publication of *Beelzebub’s Tales* that he relinquished his hold on life, and within a week he was dead.

There is also the fourth lecture talk {in Book 1}, which finishes abruptly at the point where Gurdjieff was about to explain the role of breath in man’s transformation. Gurdjieff regarded breathing exercises as particularly sacred and at the same time perilous. He was shocked at the way in which breathing exercises, particularly those of the Indian Yogis, had been introduced into the West and employed to produce states of ecstasy and to develop certain powers of perception and experience. In *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, he quotes a talk with a solitary Persian dervish, who warned him against the use of breathing exercises by those who do not understand what secondary effects may occur. Gurdjieff himself did not reject breathing exercises. On the contrary, he taught a progressive series of exercises and also explained the fundamental principles of right and wrong breathing. There is right natural breathing and right artificial breathing for the purpose of spiritual development. The second can be used either to produce temporary states of

excitement, or to permit a steady growth and development of the inner powers of man. Breathing has a special connection with the 'kesdjan' body of man. (This term was introduced in *Beelzebub's Tales* to designate the state of the man in whom has been formed a second body which can be the seat of conscience and Objective Reason.) He was, however, very careful to make sure that only those who could be relied upon not to misuse the breathing exercises should be shown how to do them. This is probably the reason why he cut from the fourth lecture talk the part which was to describe the different forms of breathing, and the ways in which they are applied.

Clearly it would have been wrong for us to have repaired this omission by including the notes which were taken by pupils who were present. I consulted Gurdjieff's family and, after careful consideration, we agreed that the best course is to include, as an appendix, four of the lecture talks given by Gurdjieff that throw light upon his intentions regarding the present book. The first was given in London in 1922 and is taken from my own notes and those of A. R. Orage. It amplifies what Gurdjieff said in Lecture Talk 3 {of Book 1}. The second lecture was given in Chicago in 1924. It refers to the possibility of changing personality by hypnotism, {which is mentioned in passing in the second chapter of Book IV}. The third is interesting, both in showing Gurdjieff's connection with Sufism, and also in giving his account of the principles of breathing exercises. In deference to his clearly indicated intention, I have omitted the detailed description of practical exercises for combining breathing and movement. The last is not so much a lecture as a picture of Gurdjieff's teaching methods that completes the sketch given in the lecture talks {of Book 1}.

I have written 'completes' but in reality the book could not be completed. Even the fragments that remain are hard to piece together to give a coherent picture. The remarkable thing about the book is not its confusion, but the extraordinary sense it gives of being in direct contact with Gurdjieff's thought. My first duty as editor was to make sure that this sense of immediacy was not impaired. It is only where the translation was quite ungrammatical that I have rearranged the words slightly. There are many passages that contain obvious errors in copying and these have been corrected.

The result is a text that is not always easy to read; but it is authentic Gurdjieff. He says exactly what he wants to say. There are almost no strange, invented words such as make *Beelzebub's Tales* hard to read. There are very few comic interludes. The book deals throughout with the serious and central themes of human life and man's possible transformation. Any attempt at interpretation would be out of place; but for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with Gurdjieff's other books, there are some passages to which attention should be drawn.

The first occurs at the end of the first chapter or lecture talk. Here

Gurdjieff speaks of the pitfalls which beset those who have tried to imitate his work on the basis of inadequate experience. He describes seven or eight groups in Russia, Turkey, Greece, Germany, England and America, each of which had singled out one particular feature of his general system and attempted to build upon it. The tendency to build too much upon too narrow a foundation has been a besetting sin of the great majority of those who have tried to modernise ancient traditions or import spiritual methods from the East. Man's complex nature has to cope with an exceedingly complicated environment which is partly natural but partly of his own creation. If he is to change himself and his relationships, a total and balanced change is needed. This cannot be achieved by any single action however powerful it may be. Another feature of nearly all 'spiritual' movements is the tendency to remain on a very elementary level as far as what is actually being done, while talking about levels which the participants are incapable of understanding, let alone attaining!

All this is well brought out in {Book 1 of} this Third Series. The essential message is that the possession of one's own 'I' is the starting point of development, not an advanced stage to be reached in the distant future. To deserve the name of 'Man' one must have one's own 'I' and yet many seekers never even learn what it means to have a 'will of one's own', that is, to possess one's own 'I'.

One sad consequence of attempting to build on a narrow foundation is to create narrow loyalties. Each group has its own 'secret' that it jealously guards and believes to be superior to that of all the others. The curse of narrowness of outlook is an important subsidiary theme of {Book 1} [the Third Series].

The great theme {of Book IV} is intelligent conscious sacrifice of the lesser good in order to attain the greater. One must be prepared to sacrifice comfort, health, the good opinion of our friends and enemies. We must even be prepared to sacrifice our own powers. Gurdjieff, from childhood, possessed unusual powers that by the age of thirty he had developed to such an extent that he could do what he liked with people. The temptation to use such powers to further one's personal aims must be overwhelming. They can make our outward life exciting, blissful, successful, but they cannot help us to change ourselves. Gurdjieff describes vividly how he was led to the decision to forego the use of his own psychic powers.

Gurdjieff demonstrated that intentional suffering and true joy of living go together. He suffered more than most men, in body, in feelings and in spirit. His undertakings all failed; he died with his work barely started, assured only that *Beelzebub's Tales* would be published, but quite unsure as to the outcome of publication. Nevertheless, he enjoyed life and had a limitless capacity for friendship. He was misunderstood and maligned even by his followers. He breathed threatenings and slaughter, but he never deliberately did anyone an injury. He had extraordinary powers of divination, of healing, of hypnotism, insights into the unseen world and

yet he allowed himself to be exploited, ridiculed and belittled. Sometimes, he even seemed to provoke hostility and derision. All this was part of his plan of life, based upon understanding the significance and use of intentional suffering.

Readers of the present book will miss the purpose if they do not try to enter into Gurdjieff's own experiences so vividly and candidly described. He was an extraordinary man who understood the necessity of being also an ordinary man.