



Performance of the '39 Series',  
1951



de Hartmann, 1921



Gurdjieff, 1924

## The history of Gurdjieff Movements

by Wim van Dullemen ©2002

### INTRODUCTION

Each person carries in him or herself-like a child that has hidden some beautiful pebbles, a feather or some pieces of colored glass in a secret drawer-some small number of primary experiences that shaped his or her life. Experiencing Gurdjieff's Movements is one of those for me. Honoring the request to write about the Movements for Stopinder, I open the drawer and take that particular pebble and hold it now in my hand. Look how enigmatic it is, its dim reflection of light, the curving veins that run through it. I turn it around and immediately a whole new pattern unfolds in my hand. As impossible as it would be to describe this pebble, is my task in writing about these Movements.

But if I am going to try now, it will not be by pretending to know; after all, I am still in a learning process and want only to pass on what others have taught me. What I learned from Kate and Tinky Brass, whose attitude stands out as an example of what cooperation should be, patiently demonstrating for me the treasured Movements from their line of Work-the original Ouspensky line.

I wish also to describe what I understand of the historical picture, painted so eloquently for me by Dushka Howarth. I want also to recall my experiences with the many independent groups I met during my period of intensive travels, that took me throughout Europe, from Scandinavia to Greece, and also to parts of America. Each of the groups faced the present-day reality of the Gurdjieff Work in their own way and I learned much from them. The vitality of our own Movements groups, in Amsterdam and Berlin, brought me new insights each time we came together, and I have tried to incorporate some of these experiences as well in this article.

I am indebted most of all to Mme. Solange Claustres, herself a pupil of Gurdjieff for seven years. During the long years I played the piano in her classes she provided me with prolonged and intensive instruction on Gurdjieff's Movements. This has been one of the great privileges of my life.

### REMEMBERING MME. SOLANGE CLAUSTRES' CLASSES

Somewhere in the mid-sixties a bunch of us hippies interested in the theories of Gurdjieff, entered a dance-studio in the then still existing old Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam.

We were welcomed by a beautiful French lady, whose relaxed smile put us directly at our ease. Without losing any time, she ranked us into lines, as if we were an Army squadron, and demonstrated a vigorous movement of arms, legs and head, that we had to perform simultaneously. An elderly woman sat at the piano and began pounding the keyboard, seemingly searching desperately for the right keys, to a haunting and strange melody.

The combination of the movements of my body with the music had a sudden impact on me. It was as if a strong light had penetrated everything in that hall, as well as myself. I knew that I had hit upon something of an enormous magnitude and power.

Later that same afternoon an incident occurred that made an even deeper impression on me. We were told to sit and relax, while Mme. Claustres checked the tension in our bodies by gently moving our shoulders. One of us, a strong, tall man was obviously very tense, because after trying to relax his shoulders, she lost her patience and said angrily, "This man is stiffer than a piece of stone from the Alps; it is impossible for anyone to work on the Movements in this condition." The man looked so unhappy and uncomfortable that it caused a brave young woman from among us, to stand up for him. "But Madame," she exclaimed, "you are talking to our Group Leader."

Without comment Mme. Claustres walked back to her place in front of the class, then wheeled around and faced us all with a look of stern determination, and said, as solemnly as a judge passing sentence, "He may talk about ideas, yes; talk as long as he likes, but his body is not in the Work!"

"The body has to be in the work ... the body has to be in the work...."-While biking home that evening, these words, like a Buddhist prayer drum, kept resounding in my head. A door had been opened and I understood how one-sided my intellectual pose had been. The body, that was now skillfully managing the bike through chaotic traffic in the center of old Amsterdam-my own body-was the body I had ignored, and that I had excluded from my thought.

My legs propelled the bike forward-what would I be without my legs? I drank in this new truth, so simple that it had been long forgotten. Why

had I forgotten? The silent water of the canals mirrored a dark evening sky. Hidden in the midst of their concentric circles was a deep enigma.

I had been asked to play the piano in Mme. Claustres' classes and for the next thirteen years I played for all the classes in Holland. I had to do both the Movements and the music, because a pianist who did not have the Movements in his body was of no use to her. Sometimes I was so exhausted from the required work, I would fall asleep between the classes with my head on the piano. What I understand now of the Movements inner content, took shape in me during these years, because of Mme. Claustre's knowledge, example and inspiration. I saw that in each moment one had to renew the attention, to check again and again the contact with the body and the feelings, and to feel remorse for one's incompetence. To be honest and simple-this is what she demanded of us. My own sense of independence is proof of the validity of her teaching.

What, after all, is the practical value of a teaching that only produces an "eternal student," one who will never be able to stand on his or her own feet?

## A DEFINITION OF MOVEMENTS

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff left a legacy of unique diversity

He wrote three books and, in collaboration with his pupil Thomas de Hartmann-a Russian composer well established in the ranks of the avantgarde in the beginning of the twentieth century-composed over 200 musical compositions. Further he created an intriguing body of some 250 dances and physical exercises called Movements, no doubt the spearhead of his teaching, for he had wanted to be known simply as "a teacher of dancing."

For many, the first impression of the Movements will be a revelatory opening to the never be foreseen, unlike any-thing they have been familiar with in the world of dance.

Those who have practiced the Movements often refer to them as "sacred dance," because of their extraordinary impact on their psychological state and expanding aware-ness.

Mme. Claustres described them as "an objective form of art... a construction of great beauty that we cannot fath-om, but which contains the law of the evolution of human consciousness. They express how and in which direction that progression has to go and as such they are a school in the real sense of that word." (1)

Although the origins of these dances have been the sub-ject of considerable speculation and mystification there remains little doubt that Gurdjieff created the major part of them himself. As Mme. Solange Claustres stated, "A num-ber of these dances stems from the Middle and Far East where Gurdjieff studied them during his travels, visiting religious communities or special ethnic groups, but the majority he created himself." (1)

Gurdjieff's Movements within the context of early 20th century european dance and the avantgarde

A whole library can be filled with the published writings of Gurdjieff s philosophical and psychological ideas, but a comparative study regarding his Movements has never been made. Yet, if we ask ourselves what is really new about them, we cannot avoid considering the works of other prominent artists active at the same time. This will help us to see the accomplishments of this revolutionary creator more clearly, in profile against this background.

According to one of his own explanations, the aim of his Movements was to assist the "harmonious development of man" by a method combining mind and feeling with the movements of the body, and manifesting all three of them together. This is a development that can never happen mechanically, by accident or by itself, but which stimulates the formation of what he called "the whole man: mind, body and feeling." (2)

The division of man into body, emotions, and intellect was not uncommon in the writings of the Russian Symbolists (34) and, even more interesting, brings to mind the work of Francois Delsarte. Now regarded as one of the founders of modern dance. Delsarte taught, in the mid-nineteenth century, a system relating all human expres-sions to one basic law, his "Law of Three." (5)

Painter and choreographer, Oskar Schlemmer was another pioneer fascinated by the threefoldness of man, as shown by his "Triadic Ballet" for which Paul Hindemith composed the music. By 1923, when he worked for the Bauhaus in Weimar, he had already fully developed his geometrical concepts of the human body, which were in dramatic contrast with the then prevailing free flowing expressions of Isadora Duncan. Schlemmer, moreover, was able to explain the deep significance of geometric body positions with an astonishing and visionary precision. His figure drawings are certainly evocative of the powerful abstract body positions employed by Gurdjieff in his stage presentations the very same year. (6)

Another parallel with Gurdjieff s Movements is to be

found in Emile Jacques Dalcroze's approach, especially in his rhythmic studies. And perhaps not only in these, because it is reported that at the night of the first demon-stration of Gurdjieffs Movements in Paris in 1923 Dalcroze's students protested in front of the theater, shout-ing, Tricheur... Voleur. (11)

...BUT THE EXISTENCE OF THESE SIMILARITIES DEMONSTRATES THAT GURDJIEFF WAS A CHILD OF HIS TIME AND SUBMITTED TO THE MYSTERIOUS FORCE BY WHICH, IN ANY GIVEN CULTURAL PERIOD, THE SAME EXPERIMENTS ARE PERFORMED SIMULTANEOUSLY BY INDEPENDENT AND GEOGRAPHICALLY SEPARATED PERSONS.

It is, however, highly unlikely that Gurdjieff would have been in the least interested in any European who had devel-oped something comparable to his own work, let alone copy it, but the existence of these similarities demonstrates that Gurdjieff was a child of his time and sub-mitted to the mysterious force by which, in any given cultural period, the same experi-ments are performed simultaneously by independent and geographically separated persons.

Gurdjieff was not only a "master of dance" but he wrote books and composed music as well and used these different art forms to mutually sustain and enhance one another. (12) This leads us looking for a common denominator linking Gurdjieff to European art, to the origin of the Gesamtkunstwerk.

This concept, first used and propogated by Richard Wagner, deeply influenced Russian Symbolism. Relating Gurdjieff to this late nineteenth century cultural trend is treading on thin ice, but it is the purpose of his art rather than its form that is reminiscent of Symbolism, where the merging of different arts had to call forth a new vision and ultimately a new form of being, as in a religious service.

Further it is noteworthy that both Scriabin and Kandinsky, who were to develop the concept of Gesamtkunstwerk fur-ther into the area of synaesthesia, were personal friends of De Hartmann.

This comparison shows us a noticeable difference as well, which is Gurdjieff s economy of means. The reverber-ation of one tone in his music can be as effective as a whole orchestra playing a minute long dramatic sequence. If we, judging from hindsight, realize that

exaggeration is the enemy of artistic expression, we can confirm that in this respect Gurdjieff, in his Movements and music, was truly modern.

A further difference is the fact that performances of the works of Wagner, Scriabin, Mahler, and the like, will be subject to the division of active performers and passive spectators. In contrast with this typical European cultural phenomenon, it is possible for anyone to participate in Gurdjieff's Movements who can find a teacher in the tradition of Gurdjieff's Work and with an organized class.

All ancient cultures relate dance to manifestations of God, Creation and its Mysteries. In those cultures, dances invariably accompany and assist men and women in their crucial steps towards physical and psychological growth. Movements represent the result of an ultimate effort by Gurdjieff to reinstall in the life of people-especially those living in Western cultures-the importance of dances and physical exercises in the processes of self-development. He introduced and implanted in our culture a new liturgy, a new ritual to stimulate and assist transformation of individual people and of society as a whole.

The Movements can and should be a point of reference and study for all serious people.

## "OLD MOVEMENTS" AND "NEW EXERCISES"

Gurdjieff created Movements in two completely different stages of his life, the first from 1918 until 1924, the year of his almost fatal car accident, and the second from 1939 until his death in 1949.

The earlier Movements were performed on stage in 1923 in Paris, and in 1924 in America, and consisted of "obligatory exercises," work dances, dervish dances, a group of women's dances, and several elaborate prayer rituals and ceremonies.

In 1939, after a period of fifteen years, he again took up his activities as a "master of dance." In what was probably the most structured teaching practice during the last decade of his life, Gurdjieff organized Movements classes for different groups almost every day and gave scores of new Movements and exercises until his death in 1949. There cannot be any doubt that his Movements in this period of his teaching were among his most primary activities and concerns. In this period he created what became known as the "39 series." An important difference between the old Movements and the new exercises is that for the accompaniment of his early Movements Gurdjieff himself composed the music in cooperation with Thomas de Hartmann, who wrote it originally for a 36 piece orchestra and reworked it later for piano solo.

Only the old Movements have Gurdjieff's own musical accompaniment, whereas Thomas de Hartmann composed the music for the "39 series" after Gurdjieff's death. This time he had to compose alone, without Gurdjieff's guidance, but he used the same signature style as in his earlier musical cooperation with Gurdjieff.

## THE CREATION OF THE "39 SERIES"

This last decade of Gurdjieff's life, the second stage of his Movements teaching, was one of extraordinary creativity. "Our group had a class once a week," remembered Mme. Solange Claustres, "and he taught at least one new Movement in each one of them. This continued for the seven years I was in his classes! He demonstrated the new 6 Movements, but rarely explained much about them. His presence was so strong-it literally filled the whole place- that you could absorb the new exercise in a direct way. No further explanation was needed. We were never allowed to make choreographies notes, because this activity would reduce our first and complete impression to an analytical or rational attitude."

Gurdjieff's stream of creativity was confirmed by another pupil, Mrs. Jessmin Howarth, a choreographer at the Paris Opera before she joined forces with Gurdjieff: "He used to come every evening with three or four absolutely new attempts." (11)

Those who were in his classes at that time described Gurdjieff's creativity to me as an empirical experiment of great intensity, lasting years. (12)

He made a supreme effort to develop exercises that would help people strengthen their awareness, will and power of attention. Sometimes he was weak or sick and had to support himself, leaning against the piano to keep standing. But he kept on working.

It was also explained to me that Gurdjieff studied the results of each new Movement he gave by observing the state of the people in the class. Many of his new exercises did not reach the goal he had in mind, only some did. It is reported that he sometimes left during the classes, to come back after a while to propose a small change in a Movement, for instance a wrist that had been straight was now bent, an arm that was horizontally forward was now diagonally forward. Occasionally even these new changes did not fulfill his goal of the desired state in the dancers, and he then would give a strict order, "No... stop ... forget this one, don't perform it again ever." That was the definite end of such a Movement. However, if a Movement did create the desired state in the psyche and bodily expressions of the performers, he would say, "That's it, this one is set and ready now. What number are we?" This referred to the numbers they gave to the new "set and ready" movements. These numbers represented the slowly growing list of what became the "39 series," the group of Movements Gurdjieff advised his pupils to practice. The "39 series" were thus the kernel of his new exercises, the ones he had accepted as finished and relevant. All his other attempts, many of which have been remembered and are since being performed by his students, had not his full approval and remain in this respect, open to question, however beautiful they may be. (13)

Work on the series went on until the end, coming to a finish only because of Gurdjieff's sickness and death. Even on his last trips to America he added seven new Movements to the list. For that reason a list of 46 Movements is used in America versus 39 Movements in Europe. It is interesting to note that not only were new items added by Gurdjieff in America, but the internal order, the sequence of Movements, was changed considerably, as well, most probably by Gurdjieff himself. (14)

It is possible that he was looking for an internal order for the new Movements he had selected, a sequence that coupled one Movement to the next, like chapters in a book.

## THREE CATEGORIES

We find it useful to divide the Movements into three categories, a classification to be considered by every student of the Movements.

1. The older Movements, stemming from Gurdjieff's first stage of teaching. These were practiced for five to six hours a day by the entire group of Gurdjieff's pupils from 1918 until the demonstrations in 1923 and 1924 (15) and are the only Movements existing for which Gurdjieff himself wrote the music.

Of those Movements, 27, are remembered and practiced to this day in authentic transmission lines stemming from Gurdjieff. The six Obligatories belong to this group.

For several other Movements used in the early demonstrations, only the music remains because the dances themselves have been forgotten or were too difficult to reconstruct.

2. The "39series," being the set of 39 Movements selected by Gurdjieff out of the multitude of his new exercises given from 1939 until his death in 1949. He recommended these for further practice and he considered them "set and ready." In fact the prominence of these 39 Movements among his other attempts was so obvious that when Gurdjieff asked Thomas de Hartmann to compose music for "his newer exercises" everybody understood he was talking about his "39." (16)

After Gurdjieff's death Thomas de Hartmann composed the music for this series, i. e., for 37 of them, because for two of the Movements the pianist is required to improvise.

3. The remainder of the new exercises-that have been remembered and are still practiced-amount to between one and two hundred Movements, depending on the criteria applied for counting. These vary from the most complicated exercises with separate roles for every dancer in the class, to short fragments for the study of a certain rhythm, or of a certain bodily action.

Mme. Jeanne de Salzmann, a pupil through whose activities many of those newer exercises have been preserved, explained once that it had only been possible to remember a minority, some 25 percent, of all the exercises Gurdjieff taught, (17) Thomas de Hartmann wrote music for fifteen Movements in this group, eight of these can be heard on our previous 2 CD set "Gurdjieff's Music for the Movements"- Channel Classics Records, CCS 15298. Gradually over the years, many of those from this last group acquired their own musical accompaniment through the dedicated activity of other composers associated with Movement classes, like Alain Kremski and Edward Michael, as well as many amateur composers.

## CHARACTERISTICS AND MEANING OF THE "39"

If we compare the "39" with Gurdjieff's earlier Movements, we basically see the same components: strong dervish dances, beautiful and quiet women's dances, powerful geo-metrical patterned Movements, as well as sacred prayer rituals. However the ancient religious and ethnological components are markedly reduced while abstract gestures and positions, performed in mathematical displacements, now prevail. It is as if during the fifteen year time span since his first efforts, Gurdjieff had digested his earlier impressions and reflected upon them to reappear with an even more personal style, in which mathematical and geometrical crystallizations were now dominant.

The drama of the human condition, so poignantly captured in a number of the old Movements, seems to have given way to a more abstract construction, but one that gives immediate and plentiful opportunity for work on oneself and work for the class as a whole.

The later Movements were even more difficult to perform than the earlier ones and demanded a huge effort from a class in their demands on precision, quickness, discipline and sustained attention for their entire duration.

The "39" Movements have been called Gurdjieff's Magnum Opus and many have felt that in this series he summarized his whole teaching in his final and most powerful message to humankind.

## THE MUSIC FOR ALL THE NEW EXERCISES WAS ORIGINALLY IMPROVISED

During the decade that Gurdjieff gave his new exercises and gradually established the "39," not only was the making of choreographic notes explicitly forbidden by him, but another of his strict orders was that the music should be improvised by the pianist.

He would give a rhythm to the pianist and his instructions were generally limited to "now just do it." (18) In fact, it is reported that the choice of a particular rhythm often provided Gurdjieff with the fundamentals out of which he created the whole structure of the new Movement. (19) Mme. Solange Claustres, as a talented pianist who had already won a "Premier Prix" for her playing before she met Gurdjieff, was asked by him to take over his classes when he travelled to America in 1949. "He instructed me to improvise," she told me, "and of course I had to, because no written music existed at that time that could be used. Improvising was not easy for me, but it taught me a great deal about the true function of music. It has absolutely nothing to do with "accompaniment" but is a living part of the inner work that takes place in the classes." (1)

A couple of decades earlier a specialist in composing music for gymnastics, Rudolf Bode, had already stressed the importance of improvisation: "... for the teaching of gymnastics as far as it is accompanied by music, the ability to employ some improvisation, even though it be produced by the most simple means, is absolutely essential... every kind of merely outer simulation must necessarily lead to monotony...." (21)

Obviously, Gurdjieff worked along the same lines and was on his guard for any premature fixations. Movements and music had to be alive. The truth of his work should present itself in an ongoing creative process, an ever new and immaculate form in every moment.

For those who regard such processes as self-evident it will be useful to add that a balance between music and dance is rare. Historically, one of the two was dominant: either the music was written to sustain the ballet, or the ballet had to fit into the existing music. Many artists, like those of the "Loheland" dance school in Germany in the beginning of the last century, have directed their energy towards restoring this balance. About this question Mme. Solange Claustres following words touch the very heart of the matter. "It is the sound produced by the pianist that determines everything, it is this sound that has to complete the inner process brought into action by the movements of the dancers." (22)

Indeed, in doing Movements one can experience sound in a totally new way, as if it illuminates one's inner life. A unique balance comes about in us; the music, the gestures and our inner aspirations become one and it is as if we have entered a new place, one without walls and outside of time. At such a moment we experience life in a way that will become difficult to forget.

## THE TRANSMISSION OF MOVEMENTS

In the following chapters I will discuss the transmission of Movements. This confronts us again with the question, What are Movements? Because the answer to this question alone tells us what exactly has to be transmitted. Each man's answer will be different, and this will be something to remember as we venture into this complex realm. For those living in a world of outer forms there will be no problem.

Movements are movements, a form of gymnastics, a bit mysterious because not many people know them, but therefore all the more suited to offer as a product in today's "Supermarket for Self-development." Those searching for a meaning behind the ruthless wall of appearances understand the difficulties in transmitting and receiving Movements.

If I were to be asked what the Movements mean to me, I would answer: "they help me to come closer to God." The sound of the wind in a tree, the amazement of a child that wakes up and finds the world covered with snow, the beauty of a lonesome house in the fields with smoke coming out of its chimney, the eyes of the beloved, the pale light of the new morning vibrating with the eternal enigma of life.... Movements help me to come closer to all that. They either awaken an energy that was dormant, or they put me in touch with something from the outside. This new energy that starts circulating in me is precious. It makes me calm, aware and determined, and it will be this energy that I will need when I have to face the utterly unknown.

Mme. Claustres once said to me, "All Gurdjieffs Movements are prayers." And when she herself once went to Gurdjieff to tell him how deeply she was always touched by his Movements, he only said quietly, "Yes . . . they are medicine." (23)

The inner meaning we attach to the Movements causes the difficulties in the often seemingly contradictory process of their transmission. The Gurdjieff Work is a difficult area to investigate because of the prevailing sense of secrecy, as well as the increasing isolation and lack of cooperation, if not hostility, between the lineages.

My role of "wandering minstrel," playing the Gurdjieff De Hartmann music in all sorts of places and circumstances, helped me to come into contact with many Gurdjieff groups and organizations that I had never met before. They all were kind to me and welcomed me warmly. I respected them and I refused judgment, as I only wanted to learn.

In that period it struck me how my work as a "wandering minstrel" resembled the job I had, several years before, working for a large international company. Of course I did not play piano for them, but I was selected to function as a central person, in an experiment supervised by specialists from Harvard University, to which all managers in Europe could talk completely freely about their problems and how they proposed to solve them. Of course I was under an obligation of strict confidentiality.

The coincidence and the resemblances of these two activities, as if this stage of my life had a specific pattern, convinced me that all organizations, whether their goals are spiritual or commercial, have to cope with the same socio-logical problems. For this reason, most large commercial enterprises have changed their hierarchical structure into a flat leveled organization, consisting of many independent smaller units, who can better adjust themselves to the complexities and demands of present day society.

When I try to convey my experiences during these years of comparative research it is not my intention to criticize the very organizations that have been beneficial to my own development, but to present those findings in such a way that an analysis of the situation is possible and will lead to a constructive way to work in the future.

I have to make clear the subjective nature of my findings, and add further that I know the situation in Europe much better than I do the situation in America.

## Movements Traditions

### WHERE ARE MOVEMENTS BEING TAUGHT, HOW, AND TO WHOM?

Movements can only be learned in an authentic transmission line.

Study of them will take years of determined effort and should encompass not only Gurdjieff's Movements, but his teaching as a whole.

Any learning process has stages. It requires the acquisition of new knowledge, the absorption and digestion of this material, and finally the application in practice of what has been learned in theory. In learning Movements these stages add up to a minimum of ten years.

It only makes sense to study with a teacher who knows the Movements, is willing to give the whole Movement and not just in fragments, and is able to stimulate the class in its inner work.

A transmission line is authentic when founded by a personal pupil of Gurdjieff. These pupils often cooperated with one another, at least in the years immediately after Gurdjieff's death, and amidst the labyrinth formed by these lines the Institut Gurdjieff in Paris and the related Foundations stand out because of their historical bonds, their competence and the size of their organization, and because all were led by their founder, Mme. Jeanne de Salzmann.

Several other lines, independent from the above mentioned organization, and smaller in size, can also be qualified as authentic because they too were founded or guided by direct pupils of Gurdjieff who themselves stood in his Movements classes.

From this last group the original Ouspensky and Bennett lines seem the most important, in so far as comparative study of Movements transmission is concerned, but these are by no means the only ones.

All these organizations differ widely. To call the Bennett line an organization is a misnomer in the first place, because it consists of a varying group of pupils of John Bennett who have organized different sorts of activities, open to everybody, according to specific needs or circumstances.

The Ouspensky line is a relatively small one, while the Foundation, by which term I indicate the different international Foundations founded or supported by the French Institut Gurdjieff and the Foundations, which incorporate thousands of students. Despite their different sizes these last two have in common that they could be qualified as hierarchic.

If we, just as an example, want to compare these three lineages we need criteria for comparison. The following criteria seem relevant.

criteria for comparison -whether or not Movements are related to the study of Gurdjieff's teaching as a whole

-the number and type of Movements that are being transmitted

-the relation between form and content of these Movements

-to whom they are taught

-whether or not whole Movements are given, or only fragments of Movements.

Application of these criteria will quickly bring the strengths and weaknesses of the different lines of transmission to the surface.

Both the Foundation and the Ouspensky line teach Movements only to members of their organizations, as an integrated component of the whole teaching they are supplying. The Bennett line experiments with short seminars, open to everybody, where the Movements dominate all other activities.

The repertoire of the Ouspensky line consists only of the 27 older Movements that have been preserved, but not only do they know them in full historical detail, they also transmit them in their totality.

The Bennett line has a mix of some old Movements and several newer exercises. They too teach the whole Movement, however not with the same painstaking care for detail as demonstrated by the Ouspensky line.

The Foundations have a true wealth of newer exercises at their disposal, unequalled by any other existing lineage. However, in Europe many of the older Movements are hardly practiced, at all and are almost forgotten. Equally unparalleled their repertoire of newer exercises is their knowledge and experience in exploring the inner content of them. The other side of this coin is that they show a shocking disrespect for the form of Movements by their inclination to teach fragments only. Further, because of their size, they are in danger of creating "specialists" for different areas of Gurdjieff's teaching, Movements being one of them. To become a "specialist," in whatever part of the Gurdjieff Work, means to suicide oneself for the whole of it.

It is remarkable, and touching as well, to realize that the three entities we selected all reflect, to this day, the historical stage of the Movements at the time when they received them.

The intensive training programs in the Ouspensky line, where everybody knows all the old Movements by heart, originated no doubt from the time that Gurdjieff demanded his pupils to exercise them, five to six hours a day, as preparation for the public demonstrations in Paris and in America. The focus on the newer exercises in the Foundation, and the way to connect them to inner work, stems from the last stage of Gurdjieff's Movements teaching and the enthusiasm of Mme. Jeanne de Salzmann, who preserved many of these exercises. The readiness to experiment with new forms of Movements education, characteristic of the Bennett line, mirrors the open-mindedness of John Bennett himself.

The key supplied by this comparative effort, and the basic lesson to be learned is that no line is perfect. When you want the best of these three worlds you have to sacrifice your isolation and start working together. That means to cooperate without being incorporated. This is what we in the Berlin and Amsterdam Movement groups have done.

Two years ago we organized in Amsterdam an exchange on the subject of the "old" Movements between our group and a group of the original "Ouspensky" line. To our surprise, Mrs. van Oyen, one of the two living members of Ouspensky's London group, turned up to join us and when asked why, given her extreme old age, she replied, "I saw many years ago how the Work had split itself into small fractions. Now I heard that an effort is being made to unite what I had seen drift apart, and for this reason I insisted on being present. Only if we work together will there be results!"

This is a direction I hope will continue.

## MOVEMENTS AND SECRECY

The one single factor responsible for the inaccessibility of the Movements is "secrecy."

Let us review two reasons for this inclination, because a side effect of this is responsible for the the growing isolation of many Gurdjieff communities.

For one to whom the Movements represents the most intimate and sacred expression of the "Work," I am dismayed when I witness the Movements being offered to people who think they are dealing with another variety of aerobics.

There is the well known esoteric principle, "You can't give what cannot be taken," or, "Do not cast pearls before swine." But how to select those that can take them? Should inclusion be restricted to members of an organization? When I play a Gurdjieff recital for a group of people who have never even heard of Gurdjieff, the inner response, as I can sense and feel it, is no less than that of members of Gurdjieff organizations. On the contrary, it is sometimes even better, and the question arises as to who can take what.

Of course it is necessary to protect the Movements against outside influences and to keep them as pure as possible. Unfortunately changes occur anyhow, and this can never be stopped.

Curt Sachs, the great German researcher on music and dance, formulated the principle that no single cultural phenomena exists that will not be influenced by other cultural

phenomena and in its turn not influence other cultural phenomena. (24)

When Gurdjieff presented his Movements in France and in America, these events were open to anyone interested and with a single exception, admission was always free.

When he was asked, "Why do you open this to all these people?" he answered angrily, "How can you judge?... We have to let everyone hear. The results do not belong to us." (25) Clearly, he intended his work to have a definite influence; and indeed, would not anybody who has to live in the reality of our society with its out of control violent and destructive tendencies. Was the surrealist Andre Breton so far from the truth when he stated that modern society is the extension of Hell on earth. If we agree, are these definite influences not needed?

Prudence in dealing with Movements can change into arrogance, and here I refer to the old Latin root of that word, which means "To keep for oneself."

Esotericism is an historical fact and occurs in all religions. Secrecy is a human vice.

How to draw the line between the two?

This question was formulated by A.L. Staveley as follows, "Which is worse? That Movements fall into the hands of those who do not respect them, distort and dilute them? Or that they are kept so wrapped up and "protected" that those who could benefit by them and who must be those for whom Gurdjieff intended them and gave them to us to pass on, never get the opportunity to work on them?"

That was exactly the problem I faced when I felt the obligation to pass on what was given to me! "What" to pass on and to "whom?"

The only way I felt that the Work could be productive was to avoid an hierarchical, or closed structure. As formulated above, the new sociological situation of our time had done the same thing to large commercial institutions as to the Work organizations, and therefore it required co-operation rather than incorporation. It requires working on the same level, in smaller subunits, rather than in a "topdown" structure.

We tried to find a middle way, we didn't want to throw the Work out onto the street at the feet of every passer by, but rather, to open it to those with a real interest.

That has worked marvelously well-almost by itself two Movements groups were born, consisting of hard working and serious minded people, one in Berlin and one in Amsterdam, and they have stabilized themselves rather quickly. These groups have been in existence for over three years.

## MME. CLAUSTRES' CLASSES REVISITED

How changes affect the practice of Movements, even in the most protected and isolated situations, was brought home to me when I participated in some recent classes.

To begin with there was none of the vitality of one of Mme. Claustres' classes. A solemn teacher had prepared a little program of Movements sequences; the pianist was sitting stiffly behind the piano waiting for the command to start playing the sheet music in front of his nose, from which he dared not deviate.

With Mme. Claustres there was always a living synergy between instructor and musician. The teacher had to know how to play, if only a little, the rhythms, the harmonies and the tone quality needed for the accompaniment of any Movement she or he was teaching. Beware the pianist that in her classes would continue to play the music straight through! One needed to improvise, to find one's own way, and together with the class. "Feel" she would call out, "listen to the class, listen to your sound... make variations... work." When I once commented, "But I am playing for the Movements, not doing them." She would say, "If not with the body, then your fingers must do the movement on the keyboard." This advice, at first sight so strange, was a great help to me!

It is extremely important for anyone teaching classes to understand that we never worked in a program form in Mme. Claustres' classes. A Movement was selected by her because at that particular moment the class needed some characteristic of it. In that way she masterfully sought the "intervals" and guided us towards a new

octave of understanding, the pianist exploring the new area, sustaining the search as best he could!

Each class was an active search for an octave! Although we never discussed it, I have no doubt that this methodology was derived directly from Gurdjieff.

To be able to guide a class in such a way needs at least three qualities that she was able to demonstrate without words. Perhaps even more than these were shown, but only these three imprinted themselves deeply on my memory.

These are: Never to react on a personal level, but always to observe the whole class, as if from a distance. This is not to be confused with any kind of censorship; on the contrary, the second quality is to be able to accept one's feelings, be open to them and to be aware of the peculiar

moments when the transition from one feeling to another takes place. The third one, and the one most difficult to understand, is the ability to sense the body all the time, in an ever ongoing and active effort to integrate the specific radiation, life and being of the physical body in one's total presence, and never, not for one moment, to allow this process to be disturbed or destroyed by mental activities or emotional reactions. the last word: "sensation"

Let us be honest about sensation. In the Fourth Way every-body uses the term "sensation of the body." If one only could understand what that means!

Always, always I have to renew the first step in the process of sensing the body; by realizing that I do not know what it means.

It is but an illusion that I am able to establish contact with my body at will, it requires a very long time and one of determined effort. With this, the moment will come when the body finally responds. Only then, when this new sensation circulates through my entire body, from the top of my head down to my toes, only then have I found the true meaning of "sensation," which means I have found one of the components of the elixir of life that man has been try-ing to prepare for himself from the beginning of time.

## NOTES

(1) Wim van Dullemen, Madame Claudres' Talks about Gurdjieffs Movements, interview published in Bres, Amsterdam, October 1997. Article authorized by Mme. Claudres. Quotation kindly permitted by Bres.

(2) VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, EARLY TALKS OF GURDJIEFF, as recollected by his pupils, 1973 Triangle Editions, Inc. Toronto, Vancouver, see page 183.

(3) James Webb (an historian specialist in Russian Esotericism) the harmonious circle. Thames and Hudson, London, 1980. Page 535.

(4) Symbolism was a cultural trend which originated in the West European industrialized countries in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It could be characterized as a search for spiritual values against the domination of science and industrialization. It was strongest in Catholic and heavily industrialized countries, like Belgium. Russian Symbolism, although it expressed itself some two decades later than in Western Europe, permeated all of Russian cultural life in the beginning of the twentieth century and had a deep influence on P.D. Ouspensky.

(5) Pia Witzmann describes Delsarte's system based upon his Law of Threefoldness and Ninefoldness in: Der Einfluß des Okkulten auf den Tanz, 1995 "Okkultismus und Avantgarde" Edition Tertium, Frankfurt

(6) E. Roters "MALER AM BAUHAUS," Rembrandt Verlag, Berlin, 1965. Page 73. Oskar Schlemmer based his approach on an older essay from Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) 'Über das Marionetten Theater'. His theory, in a nutshell, is that mankind as a consequence of the Original Sin is only capable of subjective gestures and body postures. Only through strict adherence to pure geometric expressions can we approach the divine and recreate the innocence we once lost.

(7) Dushka Howarth, quoting her mother, Jessmin Howarth, during a five hour videotaped interview by Gert Jan Blom, New York, May 1622, 2000

(8) Of particular importance here is Gurdjieff's statement that "certain ideas can only be grasped when the emotions are tuned into them by means of music." See: J.G. Bennett's making a new world, Harper & Row, New York, 1973, page 167. This was said to clarify the role of music played before readings from his books and therefore is a convincing example of the enhancement of one art form through the other, which idea was at the very base of the concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk.

(9) Transcribed from tape recordings of Mrs. Howarth's lectures

(10) Telephone Conversations with Dushka Howarth and the author, 14/7, 18/7, 04/8, 5/8, 7/8 and 14/8 /1999. Nine additional telephone conversations took place from October, 1999 to December, 1999. These talks have greatly helped me understand the historical picture, as well as the specific events and the possible categorization of Gurdjieffs Movements. I am very grateful to her, for her advice and assistance.

(11) Mme. De Salzmann stated this when receiving a group of Dutch students, the author included, in Paris, February, 1970.

(12) Rudolf Bode, Musik und Bewegung, Kassel, 1930, Bärenreiter Verlag

(13) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, OUR LIFE WITH MR. GURDJIEFF, Arkana, 1992, page 218