

And so, for the purpose of avoiding any misunderstanding through this inherency, the data for which are formed in the entirety of contemporary man, thanks evidently to his frequenting of the cinema and thanks also to his never missing an opportunity of looking into the left eye of the other sex, I wish that this commencing chapter of mine should be printed in the said manner, so that everyone can read it through without cutting the pages of the book itself.

Otherwise the bookseller will, as is said, “cavil,” and will without fail again turn out to act in accordance with the basic principle of booksellers in general, formulated by them in the words: “You’ll be more of a simpleton than a fisherman if you let go of the fish which has swallowed the bait,” and will decline to take back a book whose pages you have cut. I have no doubt of this possibility; indeed, I fully expect such lack of conscience on the part of the booksellers.

And the data for the engendering of my certainty as to this lack of conscience on the part of these booksellers were completely formed in me, when, while I was a professional “Indian Fakir,” I needed, for the complete elucidation of a certain “ultra-philosophical” question also to become familiar, among other things, with the associative process for the manifestation of the automatically constructed psyche of contemporary booksellers and of their salesmen when palming off books on their buyers.

Knowing all this and having become, since the misfortune which befell me, habitually just and fastidious in the extreme, I cannot help repeating, or rather, I cannot help again warning you, and even imploringly advising you, before beginning to cut the pages of this first book of mine, to read through very attentively, and even more than once, this first chapter of my writings.

The Arousing Of Thought 22-28

Contemporary man

And so, for the purpose of avoiding any misunderstanding through this inherency, the data for which are formed in the entirety of contemporary man, thanks evidently to his frequenting of the cinema and thanks also to his never missing an opportunity of looking into the left eye of the other sex,

The inherency he is referring to is contemporary man’s inherency to thoroughly consume what one has paid for. The cinema was the dominant passive entertainment medium of Gurdjieff’s era. The left eye is the “eye of essence.” Perhaps this phrase is a reference to sex and flirting being the dominant active means of entertainment.

In *In Search of the Miraculous* Gurdjieff is quoted as saying:

“At the same time sex plays a tremendous role in maintaining the mechanicalness of life. Everything that people do is connected with ‘sex’: politics, religion, art, the theater, music, is all ‘sex.’”

He continues

I wish that this commencing chapter of mine should be printed in the said manner, so that everyone can read it through without cutting the pages of the book itself.

Gurdjieff is sure that readers will be inclined to read the book because they paid for it, simply and mechanically, by habit. And he does not want such readers and so he wishes them to be able to return it, almost as if unread, in the hope of getting their money back.

Booksellers

Otherwise the bookseller will, as is said, “cavil,” and will without fail again turn out to act in accordance with the basic principle of booksellers in general, formulated by them in the words:

The text suggests that “booksellers” may indicate organizations that promote specific ideas and theories, such as for example, theosophist, christian scientists, and other such spiritual movements.

cavil: “to raise frivolous objections, find fault without good reason,” 1540s, from Middle French *caviller* “to mock, jest,” from Latin *cavillari* “to jeer, mock; satirize, argue scoffingly” (also source of Italian *cavillare*, Spanish *cavilar*), from *cavilla* “jest, jeering,” which is related to *calumnia* “slander, false accusation.”

Gurdjieff here accuses booksellers of a lack of conscience, although, realistically, if a book's pages have been cut, it is no longer pristine and the bookseller would be justified in refusing to take it back. If taken literally, it does not correspond to a “lack of conscience” by the bookseller. However selling books that advance dubious theories and impractical ideas does.

Fishermen

“You’ll be more of a simpleton than a fisherman if you let go of the fish which has swallowed the bait,”

The reference to fisherman is probably Biblical in the sense of Jesus promising to make his disciples “fishers of men.” Those fishers of men were hardly simpletons in the normal sense.

Indian Fakir

Gurdjieff wraps these two words in quotes. The point he is making is that the European understanding of what a Fakir is and the oriental understanding are different. He expands on this in *Meetings With Remarkable Men* writing:

As I have happened to use the word ‘fakir’, I do not consider it superfluous to digress a little in order to throw some light on this famous word. It is, indeed, one of the many empty words which, on account of the incorrect meaning given them, particularly in recent times, has an automatic action upon all contemporary Europeans and has become one of the chief causes of the progressive dwindling of their thinking capacity.

Although the word ‘fakir’ in the meaning given it by Europeans is unknown to the peoples of Asia, nevertheless, this same word is in use there almost everywhere. Fakir, or more correctly *fakhr*, has as its root the Turkoman word meaning ‘beggar’, and among almost all the peoples of the continent of Asia whose speech is derived from ancient Turkoman, this word has come down to our day with the meaning of ‘swindler’ or ‘cheat’.

As a matter of fact, to express this meaning of ‘swindler’ or ‘cheat’ two different words are used among these peoples, both derived from ancient Turkoman. One is this word ‘fakir’ and the other is *lourie*. The former is the word used for a cheat or swindler who uses his guile to take advantage of others by way of their religiousness, while the latter is applied to someone who simply takes advantage of their stupidity. The name *lourie*, by the way, is given to all gypsies, both as a people and as individuals.

Ultra-philosophical question

Gurdjieff then makes a curious statement about needing to become familiar with booksellers, in order to resolve an ultra-philosophical question. Gurdjieff does not tell the reader what that question was, only that it was ultra-philosophical.

Philosophy: c. 1300, *philosophie*, “knowledge, learning, scholarship, scholarly works, body of knowledge,” from Old French *filosofie* “philosophy, knowledge” (12c., Modern French *philosophie*) and directly from Latin *philosophia*, from Greek *philosophia* “love of knowledge, pursuit of wisdom; systematic investigation,” from *philo* “loving” + *sophia* “knowledge, wisdom,” from *sophis* “wise,

learned;” a word of unknown origin. From mid-14c. as “the discipline of dealing in rational speculation or contemplation;” from late 14c. as “natural science,” also “alchemy, occult knowledge;” in the Middle Ages the word was understood to embrace all speculative sciences. The meaning “system a person forms for conduct of life” is attested from 1771. The modern sense of “the body of highest truth, the science of the most fundamental matters” is from 1794.

Ultra-: word-forming element of Latin origin meaning “beyond” (ultraviolet, ultrasound), or “extremely, exceedingly” (ultramodern, ultra-religious, from Latin *ultra* (adv. and prep.) “beyond, on the other side, on the farther side, past, over, across.”

Even with the above etymological descriptions, it is not clear what Gurdjieff means by ultra-philosophical. Perhaps he is implying that it relates to truth at the highest level.

But in the event that notwithstanding this warning of mine, you should, nevertheless, wish to become acquainted with the further contents of my expositions, then there is already nothing else left for me to do but to wish you with all my “genuine soul” a very, very good appetite, and that you may “digest” all that you read, not only for your own health but for the health of all those near you.

I said “with my genuine soul” because recently living in Europe and coming in frequent contact with people who on every appropriate and inappropriate occasion are fond of taking in vain every sacred name which should belong only to man’s inner life, that is to say, with people who swear to no purpose, I being, as I have already confessed, a follower in general not only of the theoretical—as contemporary people have become—but also of the practical sayings of popular wisdom which have become fixed by the centuries, and therefore of the saying which in the present case corresponds to what is expressed by the words: “When you are in Rome do as Rome does,” decided, in order not to be out of harmony with the custom established here in Europe of swearing in ordinary conversation, and at the same time to act according to the commandment which was enunciated by the holy lips of Saint Moses “not to take the holy names in vain,” to make use of one of those examples of the “newly baked” fashionable languages of the present time, namely English, and so from then on, I began on necessary occasions to swear by my “English soul.”

The point is that in this fashionable language, the words “soul” and the bottom of your foot, also called “sole,” are pronounced and even written almost alike.

I do not know how it is with you, who are already partly candidate for a buyer of my writings, but my peculiar nature cannot, even with a great mental desire, avoid being indignant at the fact manifested by people

When in Rome

Gurdjieff quotes the usual idiom incorrectly by saying “When you are in Rome do as Rome does.” We must presume that he didn’t wish to write “when in Rome do as the Romans do.” This may be because he has some very critical things to say about the Romans later in *The Tales* (Book 2)

In the German version, there is an interesting departure in idiom in this passage. The text is: „Mit-den-Wölfen-muß-man-heulen”—literally “with the wolves you must howl”

The commandment

... to act according to the commandment which was enunciated by the holy lips of Saint Moses “not to take the holy names in vain,”

Gurdjieff misquotes the commandment. It’s likely that this occasional habit that he adopts is intended to make the reader think about what the commandment actually is.

You can find it twice in the Bible verses Exodus 20:7 and also Deuteronomy 5:11. It is exactly the same in both:

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

King James Bible

Gurdjieff may be extending the commandment to include all holy names or may be referring to the many holy names for the absolute which he uses throughout *The Tales*.

Soul and sole

The point is that in this fashionable language, the words “soul” and the bottom of your foot, also called “sole,” are pronounced and even written almost alike.

sole: “bottom of the human foot” early 14c., from Old French *sole*, from Vulgar Latin **sola*, from Latin *solea* “sandal, bottom of a shoe; a flatfish,” from *solum* “bottom, ground, foundation, lowest point of a thing” (hence “sole of the foot”), a word of uncertain origin.

soul: Middle English *soule*, from Old English *sawol* “spiritual and emotional part of a person, animate existence; life, living being,” from Proto-Germanic **saiwalo* (source also of Old Saxon *seola*, Old Norse *sala*, Old Frisian *sele*, Middle Dutch *siele*, Dutch *ziel*, Old High German *seula*, German *Seele*, Gothic *saiwala*), a word of uncertain origin.

The meaning “disembodied spirit of a deceased person” is attested in Old English. As a synonym for “person, individual, human being” (as in every living soul) it dates from early 14c. Soul-searching (n.) “deep self-reflection, examination of one's conscience” is attested from 1871, from the phrase used as a present-participle adjective (1610s). .

Gurdjieff regrets the confusion that two words with almost opposite meanings will inevitably create as they have the same consonance.

There is a nuance to Gurdjieff's philologizing about the English words “soul” and “sole”—the meaning of the word “sole” as an adjective. This is the etymology:

sole: “single, alone, having no husband or wife; one and only, singular, unique,” late 14c., from Old French *soul* “only, alone, just,” from Latin *solus* “alone, only, single, sole; forsaken; extraordinary,” of unknown origin, perhaps related to *se* “oneself.”

If we review this passage in the German translations of *The Tales*, to see how the English element of it is handled, we see:

English soul is: „englischen-Seele”. The words soul, “soul,” and sole, “sole of the foot” are: die Worte soul, „Seele,” und sole, „Fußsohle.”

of contemporary civilization, that the very highest in man, particularly beloved by our COMMON FATHER CREATOR, can really be named, and indeed very often before even having made clear to oneself what it is, can be understood to be that which is lowest and dirtiest in man.

Well, enough of “philologizing.” Let us return to the main task of this initial chapter, destined, among other things, on the one hand to stir up the drowsy thoughts in me as well as in the reader, and, on the other, to warn the reader about something.

And so, I have already composed in my head the plan and sequence of the intended expositions, but what form they will take on paper, I, speaking frankly, myself do not as yet know with my consciousness, but with my subconsciousness I already definitely feel that on the whole it will take the form of something which will be, so to say, “hot,” and will have an effect on the entirety of every reader such as the red pepper pods had on the poor Transcaucasian Kurd.

Now that you have become familiar with the story of our common countryman, the Transcaucasian Kurd, I already consider it my duty to make a confession and hence before continuing this first chapter, which is by way of an introduction to all my further predetermined writings, I wish to bring to the knowledge of what is called your “pure waking consciousness” the fact that in the writings following this chapter of warning I shall expound my thoughts intentionally in such sequence and with such “logical confrontation,” that the essence of certain real notions may of themselves automatically, so to say, go from this “waking consciousness”—which most people in their ignorance mistake for the real consciousness, but which I affirm and experimentally prove is the fictitious one—into what you call the subconscious, which ought to be in my opinion the real human consciousness,

COMMON FATHER CREATOR

... the very highest in man, particularly beloved by our
COMMON FATHER CREATOR, ...

This is the first of many references to the absolute which Gurdjieff employs throughout *The Tales*. The use of full capitalization is a typographical style copied from some versions of the Bible.

Drowsy thoughts

... destined, among other things, on the one hand to stir up
the drowsy thoughts in me as well as in the reader, and, on
the other, to warn the reader about something.

In *The 1931 Manuscript*, the title of this first chapter was *WARNING (Instead of a Preface)*. This paragraph reflects the idea that both chapter titles were appropriate. It is curious that Gurdjieff claimed that it was destined to have these two effects.

destiny: mid-14c., “fate, over-ruling necessity, the irresistible tendency of certain events to come about; inexorable force that shapes and controls lives and events;” from Old French *destinée* “purpose, intent, fate, destiny; that which is destined” (12c.), noun use of fem. past participle of *destiner*, from Latin *destinare* “make firm, establish”. “What is to befall any person or thing in the future” (mid-15c.).

By using the word “destined” he is implying that the first chapter will have an objective impact on the reader. By Gurdjieff’s definition, a work of art (such as a book or statue) is objective if it has an identical effect upon everyone that has the same level of being.

In calling the thoughts “drowsy” in respect of both himself and the reader, he is asserting that such thoughts were not the product of active mentation, but will become so.

Consciousness and subconsciousness

... what form they will take on paper, I, speaking frankly, myself do not as yet know with my consciousness, but with my subconsciousness I already definitely feel ...

Hot

... that on the whole it will take the form of something which will be, so to say, “hot,” and will have an effect on the entirety of every reader such as the red pepper pods had on the poor Transcaucasian Kurd...

The writing can be considered “hot” in the sense that the effort required to digest and understand it will be great, just as the Kurd's effort was great. The Transcaucasian Kurd is “poor” in the Biblical sense.

Our common countryman

Now that you have become familiar with the story of our common countryman, the Transcaucasian Kurd, ...

“Our common countryman” suggests that we all have a Transcaucasian Kurd within our inner world.

Incidentally, the paragraph that begins in this way is so dense with meaning that we have found it necessary to provide a whole series of notes about it.

My further predetermined writings

... which is by way of an introduction to all my further predetermined writings,

Specifically stating that *The Arousing of Thought* serves as an introduction to all the three series within *ALL and Everything*.

Pure waking consciousness

I wish to bring to the knowledge of what is called your “pure waking consciousness”

Because of the words that follow, by “pure waking consciousness” he must simply mean the second state of consciousness.

Conscious and subconscious

... so to say, go from this “waking consciousness”... ... into what you call the subconscious,

Gurdjieff asserts that what we generally refer to as “our subconscious” ought to be our conscious mind. With the words:

... which ought to be in my opinion the real human consciousness,

and

... which most people in their ignorance mistake for the real consciousness, but which I affirm and experimentally prove is the fictitious one

Intentional structure of the text of *The Tales*

... in the writings following this chapter of warning I shall expound my thoughts intentionally in such sequence and with such “logical confrontation,” that the essence of certain real notions may of themselves automatically, go from this “waking consciousness”... ... into what you call the subconscious...

Gurdjieff asserts that the structure of the text, specifically its sequence and the “logical confrontations” that it contains that follow this first chapter will have an objective impact and bring about a transformation in the reader.

and there by themselves mechanically bring about that transformation which should in general proceed in the entirety of a man and give him, from his own conscious mentation, the results he ought to have, which are proper to man and not merely to single- or double-brained animals.

I decided to do this without fail so that this initial chapter of mine, predetermined as I have already said to awaken your consciousness, should fully justify its purpose, and reaching not only your, in my opinion, as yet only fictitious “consciousness,” but also your real consciousness, that is to say, what you call your subconscious, might, for the first time, compel you to reflect actively.

In the entirety of every man, irrespective of his heredity and education, there are formed two independent consciousnesses, which in their functioning as well as in their manifestations have almost nothing in common. One consciousness is formed from the perception of all kinds of accidental, or on the part of others intentionally produced, mechanical impressions, among which must also be counted the “consonances” of various words which are indeed as is said empty; and the other consciousness is formed from the so to say, “already previously formed material results” transmitted to him by heredity, which have become blended with the corresponding parts of the entirety of a man, as well as from the data arising from his intentional evoking of the associative confrontations of these “materialized data” already in him.

The whole totality of the formation as well as the manifestation of this second human consciousness, which is none other than what is called the “subconscious,” and which is formed from the “materialized results” of heredity and the confrontations actualized by one’s own intentions, should in my opinion, formed by many years of my experimental elucidations during exceptionally favorably

That transformation

and there by themselves mechanically bring about that transformation which should in general proceed in the entirety of a man and give him, from his own conscious mentation, the results he ought to have, which are proper to man and not merely to single- or double-brained animals.

The transformation he refers to here is probably the crystallization of the Kesdjan body which is a possibility that man possesses but which one and two-brained beings do not. He promises the reader that his writing will have an impact, not just at the level of personality, but also at the level of essence, and that this “might, for the first time, compel you to reflect actively.”

Heredity

In the entirety of every man, irrespective of his heredity and education, ...

Heredity: 1530s, “inheritance, succession,” from French *hérédité*, from Old French *ereditē*, “inheritance, legacy” (12c.), from Latin *hereditatem* (nominative *hereditas*) “heirship, inheritance, an inheritance, condition of being an heir,” from *heres* (genitive *heredis*) “heir, heiress” (from PIE root *ghe-* “to be empty, left behind,” source also of Greek *khera* “widow”). Legal sense of “inheritable quality or character” first recorded 1784; the modern biological sense “transmission of qualities from parents to offspring” seems to be found first in 1863, introduced by Herbert Spencer.

It is important for the reader to be aware that Gurdjieff’s use of the word heredity has no relation to the large body of biological speculation that arose and has developed since the discovery of DNA, which occurred after Gurdjieff’s death. When he uses the word he implies what is inherited from family influence.

The first consciousness

In the entirety of every man, irrespective of his heredity and education, there are formed two independent

consciousnesses, which in their functioning as well as in their manifestations have almost nothing in common. One consciousness is formed from the perception of all kinds of accidental, or on the part of others intentionally produced, mechanical impressions, among which must also be counted the “consonances” of various words which are indeed as is said empty;

Here he is describing the consciousness that develops according to mentation by form. This clearly relates to page 15 of *The Tales*, where we read:

The second kind of mentation, that is, “mentation by form,” by which, strictly speaking, the exact sense of all writing must be also perceived, and after conscious confrontation with information already possessed, be assimilated, is formed in people in dependence upon the conditions of geographical locality, climate, time, and, in general, upon the whole environment in which the arising of the given man has proceeded and in which his existence has flowed up to manhood.

However here, Gurdjieff introduces the idea of consonance. He has referred to consonance once before when noting that the words “sole” and “soul” have the same consonance. Here he asserts that in the formation of this first kind of consciousness the consonance of words that contribute to its formation are valueless, because the meaning of the word has not yet been digested.

The second consciousness

and the other consciousness is formed from the so to say, “already previously formed material results” transmitted to him by heredity, which have become blended with the corresponding parts of the entirety of a man, as well as from the data arising from his intentional evoking of the associative confrontations of these “materialized data” already in him.

Here he is describing the consciousness that develops at least partly according to mentation by thought. We refer again to page 15 of *The Tales*, where we read:

one kind, mentation by thought, in which words, always possessing a relative sense, are employed

The second consciousness is formed by heredity - in other words experiences that were gathered from family and culture in childhood. We read this paragraph to mean “only those data which “have become blended with the corresponding parts of the entirety of a man” (that is, his three brains) and data arising from his experiences which he has intentionally digested.”

In Gurdjieff’s view, this second consciousness forms the subconsciousness of contemporary man.

arranged conditions, predominate in the common presence of a man.

As a result of this conviction of mine which as yet doubtlessly seems to you the fruit of the fantasies of an afflicted mind, I cannot now, as you yourself see, disregard this second consciousness and, compelled by my essence, am obliged to construct the general exposition even of this first chapter of my writings, namely, the chapter which should be the preface for everything further, calculating that it should reach and, in the manner required for my aim, “ruffle” the perceptions accumulated in both these consciousnesses of yours.

Continuing my expositions with this calculation, I must first of all inform your fictitious consciousness that, thanks to three definite peculiar data which were crystallized in my entirety during various periods of my preparatory age, I am really unique in respect of the so to say “muddling and befuddling” of all the notions and convictions supposedly firmly fixed in the entirety of people with whom I come in contact.

Tut! Tut! Tut! ... I already feel that in your “false”—but according to you “real”—consciousness, there are beginning to be agitated, like “blinded flies,” all the chief data transmitted to you by heredity from your uncle and mother, the totality of which data, always and in everything, at least engenders in you the impulse—nevertheless extremely good—of curiosity, as in the given case, to find out as quickly as possible why I, that is to say, a novice at writing, whose name has not even once been mentioned in the newspapers, have suddenly become so unique.

Never mind! I personally am very pleased with the arising of this curiosity even though only in your “false” consciousness, as I already know from experience that this impulse unworthy of man can sometimes even pass from this consciousness into one’s nature and become a

Ruffle

in the manner required for my aim, “ruffle” the perceptions accumulated in both these consciousnesses of yours.

ruffle: early 14c., *ruffelen*, “to disturb the smoothness or order of,” a word of obscure origin. Similar forms are found in Scandinavian (such as Old Norse *hruflla* “to scratch”) and Low German (*ruffelen* “to wrinkle, curl;” Middle Low German *ruffen* “to fornicate”), but the exact relation and origin of them is uncertain. Also compare Middle English *ruffelen* “be at odds with, quarrel, dispute.” The meaning “disarrange” (hair or feathers) is recorded from late 15c.; the sense of “annoy, vex, distract” is from 1650s.

He states that his writing will impact both consciousnesses and directly shock (ruffle) them.

Three definite peculiar data

...thanks to three definite peculiar data which were crystallized in my entirety during various periods of my preparatory age, I am really unique in respect of the so to say “muddling and befuddling” of all the notions and convictions supposedly firmly fixed in the entirety of people with whom I come in contact.

He introduces here the idea that he will be adept at ruffling these two different consciousnesses because of the influence on him of three significant events that occurred to him in his childhood and youth.

muddle: 1590s, “destroy the clarity of” (a transferred sense); literal sense (“to bathe in mud”) is from c. 1600; perhaps frequentative formation from mud, or from Dutch *moddelen* “to make (water) muddy,” from the same Proto-Germanic source. Sense of “to make muddy” is from 1670s; that of “make confused, bewilder” is recorded by 1680s. Meaning “to bungle” is from 1885. Related: Muddled; muddling.

befuddle: 1832 “to confuse with strong drink or opium.” 1873, “confuse,” from be- + *fuddle*. *Fuddle*, 1580s, “to get drunk” (intransitive); c. 1600, “to confuse as though with drink” (transitive), perhaps from Low German *fuddeln* “work in a slovenly manner (as if drunk),” from *fuddle* “worthless cloth.” A hard-drinker in 17c. might be called a fuddle-cap (1660s).

“Muddling and befuddling” is a poetic way of describing his ability to impact the reader.

Like “blinded flies”

I already feel that in your “false”... ..consciousness, there are beginning to be agitated, like “blinded flies,” all the chief data transmitted to you by heredity from your uncle and mother, the totality of which data, always and in everything, at least engenders in you the impulse... ..of curiosity... to find out as quickly as possible why I... ..have suddenly become so unique.

The expression “like blinded flies” is generally used to describe people or things moving around haphazardly, aimlessly, or in a confused, chaotic manner. Blinded flies would buzz and bump into things without direction or purpose.

In this case he is most likely to referring to thoughts, ideas, or impulses that are stirred up without conscious direction, like blinded flies.

Mentioned in newspapers

whose name has not even once been mentioned in the newspapers,

This is historically incorrect. Gurdjieff was mentioned on quite a few occasions in US newspapers from 1921 onwards, particularly following his first visit in 1924. This is yet another example of theatrical inexactitude.

This curiosity

I personally am very pleased with the arising of this curiosity even though only in your “false” consciousness, as I already know from experience that this impulse unworthy of man can sometimes even pass from this consciousness into one’s nature and become a worthy impulse—the impulse of the desire for knowledge, ...

The text implies that he is convinced that he has aroused this curiosity in the reader’s “false” consciousness because he knows that such curiosity can establish in the reader’s nature a desire for knowledge.

The desire for knowledge

the desire for knowledge, which, in its turn, assists the better perception and even the closer understanding of the essence of any object on which, as it sometimes happens, the attention of a contemporary man might be concentrated, and therefore I am even willing, with pleasure, to satisfy this curiosity which has arisen in you at the present moment.

He asserts that the desire for knowledge can improve the digestion of impressions and concentrate the attention.

worthy impulse—the impulse of the desire for knowledge, which, in its turn, assists the better perception and even the closer understanding of the essence of any object on which, as it sometimes happens, the attention of a contemporary man might be concentrated, and therefore I am even willing, with pleasure, to satisfy this curiosity which has arisen in you at the present moment.

Now listen and try to justify, and not to disappoint, my expectations. This original personality of mine, already “smelled out” by certain definite individuals from both choirs of the Judgment Seat Above, whence Objective justice proceeds, and also here on Earth, by as yet a very limited number of people, is based, as I already said, on three secondary specific data formed in me at different times during my preparatory age. The first of these data, from the very beginning of its arising, became as it were the chief directing lever of my entire wholeness, and the other two, the “vivifying-sources,” as it were, for the feeding and perfecting of this first datum.

The arising of this first datum proceeded when I was still only, as is said, a “chubby mite.” My dear now deceased grandmother was then still living and was a hundred and some years old.

When my grandmother—may she attain the kingdom of Heaven—was dying, my mother, as was then the custom, took me to her bedside, and as I kissed her right hand, my dear now deceased grandmother placed her dying left hand on my head and in a whisper, yet very distinctly, said:

“Eldest of my grandsons! Listen and always remember my strict injunction to you: In life never do as others do.” Having said this, she gazed at the bridge of my nose and evidently noticing my perplexity and my obscure understanding of what she had said, added somewhat angrily and imposingly:

This original personality of mine

This original personality of mine, already “smelled out” by certain definite individuals from both choirs of the Judgment Seat Above, whence Objective justice proceeds, and also here on Earth, by as yet a very limited number of people, is based, as I already said, on three secondary specific data formed in me at different times during my preparatory age.

The term to “smell out” generally means to find something out through intuition, subtle clues, or experience, rather than direct evidence. It carries a sense of “nosing out” or “scenting out” a situation.

Gurdjieff attaches initial capitals to the “Judgement Seat Above,” indicating importance. In a biblical context the term may refer to the divine court or tribunal where Christ (or God) acts as the ultimate judge of all humanity. New testament references for this are:

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Romans 14:10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

We were unable to unearth any references to “both choirs” in relation to the “Judgement Seat Above,” or in relation to any Christian texts. He may be inventing the idea.

Chubby mite

To satisfy this description Gurdjieff would have had to be very young, perhaps four years old, and preschool age.

One hundred and some years old.

My dear now deceased grandmother was then still living and was a hundred and some years old.

The age given is highly likely to be a theatrical exaggeration—the age difference could not have been so great.. Nevertheless it is worth noting here that Gurdjieff had a remarkable grandmother, to whom Tcheslaw Tchekhovitch devoted several pages in his book: *Gurdjieff, A Master In Life*.¹

According to Tchekhovitch's account she was a talented, well-respected and renowned midwife, and may indeed have given Gurdjieff advice that stayed with him. Tchekhovitch describes her death in the following way:

When she felt her end approaching due to cancer of the liver, she devoted herself entirely to prayer, wishing to remain conscious and lucid in the face of death. After several days, sensing that her final hour was imminent, she prepared her body for death, dressed herself in a gown that would serve as her shroud, and quietly lay down to await the end. Even as her body was getting cold, she chanted the words of her favourite prayer, "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name...", sometimes looking at those present as if to assure herself that she was still here on earth, sometimes singing more loudly, "Thy Kingdom come ...," as if to let the mystery resound more deeply in herself.

Her last words, spoken in Armenian, had the character of a Japanese poem;

The bird is silent.
It has flown away
To the other land
The flower has faded.
It has left this life,
But the wind will scatter its seeds.

And looking at those around her, she added, "And you! Laugh or cry. Do as you wish. It's all the same to me. I am already elsewhere."

After uttering these words, she closed her eyes, never to open them again.

It is also important to note that elsewhere Gurdjieff uses "grandmother" as a symbol of wisdom, passed down within the family.

Never do as others do

"Eldest of my grandsons! Listen and always remember my strict injunction to you: In life never do as others do."

Having said this, she gazed at the bridge of my nose and evidently noticing my perplexity and my obscure understanding of what she had said, added somewhat angrily and imposingly,

"Either do nothing—just go to school—or do something nobody else does."

Such an event would naturally be unforgettable, in the life of a child,

¹ Gurdjieff, *A Master In Life*, p237 - 240

“Either do nothing—just go to school—or do something nobody else does.”

Whereupon she immediately, without hesitation, and with a perceptible impulse of disdain for all around her, and with commendable self-cognizance, gave up her soul directly into the hands of His Truthfulness, the Archangel Gabriel.



Archangel Gabriel

with commendable self-cognizance, gave up her soul directly into the hands of His Truthfulness, the Archangel Gabriel.

The Archangel Gabriel no doubt deserves the title His truthfulness that Gurdjieff confers on him. However he is not normally associated with receiving the souls of the dead.

In religious tradition, Gabriel's central role is to deliver God's most critical messages and revelations to humanity, often concerning future events or divine plans.

In The New Testament: He is best known for his appearance to the Virgin Mary to announce that she would conceive and bear Jesus. He also appears to the priest Zechariah to announce the miraculous birth of his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20). As he has the role of herald, he was designated the patron saint of messengers, communication workers, postal workers, and telecommunications in general.

In Judaism (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), Gabriel appears to the Prophet Daniel to explain and interpret complex visions and prophecies concerning the future of Israel. He is often viewed as an angel of strength and is sometimes associated with divine justice, such as in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The name Gabriel (from the Hebrew Gabri'el) is generally interpreted as “God is my strength” or “Strong Man of God.”

In Islam (Quran): He is known as Jibrīl (or Jabrā'il), and he holds the highest rank among the angels.

He is the primary agent of divine revelation, responsible for dictating the verses of the holy book, the Qur'an, to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years.