

CHAPTER 3

Three-Centered Being

At the end of *Beelzebub's Tales* Gurdjieff appends an extract from a lecture of his that was read in New York in 1924. The lecture was called "The Variety, according to Law, of the Manifestations of Human Individuality"; and in this he asserts that it is in the very nature of man, by the time he has reached "responsible age," to consist of "four distinct personalities." Three of these "personalities" are what we know as the automatisms of thinking, feeling, and moving; and the fourth is the master of these automatisms, the real "I." For there to be this master, each of the three component personalities requires its own particular form of education in order to be "spiritualized."

The beginning of the study of centers is in observing the differences between different kinds of perceptions, different needs and desires, and different functionings. We begin to realize that the various instinctive processes of the body, such as the circulation of the blood, respiration, digestion, and so on, enter into our activity and shape our behavior in a way we are not ordinarily even aware of. Gurdjieff, as Beelzebub, sarcastically remarks on the way our mentation is influenced by the "organs of digestion and sex." The instinctive processes go by themselves and are organized by themselves apart from the rest of us. Then there are instruments such as our hands, which carry with them the inclination to be doing things, whether we are active or indolent. Our hands have this "doing" nature in their own right. Every part of the body that can manifest in the external world has this nature. All of this, internal and outer directed, is one complex with its own organization. It is exactly as if there is an "instinctive-moving" person who is breathing, digesting, looking, walking, handling, and making.

We can begin to recognize an emotional life in the states, interests, reactions, moods, desires, and all the things which give our experience its color and its direction. There are also states which are, so to say, grafted on to the emotional life by disfunctions of the body, so that from illness there comes depression and from injuries negativity. However it arises, this emotional life is not "ours" but has a logic or an automatism of its own. There is in us a personality of emotion which is not the same as the "moving-instinctive" per-

sonality. It is also not the same as the personality of thinking. Thoughts go on continuously in our minds: words, pictures, and dreams. They come and they go; they are coherent and incoherent. There is analysis and association. All of this goes by itself and thinking is also a personality in itself.

According to Gurdjieff, man without the fourth personality, his own principle of wholeness, is just like three people living in one organism. In the ordinary state, the three components of thinking, feeling, and moving are not in communication and only act on each other mechanically, being “outside” each other. This is inevitably what the study of our functions leads us to see, but it does not come easily. It is straightforward enough to learn how to group the functions in us into three parts, but it is a bigger thing really to see for ourselves that each of these parts has its own principle of organization. For the greater part of our lives, “we” are living in only one of the three. Our center of gravity passes from thinking to feeling to moving from moment to moment, and we are nearly always identified with the function “we” happen to be in. But we can make use, when it happens, of the observation by one “brain” of another, to learn that there are such things as “brains” associated with the feeling and moving functions as well as with the thinking (where we tend to take it for granted).

What we mean by the word “brain” is not simply part of our physiological organization, to be associated with an aspect of the nervous system. The moving part, for example, can exhibit the most extraordinary skills that show without doubt that it is organized on the sensitive level and not only on the automatic level of the nerves and blood. Indeed, what we intend to mean by “brain” is the organization of a function on all levels; and in this sense, a brain can be even creative. As the level of organization of a brain is raised, it becomes more subjective. When this passes into the levels of cosmic energy, we say that the brain is becoming spiritualized.

This brings us to will and why Gurdjieff used the three different terms “brain,” “spiritualization,” and “center.” A brain is a specific way in which the will can be related to the world of bodies. When a brain is spiritualized, it acts from the will and it is the will that is the center. So when we use this word center we are talking about thinking, feeling, and moving from the side of will rather than from the side of function. When a man is truly a “three-centered being” he has real “I” or his own will.

A three-centered being has all the same possibilities as the “Actualizer of Everything Existing.” It is therefore a most extraordinary thing, very far away from the ordinary state of man. As we are, we are not only not free but we are also unbalanced. Generally speaking, everyone tends to have one of their brains of body, feeling, and mind more active than the others. This gives us a very lopsided kind of experience and life. Gurdjieff called a man dominated by his body Man Number 1; by his feelings Man Number 2; and by his intellectual apparatus Man Number 3. None of them is able to act freely and none of them is able to come to the threshold of transformation, or even an understanding

of it, because this requires the coordinated and balanced working of all three brains. In one of Gurdjieff's most famous aphorisms, he says that "Understanding with one brain is hallucination; understanding with two brains is semi-hallucination; only understanding with three brains is really understanding." It is a common illusion to believe that we can do something to begin our transformation if we subject ourselves to certain kinds of influences or practice certain kinds of exercises, but none of these is any use unless we have reached the starting point.

It is only the man who is balanced, called by Gurdjieff Man Number 4, who is able to have a real purpose in life, who can understand what he wants, and who can begin to work toward his own transformation. He is the first kind of man that we can call normal, a man in the true sense of the word. He is able to function through his own initiative and his efforts will be productive. In contrast to this, men of the first three kinds are always handicapped. Their knowledge of things is incomplete and distorted, biased toward what they can think about, or react to, or sense. Their attempts at action are lopsided and even counterproductive. For real and not imaginary work of transformation, we have to reach the starting point. It is this that can take quite a long time. Sometimes it is said that "the first step is the hardest of all."

The Three Worlds in Man

The three worlds that we spoke about in the first chapter were those of function, being, and will. Everything that exists, including man, has a place in each of these worlds. We can also say that each of the three worlds is in everything.

Will does not always mean freedom and being does not always mean self-consciousness. As ordinary men we are still subject to will, but we do not have our own "I"; and our level of being may be no more than that of an automatism. When something exists entirely through exchanges of energy that are contained in material bodies, there is nothing in it which can survive physical destruction. And when something has no individualized will, it can operate only as part of the world process. Man has the possibility of attaining imperishable being and having a real "I," but it is only a possibility.

If man is to transform himself, the three worlds of will, being, and function must combine in him. It is only in a work that realizes an individual will, produces a coherent being, and coordinates a variety of functions that he can become as he ought to be. This is the real meaning of the phrase "three-centered being": the wholeness of a man derives from each of the three worlds, and in the man who is transformed they are no longer separate but work synergically "as one." We can form some picture of this by trying to imagine what each of the worlds would be like in complete isolation from the other two.

Function alone is meaningless mechanism. It is for nothing and it is nothing. We can go back to Ouspensky's room and picture it totally in darkness

with no one to sleep on the bed, no one to look through the microscope, and no one to sew with the sewing machine. It is a world without depth, in which nothing has any identity of its own. There is only a “going-on,” a movement that changes nothing. It corresponds to the “mechanical view” of the universe, in which it is supposed that there is nothing but mechanism and that identity and purpose are illusory. We can try to project ourselves into the world of a one-brained animal, say a worm; the experience of a worm such as it is must closely correspond to what we mean by the world of function, lacking in the depth of being and the purposefulness of will. The totally functional condition is not beyond our experience. Traditionally, this is referred to by such names as the “outer darkness,” where men live as mechanisms among mechanisms and nothing has any meaning.

Pure will alone is the state before the creation of the world, an affirmation lacking in the means of its realization. Very probably, it was an intuition of this state that came to [the German philosopher Arthur] Schopenhauer and led him to consider will to be a blind urge, in itself incapable of vision. The “man” in Ouspensky’s room reaches out in the darkness; not only can he not see the instruments but neither can he recognize them if he could nor are there any instruments at all. He is in a void; he reaches out in nothingness, blindly. Something of this condition is communicated to us by the will when we feel an urge that has nothing to do with what exists or can be known. It is a longing that has no words, form, or comprehensible objective. What is lacking is the creative power “to do” and a field of action.

The state of pure being is “light” in the room with nothing to be seen and no one to see; a blank state of awareness where dream and reality cannot be distinguished because there is nothing by which to distinguish them. Nothing is happening and there is no aim or purpose. There are times when something akin to this state comes over us, creating a hiatus or totally blank condition very different from sleep.

Everything that belongs to the real world is a combination of function, being, and will. To man is given the possibility of transforming this combination in him, that is, of becoming a “self-creator,” a being of “three centers.” It is in the brains that this work begins, but we must be careful not to fall back into the delusion that we “are something” apart from them and that it is “we” who work upon them. At the beginning of the work there has to come a reeducation of the three brains so that each of them in its own particular domain comes to operate in a normal fashion. Such as we are, we do not have a normal intellectual, emotional, or physical life. Instead of the normal urges we are filled with abnormal needs and desires, urges which are unrelated to our true well-being. We have imaginary pictures of what is needed for our bodies, we cultivate negative emotions, and we allow our heads to be stuffed with nonsense. Little by little we have to develop an understanding of what thinking, feeling, and action are and what they are for.

Each of the three brains is an organization of functions, which can oper-

ate with greater or lesser degrees of awareness. An ancient picture of the thinking apparatus is that of a lamp. When a lamp is filled with a heavy oil it smokes and smells; but when it is filled with a light, clear oil that has been filtered and purified the flame is bright and clear and the light it gives is strong and steady. The grades of fuel correspond to the levels of energy, as these in their turn correspond to levels of awareness. The higher energies in us have very much to do with our possibilities of functioning beyond the boundaries of what we have become conditioned to do. Everybody knows how a challenge can evoke the most extraordinary response from people. Countless people have reported on the feats of ingenuity they have performed, often in a fraction of a second, when in danger. But waiting for shocks or challenges from outside is no way to undertake the work of transformation. We can begin to work with the exercise of our own initiative in our functions so that instead of moving, thinking, or feeling in reaction to a stimulus, we move, think, or feel from we ourselves. Our power to do this is limited, but we need to learn to use the power that we have.

Man as a three-brained being has three kinds of intelligence because each of the brains is intelligent in its own way. The brain is the being of the given center and brings into operation the will that in itself we can never know. Each brain perceives, functions, and experiences in a different way, and it is that which produces the experience or taste of three fundamental urges. These urges are not themselves the will; they are the threefold “face” of it that we can see. Each center is an urge in us. There is the “will-to-see” of the thinking center—the urge to grasp and understand reality which has its distant echoes in the naggings of curiosity. There is the “will-to-be” of the feeling center—the urge to become whole with oneself and the world that can turn into its opposite of vanity. There is the “will-to-live” of the moving center—the urge to do and to retain a hold on life. By these urges we can be spiritualized. It is through them that the worlds of function, being, and will can become a whole reality: the world of function through the moving center; the world of being through the feeling center, and the world of will through the thinking center—and the three of them as one.

The Moving Center

It is not immediately clear what form bodily or moving intelligence might take. Our difficulty in visualizing the intelligence of the body brain arises because we think that it must somehow be similar to the intelligence that we are aware of in the thinking brain. But it is not at all the same. The moving brain is associated with parts of the nervous system, in the spinal cord and parts of the head brain, that do not work in the same way as those parts which operate in mental association. Our thinking intelligence is very much engaged in connecting past and future, but this does not enter the experience of the

moving part. The intelligence of the body is almost wholly concerned with the immediate present. It does not make plans. It is not concerned with results in the future or correcting something that has happened in the past. Things are registered by the body, but not as the memories the mind knows. They are either active or latent, but not yesterday or last year.

Most people realize that the moving part of us works very much faster than the thinking part. Something falls off the table and our hands have reached out, saved it, and returned it before our "minds" have begun to notice what has happened. In spite of such common experiences, we are always making the mistake of treating everything that the body does as "automatic," associating purpose and awareness only with our minds. The moving intelligence of the body brain gives us the power to perform very complex tasks. It is essential in the learning of languages, where we have to acquire a skill by imitation and be able to make a response quicker than we can think. If we had to rely on the thinking brain for the carrying out of actions we would never be able to live as human beings. Our minds may say "I will go to such and such a place" but it is the intelligence of the body which will get us there, will drive the car, respond to road conditions, adjust to the environment and the machine which is transporting us. The absurdity is that because the moving center does not daydream most people regard it as unconscious!

The brain we are talking about has two aspects to it, and sometimes Gurdjieff distinguished these two by giving them different names. There is both an instinctive function, which deals with the regulation of our physiological activities, and a moving function, which deals with our outward activities. The instinctive brain gives us the extraordinary power of inner regulation that is proper to a human organism. Whereas our thinking brains can deal, at most, with only two or three ideas at a time, the digestive process alone involves the balance and coordination of hundreds of different functions, all of which affect each other. The instinctive processes of the body are ready to function at birth. Some of them, such as growth and the circulation of the blood, are at work even long before we are born. From the moment of birth, food can no longer be taken in a prepared form through the umbilical cord, but within hours or days, at the most, the child is able to take it in through the mouth and digest it by itself.

Breathing is a remarkable power. Before birth, we breathe through our mother. After birth, we ourselves breathe. Breathing is, perhaps, the most powerful urge that we can know. If something interferes with our breathing, everything else disappears except the will to breathe: thoughts, feelings, and all other bodily forces are as nothing. We do not breathe because we know that we have to breathe; we simply breathe because we have to. We cannot put our finger on this urge and say, "Here it is; it is this." The urge has the hidden character of the will, and, although it can dominate our experience, it is not possible for us to experience it as something of which we can be aware. It is never objective. In comparison, our so-called decisions and choices are in reality very

far away from will. It represents a total commitment that our minds are incapable of understanding.

In breathing, we see the urge to live. This urge is apparent in all those cases where people cling on to life, even though their bodies are damaged or diseased and no matter how severe their agony. What is working in them is the will of the instinctive center to preserve life at all costs. It has nothing to do with the mind or the feelings or any external action. So it is possible to go through life without once being aware that there is a mystery in the preservation of our existence.

The activities of our moving center are not already prepared, as are those of instinct. It is the moving center which gives us the power of dealing with the world, but the human being is far less prepared for external action at the moment of birth than any other animal. A newborn reindeer is able to run with the herd. A moment after birth, a monkey can grasp and hold on to things and stop itself from falling. It is very extraordinary how helpless the human infant is. So many things that are instinctive for the animals have to be learned by humans. This is so because there is a creative potential in the moving center of man. And this power of creative action is most closely associated with our hands. Our hands are very extraordinary instruments. No other animal has anything which is nearly as versatile. It is through this instrument that nearly all our powers of "making" come. It is also striking that the fundamental difference between *Homo erectus*, such as the Neanderthal man, and *Homo sapiens sapiens*, that is, men such as we are, is not in brain capacity but in the anatomical power of speech.

We are able to move in most of the ways that animals can, apart from flying. We can climb, we can crawl, we can walk and lope and run and jump and dance; we can tumble and toss and turn. But it takes time to acquire these skills. Much of a child's learning consists of the recognition of objects and how to handle them; how to produce sounds; and how to walk and make other movements. For the most part, these things are learned by imitation, which is a power of the moving center. But this imitation is not the copying that turns adults into slaves because it is stimulated by a creative power. It is a very unfortunate thing that the development of the moving intelligence so often comes to a stop even during childhood. The human body has an enormous potential and contemporary education develops very little of it.

It is in the nature of the moving brain to do things, that is, produce changes in the external environment. This we have to a far greater extent than any animal because so much of their external activity is connected with the preservation of life. We have the urge to adapt the world to ourselves rather than adapt ourselves to the world. We are *Homo faber*, man the maker. Of course, our thinking is very much drawn into our activity in the world of bodies, but it is from the urge of the body that this comes. So much human effort is devoted, through the artifacts we have created as well as through our natural instruments, to extending our powers to act upon the world. It is this urge which

makes us go out over the earth, exploring, changing, experimenting. This urge is not the urge to understand or to know but to produce results that we can see. Its place is the world of bodies, the *alam-i ajsam*.

There is another powerful urge connected with the body and that is the urge which drives us to sex. This is very powerful because it is intimately connected with the working of the creative energy. We can treat it as something in its own right, apart from both the urge-to-live of the instinctive brain and the urge-to-act of the moving brain. Yet it is still a power in our bodies rather than in our minds or feelings. It should not be thought of in terms of desires or wishes. Certainly these things arise, but they are not at the center of sex. The feelings, thoughts, and tensions that arise in us in association with sex are nothing but a reflection of the confusion that exists in us. It may seem strange to say that the true sexual urge is beyond our experience, but that is how it is. Many people say that the secret of our transformation lies in sex; but this is not the “sex” that we know: it is the creative urge that lies beyond the scope of our awareness.

We now begin to see that in this one region of the functions of the body, we have to take account of three urges: to live, to “do,” and to sex. These are the normal urges, not those habits into which we have become conditioned. To realize them, to become “spiritualized” in the world of bodies or the world of function, we have to accustom ourselves to the working of higher levels of energy in the body brain. Gurdjieff also devoted an enormous effort to finding ways in which the intelligence of movement could be actualized in people. We have a marvelous capacity for doing things with our bodies, but most of the time is spent in stereotyped postures, gestures, and motions. We have the possibility denied the other animals of acting on this world in a creative manner and yet an honest appraisal of what we do with the earth shows that most of our “creations” are not only lacking in creativity but deny it entry into our lives. As for the normal sexual urge which should be in man, its effects are nowhere to be found, so overlaid with all kinds of rubbish is our sexuality. And despite the fact that our instinctive workings are largely “out of sight,” we nevertheless manage to disrupt many of them as well, through what Gurdjieff called our “way of life, unbecoming to threebrained beings”: ulcers, heart disease, cancers of various kinds—the troubles we cause for our bodies are endless.

First, we have to become aware of the senseless habits that we have. Second, we have to explore the potentials of our bodies and become familiar with how they work. No work of transformation is possible without knowledge of our own body. Third, we have to accustom the body to entirely new usages, and for this purpose the ability to concentrate the sensitive energy in the form of sensation is indispensable. As we said before, if the operation of one brain is to be changed, it is necessary to bring to bear the other two. In the system of movements created by Gurdjieff, all three brains are educated to work together.

The Feeling Center

In all his writings, Gurdjieff emphasizes again and again that our modern system of education completely neglects our feeling nature, which is, for that reason, our most immature function. Our feelings tend to be very unreliable, very unstable, and we cannot think as we want largely because our feelings are in control. For most of the time, we have automatic emotions of like and dislike. We also spend a great deal of our time in states of emotion that are unmistakably negative, such as anger, pity, and fear. We can realize through this how far we are away from what we ought to be as human beings, for these negative emotions serve no useful purpose and are quite unnecessary. They have been grafted onto us by our environment, arising in the first place as an emotional counterpart to the instinctive reactions we have to pain and bodily discomfort. It can even be to some extent that these are hereditary and now part and parcel of our lives. What it all means is that our feelings are in a state of slavery. It is only when we have worked so as not to express negative emotions and then so as to be able to neutralize them when they arise that we can begin to understand the potential of our feeling nature and what purpose it should serve.

The true power of the feelings is to be able to perceive directly how things are. This is not done through knowing, sight, or hearing but through participation, by entering into things. The feeling nature of the normal man can penetrate into the depth of the world, beyond the world of bodies, which we can reach with our senses, and beyond what can be grasped by conceptual thinking. The real nature of feeling is not in time and space but in “eternity.” Eternity is the zone of experience in which things do not go on as processes but are what they are.*

According to Gurdjieff, the disorganization of our feeling nature extends even to its physiological base. Whereas the moving and thinking brains can be associated with definite places, the feeling brain is scattered in the “nerve nodes,” the majority of which are concentrated in the solar plexus. The unification of the feelings is a very great thing.

Very often it is the feeling nature in us that first starts us on the path of transformation. We feel our own emptiness and have a longing to have some substance for ourselves or to have an assurance that we have a place in the world. These feelings are genuine and an expression of the normal urge that can move our feelings: the urge-to-be. This is not the same as the urge that is

* Bennett used eternity in a technical sense as one of the six fundamental dimensions of existence. They are the three dimensions which are spacelike plus the three that are timelike: successive time, eternity or potential, and hyparxis, the dimension of interaction between potential and actual. In eternity there is the pattern of things as in successive time there is their behavior. If time has to do with function, eternity has to do with being.

proper to our bodies. The worm, for example, lived and fulfilled its function better than we do long before we appeared, and probably long after we will have disappeared the worm will go on playing its part in maintaining this planet, but it is satisfied with merely living. We are not always satisfied with this, and in reality we need something more. We can try to fill our feelings by acting on the world, doing things, possessing things; or we can try to come to some mental mastery of the world by knowing. Yet however much we bring our powers of thought and our powers of action to the front of our life, this never satisfies what is in our feelings. Something is lacking in us and we have an inner hunger that drives us on; an urge to come closer to other people, to overcome our inner emptiness, and to find our place in the scheme of things. It is only when we stop trying to use the world to fill this hunger that things can begin to come right for us. Then we can begin to feel how great a contradiction there is between the state in which we are and what is destined for us. We cannot come to this by thought. We have to feel how big a task there is in front of man—if only he can take it on.

It is almost impossible to arrive at what man truly is by thinking. But when our feelings are open to something deeper and the ordinary emotional uproar is abated in us, then it is possible to feel what this human nature is, feel that it has been present on the earth for many thousand years, and feel the greatness of the destiny that belongs to it. This is how it is when our feeling nature becomes open to the working of the higher energies. So essential is the right working of our feelings that we can say that the transformation of man is the same as the transformation of his feeling nature. Until this has begun, transformation has not begun at all in any way.

The sense of inner emptiness can give us, under the right conditions, a drive for unity and completeness not only within ourselves but with others. We seek the feeling that we belong together. This need for other people is quite different from the need to know about them or to do things with them. It is also very different, though this is hard for us to understand in the ordinary state, from the desire to be with people who like us or are good to us. That sort of desire can do nothing for us. Neither can the almost universal habit among people of talking, which is thought to be “communicating,” help us to be together. This kind of “communication” keeps us separate. It is trying to do with function what belongs to being. When we can be with other people and not be altogether wrapped up in our own associations, it is a very big thing. It enables us to be with other people in silence and feel ourselves at one with them. If we are able to share in this way, a connection is made which does not depend on knowing but is a direct awareness. Only when this sort of experience begins to play a significant part in our lives can we begin to be what we are.

Beyond this awareness we can come to the highest level in being, which is love. Then we are led entirely beyond ourselves to the unity of everything. It is a rare thing for men.

The urge to be, which has as its culmination love, takes root in us through the feeling of our own emptiness. It is clouded by our “lust for existence,” the drive to fill ourselves from things outside. We need to be disillusioned with the world and what it can give us; we need to see that our feelings should not be dependent on what comes to us from the external world. The feeling nature is not designed for the world of bodies but for the *alam-i arwab*, which we described as the “world of energies.” It does not work from the outside of things. The *alam-i arwab* in its original meaning was the world of “spirits,” which we can understand as the “essence of things” or what they are.

It is only when we begin to get a clear picture of the privation of our feeling lives that we can begin to see the urgency of the need for work upon ourselves. We are hardly able to feel more than one thing at the same time: we are happy or we are sad, but rarely both. We have to understand that this is slavery. Struggle with slavery of our feeling nature is hardly possible in isolation from others; but it is no easy thing to be able to take advantage of group conditions. At the Prieuré, Gurdjieff told the people with him, “You have come here having understood the necessity of struggling with yourself and only with yourself. Therefore thank everyone who gives you the opportunity to do so.”

The Thinking Center

The head brain is the one with which we think ourselves most familiar, but even specialists who have devoted a great deal of study to it fail to understand its real power. The reason for this is that it works in vastly different ways, according to the level of energy with which it is working. It is not enough to study it in its ordinary level of function.

Even at the ordinary level, the head brain of man distinguishes him from other animals. Man has a different relationship to time and space: he can look toward the past and the future and put his attention on things of different scales. He has a power of representation that can be quite independent of bodily stimuli, and this enables him to acquire a kind of knowledge that animals cannot. We can store and compare experiences and recognize regularities and repetitions; and from this we can do something to predict the future. We can form a picture of how the world works through the power of abstraction. With this knowledge we can enhance the power we have of action upon the world. We can see what can be done with different materials and what kind of instruments can be made. All of this belongs to the world of ordinary things. It does not give us freedom because it is nothing more than a reflection of the world of bodies.

As we are, our thinking works entirely in accordance with the state of our nervous system and the chemistry of our blood. When there is no external demand made of us, we spend most of our time in a dream state where mental images automatically form themselves. This is influenced and even domi-

nated by our bodily sensations—what we see, hear, and touch—and by the condition of our organism, so that when we are in a healthy active state we have one kind of thought and when we are sick we have another. Sometimes the dreams in us take the form of pictures; but more commonly they take the form of words, inner talking, and conversations. Gurdjieff referred to this state as “formatting” and said that as we are we do not have minds, we have only a “formatory apparatus.” This apparatus is a mechanism in us that only turns over words with no contact with their meaning, and it is very dominant in us men of the contemporary world.

Yet it is through the inefficient and disorganized state of our thinking that we can first receive an impetus to work on ourselves. The mind, unlike the feelings or the body, can be told about the possibility of transformation. If we can learn how to use this madcap apparatus of ours that we call “thinking,” something productive can come out of it. The same associative mechanism that keeps us in the realms of dreams can also help us to work. It can be trained to keep an idea before us, a picture of how we can be. By this we become able to notice our slavery and blindness. But it is the next step that is crucial. Whenever we find ourselves in our thought aware of the idea of work, we should make a corresponding effort to practice what might otherwise remain only a possibility in our thinking. If, for example, we have the thought of being aware of ourselves, we should bring this into our bodies and become aware of our physical presence. Then from the two sides of thought and sensation we can try to become aware of our feeling state as well. In this way, our thoughts can become a reminder to work; and when this has become second nature to us, something can begin to change in our thinking so that it is not always so weak and passive as it ordinarily is.

We can think of what we call the mind as a “sensitive screen” on which images, verbal as well as visual, arising from various sources are thrown. The usefulness of these images for our understanding and our ability to exercise some control over them depends on the energies at work. Ordinarily, it is the automatic energy which dominates, and this produces the dream state. With the higher energies, the instrument is the same and forms images in the same way, but their source is different. There begins to be expressed in us the fundamental urge of the thinking center: the urge-to-see. This urge gives us the need for things to make sense; but we should not identify it with the dissatisfaction that arises in us when things are disconnected and we fail to see how they fit together. The urge-to-see arises from within and it is inherently creative. We find ourselves no longer content to pursue a particular course of knowledge simply because we have been in the habit of doing so. We try to fit what we know into a larger and larger context. From the moment of birth we are reaching out to understand why the world is as it is, and the gradual organization of this is our intellectual power. Automatic thinking is a *cul-de-sac* from which nothing comes.

Under the influence of this urge we can study the world and ourselves with

the realization that we are studying the same thing. This “sameness” that we find is really to do with the world of will. One of the ways in which tradition expresses this is to say that “man and the universe have the same laws in them,” and this is also the meaning of Gurdjieff’s statement that “man is made in the image of God, that is, of the Great Megalocosmos.” The urge-to-see is really the clearest expression of will in us. When we are able to form mental images quite independently of our surroundings and of our own state, then we come into an extraordinary creative power. The thinking center then comes into its own. It becomes what it should be, a direct instrument of our own will. Then we can think what we choose to think and have the power “to do” in Gurdjieff’s sense of the word. But it is not until we have become balanced in the working of all three brains that it is possible for our thinking to “have will.”

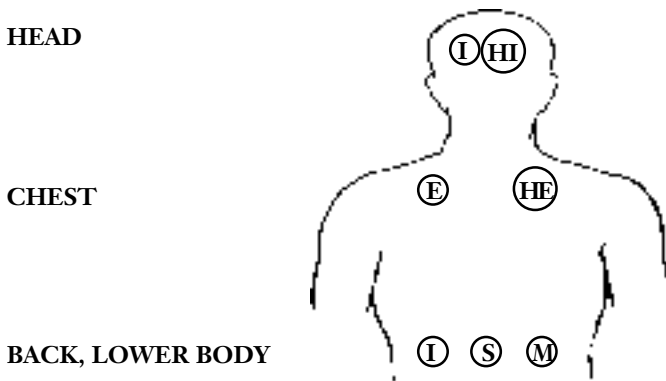
All this may seem very far away from the simple curiosity which is one of the lowest expressions of the urge-to-see, and so it is, but the same instrument is involved. When the creative energy enters to make it an instrument of our will, the head brain becomes the seat of what Gurdjieff called objective reason, the workings of which are quite beyond those of the ordinary mind. There are many gradations of objective reason, but all of them involve the ability to see directly what the world is about and what is really going on and how it is happening. This is a seeing or vision that is related to time differently from ordinary thinking. We see as it were “in a flash,” without need of any process. How high this condition is can be judged from the fact that even Man Number 4 does not have access to this sort of functioning.

The arising of objective reason depends on the formation of what are called “higher bodies.” These “bodies” are the fruits of transformation and they are of two different kinds. Besides the physical body, which is the carrier of man’s functions, there can be a consolidation in the world of being which Gurdjieff calls the *kesdjan* body and also a vehicle of will that he simply calls the “higher-being body.” It is on the formation of the *kesdjan* body that a man depends for bringing organization into his thinking. It is on the formation of the higher-being body that he depends for the arising of objective reason. Through the higher-being body, a man can become subject to a will higher than his own and in this way become a universal instrument. The effect of such a transformation sometimes overflows into the thinking in the form of visions or revelations, but the deepest illuminations occur entirely without the participation of the lower functions.

The ultimate act of choice that can open up for a man, in which man chooses his final destiny, is whether to be himself or to be God. He can choose to be separate or he can choose to be united; to live and act for himself or to become one with the Will which governs the whole world. Ultimately, the moment comes when he is able to see that either God must disappear for him or he must disappear for God. That is how it is, even though we have no means of understanding what it means.

The Structure of Man

Gurdjieff introduced a diagram of the centers in his talks in Russia during the First World War nearly sixty years ago. I myself saw him using it at the Prieuré in 1923, and although, when he came to write, he dropped it—and it does not appear in *Beelzebub's Tales* or his other writings—he certainly did not abandon it because at the end of his life he did speak about it and use it. Like much of the material that Ouspensky preserved in his *In Search of the Miraculous*, Gurdjieff may not have included it in his own books because he had discovered that people were taking it all too literally; they were not penetrating deeply enough into what it means, it all seemed too easy and straightforward. But I myself, in all the many long years since I first heard about it, have found it enormously valuable both for understanding my own nature and for talking with other people about psychological questions, though I have approached it from the direction of man's three brains in order to escape from the artificial description of the centers as if they were all roughly the same kind of mechanism.



The Structure of Man

Figure 3.1

The diagram is a representation of the human body as a “three-storied factory.” The top story is the head, the second is the breast, and the third the lumbar and pelvic region of a human body that is facing to the left. These three stories correspond to the three brains of thinking, feeling, and moving. But we can also view man in terms of his centers and then we find that he is no longer three but seven. On the bottom story there are three different cen-

ters: the moving center, which is concerned with our outer bodily actions; the instinctive center, which is concerned with the maintenance of life; and the sex center, which works with a much higher energy than the other bodily centers.* In the middle story there is both an emotional center and what Gurdjieff called a “higher emotional center.” All our ordinary emotional states and reactions belong to the emotional center, which is very much concerned with our own existence. But under the influence of the urge-to-be there can awaken the potential of the feelings to enter into higher worlds, higher levels of being and consciousness, and penetrate beyond time and space into the eternal reality. This is the working of the higher emotional center through which we can arrive at peace and detachment. In the top story there is the intellectual center which deals with the world around us; but the urge-to-see is an urge to see beyond this world. We can picture a pure state in which there is an awareness of the whole meaning and significance of the world. Through this union is achieved the will by which the world is created and maintained. That which is able to unite with the Supreme Will is the part of us that Gurdjieff calls the “higher intellectual center.”

In the whole man, then, there are three brains and seven centers. The higher centers correspond to higher levels of functioning. This picture of the perfected man is very useful in showing us how he does not always live in the highest state of consciousness. The cosmic energies are to enable man to communicate with God and to bring him into contact with the cosmic purpose. It is wasteful to use them to deal with material objects. The lower functions exist to deal with everyday life obligations. In this kind of existence that we have, there can be no final completion. The aim of the work that we set before ourselves is not to be rid of our human nature but to transform it so that it is a whole in which each part does what it should do.

Three Make One

At first acquaintance, the various descriptions of man seem contradictory and even confusing: he is three, he is four, he is seven, he is one, he is many, and so on. The difficulty only arises if we take these various descriptions in terms of things that we can know; when we begin to see into the nature of our experience, they all begin to make sense because then we go beyond the outside of things. Each of the various ways has a different starting point, a different question behind it, such as “Who am I? How do I work? What is my principle of organization?” Nearly all these questions take us beyond the world of bodies or things, but not necessarily beyond our experience.

A great deal of the material that we have briefly sketched in this chapter is by way of explanation of Gurdjieff’s “four personalities”; in particular, what he means when he says “... in order to make possible the rounded perfecting

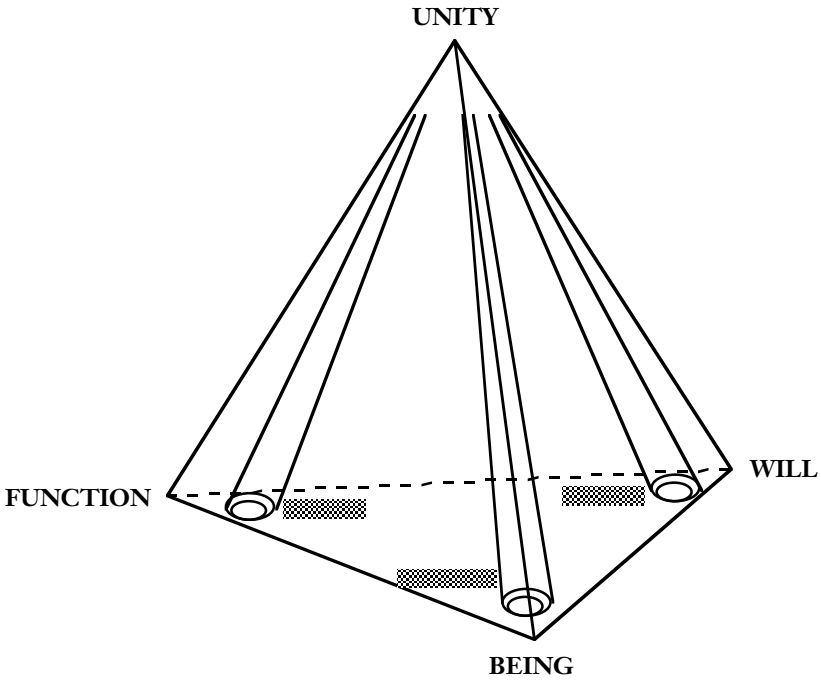
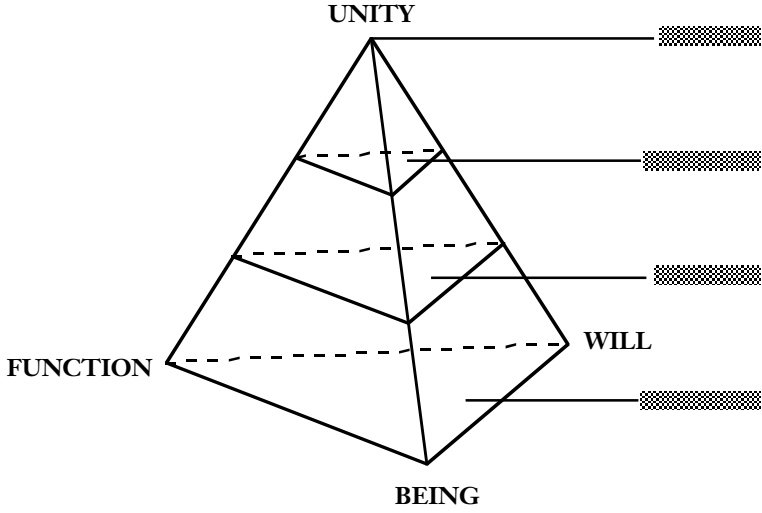
* Gurdjieff said that the sex center reconciles the moving and instinctive centers.

of a man, a special corresponding correct education is indispensably necessary for each of these three parts, and not such a treatment as is given nowadays and also called 'education.' Only then can the 'I' which should be in a man, be his own 'I.'"* To illustrate what he means, he gives a picture of a man as a hackney carriage, in a state of ill-repair, pulled by a dispirited nag that hardly understands the difference between left and right and driven by a bored coachman whose interest lies in vodka and kitchen maids. The apparatus itself is going nowhere. It is a wasteful dream. All that can happen is that it is picked up by some chance passerby who wants to go somewhere. Gurdjieff elaborates this picture, which we have mentioned once before, in the most extraordinary way, and it does enable us concretely to visualize and understand the state of affairs in man without his "own 'I.'" But what is this "own 'I'"? Gurdjieff calls it the Master of the carriage, the horse and the driver. The Master cannot appear until many things have been put right. The driver has to learn how to communicate with the horse and how to consider its needs; the reins between them are really of a special substance that is produced when thought and feeling blend and is affected by all sorts of influences from the world of energies, or what Gurdjieff calls the "weather" or "atmosphere." The "grease" on the axles needs to be spread to give lubrication, and this has to be done by work with the body. The driver has to be able to "hear" the instructions of the Master, and this requires what Gurdjieff calls "ether." All these various things have to do with the harmonization of functions and the concentration of finer energies. But still, who or what is the Master?

We have already made "I" equivalent to will. In this sense, it is quite proper to say that each one of us has a real "I" or Master, though in a latent condition. Our "own 'I'" is not will alone but realization of will in what we are and in what we do. In this realization is our own reality. Without it, we are only an aggregate of components that must inevitably disperse, sooner or later.

It is in the nature of will to act as three. This is Gurdjieff's picture of the "omnipresent active element okidanokh," which is also a representation of continuous creation. In the first chapter, he describes how the okidanokh split into three forces as it entered every new cosmic formation and how these three separated forces "strive to reblend." It is this that gives every new formation its own chance to be real, that makes it really a part of the great whole and not simply a cog in the world mechanical process. And in man this splitting and striving to reblend of the three forces give rise in him to the three characteristic urges that we have tried to describe. The general names that Gurdjieff gave to the three forces were, for example, active, passive, and neutralizing or affirming, denying, and reconciling. We can say that will is the universal affirmation, function is the universal denial, and being is the universal reconciliation. The three forces can then "crystallize" or take root in the three centers: the affirming force in the head brain, the denying force in the body brain, and the reconciling force in the feeling brain. According to Gurdjieff, these crys-

* *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 1191.



Levels of Function

Figure 3.2

tallizations have to come through intentional education; that is, through work that is understood and properly guided; and then a man arrives at the point of having “all three of the separately spiritualized parts” awake in him. In the ordinary, unawakened state of man, the threefoldness of his nature is constantly inherent in the food and air and impressions that he takes in but remains below the threshold of his awareness or provides only a fleeting “shock” in which *djartklom*, or the separation of the three forces, results but has nothing to hold on to.

Thus, although thinking, feeling, and moving are all equally functions, nevertheless we can call the thinking center the very representative of will, the feeling center the very representative of being, and the body center the very representative of function. They are able to bring the universal reality of the three worlds of function, being, and will into an individual reality. This individual reality is the fourth personality of a man, his “own ‘I’”; his wholeness.

The wholeness of man is equally the singleness of his will, the coherence of his being, and the harmony of his functions. The unity of function, being, and will is the inherent “divine spark” which is within us. We can as well say that this unity, the fourth personality, is to be “discovered,” as we can say that it is to be “made.” In either case, there has to be a removal of the veils that hide from us our own reality; but this is a concrete action that is more than a mental change.

His three centers reach toward his wholeness in their different ways, and the more they are in synergic relationship, the closer is their functioning to unity. This depends on the level of energy on which functioning takes place. On the automatic level, there is the dream state, in which we are the slave of every passing impulse, and the centers are out of contact with each other. Next, on the sensitive level, we can begin to notice the things that are going on in us and one brain can observe another. Then, on the conscious level, true self-observation becomes possible when all three brains operate together and we can experience ourselves as a whole being. At the creative level of functioning, we can act under the initiative of our own “I” and we can then become a being capable of self-creation, called by Gurdjieff Man Number 5. The balancing of centers is therefore a very great thing that can lead us beyond this material world into higher worlds, where our physical bodies can neither do anything nor support experience.

As we come closer to unity, the nature and meaning of our lives changes. Not only our perception and understanding change but how we can live. We do not exist in a vacuum. Our own development serves to bring us closer into contact with other beings and also to bring us under the influence of what lies beyond existence altogether. As we become more real, we are more able to communicate with reality.