

SUFFERING

Transcript of meeting with
Alan J. Rudner
5.3.1998

Suffering

Why is it not
to be resented
or avoided

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t o b e r e s e n t e d

W h y i s i t n o t

o r a v o i d e d W h y i s i t n o t

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t o b e r e s e n t e d

or avoided

Why
is it not

At the beginning of February 1998 . . .

A small booklet, quoting various sources on the subject of suffering was put together by Talia Natanzon and Ronen Aygen, and distributed to various friends.

It was subsequently suggested that this booklet be the exclusive reading for the month of February.

On the 5th March 1998 a meeting was arranged. It took place in Rosh Pina under the direction of Alan Rudner.

The following friends attended:

Itzhaki (18). Tami (19). Anati (17). Lisa (14). Batya (11). Viola (12). Aviv (36). Hanna (44). Anat (37). Na'ama (39). Nilly (39). Ronen (25). Talya (36). Merav (28). Stephen (49). Uri (28). Uzi (24). Adam (20). Benny (39). Martha (44). Dina (45). Yacov (29). Ronit (47). Tamara (26). Hagit (37). Matanya (40).
And the over fifties: Tzvika, Imka, Rachel, Shula and Davida.

If the radiator is on, turn it off. I think its warm enough in here. Two buttons. Is this light in your eyes?

Tzvika: It doesn't disturb.

Firstly for the children. No, not children – I don't see any children – I only see people. You see, I thought of this before I came into the room. It just crossed my mind when I knew...

Lisa? Where's Lisa? There's Lisa, close to the door – okay, ready for a quick escape. (Laugh)

I also thought of Gaya, I suppose, and just thought that I would say, 'you can stay as long as you want and when you don't want you can go, ein beaya (no problem).' I had the feeling that whatever was going to go on here wasn't going to be too much translated for the younger people, because although I wanted to touch something here that's very important for everybody – I wanted to talk straight to the 'adults' quote/unquote. You got that?

What I just said was just to give a little wave of emotion, because everybody's feeling: 'Maybe it's going to be okay tonight, maybe we're not going to get into trouble.' And here I go and I say, 'the adults, quote/unquote' – everyone goes 'eee ah.' Those that read enough to know what quote/unquote means are saying: 'Oh yeah, me an 'adult, oh my God.' So the emotions shift and the 'adults' sort of feel, 'Oh God.' Personally I don't care if they're not so adult – let them even be children.

Hello everybody. I'm going to count: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one. Okay, that tells me that most of the people that I suggested come, came.

The subject of the day is:

Suffering

Everybody know what suffering is? (Laugh)

You know what it is, hah? You see, it's not just a word. If I talk about it enough we'll have, at least the honest ones, and I see a few around here – twelve and under, at least – that if I talk about it a little bit more we're going to have to leave the room because there's going to be such a flood of water on the floor, from tears. (Laugh)

So, that's a funny thing, now that I want to talk about suffering, you see – I can't avoid the kids. They may not be dealing with as many issues as the so called adults, but the ones they are dealing with are very deep and very serious and go right to the bone, right to the heart. And their heart is still functioning – so they can cry without shame, for instance. Most adults cut off those emotions, they are left with a kind of vague after-taste.

The funny thing about it, Batya, is that I want to talk about it as 'something which is not bad.' I want to turn the whole bucket upside down. The worst thing in the world that everybody's worried about all the time, you don't know so much about that but never mind – everybody is suffering. Is there anything worse than suffering? So it must be 'bad,' right? No one wants it – hide under a table if necessary.

Okay, and I'm saying (laugh), look, wait a second. There's a terrible mistake being made in this world by most people – they don't understand what suffering is for. It's not a mistake of the universe, everything is for something. Okay, it's what's called painful, it hurts. The fact that it gets labeled 'bad,' ra – that's not hard to understand. It's always been known in certain circles that that's the big mistake. You don't understand suffering. There's so much that could be said about it. I wonder what we're going to get to say tonight on this

most, most vital issue, to take something out of this evening that is really useful. Useful.

Oh my goodness. If we can do anything, anything, even take a small step towards the useful in the area of suffering – there's nothing more important that we can learn on earth, than to understand that more.

The point I'm making is – that suffering is not bad. It's hard to use that word at all. Usually the opposite of bad is good – that sticks a little bit because it's not really that kind of opposite. The opposite of 'bad,' in this sense, is 'useful.' That is what makes it 'good.' 'Useful' is a better word – that's the word for adults.

Now for the younger ones. I want you to just see. It sounds so crazy, it's not easy to understand. I don't know whether you could understand it with more or less difficulty than an adult, I don't really know, but it's a fact. Not only is suffering good and useful – it's the most useful thing in the world. It's the one thing that can help us in a way that nothing else can. That's why very few people ever get 'help', because they don't want to go near it.

People suffering – 'don't want.' When you say, 'suffering, don't want' – you lose something very important. Now here, you see, I'm caught, I've got to decide what to do, because at the moment I try to talk to Tami and Batya – particularly. I don't know why exactly, but I have my eye on you two. Also have my eyes on Viola. Lisa I leave alone, even though I talk for her as well. Who else here is young? I'm being pulled to talk to you (the young). If I would talk to them (the adults) without you being here, maybe I would talk faster, I wouldn't have to explain – it would be different. So I've got a bit of a dilemma now – I'm suffering, I don't know what to do. Isn't that suffering too – when you don't know what to do? Man, if you really got down to it, maybe that covers all suffering. Ah. That comes to a nice point. Isn't that lovely?

I forgot what I just said, which is 'so lovely,' Just a second ago. Can anyone remind me?

Anati: You don't know what to do.

Martha: Not knowing what to do.

Yes, but did I say anything after that? Not knowing what to do, okay yes, okay, thank you very much, I've got it. I've got the connection. The connection is a big, big, big truth, so big.

Want to hear a big, big, big truth? Most, most, most useful. What was it I said?

Tami: Big truth.

I know, but somebody just reminded me of what I just said. Did I say that?
(Laugh)

Come on, just because I lose my mind doesn't mean that you have to too...

Martha: Like a big truth, covers almost all suffering.

Excuse me... I was again... my eyes... I got lost in a subliminal communication, go ahead.

Martha: 'Not knowing what to do,' like it covers most all suffering.

Thank you, yes. Whew. Such a subject. It's like looking at a flower and saying, 'Isn't that a beautiful flower?' And all of a sudden the eyes focus on the color and the leaves and the pollen and the birds on it and you've seen so many things that you forget the 'flower.' You look at something beautiful and then you get lost in the detail. You have to explain it to yourself or be able to explain it to someone else who asks: 'What was it like?...'

We drown in words. We're drowning in explanations, we're explaining to ourselves and everyone else – constantly. Explaining, explaining, explaining, explaining, explaining. And like condemning or admiring everything that you see in yourself and in other people. Always it's good or bad, good or bad, good or bad. They're good or bad, I'm good or bad, and why I'm good and why I'm bad. Explaining, explaining – phew. Allah akbar. From where?

You see, that's a bit of a shocking kind of thing, these last few statements, a bit like shock therapy.

We're explaining from morning to evening until we go to sleep at night, and we don't know how to think straight, even. And we can't stop it. We're justifying ourselves, constantly justifying ourselves. It's like a little voice saying: 'Say you're okay. Say you're okay. Say you're okay. Say you're okay.' And another little voice saying: 'You're not okay. You're not okay. You're not okay.' (laugh)

We're so busy trying to be okay. To who, to what... that's not suffering? Not everybody suffering there? They lose the feeling of 'okay', it's almost a sin to feel 'it's okay', because it seems that everybody is in terrible need. Everybody thinks you should be doing a hundred different things – 'it's not okay.' So it's complicated, this whole business, with the kind of 'thinking' quote/unquote, that we use. But it is a necessary stage in growth.

* * *

Please, (Imka) your tipool (treatment) – later, okay? She’s okay (Batya) – I’m dealing with her. Forgive my tone of voice. What I really mean is far more loving than the way it might sound. But I think I allowed it to come out that way, kind of sharp, because I know which side of the line you’ll choose to take it. You’ll understand more than you’ll be insulted.

Okay, now we’re touching ‘pain’ again – here we ‘are’ the pain. But let’s not be afraid of it.

Let’s not be afraid of it.

* * *

Ah, now I’ll go back to the original connection, the thing that’s behind all pain. It isn’t so much the actual feeling, we have different kinds of feelings. There are three kinds of feelings that we have, three different kinds. One is in the body – I feel cold, my arm hurts... feel. Then there’s feeling here (heart) – what’s called emotion. It’s vibration, it’s a ‘happening’. Sometimes a small happening, sometimes a big happening, and you say: ‘I feel, I don’t feel good.’ It’s not physical. Different kind of feeling – hah. So we can hurt in the body – we can get hit or we can get sick. We can hurt in the emotional feeling. It’s not so often that the emotional feeling is quiet or strong – strong but beautiful, it’s not so often. It hurts a lot. It hurts. Hard to find the words. You see, the words we use are mainly for this kind of material stuff (knocks on the table) – it’s hard to find words for emotions and certain things that go on in the head.

Okay, we also hurt up here (head) sometimes – when it won’t stop, for instance. It’s talking and talking – we feel what we call ‘confused.’ We get confused – we don’t know what to think, we don’t know what we’re thinking. We don’t know if we’re thinking good or bad. We’re confused. We have no confidence in our thinking. When we have no confidence in our thinking, that’s a kind of confusion – that also hurts. But it hurts different, it’s a

different machine up here that's thinking words. There is a collection of things that are so multiple that words can't usually even touch it, or if they can, it's a big thing if the feeling and the words somehow relate to each other. That's a whole story in itself.

What's the relationship between this thinking business and this feeling business? Or is the feeling only because of how other people treat us? In other words, the feeling is in the hands of other's...? If they smile at us we feel good, if they go rrr rrr we feel bad. If they give us a present or a compliment we feel good, if they tell us we're this that or the other thing we feel bad. It's in their hands??? They press the button. That's usually the connection with the emotions – other people – if they like you or don't like you, basically, if they say you're good or you're bad. Whatever.

Is there a connection 'here?' I mean, does this (heart) affect this (head), or are they only affected from what's outside? You don't have control, you don't have any influence on your emotions? It's only what someone else says, not what you say? Not what you think, not what you see... that's a big subject hah? I guess everyone thinks about that, once in a while. What's the connection between my cleverness – because everyone gets so clever – and this (emotion).

Okay, so three different kinds of pain.

Now my proposition to you tonight is – that the thing that really hurts in all these pains is 'not understanding.' It's not the pain itself.

The best example, that a few people in this room know, is Natural Childbirth. Childbirth is, in this culture, supposed to be the most painful thing. I mean, you ever see it in the movies when they're giving birth? 'Ah oh oh yeh arh eee mmm, everybody save me, ah oh oh yeh arh eee mmm ...'

Tzvika and Imka have acted as Mid-wives more than once. I don't think

anyone else here has delivered a child. Too busy doing very important things like impressing their parents, and others.

You know the biggest problem in childbirth is that people don't know how to pay attention, don't know how to watch their breathing. They don't know how to feel their muscles, how to move their attention – they don't have a sense of their body. The more attention there is, the more you can overcome this potentially agonizing business of giving birth. There's only one thing that can save you, and that's attention. And that tells you what to do, gives you your answer. And then you really believe that the child came from God – God kept you fucking well alive that moment – just by attention. And God was everything.

It was your pain, it was your hope, it was your fear – this giving birth. I mean, you were in a 'gestalt' and there was no way to think about it. The pain was agonizing and you couldn't think yourself out of it, you couldn't wish it would stop, as if you had a cold. You didn't want to stop it. There was nothing to think about. If you wanted to stop it, then the mind would try to figure out how. You know, if it was a bad cold or a sore throat – to take a pill or not to take a pill, to take a god knows what, to lay in the sun, to take a hot shower, to take an aspirin, take some homeopathy, take Tofu... you generally think, think, think – you're figuring something out. Yell at the doctor, ask for a painkiller. But in this total pain of childbirth there's no thinking, it was beyond the possibility of thought – and many things happen that way.

There we have to jump. Things that are so immense that there's no thinking. You can't think. The only thing you are left with is your attention. Hah. There you have a transcendent experience – your attention allows that. Every pain that you become aware of is a 'something.' It's always 'something.' Basically it's a vibration – a very high vibration.

We could talk for a long time on how different pains react to attention. There's also pain in the emotions and in the mind. That's, you see, really

something to look at, at some time. The point of the matter is that pain is only pain when you don't understand it. When you understand it, it's just a fact – it's not frightening anymore. There's no pain that you can have in this whole world, in this whole life, that you can't stand. There's no such thing. What is really you, inside your attention, your consciousness – is bigger and more powerful than anything in this world. There's not a pain in the world that you have to worry about, all you have to do is watch it. Not analyze it, not explain it – just watch it.

One of the things you'll see if you just watch it, is that every pain, in the body, in the emotions or in the mind, every pain, has got a beginning and an end. Anything that has a beginning has got an end. Everything. We're born in the beginning and we die at the end. That's the biggest thing, yeah. Everything.

Every thought has a beginning and an end. Every feeling that you're conscious of has a beginning. Nothing stands still. This is what drives so many people crazy around the sex business. It's such incredible energy. But they don't 'know' it. They're in confusion for their whole bloody lives on this issue because they've never watched it. They got hypnotized by it, they got greedy. Everybody, everybody. No need to feel guilty. Everybody. Everyone feeling so lousy and all of a sudden you can do something that's supposed to feel so good. The truth of the matter is that they don't feel so good each time. Every time they feel good? That's a whole story, there's a lot of myth around that. How can they feel good? They go into it with too much hysteria – not with attention. They make such a big deal over it. They don't know where they are, they don't know who they are, and they don't know what's going on. They lose themselves.

So not only that we have difficulty feeling our pain, we also have difficulty feeling what we call our pleasure – that which feels 'good.'

So there's the whole question of attention.

I've already addressed the 'under twenties,' so I shall lift my eyes.

Itzhaki: Not at all.

Ah?

Itzhaki: Not at all.

Oh excuse me, sorry. I didn't really take you into account. Oh great, here I've got this support sitting right beside me and I wasn't even taking the benefit of it. The two of us together. You haven't heard nothing yet.

Well, I think what I'm going to do now is sum-up a little. Batya, Sunnybell and Viola, all under thirteen and getting a little tired. Tami, because she's also getting a little bit tired, and Anati – I'm not so sure. But just in case it's enough, because I've just poured a lot into you. You just had a lot of adult information pumped into your system – a lot. There's more to come, but I'm running a tape. Anybody interested – you can listen to it when you get to be forty-five, fifty and serious. (Laugh)

So just to sum-up. I want to just say one thing that maybe you can remember.

It's a strange truth – that suffering is not bad. It's a door. It's like meeting the door that you have to go through, and the door is understanding. It's like a bump into the door of understanding. Suffering – I've got to put this very simply – you're not going to remember that. I've got to find just a few words.

Suffering is not bad
You have to learn how to learn from it
You have to learn how to learn from it

It's full of the most important lessons in the world. It's full of truth. Truth

that's not understood. Let's forget about the body now – we're talking about emotional, psychological pain.

Your suffering comes from not understanding. The only way you are going to be able to understand it, is to take the suffering in the right way. If you don't take the suffering in the right way, it's not going to give you the understanding. So it's the most important issue in your life.

There's all kinds of suffering, but always, even down to the physical, always at its root, at its shresh, is that we don't understand. It's a terrible mistake to take suffering as bad. It's not bad, it's a lesson that you get benefit from, if you know how to handle it. So, we have to learn how to take advantage – there are things to know about it.

We make so many mistakes, we're full of mistakes, and the whole society is telling us how to avoid it (pain) – no one wants to look at it. The advertisers want your attention, the television, the schools, the army, the governments, everyone. Your parents, your boyfriends, your girlfriends, everybody is pulling at you – to give you a place where you can be 'high.' Come have a party, come have a good time, get away from your pain, don't look at your pain. The society says, 'Turn your back on pain, go do something else, have a good time.' And when you turn your back on pain, you never see it and you never get it's lesson. The lesson is the lesson of mankind. It's the lesson of how to grow, how to be a real human being – not another teeny-bopper, and not another hysterical house wife. How to really be.

Suffering is not bad. Don't curse it, don't feel it shouldn't be. It's not true. If you didn't suffer you would be dead – that would mean you saw nothing. In a way you're suffering the experience you already have. What you already know, what you can already see. You're suffering the intelligence that you've been given. If you want more intelligence you have to learn how to deal with suffering.

What's it good for? It's good for something, you see? It's good for something. I'll tell you what it's good for. Suffering, in the end, is an energy. It's twisted energy, it's confused energy. Like in the body – if the body's been hurt, everything's trying to fix it. It's a very hot energy, and if we could give that energy our attention, we would help the healing. The energy is there. If you're afraid of that energy you close everything down, turn your back on it and run away.

I don't know whether an explanation like this gets through. We have to learn how to deal with the pain, not to turn our back on it. It's got the universe in it. It's mixed up, all your experiences – everybody's experiences – all mixed up. Everything that you saw, what you thought, is mixed up. But it's everything. You can't turn your back on everything, you have to learn how to look at the everything and get a step back from it. You see, I'm going very far. That in you that is 'looking' – that is 'you.' All that other business is somehow a collection of what-not, it's not you, it changes all the time. So if you can know the difference between you and the pain. Ah. If you can know the difference between you and the pain. The pain isn't you – you're 'feeling' pain. Also, when you are confused, it's not 'I'm confused' – 'It's' confused. 'It's' confused.

* * *

Just relax, if you fall asleep now that's also okay. I think you got the point because you're taking it so seriously, or feeling it. Everybody's taking it seriously but you're also feeling it quite a bit. You will understand more about pain, and in the meantime don't take it as bad. Take it as something that's going to take a little more time to understand.

* * *

It's hard, you know, the things that we suffer from – they look so terrible. How can we turn the terrible into good? We're suffering things terribly – sometimes in our house, sometimes when we hear about the war with Saddam Hussein, and everything in-between.

How can I say that pain and suffering can be good? Would that be saying that the things we suffer from – they're not bad? All the children that get killed in the wars – can we say it's not bad?

It's a very delicate subject. You see, from a 'higher level', it's not your business if it's good or bad. Your business is – that you don't lose energy on it, because you need the energy. If it were good or bad and you could do something, you would need a lot more energy than you have – to do anything. In your state – you can do nothing. So your judgment of good or bad is worthless. Your job is to see that you don't get sucked by it.

That's one way of putting it. There's a million ways of putting it, but let's look at that. You see I get stumped there. I say, 'hum, well now, I just hit a wall.' How can you begin to talk about suffering and pain when you say, 'you shouldn't say it's bad?' Maybe that's what we're trying to get at – 'Why? Why?'

Let's take the 'Why.' Why even talk about it? Why is pain not to be resented – resented or avoided? Resented is like the attitude, and avoided is the movement – you run away from it.

Why should suffering not be
resented or avoided?

That's not really a question for ten year olds.

Itzhaki: It's not the solution.

Excuse me?

Itzhaki: Because it's not the solution.

That's probably the best reason in the world, for that and a whole lot of other things. He said, 'It's not a solution,' which means it's useless in regard to the real question. If we could stop doing what was useless, that would really be something. That's right, it's useless. Is that what you said, 'It's useless,' yes, ah? Is that the word you used?

Itzhaki : No.

What did you say?

Tami: He said it's not the solution.

It's not a solution. Well, that's the same thing as useless. It's not a solution. If you think about it, a solution is something finished to the end, and useful is something that moves in that direction.

Itzhaki: If you avoid suffering so you cannot..

Anati: You cannot use it.

Itzhaki: You didn't find the solution if you're avoiding it.

Bidiuk (exactly), and it will come back.

Itzhaki: It's like to push a dog away, it will come back.

Exactly, exactly. You would be surprised at how many different sufferings, maybe you wouldn't be surprised, that older people get. I don't know, maybe by the time they're twenty-five, by the time they're thirty five. There are so

many painful areas of life, that they've given up all hope of doing something. They've given up on solutions. They're just happy to have something a little more comfortable or little less painful. 'This world' – they see nothing but pain, nothing but problems. Nothing but potential problems. Health problems, war problems, children problems, parent problems, money problems, sex problems, love problems, old age problems, looks problems. Problems, ein mashehoo aher (there's nothing else). It's all they're doing all day long – dealing with problems. They don't believe in solutions. They don't get a solution for one problem. If people talk in terms of solution, they think they're being romantic – 'Wait till you get into real life', they say.

'They say that falling in love is wonderful.....
 It's marvelous
 So they tell me
 I can't recall who said it
 I know I never read it
 I only know that falling in love is grand
 and . . .'

Now that's another nice subject, right? Maybe that will wake everyone up. Let's stop talking about suffering and let's talk about love.

Ronit: It's the same.

Itzhaki: It could be a too easy solution.

That's why people never go near it. It's too easy, it's too simple. Too simple. They want to be fancy, impressive. That's right, it's too simple. It is simple – it's not too simple. (Laugh) That can be taken many ways.

Itzhaki: Everything that's simple, we're making it hard.

Everything is that simple, we make it hard. Yes, yes. But 'the inyan' (business)

has already happened. Yes, most of it has happened already. Can you do something to get back to the simple? This is the thing. It's like they go out into the forest and... phew... and they never come back.

Itzhaki: How do you get back to the beginning?

Well, that first of all is very individual, because everybody's forest is different. But there is a lot known, a lot known, about the useful. Oh, I don't know how to put it, that's a big story. That's where real Knowledge, Knowledge with a Capital K comes in. There is knowledge, which is very vital.

How to come back.

You can't. You need to have a map, and you need to have, at times, a guide. The Knowledge is there. You haven't got enough time to figure it all out – you've got time to use it. It's like a soldier going out into the field – they train them. You haven't got time when you're in the war. I don't know... I just lost myself a little bit in words. As you say, the more you talk about something, the more complex it gets. Something so simple. Look what we just did. So simple and here we are winding a web like a spider.

* * *

Now I'm going to talk to those who read the booklet on suffering. It had many quotes in it from Gurdjieff, from Ouspensky, from Nicoll, from Mrs. Pogson – on the subject of suffering. Now they talked about it. It was just small little pieces, but it seemed to me that a person could understand it or think about it relative to their own life. All this material is telling how your 'computer' is working, inside. It's in a book. It's saying, hey, you press this button and this might happen, press another, and ah ah... all the little evil juices run. Anyway, people who had read Nicoll, read other things, could somehow think to themselves, had they a little bit of seriousness in them, 'What does this mean to me?'

That's the issue. What can you do about it? The funny thing is – you can't 'do about it' because you don't like it. When you don't like it, then you turn your back on it. Whether you realize it or not, you push it away – mechanically.

You have to be 'doing' for a larger reason. You have to have something in you that really wishes to live at another level. Something in you that is so fed up of this total level – something in you that really feels it doesn't have to be that way. Then you make the efforts. You have a reason. It's to get out of Hell because all this suffering is taking place in Hell.

All the words that come out of the Bible are not for 'other worlds,' they are for this world. You've seen the pictures of Hell, from some of the artists. Fancy pictures. We have those images of the devil with horns, fiery, and with a pitchfork with three points at the end. With fire all over – hot coals. Every once in a while, if someone says, 'the devil' – you get a picture, you saw it in some book. You've got some pictures of Hell and those are the pieces in it. You got this ugly looking man with a fierce look and with a fork in his hand, like they use to pick up hay, with three prongs. Why three? Three centers – the devil's fork aims for the three centres. It's not accidental, the image has an esoteric background.

* * *

Better to see whether something seeped in up to this point. Do you want something to seep into your heart now? Generally, things are never allowed in that deep. You'd have to take the pain. What kind of pain? You watch the resistance. 'Resistance' is a word that could be added in there. Your understanding is limited by your willingness to pass your 'threshold of pain' – 'I can't take anymore.' That's your limit, that's where you stop your understanding. The moment you say, 'I can't take anymore, it's too much' – that's where you're stopped.

You see, it's okay. Basically what I'm saying is, 'positive attitude towards pain rather than a negative one.'

How can you ask people to have a positive attitude towards pain, when they 'know' it's bad and it feels bad? You don't want the bad, you want the bad to go away. 'What? To be positive towards the bad?'

Oh, you see, it's a dilemma. And what I'm saying is hard to say. Depends on who you talk to, who can grasp what. I don't know whether a thing like this can be talked about in a large group. The need, for an intelligent person, is realizing that their 'good' and their 'bad' is their own subjective picture from their own petty personalities – called morality. They decided what is 'bad.' Some things seem so obvious, like 'death is bad.' Death is the best thing that happens to a human being – if they are ready for it. 'Suffering is bad', but it's the only thing a person learns from in a real sense. Not from a book and not from what someone else says, but the understanding that comes from within pain. It's the best thing that happens to us.

Without pain – no learning
Without pain – useless death

So our usual good and bad, on all kinds of issues, is like trying to stand on a foundation that doesn't exist. It says that death's bad and pain's bad. The truth of the matter is, we don't know good from bad. Good is what helps us grow, no? Bad – the devil (the mechanical) is bad. Bad is what keeps us down, sucks our energy. Good is what raises us. We have to rise to a certain level where we can really be intelligent. Until we have our energy free, our fear taken away from us, and our love back again – we are stupid ass holes like everyone else. Even if we see all the 'bad' in the world, it doesn't make any difference.

Our job is to clean our energy, so that we'll have a chance to know bad from

good in a real sense. There, maybe, we can do something. In the usual state we are in, we can't do very much of anything, we're jerked around on a thousand strings.

* * *

Suffering. Again I go back to it. Leave it in the meantime as the 'impossible question.' Leave it. I can tell you, if you can understand it at some point in your lifetime, it will be good enough. The sooner the better, because there's a lot of unnecessary suffering that you're going to have until you understand it. But just remember what I said: 'suffering is not bad.'

Suffering is important. That's it. We won't call it good, we won't call it useful. It's important. There's nothing more important in the world than to understand why it's important. You can't make an important issue 'bad,' even if it hurts. Ah.

You cannot afford to make
an important thing 'bad'
even if it hurts.

Very much like 'giving birth.' The one thing a woman that's giving birth cannot afford, is be angry, get mad. You know, 'wish that it wasn't.' She takes the pain because she wishes for the result. Her hopes are in the result, not if it's comfortable. The more attention she gives, the more amazing it can be – if she could really be totally present – within that pain. If you can't be present within that pain, how can you be present at the moment of death – which is the last 'examination.' No second try.

No more important subject on earth, than suffering. Without understanding it, life is a complete and absolute waste. We do nothing but circulate negative energy and idiocy, then die – and the universe never knew we existed. It's a terrible waste.

It's so hard for people to say, 'I don't understand.' That's one of the reasons they suffer from – not understanding. If you understand one small thing you can jump for joy. Are you going to get disturbed because you don't understand a million things out there? We get so stupidly egotistical and falsely identified, that it's hard, if not impossible, for a person to say, 'I don't know', without feeling guilty. As if you should know everything...

What should you know? How planes fly, how horses shit, how babies are born, how to grow turnips, how to fix a cassette and how to record and how to sing and how to write, how to ride horses and how to travel? You don't know about history and geography and about chemistry and about medicine and about homeopathy and about this guru and that guru and this group and that group – and you're supposed to? What do you know? It's always a little bit about something. And you can't say, 'I don't know.' You can't be honest.

You'll know what you'll know when you
know it

You want to impress. That's a whole business. Why can't we be honest? Everyone should understand that they got everything they need, if they could only be themselves. They don't have to be like anybody else, not anybody they know nor anybody they read about in history. They don't have to be 'clever,' they don't have to know about languages, particularly, they don't have to know mathematics, particularly. Whatever they have – they have to be themselves. That means they have to get back to their own breath.

Oh my God. So many habits. People begin to think to themselves that, 'I'm always this way or that' or 'I'm always that way in business' or 'I'm always like this in friendship' or 'I'm always....' they got a whole bunch of ideas about themselves. They think that in order to be themselves they've got to be like their idea. They can't just be. They're also scared – if they don't put on an act. It's complicated to get back to the 'truth of a child', it's complicated to get

back to your heart. But there – is the beginning of intelligence.

Your essence is on the other side of fear – where your love really is. It's superior to any kind of pain. Your heart, your real love, is on the other side of the pain and the suffering. If you don't want to look at the suffering you'll never get to the love, because your pain is actually 'abuse to your love.' Your love is pure, your love is balanced in the universe. We come into this world balanced and everything mechanical knocks it, so our love and our heart get bruised and covered with what we call pain. You must face the pain – not analyze. That's the tricky thing.

What does this mean? I think a talk like this might be well heard by people who have been, so called, 'in the Work' for twenty five fucking years in I don't know what city – as a reminder. What are they still messing around with?

And here I'm talking focused on Tami. You see, it's hard to believe that the truth can't penetrate without 'fancy language.' I'm ready to try anything. I've never quite put it this way.

* * *

What do we want from our friends?

What do we hope for from our friends?

What do we keep focused on with our friends?

People that we have a natural love for. It's not so difficult to love, you know. What a thing to say. 'It's not so difficult to love.' People we care for, let us say, really in our heart, really care for. That's the focus. People we care for we want the best for. If we don't want the best for them, then 'love' is just an interesting idea. They'll never get to the best unless they're ready to face the worst, and the worst of course is pain and suffering. As long as they fight the pain and suffering – they're phonies, they're insincere, they're not there. They are an excuse – one big excuse.

So I'm going to turn you off, so to speak, at the moment, and just leave you with a thought. That's very interesting you see, Itzhaki and Anati. It's like I don't take them into account at all for being here, but the moment I put my eyes on them I remember. And he opens his mouth, and I can see that they're 'on beam,' so to speak.

It's a large subject. How to deal, for instance, with the pain and suffering of someone you really care for? Because until they deal with it, their life is a mess, no matter what you do for them. And if you care for them, the only real thing you can do is maybe not get in their way.

It's not so complicated, but there are so many things in life that pull you away from the logic of it. The whole society is trying to give you a 'pill against pain' – television, movies, dancing, grass, liquor, sex, family, children, houses, money, cars, motorcycles, airplanes, credit cards – everything. 'Here... pack of cigarettes... cigarettes, Winston, Winston taste good...' you feel lousy, take a Winston – you're going to feel good...

That's the whole society. They give you an education in schools, so you won't suffer. You'll be able to get out and earn a living, you won't starve to death. It sounds so logical. How does school relate to 'Winston?' I got to figure that out myself. That is quite a jump. That's almost too much for me.

Yeah, schools are supposedly preparing you not to suffer in life – supposedly. And how not to suffer? Be able to earn a living, because you suffer if you don't eat enough and you get cold in the winter if you don't have a roof. You understand? They only see suffering in the physical body. How much do we suffer in the physical body? It happens.

But emotionally and psychologically – when are we not suffering, hah? So the school, wonderful education system, they're going to tell you how not to suffer – get a bagrut (matriculation), if that's not enough get a BA and maybe

an MA and maybe a Ph.D, and then you'll be like Shula and you won't suffer any more. (laugh)

Shula's not in the pain right now. I'm glad. You see, the people who have experienced the deepest, have ceased to exist as a separate something. Look at her. I look at her and I see myself.

It's almost impossible. People say it's impossible. 'Everyone's in trouble.' We live in a wild, violent, lying, and manipulating horrible world. And you go to school and get educated. Get educated – to understand it. No, no, no, they don't want you to understand it, they want you to fit into it and if you fit into it they give you a mascot (salary), or whatever they call it. But they're preparing you 'not to suffer...?' That's what I'm saying. That's, subliminally, their excuse. They're going to make you strong. Oh. Strong person doesn't suffer, right? Clever and strong.

Oh, oh. I'm just wondering – people believe it.

I think that people believe that the educated and those that made a lot of money because they were educated – they don't suffer. 'If I could only be rich I wouldn't suffer.' Ha ha ha ha ha. That's a hard one to break through. You see it on television, they got money, they're having a good time – so it looks. They look beautiful, they dress beautiful, they got beautiful cars, beautiful airplanes, beautiful women, beautiful men, beautiful children, beautiful garden, beautiful houses, beautiful food, beautiful travel, beautiful funerals. (Laugh)

Itzhaki: They're still in the same ditch.

Ken (yes). I don't think I ever had an illusion about that. From the time I was young I was seeing people who were prominent. My family was right on the gvul (border) – they were middle class, they touched 'the good life.' Within their range of friends were the most successful and the most educated, they

played cards with them, they didn't talk much. These people don't talk to each other. I don't know what they do anymore... watch television together? They're not honest.

Happy they're not. Suffering they do. Every time they go to bed at night they pop a pill. But it's a special kind of pill – they remember how much property they've got, how much money they've got – and they swallow that and they go to sleep. I mean, if they've got 'all that,' they must be all right, hah? Ten million dollars, hundred million dollars, and they wake up in the morning and they suffer, they suffer. But they have this 'pill.' But when they get to be eighty years old, if they get that far, all their money can't do them much good. That pill stops working. Oh they suffer...

Everyone suffers. Everyone suffers uselessly. And they think they shouldn't, they think it's bad. The masses will always do that. Everyone you know is running away from suffering – that's all they're doing.

But if you have some kind of something in yourself that says, 'Hey wait a minute.' It's not enough just to want not to suffer – it's too personal, it's too egotistical. You can't. What you need not to suffer, is something that works in you that's larger than your petty little self-concern. There's so much energy in an understanding of how to suffer properly. If you turn it all on yourself, to make you happy, you'd explode with it. It doesn't work that way. The energy of the 'good' is bigger than what your skin can hold.

* * *

I'll jump to another subject. Most 'self-concern' is based on a non-entity. You're busily concerned with a self image that doesn't exist in reality. That's a big jump.

Be honest. Have your identity in your honesty and your observation. Don't believe that you 'have to know' what's right and what's wrong and what's

good and what's bad, because you don't know. Until you can accept that, you're not going to know what you could know.

So the last thing in the world that people want to say is, 'I don't know.' Not only that, if you really want to see how ridiculous it is, they barely, barely ever say, 'I'm not sure.' Even that is too risky to their self-image, to their personalities, to their reputation. Who would be a friend of theirs?

We're handing out those pictures to everybody. God forbid they think 'we're nothing,' God forbid they should think that we don't know. If we don't know – we're nobody. But that's exactly what you are. That's the beginning of intelligence. You can start learning again like a child, if you go back to essence, if you go back to simplicity, if you go back to the tears. If you drop the stupid blaming which comes from your not knowing. Something is uncomfortable, you don't understand it, you can't stand not understanding, so you make someone else 'wrong.' You get so used to those mechanics. When you can't make someone else wrong, you end off making yourself wrong – from the same kind of judgments.

Stephen wrote something. It was connected to this little booklet we've been reading. A synopsis, or something like that. He wrote something and wanted me to see it. He wrote:

'Mechanical suffering... the implications are shocking and amazing!'

Itzhaki: What's 'implications?'

Im ze cacha, ma zot omeret? (if it's like that, what does it say to me?)

In the booklet, a quote from Dr. Nicoll:

"I remember that Mr. Ouspensky spoke very clearly about this question. He said first of all that everyone, without knowing it, has fallen into typical forms of suffering – from which they derive self-satisfaction. They justify their suffering and so take it for granted as part and parcel as themselves."

They justify their suffering – ‘of course I’m suffering, I’m not married, of course I’m suffering, I don’t have money, of course I’m suffering, my daughter is driving me crazy, of course I’m suffering, they’re going to drop Anthrax on us’ (that’s something else of course). They ‘know’ what’s good and bad. What’s bad is what hurts me. Is that what makes something bad?

You see we’re very mechanical, we don’t think very well. What doesn’t feel comfortable is ‘bad.’ What feels comfortable is ‘good.’ We’ve got a lot to learn – we’ve become quite mechanical tinker-toys. When you think about it, all these questions come up, and we are really not so sure how to think about them.

Again he says:

“Namely, they justify their suffering – and take it for granted as part and parcel of themselves.” That’s me.

I wrote sometime back, ‘People want you to love their pain.’ They don’t want you to love them, they want you to love their pain – that’s who they think they are. He loves me = he understands me. What has he got to understand, what you like and what you don’t like? People want you to love their pain, they don’t want you to love them – they take it ‘for granted’ as part and parcel of themselves. They think their pain is them. To break that illusion is like splitting the atom.

You are not your pain – you have pain.
That which sees is you.

That’s not just a poetic statement, that’s something that has to be remembered and exercised until it becomes clear that it is The Reality. Because if you don’t live in that reality, you’re moving around like another wound-up tinker-toy.

Nicoll continues:

“He called it a kind of thing that you drag behind you all the time or push in front of you.”

Okay. You see we've talked about it now from different angles. We suffer because we don't understand correctly, comprehensively. Sometimes you're mad or angry or negative and you're seeing something that's very true. Man's killing man. You see something that's very true, but you never see it wide – you never see it in context. When you're negative, you've got bad energy in you – you get identified with it. It's like putting your nose too close to a picture, you don't see it in perspective. Is that kind of clear what I'm saying, Tami? Yes.

So this kind of talk and this kind of material, is what is called Esoteric Psychology. Esoteric is a very high sounding word, but what it really means is 'inner.' Inner in a very special way – inner evolutionary. Inner for growth of intelligence of a human being. You see, we live at a very low level. We're eaten by the society with their wars and their lies, they inculcate us with fear and false identity. Growth would be to regain a clarity and a purity and a reality and a growth potential that's natural to us – our birth right. Or as the Work says: 'You have a right to remember yourself.'

* * *

Shula, is that chair reasonable? It is?

Shula: It's okay, I've had a long day.

I won't embarrass you, which means I won't open my mouth. (laugh)

I once had a conversation with Shula, maybe three or four of the same nature. They touched on her areas of interest, socially and academically, areas that you might call her "areas of expertise." She's not a conventional person in any sense of the word, which embarrasses her to no small extent. I hope she gets over that. There's no need to get embarrassed about nothing. And here I'm

going to ‘embarrass her.’ I don’t think she’s got any terrible qualities. I’m sure of it. She could be stronger here and there – she could cook more, clean more, be a better mother. Who couldn’t?

I didn’t think I was going in that direction with Shula, but I’ll do it softly. I’ve got nothing bad to say, absolutely nothing bad to say. Actually what I wanted to talk about was the few serious discussions we had, that touched on her area of experience and understanding. She put it all together once, not all, just a sketch, put it into what is called a ‘Dissertation.’ Handed it into Berkeley University in California and got a Doctorate for it.

But the truth of the matter, it is really more than ‘academic’ to her. These are issues that really concern her. Yes. So I deal with her, I know her from there and I trust her from there. I think I trust her even more than she trusts herself, because of an understandable reason. She slips, as everybody does, into another level in herself, every once in a while. With her it’s the ‘surviving, single mother.’ That’s over-simplifying it, but it has a lot of self-doubt in it, fear of the future, guilt of the past, insecurities of one kind or another – the normal stuff that people are in – with her particular package of suffering. And it’s agonized and it’s forgetful and it’s... she’s embarrassed about it. She cringes there, because the ‘other place’ has such a different perspective on the whole world.

Now I know those two parts of her and I know which one is real. So as I say, in a way, I have a higher regard for her than she maintains in herself, because when she slips ‘down there’ – she thinks that’s her. Like everybody that has an upper and lower place – when you’re down, you’re sure that’s you and the rest is imagination, when you’re up, that ‘idiotic you’ down there, is just nothing, a dream.

I could get sidetracked, what they call sidetracked, but I often wonder about your sensitivity – I see how careful I have to be with that sensitivity. From that higher place in you that sees what mankind does to mankind, and with

such detailed knowledge of the current situation in the world, you have absolutely no reason to be concerned with self-image.

Oh, maybe it's the other end of the stick, so to speak. There are all kinds of people here tonight, and I was kind of focused on the youngest, in terms of experience. The question of age doesn't interest me at all, doesn't impress me one way or the other. That's clear. I had to say that, because you're maybe the eldest here. You're thinking, 'I look around... am I really the eldest here?' I don't even know, probably not. But, experience, I'm talking about. It's a fact. Geographically for sure, current issues for sure. You're a storehouse of current facts in the sociological sense – all of which was taken in and recorded with a high degree of honesty and non-identification. Quite objective. It's reliable, it doesn't have your personal tastes so much in it, you know. So that's something. If that's not to be respected, I don't know what should be. It's clear what I say, right? I don't have to ask you that.

Some things come to mind with Shula, sitting here besides me. In one of our discussions she was talking about a phenomena in the academic world, in the University world. There are various subjects that they have been teaching for years, like sociology. All kinds of issues about humanity, where they had many 'theories.' That's it. They had theories. And now, in this period of time, they're having, what they call 'post'... can you give me a few examples of 'post'?

Shula: Post-modern...

Post-modern what?

Shula: Anything. Society, Family.

Yes, Post-modern family. People have different concepts of what families should be. It has little to do with how things are now. Can you explain what

would be 'Post-mortem'... 'Post mortem...' good, eh? (laugh) That's really what it is. 'Mortem' is - 'dead.'

Okay, so they have this 'Post-modern' whatever. Some examples?

Shula: That they...

Speak up please, no microphone here.

Shula: That the current situation of families in the industrialized world, in the advanced industrial societies, is not any more a pattern that is characterized by what is called division of sex, division of age. Which means it is not anymore a group of a man and a woman engaged with/by reproduction and by sexual activities and clear ceremonies - to engage into the relationship and to break the relationship, and virginity, and all that and so forth. But today, more and more, the tendency is to talk, instead of family, is to talk about families, which is any group of two or more people that are related with caring, affection and respect.

Caring, affection and respect. Yes.

Shula: Which is any two people which are not necessarily connected anymore by biology, not by law, not by different sex, not by different age. Like it can be me and Ariel (her son), it can be two men, it can be two women, it can be varied all the time, it can be serial.

What's serial?

Shula: One after another.

Uh ha.

Shula: Changing. The family, what in the past was called 'extended family',

which is like the uncles and the grandparents and all the extended family. Now it's more the networks of the in-laws and the ex of the ex and the boyfriend of the ex and the children of the current and the other...

I'm going to stop you just for a moment now, because I'm able to grasp this. Firstly because I heard it once before. Let's just hold it right now, it's enough for the purpose that I asked. Post-modern family, in this particular case, right?

Shula : 'Families.'

Families, okay. Post-modern families. What she's saying is, you can correct me if I'm wrong, in my language, without a Spanish accent. That in universities or other places where psychologists and sociologists... psychologists deal with the psychology, usually, of the individual. Sociologists are dealing with groups of people, studying how they interact. So these people that are dealing with those kinds of things, when they studied and wrote and discussed issues of family, they would talk about a mother and a father that had a little baby and then another little baby. That was family. Then there was the notion of 'extended family' – the uncles and the aunts and the cousins etc.. And what is now called 'Post-modern' is not restricted to this traditional form. They are studying the issue of family in terms of any group of two or more people who are in 'a relationship of love, trust and respect.'

Have I got it, more or less? 'Post-modern.'

I think, if I remember correctly, from another conversation with her – what they're really doing is catching up with reality. They're not coming up with new theories, they're leaving their theories and dealing with what's actually going on in the world.

Another aspect, the way I get it from her, is this idea of 'extended family.' It's a stretch a bit from the old notion, I suppose. Extended family turns out to be

my ex-husband and my ex-husband's new wife and my adopted child and their real mother and the surrogate mother. Extended family is more extended than it was before, but it's still not 'Post-modern.' It is and it isn't. That sort of touches the border between the two notions.

So now they start looking at a variety of 'relationships.' Yes. She began to describe a few. It could be a homosexual relationship, it could be a mother and a child living alone. It could be, I guess, any group of people?

Shula: Yes.

The only qualification is that there are two or more people, and that they're in a relationship of respect, love and care. I tell you something, when you got those elements going with two or more people, you've got a school, at some level.

Here comes some more 'academic talk.' It's the term 'Trans-personal.' What is Trans-personal?

Shula: Trans-personal is...

If possible, don't worry who can understand you or not. I can understand you, and I'll 'sum-up.' You could talk differently to each person here. Now you have to talk generally. You can talk to me if you like. But I'd like you to sit up a little more straight, please, and talk with a full voice and have the confidence of... what's her name? Elisabeth Kubler Ross. There is no reason why not. What you know, you know well. You don't pretend to know more than you know, and you share it with respect, love and care, and I want to hear it in your fucking voice.

Shula: Trans-personal, in a way, it's a word that has been used by people that meant, I believe, something like 'spiritual.' But they didn't want to use such a word that has so many connotations.

Hold it. Translation. The word Trans-personal. 'Trans' means, over, passed. Transcendental.

Shula: Beyond.

Beyond, something... Trans-personal. Again this is a term being used by these clever people in the universities. They're discovering another area of reality – that people are dealing with things that are Trans-personal. And she says, they started to use the term in universities in particular. She didn't say universities, I think 'academia.' It's an academic term, by people who didn't want to use the word 'spiritual,' because it was like, 'heavy' – it had too many associations connected to it.

Most authentic spiritual people in the world don't want to use the word 'God.' Because if you use the word God, you've already confused the person and get all kinds of false emotions and god knows what associations they carry with that word.

Buddhism is the big example. People never understood it. Others have explained it. People say that the Buddhists don't believe in God. It's not true. They don't talk about God. Buddha was very particular with that. The Hindu religion that he grew up in, got so 'priest hooded' and cluttered with ceremonies. The Buddha found the word 'God' to be dangerous.

For our growth towards God to a higher level – the need is for clarity, and is a psychological issue. And if you throw in a word like 'God,' which is full of all kinds of emotions and whatnot – it disturbs. He stopped it. He didn't say 'no God', he said, we don't talk about God. Gurdjieff also doesn't talk about God. It's stupid to talk about something that's so far away from us. Talk about God is to talk about heaven. Better to talk about where you are – and that's hell. Because in heaven, you are not – you can only imagine, and imagination is part of the problem.

‘Trans-personal.’ What’s Trans-personal? Something. She hasn’t come to that, but I’ll jump the gun. Trans-personal has a context, larger than your so called ‘personal identity.’ Things not being done for your pride and your vanity and your security and your house and your country and your, your, your. It’s Trans-personal, it has something that takes in god knows what – other people, humanity at large. It has a consideration larger than yourself. Simply put, right? Larger than yourself. Trans-personal.

That’s what religions are looking at – teachings etc.. they didn’t want to use the word ‘spiritual’ – they were afraid of the word – like Buddha. Universities are full of Buddha’s. Did you know? And they had this insight, so they don’t call it spiritual – they call it ‘Trans-personal’. Bringing it down more to the immediate, to the person. Into the reality – not into the clouds.

Shula: Yes, and more specifically, the people who started really with the concept, which was like Stanilow Groff from the Esalen Institute and other people.

Who, who, what’s his name?

Shula: Grof, Grof, Stanislav Grof or Alice and Elmer Green who invented Bio-feedback. They meant, specifically they talked about. It was first coined in the context of psychology. Trans-personal psychology, meaning – that part of ourselves that is beyond the biography, the personality. Beyond ‘who I am’, from the moment I am born in this body, let us say in this lifetime, until I am dead. And it referred to...

Okay, hold it. She’s saying, where it really came from. It’s different from what I said. I said, it’s larger than the person and it takes in the world or whatever. Something larger. And she’s saying, it’s even larger than that – it has to do with the essence of the matter, the essence of the person. What was born into this world, and what she calls, their ‘biography.’ Biography is the story of a person’s life – all the details, the experiences, all the emotions, all the

thoughts, all the conclusions. The personal history – that’s what a biography is – what they are ‘seeing the world through.’

That’s not an easy concept to grasp. If it were easy, they wouldn’t have to have a new category in the universities for studying it. And they end off, and I’m sure they have already, libraries on it. So something larger than our own acquired picture of the world, from our own personal experiences. Yes? Going back to something Trans-personal.

Shula: Beyond the personality.

Yes. Gurdjieff used to say: ‘We’re born into this world like a clean sheet of paper.’ And everybody wants to put some mark on it – tell us what’s right, what’s wrong ‘ddd dbbb’. Everyone. They call it education. And the more the paper is filled, the more the person is ‘educated.’ The more dirty the paper, the more respect a person gets.

It’s like a transparent paper with pictures on it, put over a glass window. We look at the world through those pictures. Do you get the picture? Our biography, it’s as if our whole life biography, was all put down in pictures and in words on the windowpane. And every time we looked out the window, we have to look through those pictures and words. Everything that we see is conditioned by what was on the windowpane – that’s our whole history, our whole past. In other words, our sense of life is totally ours. Each one has his own little concocted world that came together more or less accidentally, and he gets his sense of ‘I’ within that.

Now they’ve got trans-personal psychology. How do they get to the essence behind this conditioned personality? Do they have any...?

Shula: Many different things.

Many things. A lot of interaction with people, encounter groups?

Shula: Meditation.

Meditation, ah meditation. Now that's interesting.

Shula: Methodologies for the expansion of consciousness.

Methodologies – methods for the expansion of consciousness.

Shula : Which includes from 'grass' to meditation.

From grass to meditation.

Shula : To rituals, to re-birthing, to affirmations, to the Work, to many...

Yes... she said, 'The Work' could be called a Trans-personal methodology.

Okay, I'm not sorry we went into this, but I mean, she knows all about this. What they're doing in universities. Not all, but she read a lot of books about it, she's been at the universities where they deal with it, she's been to Esalen Institute. She's met a lot of people that have been into various things from saving the planet ecologically, to saving the animals, to meditations. She's met people and she's been to various institutes and the universities. She's quite educated in the field.

However, you see, she knows about so many ways to come to the truth, and has even met numbers of people, not so many, that she believes, actually 'arrived.' She's not sure, because that truth is hard to identify, but somehow, some appear to live at the Trans-personal level. Huh? Anyone? No? That's too much. She doesn't know.

I don't know, she had a teacher, I didn't hear much about him, an Indian in

Mexico. And she had other serious relationships – I’ve seen their books. She has known people that she’s considered ‘teachers.’ Certainly that’s the smell she got from them. With all of that, now, let’s see if she can be Trans-personal in this. Not to make it good or bad for her or to judge it personally – just as a fact. To know the difference between knowing about something and being able to live it.

Good issue, right? Obviously.

Good, that’s a whole issue between her and me. She’s so strong in her higher places. But the tendency is for something that goes very high in one direction and when the pendulum swings to the other side, it goes, she goes, very weak. She gets so weak, she gets weak in the knees. You know the expression, ‘weak in the knees.’ Where you feel you’re so weak you could collapse. Not because you’re tired. So maybe, I just take the opportunity to talk like this with her. If somehow, some part of her, can understand it. I know that which is ‘her,’ even if she forgets sometimes. I’ve no doubt about her two different places, they have completely different vibrations. They have a completely different reality.

I think that goes for everybody in this room.

Your higher parts have different components. You have different avenues of manifestations from your real intelligence and purity – when you’re there. Different. And that level is something to ‘aware.’ It also has love in it – the real has love in it. That’s another dangerous word to use, just like the word ‘God.’ Too complex, so many subjective notions around it. But the Truth and Love and God and Peace and Reality – they’re all different words for the same thing.

One can say, I know you ‘in your heart.’ That’s the easiest way to say it. And I know your heart when it’s there. It’s *ouvda* (fact). Your ‘cleverness’ with your usual mind, with its calculations and speculations and hopes and fears and

pictures and moods – are temporary phenomena at the sub Trans-personal level.

That's 'media,' that's imagination. That's 'reality' only to the degree that you're identified in the agonizing, and other people are reacting to it, then forgetting it all five minutes later. It's absolutely unreal, compared to you at your heart. It's as different as day and night, as black is to white. They're mixed within you and they switch very rapidly. As a result you haven't got the confidence in yourself, in your real self – that which I relate to.

And if one has any care or any love, or whatever you want to call it – that's the only thing that's interesting. The hope is for that part in you to strengthen, so you can stop being miserable – to start with. Start contributing to what is so needed in terms of some non-identified, sincere lovers.

Gut gesocht ? (Well said?)

Shula: Ya ya. Can I have one? (Cigarette)

No.

Shula: Why?

My job is to talk about suffering. Your job tonight is to suffer. And that will be my job as long as you're living in darkness, because darkness and night are the same thing. And because – I don't cause the suffering.

* * *

Gurdjieff said something to the effect that – ‘A person has a realistic sense of existence and themselves only when they realize that whoever they are facing, at any moment, the next moment that person could be dead or they themselves could be dead. Only then is essential reality clear.’

We are going to be dead, gone in a few moments. That’s a fact. Until you live with that fact, you don’t know what life is. You’ve got a lot of ideas, a lot of pride and a lot of guilt within it. But it’s all your own imagination. You’re not living in basic reality.

I was at Klill yesterday. Amal has got a friend, who I had some contact with twenty five years ago. She’s married to a poet/folk singer. He’s the one who wrote the song that was sung just before Rabin was assassinated. Who is he? Yankelah Rothblit. I’ll give the story. So, she’s married and has... how many children? Huh?

Ronit: Five, six, four...

She had a lot of children. And Amal visited her recently in Jerusalem and said she is sick. She’s got a disease. It’s like multiple-sclerosis, M.S. Ugly thing. There’s degeneration of the nervous system. After AIDS and cancer that’s what people worry about most.

She must be in her mid-forties. She said she’s got something worse than multiple-sclerosis – similar. Multiple-sclerosis usually starts in the legs, with her it started in the throat. She can hardly talk. It’s clear she’s going to go quick.

Amal says: ‘I’m jealous of her.’

Jealous of her?...

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘her attitude.’

‘What do you mean?’ I said.

I’m trying to remember exactly what she told me. Oh yeah, now I remember. This dying woman/girl was saying things like – ‘I’m just realizing what life is. I was busy with so many things that I now realized, were completely unimportant.’ Amal says the girl is shining. She’s shining. She sees life for the first time because she knows she’s going to die. Not because she ‘thinks’ about it. It became a fact. Now, it’s a fact in all our lives. What’s the difference if it’s next week or it’s five hundred weeks, a thousand weeks?

You can’t really ‘convince’ a person into this frame of mind, even though logically it makes sense. The Work says, ‘die before you die.’ Because if you see your own imagination, if you’re honest in observation, if you’re not busy in maintaining an image – not for your parents, your friends, your neighbors, not for the living or the dead – not trying to measure up to other people’s opinion... but concerned with ‘Knowing Thyself.’ Knowing the mind, the emotions, the body – if you pay attention... you will see the illusion in it. You’ll see. You will die to your imagination of yourself.

That is what is so wonderful about having a lot of experience. It was once said: ‘It’s not the quality of your experiences that matter – it’s the quantity.’ What a funny thing to say. We think we’ll learn from quality. It’s not the quality of experiences. When you see enough, it’s like the jigsaw-puzzle coming together. To know that it’s a jigsaw-puzzle – it doesn’t matter what kind of picture it is, a bad picture, a nice picture. While you’re putting it together, you’re so absorbed with it that you don’t realize that it’s a game. When it comes together, it comes together – you can’t ‘figure it out.’ The more you see, the more ‘reality’ will expose itself to you – the less you try to twist it to your own advantage, which you can’t do anyway, the better. You can’t twist reality.

That’s what Work is about. If you apply the Work Ideas and do things which aren’t the usual, stupid, as if selfish – you’ll do and see an awful lot more. I

once said, that the Work is like 'avoiding the avoidance.' Avoiding the avoidance.

So it's said: 'die before you die.' But you don't.

There's a wonderful Sufi story:

'A man goes to a Sufi and asks: 'What do you feel?'

The Sufi says: 'I feel when I wake up in the morning, that I may not live to see the end of the day.'

And the man says to the Sufi: 'Oh sure, but everybody knows that.'

And the Sufi says: 'Yes, but how many people feel it...?'

Does this make sense to you? You're not hearing anything new, are you? It's all a fact. But how difficult it is. There's a gap between the 'fact' and living it, right?

What do you think is needed? I mean, you know it can only come from you personally. What each one needs is different. But the essence of it is not so different. Not so different in essence – what's needed for you and is needed for Tami. So if you can just be honest.

What is getting in the way of the joy of 'doing your best?' In all fields. What?

Why the gap between the knowing and the living?

Shula: I feel it like a lack of connectedness. Real connection with others.

You feel a lack of connectedness with others. Uh ha. Have you any suspicion about what's at the root of that? What could be the barrier to that? Have you got any suspicion?

Shula: It's some type of fear that I don't know to...

Some kind of fear. Okay. I'll tell you something. My interest corresponds with yours at the essential level. I think you understand that. Do you want to make an effort to look at this issue with me – I'm prepared to do it with you. Because the only thing I'm interested in relative to you, is your good health and your ability to live closer and closer to what you know best. That's really our challenge.

To live closer to what we already know best

We can't do more than we 'know best.' If we do the best we can, a lot of help is available in ways you wouldn't guess at. But 'help' cannot penetrate unless you are doing your best, from the best place in yourself. That place that wishes to remember what you know best – that's equivalent to 'remembering yourself.' Unless you're making a supreme effort, then higher influences (they call it), cannot reach you. Those higher influences are also inside yourself. So in my eyes, I think you are trying to do your best. That's the strange thing about it, that's what is interesting to discuss. It's not that you're not trying. Somehow you're not getting the benefit of the light and joy which should be yours already. Somehow that's being blocked, and I wonder what it is and you wonder what it is. You know that's where our interests connect. I'm not in the 'family business,' I'm not in the 'money business,' I'm not in the 'commune business.' What is being discussed here, is what I value.

This will at least keep Stephen off the streets for a while. He can't wait until this meeting is over. He's going home tonight and will probably stay up all night and transcribe this. Because he functions as if there's no tomorrow – from his own experience. He tries not to leave things over, if he can help it.

* * *

My guess it's eleven o'clock. Is that right Dina?

Dina: Five past eleven.

Five past eleven. So we're going to have just a few more minutes here, I think. We should have enough staying power for that. Eleven thirty would be three hours, roughly. I'm going to continue a little bit.

Useful to say this I think.

* * *

Interestingly enough, what I'm going to say now, applies, for some strange reason, more to the females than to the males. I think I can understand why.

In this world, in this society, in this culture that we live in, the males have more flexibility, more freedom. Not that they use it particularly, but they have kind of a built-in notion that they can do anything they want. They can change jobs, they can go to another country – it's relatively simple. It's more awkward for a woman. If you're a real woman, you're no different from a real man – you can go and do and be whatever any man can. If you're still identified as a 'female' in this world, which is almost inevitable to a certain extent, then you feel somewhat restricted. Men can fend for themselves more easily. That's what they say. But these are very special days. What is being experienced is the total spectrum of fear and negativity that can exist in the world.

You either know it in yourself or see it in most of the people you are in connection with. That doesn't mean you're living in a state of total external considering, but the circumstances themselves make you aware that this person is sick and dying and that person got divorced and this person is... you're aware of people's suffering. You're aware of their confusion. It's useful to bring that knowledge up to your conscious awareness.

Then, of course, yourself. You're confused and worried in the sex issue, about the family issue, about the money issue, you're confused and worried about the... anyone want to add something? You identify. You're confused and don't know exactly how to deal with your parents, you're confused and don't know exactly how to deal with the children and your neighbors. It's very seldom you feel happy. 'Happy'... it's become just a word. Occasionally you take a puff on something, a drink of something, and you feel good and recognized and loved, for a few minutes. That's the reality.

Sometimes you can keep yourself going for a while, on 'hope.' For periods of time you actually feel that you are, I don't know, I don't want to get into that word – in love, or loved, or something. That happens sometimes... Oh yoi... we don't want to talk about that, it's too painful.

Love, you should know, is a level within yourself. Love loves love. It's got nothing to do with our usual imagination on the subject. It's always active, present – if at all.

Now what I wanted to point out, is that – not that it's anything new to you, but if you think about it for a while – you are in a position to be more honest with yourself in these days, than maybe any other time ever in your life. Because all these pains and agonies and questions and confusions are changing so quickly. You can't really stay totally identified with any one emotion for very long. So, like the buffers are breaking down a bit – you can see it's a recurring 'holocaust.' (Laugh)

Nobody will laugh with me?

You're also beginning to sense, that it's just simply the reality. With the older people you know in your life, your family and others, you can see it's the same. Oh, each one is a little bit different – some get hysterical, some get depressed, some go senile, some get violent, some get cynical, some get ego-maniacal.

Insisting on their picture – fanatic in one way or another. But you see it all around. You can see it, at least at those times, when you are not totally concerned with ‘how they see you.’ When you’re concerned with how they see you, ‘Do they like you? Do they not like you? Do they think you’re good or bad...’, then you don’t see them. All you see is their like, dislike, appreciation or contempt of you. You shut the door on seeing all.

Well, I wonder. If this gets transcribed, you can read it over and consider it. How you block yourself from seeing the truth of the matter, the truth of a ‘level of being.’ When people are not present, they are in an egotistical patheticness. They’re suffering in it and it’s no different in you – it’s a ‘level of being.’ Do you begin to understand the Work? Until you can fully face the horror of this corrupted mankind that we are part of, until you can face it, you’re identified with it and part of it. And your notions of good and bad are part of the same violence – and you know it.

Ronit, you following me? Yes, you are, totally. But you see, you can’t remember it all, it may come back to you at different times. I question myself at this point – what’s the use of going into all of this, because I’m certainly not here to make an impression about myself. And certainly I’m not here in order to entertain. So the test I present to it, the question I always have is – of what use is it? And that goes from this evening to whatever I’ve done in the past thirty years.

I’m only interested in what use it is. In terms of a person’s coming to terms with ‘God,’ if you will, coming to terms with their essence. Coming to terms with the only thing in the world that can give them peace and security – their Real Self. Their simple, non-impressive, simple real self – that’s the next level within which is God to the level below it. That’s the only place of satisfaction. ‘In sickness or in health to death do us part.’ That’s the real marriage.

The knowing, the wish to live in that place in yourself, seeing from there – the pain, the horror, the insecurity of everything around. Everything starts,

everything finishes, anything can come, anything can go. And you can face the insecurity with the joy of being.

How many words can you put to it, trying to paint a picture that's going to penetrate?

The Sufis say: 'Don't be so busy keeping men happy – keep God happy.' That means, live from conscience, live from total fearfulness. Fearlessly.

So that was the note I wrote down, 'You are experiencing every type of negative emotion imaginable!' Are you not? Look back as far as you can – a week, a month, a year – each one of you. You are experiencing every type of negative emotion imaginable, and if you're not experiencing one, you're seeing it in others.

* * *

Let's go back to the issue of suffering. That's the subject we have the possibility of doing something about, not just having these fancy pictures that I'm throwing up in the air now. They're true. You know it. You know it in yourselves. But they're just ideas and pictures in words. 'The finger pointing to the moon' – which is words pointing to a reality –

'The finger pointing to the moon
is not the moon.'

So it's important to have this kind of knowledge. It confirms things that you have seen for yourself. You can categorize, like with a good filing cabinet, to do something practical. Here with this issue of suffering – the possibility of coming to a new relationship to this word and this reality. It takes an effort, it's real work. It's a way, it's a path – the only path.

Some people in this age say, 'Me? No, no, no, forget about it, just meditate. Meditate. Because all the rest is nonsense. It's all illusion. It's senseless. Just forget about it. Just meditate.'

But you meditate, you finish, and then you find yourself right back in the middle of it all again. The meditative element is important, but the real meditative element is self-remembering. The degree to which you can see these things, outside and inside, from a place where you are not totally identified. Far back within yourself. Then it becomes it and you become you.

It's a serious, serious matter to be a conscious human being. We're not meant to be puppets on a thousand strings, we're not meant to disintegrate into negativity and broken hearts, like the majority of people on the face of the earth. They end off 'dust to dust' – seeds that never opened.

* * *

We find ourselves together here – all from different backgrounds. God knows, maybe we're talking above our heads. I don't think so – it's a serious matter to be a human being. It's not just to be a 'little more happy,' it's not to be a little bit of anything – it's something very major, very radical. You can't have your cake and eat it too.

Now, if by chance you find that this makes sense, and is logical and practical, then I would suggest you take it very seriously – it will end up being the difference between life and death. We are not alive in our negativity.

There's degrees of being asleep. At a certain point you're half awake, you're dreaming, then you 'wake up' but the dream is still kind of going on. You know you're dreaming and you're also awake. You know it's a dream, but you allow it. Maybe some people here are a bit close to that 'in life' now – they begin to realize that they're kind of dreaming their 'reality' up.

I have the sense that more than a few people here have this sense of how they are waking up into more or less the same dream, every morning. So they have a certain evaluation of what they're hearing now. I want to underline the fact that this is not a little bit of pseudo-psychology, it's not a little bit of therapy, it's not a little bit about 'being a little bit happier' – not a little bit anything. It's about how to transform your energy, so you can be what you know you want to be and can be – a full human being.

You see, ultimately, it's not a question of psychology, it's certainly not merely a question of social interaction – it's a question of energies. All the psychology, all the ideas, are not to make you a 'nice person' or a 'better person' or a more 'respected person' or a more 'loved person' – it's to make you a more awake person. If you're more awake, you'll be more aware of the suffering and the horror. And if you can be aware of that, in the proper way, that energy, that horrible negative energy that we are surrounded with and choking on, these days – can slowly transform. You have to suffer the pain of the negativity so it can transform into a higher energy. Energy is the issue. And you're pissing it away in your vanity, in your pictures, in your anger, in your wish to be 'right'. In the automatic expression of your irritation. You're experiencing the same thing everyone else in the world is. You're suffering the same thing, and egotistically holding on to it – as pride in your so called 'sensitivity.'

You following? (Shula) Yes, yes, a good recorder.

It's not a small issue. The Work is something that you're using daily – pondering, questioning, connecting – with the hope of transcending your pain and sorrow. Otherwise it's a terrible waste of time. And the moment I see it as a waste of your own time, I won't participate in it. Now, even though the Work is something from 'above,' with a very particular agenda, it takes your understanding, your pondering, and your effort.

Bechol levavcha
 Bechol nofshecha
 Ubechol meodecha

With all your heart
 And with all your soul
 And with all your might

Nothing less. You don't 'buy' Truth, God, Love, Peace – cheap. You pay with everything. You want 'everything' = you must leave everything that is useless. 'It's harder for a rich man to find God than it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.'

And Nicoll, alav hashalom (peace be with him), explains that, and says: 'What is the rich man?' Are we still so petty and stupid to think that if a man has a billion dollars, it's harder for him than it is for you? That's not the issue, obviously. So he explains that the rich man is the man who is rich in 'personality.' That's our 'knowing,' our 'virtue,' our 'seriousness,' our 'heshbonot' (accounts), our 'magiah li' (I deserve), our 'pictures of ourselves.' You can't drag that through 'the eye of a needle.'

I don't want to go further. No one wants to be 'small.' It seems everyone wants to be impressive, big, and important – valued by everybody. Valued.

We want our dirty sheet of paper valued.

Now the Work, is something to 'do.' Don't assume anything. It's got to answer your question, it has to make sense to you. I don't assume that your association with me is just what you need – I don't assume that for a second. I expect you to watch what you need. No one can tell another person what they need.

You can't expect success by going into a gambling casino and placing a little

money on the roulette, a little money on the blackjack table, a little money in a slot machine – and keep pulling the handle. You can't be a little bit Christian and a little bit Jewish and a little bit Buddhist and a little bit Sufi. You got to be you. And yes – remember you're going to be dead soon.

Look what you have to learn about human beings, and the imaginary influence you can have on them. Some people have to have a few children to see that. Some people have to have a lot of children before they realize that no matter what they tell anybody, correcting their world, correcting this or that – it doesn't work. People don't change that easily. They're influenced by many things, many things. Your tafkid (task) is you.

* * *

A real Sufi story:

The son of the King, in a palace. The King says to him, 'get me a glass of water.' The well is just outside the wall that surrounds the palace. The son walks out of the palace to the well. And the story goes on – he lifts his head and he sees a beautiful girl, falls in love with her, follows her, marries her, has a few children, builds a house, lives with his in-laws and supports them and others. Years go by – all of a sudden, he's walking alone in the field one day, and he remembers, he's the son of the King. Immediately he goes back to the palace, walks in. The King takes one look at him and says, 'Where's my glass of water?'

You came into this world for God knows how many different reasons or how the Universe uses us. But always with this unique opportunity of doing one thing that your father, the King, needs from you. One thing – To Remember Yourself. And in that is your connection with the 'Higher.' You are the child of the King – you are a child of God.

And no matter what you do in this world – if you cure AIDS, stop wars, educate all the children, build roads, buildings, cities, clean up the air, stop the

forests from burning, dispense with racial hatreds and win ten Noble Prizes. But you don't do that one thing – you've missed. You've come into this world to do one thing, when that one thing is done, the 'King' may have some additional work for you, and you'll know how to listen. You'll know if you can do it or not.

The King's son comes back to the castle after turning the world upside down, and the King asks him, 'Where is my glass of water.'

You have the choice of doing that, or spending the rest of your life playing with a daisy – 'He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not.' Could be anything, we've got a bunch of daises. Pay your money, take your choice. I know the serious places in you – some are more intellectual, some more feeling, some are more honest, some more experienced, more of this and less of that. But somehow you all have a taste for something 'different.'

And I'm saying, in order to reap the benefit, there is work to be done. You have to take yourself 'in hand.' And in 'this environment' there is a certain something being offered. I have to watch that it doesn't become too comfortable, because our normal inclination is much more towards safety and comfort than for what I've got in mind. It just might benefit you. So I'm not interested in making it 'attractive.' If it's usable – all to the good.

' What's good for you
is good for me
is good for us
whoever that us
turns out to be.'

People get attracted to the Work for all kinds of reasons, which is okay at the beginning. People like to be around the opposite sex, others like to have the

feeling they're part of a commune, others starved for attention, etc., etc.. But if you begin to understand, there is a major step to be made inside, a major break with the way that you usually take things. If not, then you can join a lot of people who are sitting meditation in Buddhist places or other meditations – might be useful in the right place at the right time. Other people on large communes. So you have to sense what's functional for you, not wishful thinking and certainly not spending, I don't know how many years, impressing me. God forbid. You can't impress me and you can't build credits – it's not a deal. There's no 'deal.'

Now sometimes you feel happy, connected, and even joyful, because you have some connection with this thing called Work. If you get into a depression, you can be moved. Most people have absolutely no moves at all in life. Sometimes you get a little proud because you find you have a few moves, and you feel more intelligent than other people. But basically you're quite aware, as I wrote, 'That you are experiencing every type of negative emotion imaginable in this period,' and you feel quite a victim of it. Now, 'Don't add insult to injury.' It's useful, what you're seeing, you've got some years ahead of you.

I've said it a number of times, I don't give a damn whether you're happy or unhappy in this period of your life or whether you like me or dislike me, or put me on a pedestal, or wonder, or doubt, or question, or glorify. Basically, if you're happy or unhappy – I don't care. I care how well you're going to be when you're sixty, seventy, eighty years old. I care how you are going to die.

If you've got suffering to do – do it now. You're suffering in your own ignorance – not what you don't know, but what you think you know. You can't be as simple as a child. Experiences you're having now – of all kinds, which I share with you. Each of you has agony, if I know you and keep in touch, I share that agony with you. It's a lot of agony, I tell you, but I'm glad that you're aware of it more. I'm glad that you occasionally see each other and realize... whatever you realize.

And do it with sincerity. You can't be judging it. Don't get into, 'Oh, I'm not enlightened.'

You can do what you can do when you do it.

I'll tell you something about the Work – you can't abuse it. There's an expression that says, 'There's no fooling the Work' – it represents Truth. And what's so beautiful about it is, that it doesn't ask you to believe anything. Try it, see it, if something works – then you know. Truth is something you experience as being true. Do you understand? Keep to the Work. It doesn't ask for faith, it doesn't ask for belief – they're too weak.

So be patient with yourself. I know a lot of people are suffering and there are occasions of agony, such agony. There are a lot of people feeling the agony in themselves and a lot of people are feeling other people's agony. Sometimes so trapped, so impossible, so isolated, so lonely, so...

If you're really suffering in your agony so much, it just shows how much you are identified with it all. You ascribe everything to yourself because you don't see with enough care – other people. If you did, you would recognize that you're witnessing, you're experiencing a specific 'level of being.' Until you can realize that, you're identified with it. You'll die in your agony.

There is something in you that can step back from it all – that's what the Work is about.

Non-Critical Self-Observation

Non-Identification

Self-Remembering

There are so many areas that you can make efforts.

(End)

ON SUFFERING

Extracts from different sources
on the issue of suffering

Compiled by Ronen Aygen & Taliah Natanzon

G. I. Gurdjieff to Fritz Peters:

“In your country, you think life is only for pleasure. You have saying in your country: 'Pursuit of happiness,' and this saying show that people not understand life. Happiness is nothing, is only other side of unhappiness. But in your country, in most of world now, people only want happiness. Other things also important: suffering important because is also part of life, necessary part. Without suffering man cannot grow, but when you suffer, you think only of self, you feel sorry for self, wish not to suffer because this make you feel not comfortable, make you wish escape, from thing that make you feel bad. When man suffer, he feel only self- pity. Not so if real man. Real man also sometime feel happiness, real happiness; but when he also feel real suffering, he not try to stop this thing in self. He accept this because he know is proper to man. Must suffer to know truth about self; must learn suffer with will. When suffering come to man must make intentional suffering, must feel with all being; must wish with such suffering that it will help make conscious; help to understand.

You have only physical suffering, suffering of body because pain in leg. This suffering also help if you know how to use for self. But this is suffering like animal, not important suffering. With other suffering, suffering in all self, is possibility understand that all people suffer this way, is possibility also understand how depend on Nature, on other people, on everything, for help in life. Cannot live life alone. Aloneness – not loneliness, which is bad thing – but aloneness can be good thing for man, very necessary for life, but also necessary learn not live alone because real life depend on other human being and not just on self. Now, you still boy, cannot understand what I talk – but remember this thing; remember for time when you not thank me because I save life.”

Maurice Nicoll:**Work-Ideas**

Gurdjieff said:

“People imagine they have something to sacrifice. There is only one thing they have to sacrifice and that is their suffering.

A man in this work must eventually begin to know what Conscious Suffering is compared with Mechanical Suffering.”

Everyone suffers mechanically. What is mechanical suffering? It is something quite different from conscious suffering. It is something so intricate, so devious, so contradictory, so various, so subtle, so historically long – in short, a habit – that we do not observe it. We do not see it's continual, inner, private, petrifying action, like that steady drip of calcium-charged water that builds up those strange pillars in deep caves between floor and roof. The Work teaches that we all, inevitably, have mechanical suffering and that this is the only thing we have to offer as sacrifice. In order to change, one must sacrifice something. Understand clearly and ask yourself a question, which means that you will have actually to think for yourself of the answer – I say, ask yourself this question: "Can I possibly imagine that I can change if I do not give up, sacrifice, something?" This means simply that you cannot change if you wish to continue to be the same person. To change is to become different. If I want to go to London, I must give up being at Amwell.

Now notice carefully what we have to give up.

The sacrifice the Work seeks is that of our habitual, mechanical suffering.

You have often heard before that the only thing that we can sacrifice in the Work is our suffering. The Work teaches that we have to have a new kind of suffering not based on our ordinary mechanical suffering. All change in oneself can only take place by giving up what one was and becoming something different. To change oneself means to become different. I cannot change myself if I remain the same person that I am mechanically. Therefore in order to change I must give up something, sacrifice something. The idea of sacrifice runs through all

esotericism.

I remember that Mr. Ouspensky spoke very early about this question. He said first of all that everyone without knowing it has fallen into typical forms of suffering from which they derive self justification – namely, they justify their suffering and so take it for granted as part and parcel of themselves. He called it a kind of thing that you drag behind you all the time or push in front of you.

P. D. Ouspensky:

"All your internal considering and account-making is based on this acquired suffering which people value very much. All this suffering belongs to the side of Personality. People suffer uselessly but cling to their suffering."

"When you begin to be alongside this Work and become conscious of what you are like through self observation you will see how you are not like this Work, how your being does not correspond with it." (People asked:) "Then what should we do?" The answer always was: "You must remember yourselves and the first thing you must give up is your suffering."

Maurice Nicoll:

I think he meant, as regards the latter part of what he said, that as long as you carry your suffering with you, you cannot do the Work. You have to give it up – that is, you have to sacrifice this strange thing in you that is the basis of all internal considering and account-making.

P. D. Ouspensky:

"No one can reach a higher level of Being unless he gives up his present forms of suffering."

Maurice Nicoll:

The Work says that everyone as regards Being has his or her own form of suffering, of negative emotions, of grievances, of sad thoughts and feelings, and so on. This applies to everyone. There are no exceptions. And this thing in

ourselves we are told to sacrifice at the very outset of this teaching. Therefore it is very necessary to try to observe one's form of suffering.

Real suffering is utterly different and always opens us to a higher level: fraudulent suffering closes us. It is extraordinary how a moment of real suffering makes everything false fall away from you and at such moments you understand quite plainly what this Work is about, but fraudulent, self-invented suffering comes between us and Higher Centers – that is, between us and the voice of the Work that is always speaking to us, and which we have to learn at first from outside, from a teacher, and after a time can begin to hear speaking to us inside.

Beril Pogson:

What is the difference between conscious suffering and mechanical suffering?

Mrs. Pogson: It is a matter of inner taste. When you have made an aim and see yourself unable to keep it, you suffer in a sense because you are still like that.

It feels to me like self-criticism?

Mrs. Pogson: There is all the difference in the world. There can be self-criticism in the beginning, but this is from pride and feeling you should be different. The other is a kind of helplessness if one is sincere. Then help can come and next time you can possibly choose differently.

P. D. Ouspensky:

How can I remember my realization that much of emotional suffering is in false personality?

Only by self-remembering. Suffering is the best possible help for self-remembering if you learn how to use it. By itself it does not help; one can suffer

one's whole life and it will not give a grain of result, but if one learns to use suffering, it will become helpful. The moment you suffer, try to remember yourself.

There are two kinds of suffering: one is due to seeing my own mechanicalness and weakness, and the other is suffering from seeing someone you are fond of ill or unhappy. How to work against it or use it for the work?

The question is, can you do something or not? If you can, you can, but if you cannot, it is another thing. If we begin suffering about everything we cannot help, then we shall certainly never cease suffering. The chief thing is to find how much imagination there is in it. We may be perfectly sure there is none, but if we make one more effort we often see that it is all imaginary. We have a wrong picture of ourselves, and at the same time we ascribe to this wrong picture real features. But if this picture is false, then everything about it is bound to be false, and it's suffering is also false. It may be very acute, but this does not make any difference. Imaginary suffering is generally more unpleasant than real, because with real suffering you can do something, but with imaginary suffering you can do nothing. You can only get rid of it, but if you are fond of it or proud of it, then you have to keep it.

Maurice Nicoll:

Now it is a very good idea to try to observe your typical forms of mechanical suffering and here it is a good thing to try to observe your fantasies – i.e. the passive work of the imagination in you. All our Earth-problems are of no value at all at a higher level of Being, and our work is to cancel our Earth-problems, our Earth-suffering, our internal accounting, our negative states towards others, our grievances towards others, our dislike of others and our hate of others.

Our Emotional Center, as it is, is nothing but self-emotions with the resultant negative emotions arising from them. The purification of the Emotional Center must, practically speaking, destroy the Emotional Center in us as it is now, with all our little personal, sensitive, difficult reactions, our little personal feelings about everyone, our bundle of sensitive likes and dislikes – in short, our very

small petty emotions, that we have as long as self-emotions govern us.

You have to serve the Work and not yourself. The Work must not be a function of yourself but you must become a function of the Work.

What does serving the Work mean? To serve the Work means to obey what it teaches you to practice on yourself. You want to be gloomy and moody, to object, and so on, and you observe your state and begin to separate from it – then you are serving the Work. And in so doing you are giving up some of your mechanical suffering.

But to work on your typical forms of suffering, close and sincere observation of your Being is necessary, and directing the Work on to those places in your Being through the light of self-observation, and trying not to go with these reactions, not to identify with them, not to put feeling of 'I' into them, and the more you value the Work in which higher meaning is something above the meaning of life, the more will the Work help you to overcome your mechanical suffering.

Work-Idea

‘A man, a woman, cannot change unless he or she begins to realize his or her mechanicalness. As long as men and women ascribe full consciousness to themselves and their actions, they will remain asleep and suffer from themselves uselessly.’

Understand clearly that we can not change the events but only our way of taking them. But if we have not practiced self-observation, if we have not made a new place in our minds where we can, to a small extent, observe incoming impressions before reacting to them and observe how ordinarily we would react, this will be impossible. That is, we remain machines governed by life, which is a series of changing events that overpower us in a regular rotation.

The point of the Work is to create a conscious place or bar or custom-house where we can be conscious of the quality of incoming impressions and so detect a typical event, and what would be our mechanical reaction to it before we react mechanically to it. Here we can interfere with ourselves safely.

Now the point of the Work in this respect is how you relate yourself to what is happening to you. What is happening to you is events – some event which millions of others are under. Events govern the world. The world is a series of recurring events – yes, old, old, recurring events.

You cannot change the event – but you can alter yourself in regard to how you take it.

Do you not understand what it means to be passive to events so that you do not combine with them – whatever they be? Yes, a very difficult thing – but of enormous, incalculable value once you see what the Work is teaching about non-identifying.

Every event that comes to us in life is like a pocket into which we fall if we identify and neither observe nor remember ourselves. For example, a good pocket is "I have had a hard life".

Even the smallest event acts as a pocket, such as losing one's collar stud. We may identify with some trivial event like this so that all day long we are in a temper, a sulky mood, so that all day long we are in a pocket of some kind. We have been, in that case, easily caught by life, which seeks to keep us asleep and have not grasped that the Work is to make us take events consciously and not mechanically.

For many years before I met this Work I was Jung's pupil in Zurich. One of the useful things he taught was that we all cast a psychological shadow and that the beginning of the way to internal evolution lay in making the shadow gradually conscious. The shadow is the part of us that we are not conscious of, but must – with pain to both pride and vanity, which is conscious suffering – eventually make conscious. It is absolutely necessary to face this shadow if we are serious. Of course it alters our idea of ourselves very much. This shadow, which is in everyone, can make havoc in our lives, as long as we are unconscious of it. As a part of our being that we do not acknowledge, it attracts much that seems incomprehensible in our Life, owing to our not accepting it. A man without a shadow would be fully conscious to himself. He would have suffered usefully.

J. G. Bennet:

Mr. Bennet, you've often said that it is necessary to suffer, and you've also talked about conscious suffering in the sense of actually putting yourself in the way of something. Is it necessary right from the start of one's path, or is it necessary at a particular stage that one does this, and is it done under direction? Could you speak a little about this?

Bennet: Certainly. Gurdjieff made a very sharp distinction between voluntary suffering and intentional suffering. There is involuntary suffering that we can't avoid – that can be used – but the suffering that comes because of our own actions is quite different in these two cases and this is not usually understood.

Voluntary suffering is suffering that one imposes on oneself for a definite aim, as an athlete diets himself, works himself, denies himself all sorts of pleasures. He makes his life exceedingly hard and puts himself in the control of a trainer – all because he wants to win or achieve something. That is the paradigm type of voluntary suffering. One can have voluntary suffering for the purpose of self-improvement. Let us take a simple case – I want to overcome unpunctuality or not getting up or something like that and I know that this has got to be cured, or I wish to cure it. And I say – well, whenever I'm late I will fast, deprive myself of food or do something or other, until I can make myself get up or not be late. All that is voluntary suffering because it is done for an aim that one has set himself. In Gurdjieff's opinion this kind of suffering has relatively little value – the reward is the value of it.

Intentional suffering arises exclusively through actions for the good of others. The simple principle or paradigm of intentional suffering is, if one wishes to do good to somebody, to recognize that this is always going to mean more trouble than one reckons with, and so one must never do it for the sake of reward, but work for the welfare of one's neighbour by the conscious sacrifice of one's own. All that is really the basic, simple case of intentional suffering. It requires that one should understand the law. To do good is a privilege that one has to pay for, not something for which one will get a reward. If one wants to do something right, one will have to suffer for it – not merely that it is hard – it will bring some kind of painful consequences. A simple case is that it can bring ingratitude and

can involve one in much more trouble than one reckoned with, that 'one thinks one has to go a mile and one finds that one has to go twain', as the sermon on the mount puts it. Or you give a man your coat and he expects your cloak also.

Alan J. Rudner:

Oh... there's so much suffering, there's suffering everywhere. But it has to be that way – that's the way it is. It's representative of the general level of being of humanity, and it's relative to other facts in the universe – they're all coordinated. Mankind cannot be other than he is, from where he is. There are prophecies, though I don't look at things through those eyes. that the earth is actually going through a major evolutionary step at this point in time, and mankind will take an evolutionary step with it. The earth being a being... how does that connect with what I'm saying...? All this negativity is no longer necessary. It was necessary as a type of food: animals give out certain vibrations, plants give out certain vibrations – it's all an inter-change of food – and human beings emote like nothing else on earth. And that was needed in some way, it's not needed any longer – so they say.

The work talks about the difference between conscious suffering and mechanical suffering. All the suffering that came about was needed; that's mechanical suffering. We have to suffer. Everyone has to suffer. But if you do it consciously, it feeds what it has to. We have to pay our debt to nature, so to speak, it's our debt for our existence, but with the right attitude towards suffering we can also benefit from it.

So that's the big trick in the work – to change mechanical suffering to conscious suffering. The funny thing about it is that we don't really suffer, our centres suffer. We also suffer, because of our non existence, we suffer when we're not present, we're always sort of tagging along behind all our habits, you know...

Our real essence is living smack in the middle of our hysteria, and our centres remain hysterical until we give them attention and realize we're not them. Attention is light, and there are certain things that happen in the dark that cannot happen in the light, certain chemical reactions. For instance, in

laboratories, certain things that can happen in the dark cannot happen in the light. Attention is light and light heals. You see?

There are many levels of what goes on there, but our identification with our centers is what causes us to think that we suffer. Our pride suffers (hah), for instance. That's a whole other story, you can read the booklet on pride, I won't go into that.

Our centers suffer and we are not our centers.