

Survival

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PART ONE

Many of those around Gurdjieff, like Ouspensky, Nicoll and Orage were highly educated people. They were 'intellectual types' – part of the then current Intelligentsia.

(Here we've got two of our high-tech defense systems flying overhead – helicopters! They look like Christmas trees with their blue and red flashing lights.)

This opens up some interesting angles. In the age that we are now living 'intellectuals' are running the world. It's the valued faculty. It hasn't always been that way – not so long ago a real farmer was the backbone of society. Intellectuals were likely to be up in their 'ivory tower' reading or writing while the farmers were out there feeding the populace. But in these days those with the best memories and educated to 'think' are running the show. All head stuff.

So the intellectual is honored and rewarded and is pretty much running things. It is actually quite devilish, with each individual in it for himself. A farmer had to be sensitive to his community as they shared things and defended themselves together. The politicians, economists and high-tech folk will screw the guy sitting at the next desk as quickly as you can say 'Jackie Robinson'!

The fact that the Work has been 'packaged' in such clear scientific terms was a requirement for reaching some of the new-age intellectuals. One of the most difficult thing in the world is to 'wake-up' an intellectual. That's really like taking on the devil full face – they are the least 'present'.

(How far we are from relating to each other with as much sensitivity as those dogs downstairs.)

Gurdjieff gathered some highly qualified people, with the capacity of making an impression on intellectuals of the highest order. This challenged and superseded their intellect in a language they could understand – scientific language.

(Na'ama – when you get as graceful on the outside as you are capable of being on the inside, you'll move like a ballet dancer. Timing is the issue. What to do, and then the timing. To have the timing you have to be conscious of what you intend to do. Generally we take a cigarette, then notice it after. When your timing equals your intention you'll be so invisible that nobody will even notice you – no more than when a fresh breeze comes through the window.)

Most of the early people around the Work were talking 'oh so politely' – but they had some burning questions. They were also people of integrity, who could listen not only with their mind but also with their heart. Some time ago we re-printed the booklet: 'Talks by Madame Ouspensky', by de Ropp. I remember its tone – Madame Ouspensky was like 'sticking it to them'. It seems she could get away with that. Gurdjieff was known to have referred to the 'merde de la merde' – he also wasn't shy.

What I'm trying to approach now is the situation in this country. This is a society with no stable culture, no patience, no ability to listen, and a high level of anxiety. Individuals here have been exposed to a life-time of screaming, complaining and accusing. It forms up in them as one giant scream! More often than not it bursts out of their mouth but actually they're screaming inside all the time. That's the society we're in – here, now!

There is the physical, emotional, or intellectual man. Everyone is dominated by one or another of these 'centers'. Israeli society is basically Western and dominated by the intellectual type. Even if you're not a 'natural intellectual', you've got to act and talk as if you were. You've got to argue, you've got to explain, explain, explain. If you look at it, it is so. In a more normal society people are not going around justifying themselves constantly.

Now, here, we have 'intellectuals' that can't sit still. They have lost confidence in just 'being' – without the explanations. Normal people have their identity in their good will and honesty – who is interested in their justifications/explanations, anyway?

What kind of shock would be needed in this society for people's emotional center to calm down and be receptive? The shock would have to overcome years of warring, sonic booms, drivers yelling, yelling in public, at home, on television. Hardly a sentence passes

without an argument – nobody hears nobody. You've lived most of your life in that.

What I just said is immense. But all that you people have heard is the 'words', and those words can fly by like the last butterfly in the desert. What if I had screamed and yelled and thrown a few chairs around, and then turned to you and said: 'look you so called humans . . . that's what you've been conditioned by . . . do you get the picture!?'

Now to this Madame Ouspensky/de Ropp booklet. The last piece was written on December 28, 1940 as World War II was in its second year, and at this point de Ropp is a student of Madame Ouspensky. Everyone addressed her as 'Madame'. It reminds me of the Russian poet whom I helped read his translated poetry, in Brooklyn, a few years back. 'What is woman?' was one of his poems. 'Vat is vuman!?' I don't know whether the average women's picture is any more realistic than the average man's. But here was a real woman – they addressed her as 'Madame'. Just another female, but . . .

'Madame spoke about naturalness and artificiality. For her, all of us were artificial. Restraints of upbringing and environment had formed a crust about us through which nothing could penetrate. We always lived in thoughts and were unable to feel or to receive impressions directly from the outside world. Her work with us was in the nature of digging hard stony ground or breaking down the hard casings in which we lived.'

I'll read on:

'Man is in a world within a world. In the Ray of Creation, higher matters permeate the lower. In the same way, man consists not of one body but of several, the finer within the coarser. He must make contact with the outside world in order that the inner world may develop.'

I recently had an exchange with Danny Waxman the film maker. The last time I saw him was about eight years ago when he was in his mid-forties – now he's fifty-five. He's already a little bit – isn't it amazing – he's somewhat humble now. Besides having a good many films to his credit he has a far from usual background. Born in Shanghai to German/Jewish parents who had escaped Nazi Germany, they then moved to Israel when he was four years old. His parents separated. Eight years in eight different schools,

including pnimiya (boarding school). Enlisted in the paratroopers at seventeen. Now he looks kind of like a demure Alfred Hitchcock. Not quite, but it's hard to picture him as a fighter in the army. He studied drama here in Israel and then went on to film school in London. He's considered very talented.

I related to him a little bit of the Theory of Eternal Recurrence: 'The more often a person has returned to this world, the more efficient they become at what they are doing!' My implication being: 'don't you think it's time to find out why you're doing what you're doing?' He does so many things well – secure finance, write scripts, organize actors, film crews, direct and produce. This is not a young soul!

I said, 'It doesn't take so much effort – it's natural to you, right?'

'Yeah', he said.

I asked him, 'if you had an unlimited budget, what would you do now?'

He said, 'I haven't got a project going right now, I'm doing little things here and there for money.'

I asked, 'what would you really like to do, if you had an unlimited budget? What subject would you like to cover?'

And he couldn't give me an answer. I didn't expect one on the spot, maybe he's thinking about it.

I suggested that if there was something, really right, that required ten or a hundred million – he could get it. There's more people out there with millions that don't know what the hell to do with it than you can imagine.

He just related some of his life history and it came out all very relaxed though he seemed somewhat tired. When I met him some years ago he had three or four young children. It was clear, then, that this was his main 'prop'. He was saying that what he was really doing – was 'family'. Now the children are somewhere in their teens. 'In a few years they're all out of the house.' You should have seen his face when he said that. He had been doing family, family, family – and all of a sudden, even though it's a few years off, for him it's as good as gone. The meaning is not there anymore – he's done it.

So, all this experience: from Shanghai . . . to Israeli schools . . . to the paratroopers . . . from films on religious fanatics and Ethiopian immigrants . . . and raising a family. A lot of experience. A curious, interesting, interested man. And he's sitting there and says to me, 'what a brain washing I was subjected to in this country . . . I knew it, but I'm just beginning to see the depth of the brain washing that my generation got . . . my children are a little bit free of it . . . the whole Zionist business . . . I didn't ask to come here!'

He was like saying: 'I don't think it's possible to get out of a thing like that . . . it made me who I am. Fear . . . full of fear . . . all those things that I did . . . it was for the money, you know, from fear, fear, money!' He was so true and honest that his 'shorthand' could feed a whole book (a movie?). I've known enough people who went through this society to understand what he's talking about – but still it was amazing. I invited him to come to the house, he didn't look too well, something gray about him at the moment, like he gave up. And only fifty-five.

I said, 'all that work you've done – it can't be for nothing. All that activity – a waste?'

What he outlined reminds me of what 'Madame' said:

'Madame spoke about naturalness and artificiality. For her, all of us were artificial. Restraints of upbringing and environment had formed a crust about us through which nothing could penetrate. We always lived in thoughts and were unable to feel or to receive impressions directly from the outside world. Her work with us was in the nature of digging hard stony ground or breaking down the hard casings in which we lived.'

(To Yakov): I think I know the answer to this question, but I'll ask it anyway, so that you can think about it. Now I'm thinking about it pretty much at the superficial level.

Do you lie?

Yakov: 'A lie can get out of my lips.'

PART TWO

Standing in the open doorway of a room where Hagit and Merav were sitting, I found myself doing, quite instinctively, what I labeled a few years back as: 'Apocalyptic Yoga'. I wanted to ask the girls something, but I felt it couldn't do anything other than bring confusion – so I didn't.

I'll try to get into it, now. It's connected to the last paper, and relative to the society we're now living in – Israel, year 2001. It reminds me so much of India in the early '70s. The feeling was of being on planet Earth sometime in the distant past, like having gone through a time-warp. It was almost impossible to conceive that what was then going on there was happening at the same time as the modern West existed.

So, I'm back doing 'Apocalyptic Yoga' in the doorway of the girls room, wanting to ask them something. And that was:

'What do you think you are doing !?'

Part of me was saying, 'that's a very reasonable question.' Another part was saying: 'that's a ridiculous question – they wouldn't know what to say.' They would squirm a bit and wonder, 'what does he mean?' That wasn't going to go anywhere.

Now I should be able to 'tie this all up'. The overall dynamic of this country – and it's pretty understandable considering all that has been going on since 1948, has been justified on the basis of 'security'. Are you aware of how deep that runs – psychologically? People's attitude moderated somewhat since Israel became acknowledged as some kind of a 'regional power', but, still, regardless of anything else – security first. I don't know whether it still goes on, but when a male child was born here the nurses would exclaim: 'Mazal tov, another soldier!' It was needed – the State was constantly under serious threats from all sides. Really an amazing survival phenomenon has taken place. So, survival is unquestionably 'the issue'. Now, that's what most of you people here grew up in.

Merav just mentioned our last talk with Danny Waxman. All his training in art and movies and what not – and he was saying that he realized that fear was behind it all. It's so

obvious – 'defense' is what everyone in this country is conditioned by. And it goes further than that. We're also living on a piece of desert, and with people from so many different cultures. A Moroccan Jew is as different from a Russian Jew, as an Eskimo is from a Mayan. Everyone is holding on! Imka said years ago when I was questioning her about something: 'Can't you see that we're just surviving?' Well, she had eight kids – it's understandable at that level. But that's what we're all in the middle of here.

So I had difficulty in posing a question like: 'what do you think you're doing?' Because, here, you know what everybody is doing – they're fuck'n well surviving. That's what they're doing!

Excuse me for yelling into the microphone.

That's quite an energy to be addicted to, no? Israel became one big hypodermic needle that you 'shoot-up' with. Incredible energy. One could die of starvation, lack of water, the heat, the Arabs! But we're all surviving – as if.

Alon Porat just came back from Germany – two weeks at an artists gathering. He has also been to New York within the past few years. He says: 'Amazing . . . it all works . . . people in the West can work at their job or profession – and then go out and live their life!'

Here, everyone is running around hysterically – spend half their life looking for bargains! The Bedouin pick-up every scrap they find, the Israelis are at it in a more 'sophisticated' way – a little bit here and a little bit there, and you'll get by, if you're lucky.

Now, back to the question of: 'what are you doing?' or 'what do you think you're doing?'

It's a ridiculous question here. Whatever you're doing, you're doing it to survive – emotionally, mentally, physically. Do you have the option to think of what you would like to do? You become a teacher, learn computers, do massage – to survive! It's so true that I feel stupid even talking about it – it's like saying 'everything's up'.

What allows this to come up now without fear of confusing Merav to death, has to do with something she said. She had transcribed the last talk, and I wondered if it made some

kind of impression on her. It turns out that there were a few things that she remembered well: the talk with Danny Waxman, the high level of anxiety, people's emotional center so disturbed, and everyone always thinking justifying explaining explaining!

Your ears are hurting, Tamara?

Tamara : 'Not hurting.'

There is pressure – yes, I am talking loud. We could be reaching a 'sound barrier' – emotional, vibrational. Your father might have induced that in childhood, an automatic reaction. That's just possible, no? A resistance point!

I don't know how much sense this analogy will make, but we'll take a look:

One is in India, in a rural area, in a farmers field – and they're plowing with water-buffaloes. You see this and say: 'You idiots, why don't you get yourself a tractor? I mean, a tractor! You're not going nowhere with that cow – you'll hardly feed yourself and your pigeons!'

Now, here in this country, the official declaration is – security first! That's the line, that's what we're doing here, we're staying alive. And I'm saying, like, 'where is your tractor?' I'm saying, 'what do you expect from that? To what end?'

In middle-class America, families 'made a living', had a more or less steady income, had 'insurance' – they didn't have to think about security all the time. They strove to become something – a lawyer, a doctor, a businessman . . . something. When I connected with the Hasidim in my early twenties, one prominent member of the community asked me, 'Did I want to become a Rabbi?' In that society, if you did something, it was always for something. Someone becomes 'religious' – they want to become a Rabbi, right? Oh, well!

So, people there went out to accomplish something – never mind what! You could say they were also 'surviving'. But, you know, here it's like talking tractors in rural India. I don't know how to cross those two worlds. Within the 'American Dream' there was surely a lot of illusion – but nevertheless they were going to something . . . 'something'!

Now, more to the point. You can only really think, when you are relaxed. You can think clearly only when you're not in anxiety, not afraid. But if all your life and everything around you says 'danger danger danger', and you've already learnt a few tricks of how to survive in it – can that change?

Politics and discussions about it, are frantic. The obvious truth is that all that is going on here is a frantic determination to survive. And, 'this is a rough neighborhood'. Then again, the money comes in from Big Brother in America who will 'insist' that this country survive. They are controlling the Arab world from here. So, everyone knows – you take where you can, don't be a frier (sucker)!

The head of the Shas religious party was just put in jail because he was creaming-off some money. 'Everybody does it, what, he shouldn't live in a decent house, that's stealing?' It's all justified! And, the Universities? People busy publishing 'papers' – the more published, the more 'prestige' and the better position you get. All struggling to hold on to their salaries, their 'lives'! What are they doing? They're surviving!

You can say that the rest of the world is pretty much the same. But within the middle-class, something a bit normal developed. Gurdjieff commented that, it takes a certain degree of normalcy in society to be able to 'work'. It's not hard to understand – when the energy gets really psychopathic it's hard to learn anything useful.

What would you do if you were not afraid? That's it – how to break through all of this! Is it possible to break through? In the last 2000 years of Jewish history – no matter where – the Jews have been nervous, in tension, paranoid. And then for something like fifty years – all your lifetime – in the middle of this refugee camp, American Army Base called Israel. Everyone is hanging on with their fingernails. Haven't you noticed?

And, most are aspiring to a middle-class, and more, 'standard of living'. That's difficult enough in the so-called advanced countries – here it's ridiculous. But the Average Israeli insists on being as 'sophisticated' as any god-damn American, if not more!

Hagit – I'm going to call you 'legs!' You've got many fine qualities, but your legs are, I mean, *pièce de résistance*! Did you ever think of modeling for a stocking advertisement? It's just a fact, yes! Your body is generally aesthetic come to think of it. Not that it's so overly sexy, it's just, you know, 'aesthetic' – it fits you. I haven't the inclination to give it a bite here or there, nothing like that. A sensitive body, along with sensitive emotions, and a sensitive mind – generally sensitive.

Oh my goodness, I wonder who you'd really be, if you could live without fear. Then you could ask, 'what do I want to do? . . . what do I want to know? . . . what am I good for?' And then to go for it – with no fear. What you're doing now is, I guess, getting to know more about yourself. Maybe, eventually you'll be able to pose those questions, when there's 'someone' there to answer.

When I worked on your body, it responded. It was just waiting for the right buttons to be pushed. That should have changed your life forever – if you could just remember! Now, the 'memory' is in you. If you could get back there – physically – your mind and heart would function differently. Every center adjusts to a change in any other center. It's possible to get back to the 'impression' already in you – there's no reason why not, with the fine-tuning that you just received.

Merav caught the essence of the last paper. If she caught it in writing, then she also, somehow, knows it in herself. Something in her said: 'wow . . . you know . . . if one could really relax!' Yes, no need to be a genius or clever. Whatever you really are – you can be it!

One of the new cards coming out says: 'Competition and Comparison are Ugly things!' You have no idea of what freedom there could be if we were just to stop measuring ourselves against other people.

Competition and comparison are like the outer walls of a prison. We're in prison – psychologically. There are all kinds of corridors, locks on the doors etc., and it's not simple just getting from your own cell into the outer courtyard. Then, the courtyard is surrounded by a wall. I'm inclined to say that that outer wall is made of 'bricks' – and

those bricks are made from competition and comparison!

Good, I said it. Oh, isn't that nice!

Someone asked: 'What is worry?' It's worth a wider look. I was thinking, 'what's Anat's problem, now?' Bottom line. She can talk about this, that or the next thing – but she's in worry, fear! She is not particularly sure of why or what she's doing. Then, I thought of Hillel and Sari. If you were to ask them, 'what are you doing?', they would tell you that they are doing what most of the population is doing – 'raising a family'. That's what they're doing.

Now, those that are not 'raising a family', are part of a family that somebody else was raising. People are out of the family house, but they're still 'doing it'. The mother and father role are (sometimes) the most easily defined – others hardly know what the hell they are supposed to do, but if they don't do, someone gets disturbed. Again, everyone is surviving – holding the family together. It's fear – you can't hold anything, everything is moving. When you try to hold, you buy into fear!

Stephen – are you the one that wanted to make money in order that your parents shouldn't have to be 'talking money all the time'?

Stephen : yes.

Alan : It was you, that's right. I don't know the entire story, but at some point Stephen studied something around the construction business. He went to Australia to make some money, then came back and bought a house for his parents. He went and did . . . 'Something'!