THE STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS
OF WAKING SLEEP

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G. 1. Gurdjieff, one of the early pioneers in making the trans-
personal insights of Eastern psychology and spirituality available
to Westerners, is well known for his dictum, "Man is asleep." This
assertion and its elaborations is one of the most basic themes of
Gurdjieff's teachings, and it carries significant implications for the
field of transpersonal psychology.

This phrase, "Man is asleep," is a proposition, a representation,
something we tend to understand on an intellectual level in accor-
dance with the habitual functioning of our minds. But these are also
words that point to a reality which is the source of enormous
amounts of unnecessary suffering and limitation. The intended
function of the assertion, of our associations to it and our thoughts
about it, is to get us to *observe*, to point our attention in the right
direction so our understanding can become much deeper than the
words. With such understanding comes the possibility of more
effective action, of awakening. The ultimate importance of Gurd-
jieffs words and teachings stems from this possibility of awaken-
ing from a habitual state of "waking sleep."

*awakening
from a
habitual
state of
"waking
sleep"*

Words, unfortunately, do more than point our attention in a desired
direction: they tend to take on a kind of life of their own, connecting
automatically and non-consciously with other words and concepts
that also have lives of their own, tapping into basic emotional
drives and other cognitive and affective structures. It is all too easy
for words to become things that divert and actually defend us from
the realities they were originally intended to point our attention
toward, to substitute concepts *about* reality for reality. Also words

change over time as their connotations and associations alter, so a set of words that pointed fairly accurately at one point in history may point us in a different direction later on.

This paper is also a modern set of words-about the meaning of the idea "Man is asleep." I retain the word "man" herein out of respect for Gurdjieff's usage and era (Ouspensky, 1949), but I intend it to include both sexes in the generic sense. This paper is based on (1) my intellectual and scholarly knowledge of modern psychological literature, Gurdjieff's teachings, and some other traditional systems of thought such as Buddhism; and (2) my personal understandings of what it means to struggle against waking sleep and to occasionally realize moments of relative awakening. I hope the use of modem psychological tenus in this paper, such as "defense mechanisms" rather than "buffers," will point the reader's attention toward the realities of being asleep in a more effective way than the older words used in previously published material.

a
set
of
suggestions

These words, like all words, are inherently dangerous. The feelings of intellectual and emotional satisfaction that arise from using and connecting words cleverly can become more important than looking for the reality behind them. Therefore, while I have tried to communicate as effectively as possible what I understand, consider these words only as a set of suggestions for stimulating your own observations.

I begin with a rough concept of what "Man is asleep" may mean, examine various relevant findings and understandings of contemporary psychology-particularly as they may be helpful to our individual efforts at awakening-arriving, it is hoped, at a fuller conceptual understanding of waking sleep.

WHAT DOBS IT MEAN TO BE IN A STATE OF WAKING SLEEP?

We can say that "Man is asleep" in the overall sense that an individual in an ordinary, culturally "normal" state of consciousness is:

(a) unaware or only partially aware of important objects, people and processes in his or her immediate environment.

(b) unaware or only partially aware of important, sometimes vital talents, processes, and events within his or her own being.

If this were all there was to our initial definition of being asleep, we could more simply call it "ignorance," and straightforward efforts at education would be the remedy. Therefore we must add:

(c) man habitually and automatically spends an enormous amount of time in daydreams and delusory belief systems about himself and his world; that is, man walks around in a kind of waking (day)dream;

(d) man is strongly and emotionally attached to and defends many of his dreams and delusory belief systems; and

(e) man significantly distorts his perceptions of his world and his self, usually in a manner that subjectively supports his daydreams and delusory belief systems.

As a consequence of being asleep in this sense, of usually being in what I have elsewhere termed *consensus trance'* we undergo an enormous amount of suffering. From the point of view of someone who is more aware of his own and the world's nature, most of this suffering is unnecessary and useless. This is analogous to a mature person observing the sufferings of an adolescent, knowing how much more easily they could be handled. To express it in another way, our lives are lived relatively *mindlessly* rather than *mindfully,* with consequent maladaptive perception, thinking, feeling and action. Awakening from this waking sleep, becoming mindful, requires considerably more than exposure to educational "facts."

consensus trance

COGNITIVE/STRUCTURAL   MECHANISMS   OF WAKING   SLEEP

The concept that "Man is asleep" in such an overall sense was foreign to almost all Western academic and clinical psychology and psychiatry at the time Gurdjiefftaught in the early and middle parts of our century. Looking back from a contemporary perspective on sleep and awakening, we could say, though, that some quite specific aspects of waking sleep were being extensively explored in investigations of mental illness and neurosis. I do not believe Gurdjieffhad any real familiarity with this material and so he is not likely to have incorporated it as a teaching tool.

In recent years, however, a concept somewhat similar to that of "Man is asleep" has begun to appear in studies of *mindfulness* and *mindlessness* in everyday functioning, by psychologist Ellen Langer of Harvard University and her colleagues. To quote Langer:

  Individuals can perform seemingly complex tasks with little if any active mental involvement. ... Although people are certainly capable of acting mindfully, they frequently respond in a routinized, mindless way.... In much of everyday life, people rely on distinctions drawn in the past; they overly depend on structures of situations representative of the underlying meaning without making new distinctions. This mindlessness holds the world still and prevents an awareness that

things could be otherwise... Research points to how mindlessly held categories limit human performance and even have a negative impact on physica lhealth... in spite of our awareness of limited information processing people in general still are far more mindless than psychologists have assumed (Langer,1989b,pp. 137-38).

Langer has recently summarized much of her and her colleagues' work in a readable, semi-popular book, *Mindfulness* (Langer, 1989a), as well as in technical publications aimed at psychologists (see Langer, 1989b for an excellent set of references). Langer finds that mindlessness, in the sense of an automatization and mechanicalness of cognitive functioning, is exceedingly common in everyday life, rather than a rare curiosity, and that it must be considered a major factor in understanding human psychology. I will start this more detailed look at waking sleep by considering some of the outcomes of her research.

Langer's work has focused on what we might call the cognitive or structural aspects of waking sleep. By this I mean habits of processing information that are primarily just that, habits, autornatisms that become part ofthe structure of everyday consciousness. While they often lead to maladaptive behavior and consequent suffering, they are usually not strongly driven by affective, emotional forces, like the defense mechanisms we will discuss later.

Expertness

a major source of the mechanicalness

Our "expertness" in everyday life, valuable as it is in many ways, is a major source of the mechanicalness of our behavior and psychological reaction.

When we first learn a new task, we must pay clear attention to what we are doing. We must observe the general situation we are in, the particulars of the challenge to us within that situation, the particulars of the response we give to the challenge, and how well that response does or does not help us achieve our goals, as well as other effects it may create. When we first learned to drive a car, for example, we had to learn to pay general attention to the road and traffic conditions around us. Is the road curving to the left? Is there a car stopped in the lane ahead of us or a pedestrian about to step out in front of us?

Suppose we see the road curving left in front of us: we are challenged to follow it. Do we get frightened at this challenge and want to close our eyes and run from the car? That reaction must be suppressed if we are to leam to drive. We try turning the steering wheel, observing how much effort it takes to tum it and the response. Do we oversteer and cross the center line? Do we understeer and start to go up on the curb? We pay a lot of attention to our

current reality. But with repetition we lose track of the components of the task. With further practice we overlearn the task, doing it thousands of times more than needed for "expertness." "As we repeat a task over and over again, and become better at it, the individual parts of the task move out of consciousness. Eventually we come to assume that we *can* do the task although we no longer know *how* we do it" (Langer, 1989a, p. 20).

Once a routine is overlearned, a familiar stimulus situation automatically and mindlessly invokes the appropriate "expert" routine. This is operating like a *machine,* as Gurdjieff so often said. Press button C (stimulus pattern) and the machine makes certain motions (conditioned response), both internally (thoughts, feelings) and externally (behavior). While the familiar stimulus situation *seems* the same over and over again, from the point of view of someone more awake, it is actually somewhat different each time. The robotic running of the automatized "expert" pattern thus exacts some costs from us. It may be that the subtle differences which are not noticed are actually quite important, leading to an inappropriate response that may have important consequences.

A second cost of consciousness being dominated by automatized "expert" routines is that we miss what Gurdjieff termed the *"food of impressions* "-the stimulation resulting from actually paying real attention to an apparently familiar situation. It is exemplified in meditative processes such as Vipassana (Insight Meditation) applied to everyday life, and in Gurdjieff's practice of "remembering ourselves." Roboticized, we live a bland mental life of conditioned reactions to abstractions about abstractions and associations to abstractions-s-un sustaining sensory impressions. By learning to be present and pay attention to our senses, however, we could feast instead of starve.

missing the "food of impressions"

This is not to say that the automatized responses of "expertness" are inherently bad. An automatized response usually absorbs less of our conscious attention than is demanded in new learning, so we have attention left over to consciously use for other purposes (although all too often it is automatically grabbed by some other habitual pattern of thinking). We can, for example, carry on a (perhaps conscious and useful) conversation with a passenger and drive at the same time.

It is the inability to recognize and, when necessary, stop an automatized "expert" reaction pattern that is the problem. You would not want to have to learn to drive anew every time you got in a car. On the other hand, you can exhaust your energies or even kill yourself with an "expert" driving reaction if the situation really is unusual. And you can lose the joy and stimulation, Gurdjieff's food of impressions, that is possible from consciously driving.

Premature Cognitive Commitment

What Langer calls *premature cognitive commitment* consists of forming a mindset when we first encounter an object, person or situation and then mindlessly clinging to this mindset, allowing it to operate mechanically when we re-encounter the same or similar objects, persons or situations.

Langer gives the following striking illustrative exercise. Shift your attention to your mouth. Run your tongue around inside it; note the inherent pleasure of being able to move your tongue so precisely, to feel the silkiness of the saliva on the varied and fascinating texture of your teeth and gums. Now get a glass. Spit into it. Now drink the "spit."

I suggest you actually do this, not just read about it. Our belief that *concepts* about experience-in this case reading about experience-gives us full knowledge of the actual experience, simply may be wrong.

the cognitive commitment

Isn't it interesting how the pleasant, natural saliva in your mouth turned into "spit?" We intellectually know, of course, that there were no significant changes in it in the few seconds it was in the glass, but psychologically it changed into "spit," a cognitive concept loaded with negative connotations. In this situation the cognitive commitment to "spit" is indeed inappropriate. The cognitive commitment to "spit" made long ago in your developmental history was premature, as expelled saliva should not always be seen as "spit." It is good first aid, for example, to lick minor wounds because of antibacterial properties of saliva.'

Note that the example above contains emotional components as well as cognitive ones, an important factor we shall return to later.

Belief in Limited Resources

> One of the main reasons we may become entrapped by the absolute categories we create (or are given by someone else) rather than accept the world as dynamic and continuous is because we believe that resources are limited. If there are clear and stable categories, then we can make rules by which to dole out these resources. If resources weren't so limited, or if these limits were greatly exaggerated, the categories wouldn't need to be so rigid (Langer, 1989a, p. 27).

Our ordinary state of "consciousness," what we have been calling waking sleep, can be described as *consensus consciousness* or, when we wish to emphasize the automatized mindlessness and lack of vitality of so much of it, *consensus trance,* terms I have introduced elsewhere (Tart, 1986). These terms emphasize how much of

our ordinary mental functioning is conditioned in us by our socialization, a relatively common heritage from our culture, a knowledge on which there is general consensus. Our culture indoctrinates many ideas of limits in us in the course of our upbringing, limits about what is materially available outside of us, and limits to our internal resources.

There are, of course, real material limits. From a psychological growth perspective, however, the artificial and unnecessary limits we impose on ourselves in our mechanicalness are far more important. In very real ways, we are dedicated practitioners of a kind of "mantra yoga": in our thoughts we constantly and devotedly repeat chants like, "There isn't enough for mel" or "I can't do it!" or "I'm not good enough!" By such psychological repetition of thought and feeling themes, we structure our lives to validate these themes.

This does not mean we should go to the extreme of imagining ourselves as unlimited, infinite godlike beings with magical powers, of course. That can sometimes be a useful, ultimate belief practice to spur on our efforts under the right circumstances, but we must be discriminating and very realistic about what we actually can and cannot accomplish in our usual life.

we
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I am discussing a largely intellectual beliefin limited resources as a cognitive underpinning of mechanicalness, but note that such beliefs readily acquire emotional investment. "As long as people cling to a narrow belief in limited resources, those who are fortunate enough to win by the arbitrary (but rigid) rules that are set up, such as SAT3 scores, have a stake in maintaining the status quo" (Langer, 1989a, p. 28).

Education for Outcome

> From kindergarten on, the focus of schooling is usually on goals rather than on the process by which they are achieved. This single-minded pursuit of one outcome or another, from tying shoelaces to getting into Harvard, makes it difficult to have a mindful attitude about life ... questions of "Can I?" or "What if I can't do it?" arc likely to predominate, creating an anxious preoccupation with success or failure.... Throughout our lives, an outcome orientation in social situations can induce mindlessness. If we think we know how to handle a situation, we don't feel a need to pay attention. Ifwe respond to the situation as very familiar (a result, for example, of overlearning), we notice only the minimal cues necessary to carry out the proper scenario. If, on the other hand the situation is strange, we might be so preoccupied with thoughts offailure ("What ifI make a fool of'myself?") that we miss nuances of our own and others' behavior. In this sense we are mindless with respect to the immediate situation, although we may be thinking quite actively about outcome-related issues (Langer, 1989a. pp. 33-34).

One of the benefits of carrying out ordinary tasks a little more slowly and much more mindfully than usual-a common component of Gurdjieff work-is the insights it often provides into underlying processes that have gotten covered over when we are overly goal-oriented.

Context Induced Mindlessness

We are all familiar with the fairy tale of "The Ugly Duckling." A swan, raised from the egg among ducks, thinks of itself as ugly and awkward, for it is applying duck standards to itself. When it discovers other swans and applies swan standards in a swan context to itself, it finds happiness. We are all conditioned to mechanically accept contexts, meaning frameworks, pressed on us by others and by our culture f upbringing. Insofar as these contexts do not reflect our real nature, our essence, our transpersonal possibilities, we distort our perceptions of our selves and our world, and we may suffer.

the "meaning frameworks" conditioned into us

Part of the impact of a context pressed on us by others occurs when it is not presented as context, but as truth. Most context conditioning happens during early childhood, when we have little ability to see how relative, artificial, and perhaps inherently pathological it may be. Usually, when we play a game, we know that, while rules are necessary to have a game, they are artificial, and we drop them at the end of the game. The "meaning frameworks" conditioned into us in the course of our enculturation, however, are often experienced as final truths.

> When we talk about context, we often make the mistake of believing that it is somehow "out there." If we take words "out of context," we think the context remains on the page. But it doesn't exist out there without us.... A context is a premature cognitive commitment, a mindset (Langer, 1989a, p. 37).

Langer also notes that:

> The power *of* context over our reactions and interpretations also makes *us* susceptible to what we may call *context confusion.* Here people confuse the context controlling the behavior of another person with the context determining their own behavior. Most people typically assume that other people's motives and intentions are the same as theirs, although the same behavior may have very different meanings (Langer, 1989a, p. 40).

MECHANISMS OF EMOTIONALLY DRIVEN WAKING SLEEP

While the psychological mechanisms described above may distort our functioning in ordinary consciousness, they are primarily hab-

its of relatively unemotional "cognition," cognition in a broad sense of "making sense" of interpreting raw experience. These mechanisms manifest in automated habits of perception as well as in more formal conscious thinking. Although they may be used in the service of emotions, by themselves they are primarily information processing mechanisms.

This brings us to various mechanisms in waking sleep that, while they are also ways of processing or distorting information, have strong emotional bases and components, and are often more difficult to observe. Indeed, some are extremely resistant to self-observation.

As Freud put it, (Freud, 1912, p. 265, as quoted in Langer, 1989a),

> It is by no means impossible for the product of unconscious activity to pierce into consciousness, but a certain amount of exertion is needed for this task. When we try to do it in ourselves, we become aware of a distinct feeling of *repulsion* which must be overcome, and when we produce it in a patient, we get the most unquestionable sign of what we call *resistance* to it. So we learn that the unconscious idea is excluded from consciousness by living forces which oppose themselves to its reception, while they do not object to other ideas, the (prejconscious ones.

This phenomena, which I will now examine in more detail," is the important category of "motivated not-knowing." It is related to two components of waking sleep presented at the beginning this paper, namely,

"motivated not-knowing"

(d)   man is strongly emotionally attached to and defends many of his dreams and delusory belief systems; and

(e)   man significantly distorts his perceptions of his world and his self, usually in a manner that subjectively supports his daydreams and delusory belief systems.

There are numerous disparities and contradictions in the structure of our personalities. One part of us ("subpersonality," little "I," mood state, identity state) may want constant attention in order to feel secure, for example, while another part is threatened by attention and wants to be left alone. One part may want to work hard and become rich; another part doesn't like to work and sleeps late. In some ways we love our parents, in other ways we hate them. Life also provides frustrations: you want something, but you can't have it; you don't want something, but you get it. The consequent feelings of frustration can cause suffering, especially if they connect with various aspects of personality. There are realistic ways of dealing with contradictions and suffering, and unrealistic ways. Here the focus is on the latter.

We can suffer greatly when we become aware of a single major contradiction in ourselves. What would happen if we became aware of many or all of them simultaneously? Gurdjieff stated that if a person were suddenly to become conscious of all the contradictory parts of himself, he would probably go mad. Such sudden and complete self-knowledge is very unlikely to happen, fortunately- although spiritual emergencies sometimes show aspects of it. The fragmented parts of ourselves are not just randomly scattered about, as it were; they are part of an active arrangement of what Gurdjieff called *false personality,* s an arrangement that maintains its organization in spite of change and stress. When we split off parts of ourselves, active mechanisms nevertheless keep them in their places. Gurdjieff called these mechanisms *buffers.*

psychological buffers

Gurdjieff's mechanical analogy for these psychological buffers is that of buffers on railroad cars. When these cars are coupled together, one is run into another at a speed of several miles per hour in order to lock the couplings. Imagine what the uncushioned shock and jolt would be like for the passengers as these massive steel cars hit each other! A buffer is a shock absorber, like those on an automobile: it absorbs much of the sudden energy of the initial jolt and then releases it much more slowly, much less perceptibly. Psychological buffers smooth out the sudden shock that occurs when we switch from one subpersonality to another, making it small enough so that we are not likely to be aware of the change.

This kind of psychological buffering can work within a particular subpersonality or identity state, and shifting between identity states can also act as a buffer.

Notice that with the above analogy there is still something there that we *could* notice if we wanted to or trained ourselves to: a *mild* shock. Ordinarily the change is small enough that it doesn't force itself on our attention and the sudden shock is buffered into a small, gradual one.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Gurdjieff did not write very specifically about the nature of buffers. Perhaps he did not think it necessary. If you became very good at self-observation, you would neutralize the buffers-so why take time to study them? Perhaps he felt it was necessary to discover one's own particular defenses for the discovery to be maximally effective. Perhaps detailed knowledge was not available at the time.

Modem mainstream psychology and psychiatry, however, have learned a great deal about specific kinds of buffers, even though they lack the concept of awakening. The general psychological

term for these buffers is *defense mechanisms.* I believe knowledge of them greatly enriches Gurdjieff's concept of buffers. Understanding defense mechanisms is very important if we are to transcend them, Conceptual knowledge of them is also important because some kinds of buffers might be very resistant to the primary Gurdjieffian technique of self-observation, or insight meditation practices For such defenses other techniques might be more effective than unassisted self-observation for understanding the structure of personality.

Psychoanalytic theory, which has looked at defense mechanisms in the greatest detail, theorizes that we use them when we have some instinctual impulse whose expression is socially prohibited (unrestrained sexuality, greed, or aggression, for example). The collection of internalized prohibitions of our culture is commonly referred to as the superego. A strong superego can flood us with anxiety and fear for even *thinking about* a prohibited action, much less doing it. A defense mechanism, a buffer, by making us unaware of a prohibited impulse reduces the effect of a superego attack. Defense mechanisms also buffer our awareness of the disappointments and threats in life. While most obvious in people labeled neurotic or psychotic, defense mechanisms are extensively and unwittingly used by normal people. We could not maintain our consensus trance without their buffering effect.

consensus trance and psychological buffering

Some people may use one of these for almost all their defense needs. That is, they have a chief form of defense-s-what Gurdjieff called a *person's chief feature,* that is central in the structure of their false personality. I believe this chief feature concept is similar to the currently popular enneagram type theory (Naranjo, 1990; Palmer, 1988). But we all may use many of these defenses on occasion. Here we are looking at them primarily in relation to the goal of waking up. I have not attempted to cover all defense mechanisms or all their subtleties; more information about them can be found in the literature on abnormal psychology and psychotherapy.

Two further general points about defense mechanisms must be made before we look at specifics. First, in general they are *dynamic* rather than *static.* It is not simply that we have some habits that distort our perception, feeling, thinking and action, and that these habits have emotional bases. There is actually a kind cf'intelligence and motivation in these defense mechanisms whose aim is to protect a person from suffering. Defenses usually start as an action that is at least partially effective in reducing a person's suffering, especially in childhood when most defenses are formed. At some level of consciousness each of us has an investment in protecting our defenses, although we may be unaware of this fact. Thus simple self-observation may not be very effective in discovering or chang-

ing many defense mechanisms. The full implications of this have yet to be worked out. Thus we must add the following to our description of waking sleep.

(f)   man is emotionally and cognitively invested in his psychological defenses and, in many ways, actively protects them from discovery or dismantling without knowing that he does so.

Secondly, although contemporary psychology has much to offer for psychological and spiritual growth, there is a major flaw in mainstream modem psychological knowledge. of defense mechanisms. The model of man underlying them is usually first- or second-force psychology, in which man is seen as only an animal, instinctively caring only for his own survival and pleasure, and enjoying hurting and dominating others. Enculturation is then seen as necessary to control this animal nature, and attempts to transcend. this necessary control mechanism, or to be "transpersonal," are thus seen as inherently dangerous. In this model, since we cannot be allowed to grab whatever we need whenever we want, rape when we are in the mood, kill whoever gets in our way, the restrictions, conditionings, and automatizations in enculturation and the conditioning of a superego to inhibit our baser nature, seem absolutely necessary.

enculturation
is seen
as
necessary

Thus, some forms of defense mechanisms are usually seen as necessary in inhibiting our animal nature. It is only when they are too effective, taking away more of our happiness than is really necessary for our compromise with civilized life, that they are viewed as neurotic. It is fine and necessary for a person to be overcome with guilt and anxiety if he thinks about robbing another or raping a child, but neurotic if he becomes anxious at the thought of riding an elevator or talking to strangers at a meeting.

I have exaggerated the position of mainstream Western psychology somewhat to make my point. There are now, and always have been, significant movements within psychology (Jungian, humanistic, and transpersonal psychologies, to mention just three) that see a positive, even a spiritual, side to our essential nature. But the negative view of man is more entwined throughout our mainstream psychology and culture.

I firmly believe that we are basically good, as well as flawed and twisted, and it is important to know how various defense mechanisms can block the development and manifestation of the deeper and more positive sides of our nature. Our task is to understand and correct these distortions 80 we can get on with cultivating OUf higher natures. I will begin with the specific defense mechanisms, buffers, that support waking sleep.

Lying

All buffers and defense mechanisms are forms of lying. They misrepresent the truth, both to ourselves and to others. Gurdjieff put great emphasis on understanding lying. Although most people believe they never lie or do so only infrequently, Gurdjieff was insistent that *most people lie most of the time.* That they do not consciously know they are lying makes their situation far worse.

Conscious lying can be an effective defense against social pressure. The person who "swears he didn't do it" may escape punishment from external sources. Success in bringing off the lie depends on other people's sensitivity to lying and the evidence that might support or undermine the lie. It may sometimes involve the liar's ability to identify with the lie as it's told, so it seems like truth to him as he tells it, giving him an air of conviction that can take in his listeners.

Having few or no superego prohibitions against lying also increases the likelihood of success in taking in others. If you try to lie when you are experiencing guilt and anxiety about it, you will often show signs of distress that alert your audience to your lying. Since much social cohesiveness and stability come from people not lying about things considered especially important, much of the enculturation process is devoted to constructing a strong superego that will *constructing* punish a person with guilt when he lies. When a strong superego *a strong* hasn't been created-by strong 'meaning that the person will tell the *superego* truth about the things his culture thinks it is important to be truthful about-that person may be called a *psychopath* or *sociopath.* In common usage this means a morally deficient person, although psychiatrists and psychologists try to avoid making this value judgment in using the more recent term "sociopath" rather than "psychopath."

When you know you are deliberately lying, your perception of the world and your situation in it may be reasonably functional (ignoring your ordinary state of waking sleep). When you identify with the lying, and experience the lie as the truth, related perceptions can become significantly distorted.

Sometimes we lie to avoid our more essential and higher nature, We may tell ourselves and others that, "Everybody does it; it doesn't mean anything," when something in us knows quite well we have not lived up to our higher self. This kind of lying may be used to avoid some command of the superego, of course, but I believe, as Gurdjieff insisted, that there is some sort of innate, higher aspect of ourselves that knows a deeper morality, and in lying and other defense mechanisms we try to avoid living up to it.

Gurdjieff was not particularly concerned about the morality of everyday lying, for he recognized both the cultural relativity of values and the widespread hypocrisy of most of our beliefs about morality. Rather, he taught that *unconscious, habitual, automated lying is the real problem.* People in consensus trance are like machines-they must do what they have been conditioned to do by their general enculturation process and the particulars of their life history. At this stage of development, questions of morality are a diversion from the real problem, namely a lack of genuine consciousness and will."

Suppression

Suppression is a conscious defense mechanism. In suppression you are aware of an unacceptable desire or urge, but deliberately keep it from manifesting. The unacceptability of overt expression may result from superego prohibitions and/or social conventions.

As an example, suppose you are in an important business meeting and you have a very annoying itch on your scalp. Social norms in our culture are that it is crude and undignified to scratch in public, especially the kind of prolonged, powerful scratch it would take to satisfy this itch. In spite of the great desire to scratch, you keep yourself from doing it and from even visibly expressing any discomfort. This can mean actively watching yourself-your hand might just come up and start scratching "all by itself' the moment your attention wanders-and actively opposing your desire, putting your energies into the culturally more important desire to appear dignified. That's suppression, used pragmatically in this instance.

*actively
opposing
your
desire*

If you were brought up to believe that scratching in front of others is what's bad, you can do it when you're alone. If, unfortunately, you were brought up to believe that scratching itches is bad *per se,* then you can't ever scratch, at least not without feeling guilty. Suppression is then used to avoid an attack from the superego.

Suppression is also often used to thwart our better selves. "I should protect that kid who is being cruelly teased. But the gang will turn on me as well, if I do. They'll say I'm just a dumb kid too, and I want them to think I'm as grown-up as they are. I won't say anything."

Consciousness as a constructor of reality, a "world simulator,"? functions quite well in suppression. Both the outside world and your own position are represented realistically (given your ordinary state of waking sleep). Your operational thinking, your simulation of the consequences of actually scratching, is realistic ("I

won't make a good impression on the people if scratch"), and so your behavior is adaptive. The simulation of the world and your position in it is realistic, but you deliberately control the attention and energy available to parts of your consciousness so that the urge to scratch is recognized but blocked.

Suppression is often healthy, at least at a surface level, if you know what you are doing. At a deeper level, you may not really understand the reasons why you think you must suppress a desire or feeling. They may have been conditioned in you as part of consensus trance, so suppression may be a manifestation of other pathology.

Reaction Formation

Reaction formation and the defense mechanisms discussed from here on are stronger manifestations of waking sleep because they involve blocks and distortions of our ordinary consciousness, quite aside from preventing our awakening and development of higher consciousness. Lying that one identifies with, so that it is simulated as the truth, is also a very serious distortion.

Reaction formation is a leaping to the opposite in order to deny an unacceptable desire or feeling. The initiating desire or feeling is not directly experienced: the machinery of false personality automatically steps in and an opposite feeling or desire is strongly experienced instead. The reaction is formed almost instantly, without any feeling of deliberate effort.

*denying
an
unacceptable
desire
or
feeling*

Suppose you were deeply religious as a child, but your expectations weren't met. A loved friend may have died, for example, in spite of your fervent prayers. You turn bitter and denounce all your religious feelings. At first this is conscious. Now in adult life, when something religious is mentioned, you automatically (and with considerable emotion) ridicule it. This is reaction formation.

As another example, suppose you learn that a rival at work, let's call him John, has just received a major promotion that you believe should have gone to you. Your deep-level response is envy and anger and wanting somehow to attack John, but, for whatever reasons, envy and anger are completely unacceptable to you. As a result of reaction formation operating, almost instantly, you don't feel any anger or desire to attack. Instead you feel a burst of "Christian charity" or "comradeship" and enthusiastically tell your colleagues and friends how wonderful it is that John has been rewarded for his efforts. Whenever you are unrealistically overenthusiastic about something, it is useful to question whether this is a reaction formation defense to hide some other feeling.

Reaction formation is the mechanism of the "sour grapes" reaction. You can't get something, so you start seeing its negative aspects: "I didn't really want that crummy thing anyway!" This is a mild form of reaction formation, in that the initial desire was clearly in consciousness before the reaction formed,

In looking at consciousness from the "world simulator" model, I have noted (Tart, 1986) that an effective and healthy simulation is one that accurately mirrors the outside world and our own essential or deeper feelings and values. The more accurately the outside physical world is simulated, the more useful simulations of various possible courses of action (operational thinking) will be. Reaction formation is a major distortion of the world simulation process, for what we perceive about our reaction to an event is opposite to our more basic initial reaction. Our simulations about further courses of actions and their consequences, and our subsequent behavior, will then be flawed.

As you become skilled at self-observation, especially in noticing the more subtle, quiet aspects of your feelings and the quick, momentary emotions, you may be able to notice the feelings that reaction formation is hiding and explore them more deeply. This defense can also be explored by systematically asking yourself whether you have any feelings whatsoever that are opposite to or being held down by your strongly held convictions. Of course, a skilled therapist or growth facilitator can enable you to see aspects of your functioning that may be difficult to discover on your own.

Repression

blocking
an
unacceptable
feeling
or
desire

Repression is a total blocking from awareness of an unacceptable feeling or desire. It is a splitting of one's mind into a conscious part with no awareness of the unacceptable, and an unconscious part where there may be a strong reaction. The unacceptable is forcibly kept out of awareness, with no conscious realization that anything is being repressed. It's as if there were material stored in memory with special signs on it warning that this material must *always* be kept from consciousness!

Some material that is now repressed was initially conscious. Repression serves to take the conscious pain away. It is also possible for repression to operate almost instantly on freshly perceived material, repressing it right away, as in perceptual defense, leaving no memory at all of it in consciousness.

The idea of repression could become just another form of name calling in arguments. "You hate me! What do you mean you don't feel any hate? You're just repressing your feelings!" Repression is

a defense mechanism often used against powerful feelings and desires, however, so it can have indirect effects that allow an outside observer to infer that repression is taking place.

Suppose a patient starts therapy. In initial interviews the therapist will want to get some idea about the patient's feelings about various issues liable to be important. The therapist asks, "How do you get along with your mother?" The patient says, "Just fine, I love her very much," but the therapist notes that his face turns pale as he says this, his fists clench, and his posture becomes rigid. Exploring more, the therapist asks, "Any problems at all with her, even little ones?" "No!" the patient replies in an angry tone of voice. Further questioning may show that the patient has no awareness of the angry, strongly emotional quality of his nonverbal behavior and, to the best of his conscious knowledge, believes that his feelings toward his mother arc all positive. We infer repression: negative feelings toward his mother are so strong and so unacceptable that they are completely blocked from awareness.

we infer repression

Repression is still an inference in this example, a theory, not direct knowledge to either the therapist or the patient. If, in the course of psychotherapy, the patient does eventually experience strong negative feelings toward his mother, we will believe our inference about these repressed feelings was accurate. Various altered states of consciousness can also sometimes temporarily bypass repressive defenses so the repressed material is directly experienced.

Repression of the transpersonal aspect of our selves, of what Gurdjieff called our essence, was also instituted in the enculturation process and for many people is now very thorough. As a young child, you could not have walked by a funny looking dog on the sidewalk without stopping to look and wonder. As an adult, chances are you hardly feel the urge to look. You have to get to work! You're too important. The widespread repression of most of our native curiosity, so that we are only allowed to be curious about things the culture defines as important, is one of the most horrible things about enculturation,

Consciousness, functioning as world simulator, must construct an internal, experienced model of self and reality that has enough congruence with external reality to allow survival. But in repression, perceived reality is constructed in badly distorted ways. As soon as a perception, thought, or feeling triggers a line of thought or feeling that might release repressed desires and feelings, an active blocking occurs such that the stimulation does not bring the repressed material into the ongoing simulation of reality at all. If we think of simulations of the world and our experience as being like actors who walk onto the stage of our mind and play their parts, then in repression an unacceptable actor is simply not allowed on

stage. A sensitive observer sometimes notes some turmoil back-stage at this point, however. The indirect effects of repression can give it away.

It may be particularly hard to bring up information and feelings about repressed material, even if one is practicing systematic self-observation. By definition, there is a powerful but hidden reason the material is being blocked from consciousness, and the desire to know oneself through self-observation may not be sufficient to overcome this block. You may become sensitive to "peculiar" reactions at times, the indirect effects of repression, like our patient's angry tone of voice that was so much at variance with his statement that he loved his mother; but it may take outside intervention, from a therapist or teacher, to help uncover repressed material.

Identification, Subselves and Compartmentalization

Identification is a pervasive and vitally important aspect of psycho-logical functioning, as Gurdjieff emphasized by talking about our many "I"s so frequently. Here we will only look at some of its functions as a defense mechanism.

a vitally important aspect of psychological functioning

If I tell you that some Nazi concentration camp guards were sadistic killers, that they enjoyed torture and murder, that they got a perverted sexual thrill from others' pain, this is an unpleasant thing to think about. You would probably dismiss it quickly from your mind without getting too upset about it. If I say that *you* get a sexual thrill out of causing others pain and would enjoy torturing and killing if you could get away with it, that is a different matter!

The acceptability and unacceptability of one's own feelings and desires is usually a much more important matter than the accept-ability and unacceptability of someone else's feelings. When a feeling or desire is triggered in you that you deem unacceptable, if you identify with some other aspect of yourself, another "I," an-other subself that doesn't have such feelings and desires, then you distance yourself from the feeling; you disown it. It was a passing fancy, a minor aberration perhaps, but it wasn't yours; you don't have to think about it or deal with it any longer.

The transitions between subselves can thus form an effective de-fense against fully experiencing or having to deal with the unac-ceptable in us. Indeed, by staying in an acceptable set of subselves, trying to identify only with them all the time, we reduce the possibility of unacceptable feelings and desires being aroused at all. Suppose [have a subself that enjoys being cruel to animals, but either big "I".......-one of Gurdjieff's terms for the essence of deeper self-c-ormy usual subselves are revolted by this cruel subself and

its feelings. By concentrating on being in acceptable subselves, I can use up all my attention and energy so that it is less likely the cruel subself will ever be activated, even when "appropriate" circumstances come along. I can never be certain that the undesirable subself will not be activated, however, so a constant (even if not always conscious) thread of uncertainty and defensiveness is introduced into my life.

Identification is a quality created in the world simulation process, the automated construction of consciousness. The quality, "This is me!," originally stems from straightforward sensory connections: I see my hand in front of my face; it is connected to my arm; it responds to my will; a touch on my hand by someone else feels quite different than when that person touches furniture, and so on. Even more basically, our perceptual system is neurologically hardwired to automatically create the concept of a separate self which is at the center of all perception, the "ecological self" (Neisser, 1988). In the course of enculturation, this basic pattern is enormously elaborated. The "This is me!" quality is then applied to selected mental processes, selected simulations, so when a certain experience is retrieved from memory, it comes already tagged with the "This is me! Priority treatment!" quality.

the "This is me" quality

Self-observation can make us aware of our subselves and the functions they serve. Practice allows the observation of a certain "flavor" of consciousness that indicates that the "sense-of-identity" subsystem (Tart, 1975) is adding the "I!" quality to the contents of consciousness. The increased self-acceptance that should eventually come from self-observation and self-remembering should then make this kind of fragmentation less necessary and make identification a voluntary process, a tool we can use if we wish, rather than an automatic defense mechanism.

Introjection

Introjection is a more primitive form of identification. An object, concept, or person seems to be inside you, a part of you, even while still seeming foreign or separate in some way. Being a part of you, it has special power.

Suppose you are in a situation where a guest has been making a series of negative remarks. She doesn't like your curtains; your sofa needs recovering; you don't have enough of the "right" books on your shelves; your cooking isn't like the wonderful food she had elsewhere, and so forth. You are getting angry; you want to retaliate and ask her to leave. But in your development, you introjected an image, a simulation, of your mother. It feels as if she were "inside" you in some sense, that she is telling you that you must *always* be

polite to guests because nice people never offend a guest. So you don't act on your feelings and you stay polite, even though you are suffering inside. It's important to please this representation of your mother. This is introjection. Your mother is indeed inside you in the form of an active simulation of her. The simulation of the person introjeeted inside you can also inhibit your desires to be generous, caring, and sensitive.

Psychoanalysts believe that if something has been introjected for some time, then it will be identified with. In our example, if you become identified with the simulation of your mother, it will become *your* attitude that you must always be polite to guests. It won't seem like something foreign inside you that exerts pressure on you; it has, in a sense, become you. In practice the terms *identification* and *introjection* are often not clearly differentiated by therapists, but we can sometimes see the difference in the process in ourselves.

The conflict experienced with introjection makes the process accessible to self-observation, although the dynamic reasons that provide the power behind introjection may not be accessible without more effort.

Isolation/Dissociation

compartment-alization as a defense

In isolation or dissociation, unacceptable or conflicting desires and feelings are attenuated by splitting yourself into unconnected parts. Compartmentalization is another name for this defense. If feeling A is threatening or unacceptable because you also believe in and feel B, then keep A and B in separate compartments in your mind so you do not experience them simultaneously: thus no conflict. Don't put mental energy into associating them, and they will stay dissociated. Isolation can also involve a splitting of what normally is a unified experience into parts that dissociate its emotional charge.

The defensive effect is similar to using identification, where conflicting desires or feelings can be kept in separate identities, separate subselves, and so not meet. Isolation doesn't require the energy of adding the strong "This is me!" quality to the isolated desires or feelings, however, or organizing them, associating them into subselves.

Isolation can keep insights and vital experiences from helping you to grow. I have known people who have had deep spiritual experiences, and have yet used isolation to buffer this positive shock, so nothing in their life changes.

Isolation defenses can be inferred when you notice someone (in-

eluding yourself) holding two strong and contradictory opinions, usually at different moments or in different contexts, without feeling conflict or anxiety about this inconsistency or conflict. If you point out this inconsistency to him, he seems to evade looking at the inconsistency, preserving the isolation. The world simulation aspect of consciousness is deficient at creating connections, associations between different stored experiences.

Self-observation can provide knowledge about isolated aspects of mental functioning, but without a deliberate effort to compare and contrast observations, occasionally reviewing the "album of photographs" of ourselves we have collected, the observations themselves may be stored in an isolated fashion, so they have little impetus toward producing change. One major type of false personality pattern, type 5, *ego stinge,* centers around this kind of isolation defense (Lilly & Hart, 1975; Palmer, 1988). This type is very good at self-observation, does it habitually, yet is little affected by what is observed. Having a therapist or teacher who confronts you with contradictory aspects of yourself that you have kept isolated can be very useful.

Projection

Projection is the opposite of identification. When an unacceptable feeling or desire comes up, instead of being labeled "This is mel," the world simulation process labels it, "This is *not* me; this is what someone else feels or wants." Since projective defense usually occurs with respect to unacceptable, "bad" feelings and desires, other people are seen as bad.
"this is not me"

Suppose you have been brought up to believe that anger is a bad emotion: good people don't get angry; they are always understanding and patient. Not only were you punished as a child when you got angry, but on many occasions your feelings were invalidated: "You don't really feel angry. That's not nice anyway. You're just tired." Such invalidation of children's feelings is all too common. Now you're in a store where a clerk who is waiting on you is slow and inefficient. He has to keep looking up information and brings you the wrong products to look at. In reality, this clerk doesn't know his job very well yet, although he is doing his best. You're in a hurry, however, and the delays and mistakes make you angry. But since being angry is unacceptable to you, you start to believe that the clerk must not like you, is angry at you, and is deliberately annoying you! The clerk is bad and angry, while you are innocent, good, and too patient. Once this initial projection has taken place, it will further affect your perception/simulation of the world so that you become even more aware of everything the clerk does wrong, a distorted perception that will seem to validate your initial projection.

Projection can also be used to project the goodness in yourself on to others, so as not to threaten your own poor self-image and whatever secondary gains arise from having such an image. In this defense, salvation is always looked for outside. "Someone will come along who will set things right." When you project too much of your own goodness outside, then you become susceptible to unhealthy manipulation by others. I have found that self-observation and self-remembering along Gurdjieff's lines leads to a useful outcome in this respect. You see your "flaws" very clearly, and your self-importance drops. At the same time, you also see that most of this self-importance was imaginary anyway. By dropping it, you now find a genuine inner strength. This strength seems adequate to handle almost anything, yet it's not the sort of thing you would make any fuss about, you don't feel you have any special powers. There may be some real suffering at times over real problems, but the unnecessary sufferings start to drop away.

011eof the functions of the world simulation aspect of consciousness is not only to represent an experience per se, but to locate it in space, in time, and on the me/not-me dimension. In projection, the external aspects of the experience are initially simulated well, but there is a total reversal on the me/not-me location of one's own feelings. This is a serious and all too common distortion of reality perception. How many unpleasant people have we met who claim that they usually find other people quite unpleasant?

a serious and common distortion of reality perception

Projections can sometimes be observed by noting their flavor, by becoming mentally fast enough in self-observation to notice the fleeting moment when, for example) *you* felt angry before you began perceiving another as angry. It is also helpful to check your projections by asking other people what they are actually feeling. This doesn't always work) of course, as others can be dishonest, but with people you can realistically put some trust in and who are also committed to growth, it can be very useful. Watch out for the tendency to assume that anyone who doesn't confirm your perception (projection) of hirn/her is lying!

Rationalization

Rationalization is a defense that allows some response to situations that trigger unacceptable feelings and desires, but which obscures and dilutes their stressfulness and unacceptableness by substituting a plausible and acceptable rationale for the unacceptable motivations.

Suppose you were troubled by feelings of inadequacy as a child, and you hated to feel that way. You discovered that giving advice to others who were troubled by problems made you forget your

feelings of inadequacy, indeed made you feel important and competent. Now when you meet someone who appears troubled, your own feelings of inadequacy may be empathically triggered, but these feelings are immediately "papered over," rationalized, by a laudable desire to help the other person. You can now help them and feel good about it: you believe you're operating from the best of motives. Your rationalization of why you want to give advice has buffered you from your deeper, unacceptable feelings of inadequacy. Indeed, we have a natural "essence" desire to help others, so there is a good deal of truth mixed in with this rationalization. The more truth there is mixed in with distortion driven by defensiveness, the better rationalization can function. Much of what passes for rational thought is actually rationalization.

Suppose you have gotten some insight into the fact that you compulsively help others who are suffering in order to cover up your own feelings of inadequacy. "Well," you say, "no more advice giving! I have my own psychological problems, so I can't give decent advice; it's just a sham." Perhaps. This may also be a rationalization defense against responding to your natural empathy and concern for others.

Self-observation is very useful for spotting rationalization and putting you in touch with the underlying feelings. Developing sensitivity to your emotional feelings is crucial here, as it is the rejected feelings that drive the mechanism of rationalization. There is a moment before rationalization obscures these feelings, so if you're practicing self-observation, you'll see that feeling and the desire to rationalize it away.

self-observation and rationalization

In rationalization, the world simulation process constructs a generally good simulation of the external situation but a poor representation of your position in the matter.

Sublimation

The psychoanalytic concept of sublimation is that you take the instinctual desire/energy that was originally attached to an unacceptable object and focus this energy on an approved object. Freud theorized, for instance, that a boy's sexual instincts originally focus on his mother. Incest is taboo, so there can be no gratification there. When the boy matures and later marries, however, he may pick a woman who is like his mother in important ways. His unconscious mind equates his wife and his mother, so sexual intercourse with his wife partly gratifies the original desire for sexual relations with his mother, without the conflicts that conscious awareness of this desire would bring. A person who believed that sex was inherently sinful might live a celibate life and try to sublimate his sexual

energy into good works. A physically aggressive person, knowing that direct violence would get him in trouble, might become a very sharp bargainer in business transactions.

Without necessarily accepting all of this theory, we can see sublimation as substitute gratification, getting something that is satisfying enough to your desires to relieve at least some of the pressure. At one extreme this can be a conscious process, knowing you're making a compromise as required by reality. At the other extreme you may not know what you're doing and may use rationalization or other defense mechanisms to support your sublimation.

You may also sublimate "spiritual" or "psychic" energies into mundane activities. I have met several people, for instance, who had long histories of medical problems, such as years of migraine headaches. The *best* medical attention did nothing to cure them. Finally they became involved in psychic and spiritual activities and the medical problems disappeared. They realized afterward that they had a natural gift for psychic and/or spiritual work but had not developed it because it wasn't approved of in their culture. They had tried to take that kind of energy and use it all in everyday activities. This succeeded only partially. The medical problems had been the result of sublimation not being effective.

developing
the
ability
to
detect
sublimations

Developing the ability to detect sublimations grows from a general development of the ability to self-observe and self-remember. Developing these processes leads to increasing awareness of and growth of your essence, so what you really care about becomes clearer.

Denial

Denial opposes force with force. When an unacceptable desire or feeling comes up, your mind marshals a strong counterforce which says, "No! I do *not* want that; 1 do *not* feel that way!" There is a strong, violent quality to this direct style of defense. The strength of it, the apparent willfulness involved, makes the user feel alive and determined.

Denial is different from suppression, which acknowledges the validity of the desire or experience but denies it expression, for (usually) realistic reasons, without being fooled about what it is you would like. It is different from reaction formation because of the apparent willfulness involved. You feel you are choosing (whether you really have a choice or not) to reject something, whereas in reaction formation going to the opposite extreme is automatized and seems like your natural reaction. The conflict isn't sensed. The attack on religion we used as an example of defense

against religious feelings in our discussion of reaction formation could also occur with denial. Here there would be conscious experience of the strength of the rejection and attack.

Denial can be detected by especially observing strong reactions of rejection, looking for the flavor underneath something else.

Active Narcoticization/Distraction

Active narcoticization/distraction is an active fragmentation of attention, an active deadening, a dispersion of energies, a distraction from the unacceptable. For practical purposes (ignoring the effects of training) we ordinarily have a relatively fixed amount of mental attention available. The world simulation process can only handle so many things at once. An unacceptable desire or feeling only becomes really disturbing when it captures much of our available attention. If that attention keeps jumping from one thing to the next, it is hard to capture.

a dispersion of energies. a distraction from the unacceptable

Suppose you are in conversation with someone who mentions that *Consumer Reports* has tested the model of expensive car you just bought and found it poorly made, trouble-prone, and a bad buy. Most of us have considerable identification with our cars, as well as being affected by the fact that they are a major investment, so it is upsetting to have our judgment questioned this way. But as you begin to react to the negative implications about your judgment, you are reminded that the car is due for servicing tomorrow, which then reminds you about the movie you are planning to see tomorrow night, and then you notice that your friend's hairstyle is quite attractive and you say something about that, which reminds you of a picnic you once took together, so now you notice that you're hungry, which reminds you that you must rush off now to the meeting of your group which is working on solving the problems of world hunger, and so on. Narcoticization dulls you to the threatening aspects of your reality, not by taking away your mental energy per se, but by moving your energy around so much that you are distracted from events that might upset you.

The world simulation process is not inactive here. If anything, it is working overtime creating an interesting experiential world, but the process is giving energy and attention to everything, thus failing to emphasize what is essential.

When active narcoticizarion is the dominant style of false personality, you lead a very busy life, but somehow really important things are neglected in spite of all that activity. The busyness can further lead to being tired much of the time, and tiredness dulls you, thus making it harder to see what is missing in your life. Narcoticization

can be a primary defense against real growth. Going from one teacher to another, doing several different spiritual practices at once, all keep you too busy to hear your essential self.

Questioning excessive busyness, looking for the quieter feelings hidden by excessive activity, can reveal that the narcoticization defense is operating.

Regression

Regression is generally seen as a last-ditch defense, used when more "adult" defense mechanisms haven't been adequate. A person regresses to the personality and psychological structures he or she had at an earlier age, when the course of life was presumably more satisfactory. The regression may not be as obvious as in hypnotic age regression, where the subject claims to be younger and acts very convincingly as if he were. Rather, it involves a shift in emotional attitudes to an earlier developmental stage. The regression may last for only a few moments or for much longer periods.

Systematic self-observation can quickly pick up the emotional flavor of regression if one is not too thoroughly identified with it. Also, I have developed a useful technique for self-observing these regressions. "Flash answers," instant verbal responses to questions, with no time to formulate or think about (censor) them, can be very revealing *if* one has a commitment to learning and speaking the truth. You can try this by making this commitment with a friend or your spouse, and telling him or her to unexpectedly ask you the question, "How old are you?" during moments when you are emotional. Answer *immediately* when asked, with the first number that pops into your mind, no matter how you judge the answer.

"flash answers"

The answers are usually surprisingly young. When done by both people in an argument, it is surprising how many arguments disappear in laughter when both parties recognize that they are operating from an emotional age of three or four! It must be done in an atmosphere of mutual trust and basic respect, however, not as a way for the other person to win arguments by forcing you to admit that you're being childish. This flash answer technique can be used in many other ways to learn about yourself.

I suspect partial and brief regressions are much more common than is recognized. Regressions demonstrate the arbitrariness of our false personality. All the elements of our younger selves are available: by adding the sense of "This is me!" to them, we resurrect a younger self.

CONCLUSION

Our ordinary, "normal" state of consciousness, more perceptively called "waking sleep" or "consensus trance," is a difficult state. Too much of our essence, our deep feelings, desires, and talents, are invalidated and twisted in the course of the enculturation and conditioning we go through to conform to the consensus about what is normal. Thus, waking sleep is full of tensions and strains. Defense mechanisms are strain relievers, buffers, to allow adequate (by social standards) functioning of the culture as a whole.

Yet the cost to the individual and to society is very high. There is a quality of tension, anxiety and hurry in life that can alienate us from ourselves and from other people. Interacting with and greatly amplifying this self-alienation, the distortions of our perception of external reality, especially of other people, and the distortions of our own feelings that occur because of our automatizations and defense mechanisms, lead to frequent maladaptive actions.

The consequences of these actions create enormous amounts of unnecessary suffering. This suffering diverts energy that could be used to solve real problems and further our higher development. As Gurdjieff so often pointed out, much of the suffering in our world is "stupid," unnecessary suffering, the misereation of entranced people. The common belief in our culture that a fair amount of suffering is inevitable and normal acts as a further costly defense mechanism which prevents us from questioning ourselves and our culture. Psychological secondary gains further hinder our natural desire to intelligence and happiness. "Stupid suffering" may be common, but it is certainly not "normal" in the sense of healthy.

enormous amounts of unnecessary suffering

I hope these psychological reflections on the structure and dynamics of waking sleep will be of some practical use in self-observational work, as well as aiding the understanding of ordinary consciousness. After all, if we could wake up, what could we not accomplish?

NOTES

1 I describe ordinary consciousness as a state-like trance in the pejorative sense of a loss of vitality and initiative, combined with a mechanicalness of thought, feeling and action. The adjective "consensus" is to remind us that the particular form of this trance is strongly influenced by the particular culture we are raised in, the implicit and explicit social consensus on what is real and important. See Tart, 1986, for details.

2 I experienced a complete demonstration of the mechanicalness of everyday life as I typed the word "saliva," I observed that my mind had automatically rejected "spit," in spite of its importance in what I was writing about, because I was thinking positively about the medical use of this substance, which automatically changed it into the more emotionally acceptable "saliva."

"TheSAT is the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

4Parts of the following discussion have been adapted, by permission of the publisher, from Chapter 13, Defense Mechanisms, of my *Waking Up: Overcoming the Obstacles to Human Potential,*

'Gurdjieff used the descriptor "false" in conjunction with personality to emphasize that much of what we take to be our selves *was* not our own free choice but the result of enculturation, socialization and conditioning processes that may have made us become someone quite contrary to our natural impulses and desires,

6For some people a time-limited practice of deliberately and consciously lying, while self-observing, can be very growthful, It is also quite difficult. On several occasions I gave participants in a training group a "simple" *assignment* tell five, little, white lies each day for the next two weeks, I specified that the lies were to be harmless, to have no real consequences for them or the people they were told to. Yet students usually experienced great difficulty and tension in carrying out this exercise, or resisted by consistently forgetting to do it.

'Modern psychological understanding shows that the world we naively think we straightforwardly "perceive" is actually a complex, semi-arbitrary construction, a "virtual" reality in computer terms. Fuller explanations of this are provided elsewhere (Tart, 1975; 1986).

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