

REVIEW ESSAYS:

ALL AND EVERYTHING by G. I. GURDJIEFF

Terry Winter Owens & Suzanne D. Smith

THIS BOOK is without doubt one of the most extraordinary books ever published. Its title is no exaggeration, for the book not only touches on all and every conceivable subject, but it also is all and everything — that is, a collection of science fiction tales, an allegory, a satire, a philosophical treatise, a sociological essay, an introduction to psychology, a cryptogram and, for those who follow Gurdjieff's teachings, a bible. It is a highly unusual mixture of entertainment and esotericism, of humor and seriousness, of obscurity and clarity. Despite its scope and diversity, it does not suffer, as one would expect, from lack of organization or direction, but on the contrary it is very much intact.

The author, George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, ranks among the most controversial men of the 20th century, and he may well be one of the most important. He was born in 1877 of Greek ancestry in what is now Russian Armenia and died in Paris in 1949. As a young man he devoted all his energies to searching for the fundamental truths of life. He traveled extensively throughout the East, sometimes gaining entrance to esoteric schools that few, if any, Westerners had ever been admitted to. From what he learned in his travels, he became convinced that there was a way for man to become much more than what he is. He then set about putting what he had learned into a form that would be understandable and meaningful to the Western world. He developed a method whereby a man could evolve through his own efforts, and he taught it in Moscow, Fontainebleau, London, Paris and New York. The basis of the method seemed simple enough — to observe oneself objectively, impartially and at the moment, but the execution of it was extremely difficult, which led to it being called "the Work." Through efforts "to work on oneself" and increase one's self-awareness or consciousness, Gurdjieff maintained that a man could develop new faculties which, because they are based on objectivity and impartiality, would enable man to function harmoniously. Gurdjieff believed, unlike many religious philosophers, that man has to develop a soul — he is not born with it — and these new faculties contribute to the development of the soul. He presented his ideas in three forms — lectures and writing, music, and

sacred dances and movements to correspond to the three main areas of man — his intellect, his emotions, and his physical body. What was possibly most important and unique about Gurdjieff was that he was a living example of what his method could produce. Even people who didn't like him had to admit that here was a man in control of himself, a man who operated from the inside out rather than being in the power of external influences like most men.

It is indeed fortunate that he put his ideas in writing, because throughout history we can see what has happened when wise men have entrusted the dissemination of their teachings solely to their disciples. Distortions, disagreements and even reversals are inevitably the final result. This is not to say that many of the books written about the ideas and method of Gurdjieff are not quite good. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*, Kenneth Walker's *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teachings*, and C. Daly King's *The States of Human Consciousness* are excellent introductions to Gurdjieff and his ideas. But these are second-hand and consequently not as complete or as accurate as something coming directly from Gurdjieff himself. They are only substitutes — necessarily colored and limited by the nature and understanding of their authors, while with *All and Everything* we have the man himself, and we do not have to settle for anything less.

Because the book is so unique, the reading of it does present certain challenges. Gurdjieff suggests that *All and Everything* be read three times, and not until the third reading should the reader try to fathom the gist of it. However, this does not mean that a tremendous amount cannot be gleaned from the first reading. A good guide to understanding the book is the section "From the Author" at the very end. Here Gurdjieff steps out of his role as story-teller and talks to the reader directly. He presents a marvelous perspective for viewing his system in forthright and compelling language. Although his picture of man is far from flattering, it is filled with hope and the promise of man's possibilities.

Another good guide is to keep in mind Gurdjieff's purpose in writing *All and Everything*, which he states in no uncertain terms: To destroy mercilessly, without any compromises whatever, all man's beliefs and views about everything existing in the world. To reinforce this aim, Gurdjieff selects a most diabolical name for his hero — the name of the devil himself — Beelzebub. However, *All and Everything* is not like so many philosophy books that brilliantly show man what a farce he is and then leave it at that. Its exposé of man is not an end in itself, but rather a beginning. Gurdjieff sets out to destroy only in order to create. He believes that before man can

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proceed to uncover and develop his hidden possibilities, he must first question the condition in which he is, must feel dissatisfaction, must have an inkling that there is more to life than what the senses perceive. An apt analogy to the Gurdjieff method is the formation of a pearl. The analogous irritant is the many provocative statements set forth by Gurdjieff which one cannot easily dismiss or ignore. This irritant can constitute the beginning and provide material for man's development in just the same way that the foreign substance in the oyster causes it to start forming a pearl. When man's inner development or soul reaches fruition, like a pearl it then exists independently of that which created it and is not affected by death.

Two other important points to keep in mind are the subtitle, "An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man," which implies that this is no ordinary criticism, and Gurdjieff's statement that the book is written "according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning." It is impossible to explore here all the ramifications of these two points, but it is apparent that Gurdjieff does not propose the usual palliative measures of reform nor does he present his arguments in a traditional way. He makes it clear that mankind cannot be "worked on" from the outside; that is, things like war or disease cannot be eliminated even through the best forms of legislation or science or artistic endeavor. The only possible solution is that enough men embark on a road leading to higher states of consciousness.

Probably the biggest challenge in reading the book lies in its richness of content. What is said can be taken on so many different levels, and it is often hard to know how to go about deciphering it. In general, it could be said that Gurdjieff is working on the hypothesis "as above, so below." Thus, when he talks about the universe and the sun and the moon, he is also talking about man and what he is composed of. Modern scientists do the same thing when they compare atomic configurations to solar systems — nucleus to sun and electrons to planets in orbit.

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Since Gurdjieff has chosen to present his ideas chiefly in the form of allegory, one can read a great deal of this book simply as fascinating science-fiction. The story opens aboard the spaceship Karnak. Beelzebub is traveling to a conference where his sage advice is needed on matters of cosmic significance. He is accompanied by his grandson, Hassein, and his old and faithful servant, Ahoon. As they travel, to please the interest and curiosity of Hassein, and also

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to educate him, Beelzebub regales Hassein with tales about the Earth, about events in the universe, and about cosmological and psychological law. First of all, Beelzebub tells Hassein how he happened to become interested in the planet Earth. It seems that during his youth, he intervened in affairs that were of no concern to him and as punishment was banished to Mars, a "remote corner of the Universe" (our solar system). There he builds a telescope in order to study the goings-on on Earth and to observe the strange customs of its inhabitants. He finds man's inclination to "destroy the existence of others" and the whole question of war particularly strange and repugnant. Allegorically, the telescope on Mars can be considered as something each man has to build for himself in order to view his functioning — perhaps the first step in the acquisition of objective self-knowledge. The significance of Mars is perhaps in its distance — that is, one cannot become emotionally involved or as easily prejudiced if one is so far removed.

Beelzebub then relates to his grandson an engrossing story — about the early life of Earth — which is filled with psychological implications. Due to cosmological disturbances, two fragments broke off from the Earth early in its creation — one was the Moon and the other was what Gurdjieff calls Anulios, of which Earthmen are entirely unaware. In order to maintain the balance of the universe, it was necessary to ensure that these two satellites remain orbiting around the Earth, and Earthmen were required to give off a certain substance that would facilitate that end. Fearing that if the Earthmen discovered their real function, they might find no reason for continuing to live, the higher powers implanted an organ in them called Kundabuffer which prevented them from perceiving their true condition. Later the organ was removed, but unfortunately its consequences had become crystallized and they remain to this day. Whereas the Kundabuffer was only intended to prevent man from seeing reality, it caused the additional qualities of self-love, vanity, swagger, pride, etc. These qualities are psychological and emotional props which put a cloud over the true nature of man. Hence, man needs a vantage point beyond the cloud, or a means to see through it to his real nature and to discover there the purpose of his life. Gurdjieff presents this purpose not only as an aim, but as a duty which he calls Partkdolg-duty — a duty quite separate from the usual ethical and moral obligations.

Beelzebub also tells Hassein of his personal visits to the planet Earth, where he learns more about the nature of man after gaining preliminary knowledge through his telescope. These trips might be construed as a more advanced step in the method of working on one-

self — perhaps implying that once having acquired the ability to see oneself objectively as if from the outside, one could then make closer observations and still retain one's state of non-involvement or impartiality. These descents to Earth are narrated to Hassein for educational purposes, but they are always entertaining stories. In all, Beelzebub makes six trips to Earth, each possibly representing a specific portion of the body or psyche deserving study.

His first trip is to the then-existent continent Atlantis where one of his fellow countrymen has become involved in governmental affairs. In attempting to correct apparent injustices Beelzebub's countryman has, in short, made a mess, because although he is more highly developed spiritually than the Earth king, he does not have as much practical experience. Beelzebub goes to Atlantis to get his kinsman out of this situation and to help set things straight. There is much ingenuity and guile in this episode, and although much of it has serious implications, there is also an element of comedy when Beelzebub helps stage a revolution. An important psychological analogy in this first descent is the idea of immature intervention. Perhaps an area of our functioning is a "know-it-all" (like Beelzebub's kinsman) and it tries to change something in us which it does not understand. Perhaps even with the best of intentions it blunders because of lack of experience.

Beelzebub is not alone in his quest for development, and he tells Hassein of other people — some extra-terrestrials, some Earthmen and some of divine origin — also in pursuit of objective truth. The first of them is Gornahoor Harharkh, whom we first meet in the chapter "The Arch-preposterous." He is an "essence-friend" of Beelzebub living on Saturn. His prime interest is electricity (called Okidanokh) which participates in the formation of all new arisings. Gornahoor Harharkh invents a machine which demonstrates and makes available for his use the properties of Okidanokh. He enters into the machine and through its operation is able to become a witness to the operation of the cosmic law to which Okidanokh is subject. This, he states, is not possible for the uninitiated. The purpose of his experiments is to develop his Reason — an attribute which, according to Gurdjieff, man does not have by nature but must acquire through effort. The machine is described in great detail, and the experiment might correspond to an exercise or practice connected with "the Work." But even Gornahoor Harharkh makes a mistake while performing the experiment and has to suffer some unpleasant consequences — again, perhaps a warning that exact knowledge is required in order to make such experiments.

Perhaps the most outstanding character in the book (outside

of Beelzebub) is Ashiata Shiemash. We learn about him in a series of four chapters which are some of the most emotionally stimulating in the book. Ashiata Shiemash was sent to Earth as a messenger from above, a messiah figure of enormous nobility and beauty. He was also concerned with consciousness, and with the conscious fulfillment of one's possibilities in relation to "His Endlessness" or God. His writings are unusually moving and have a scriptural tone and quality. An example are his three verses on what he calls the sacred being-impulses of Faith, Love and Hope:

Faith of consciousness is freedom

Faith of feeling is weakness

Faith of body is stupidity.

Love of consciousness evokes the same in response

Love of feeling evokes the opposite

Love of body depends only on type and polarity.

Hope of consciousness is strength

Hope of feeling is slavery

Hope of body is disease.

Ashiata Shiemash is greatly concerned with attaining Conscience which would involve the "inevitable struggle with the arising and the proceeding within [us] of two quite opposite functionings, giving results always sensed by us either as 'desires' or 'non-desires.'" Ashiata Shiemash establishes five rules of objective morality which are called "being-obligolnian-strivings," and they lead to genuine conscience. It is stated that in order to fulfill these "strivings," man has to "work consciously on himself." These five rules are:

- (1) to have everything satisfying and really necessary for one's body.
- (2) to have a constant and unflagging instinctive need for self-perfection in the sense of being.
- (3) the conscious striving to know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance.
- (4) to strive from the beginning of one's existence to pay for one's arising and individuality as quickly as possible, in order afterward to be free to lighten as much as possible the Sorrow of our Common Father.

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- (5) the striving always to assist the most rapid perfecting of other beings, both those similar to oneself and those of other forms, up to the degree of self-individuality.

Gurdjieff points out that one of the psychological traits of contemporary man which impedes the formation of a Conscience is the "disease of tomorrow" — i.e., putting off until tomorrow what you could do today.

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Intricately woven into Beelzebub's stories are pieces of information that seem quite straightforward. For instance, Beelzebub explains to Hasein that man is composed of three brains or centers. They are the instinctive or moving center, the emotional or feeling center, and the intellectual or thinking center. Perhaps Beelzebub and his party can be seen as a demonstration of the three centers functioning together as a unit, each having a definite role to fulfill. Beelzebub himself would correspond to the thinking center. He has all the information, is the maker of plans and decisions, and is the leader of the group. Ahoon, the servant, represents the physical center. He is described as faithful. He is always there, ready to serve, and does not intrude with his own personal desires — perhaps a more ideal condition for the body to be in than is generally the case with man. Hasein represents the emotional center. He is young, not fully developed, is in the process of being educated, has willingness and eagerness to grow up, and is often intensely moved by what Beelzebub tells him. In this analogy it can be seen how Gurdjieff's system, which has been called the Fourth Way, differs from the three ways of the monk, the yogi and the fakir. They each try to develop primarily through the means of one center: the fakir through chastisement of the body, the yogi through mental discipline, and the monk through prayer and belief which are chiefly emotional. For Gurdjieff's work, all three centers must be utilized so that man can develop harmoniously, not lopsidedly. In this connection it is most interesting to read about the Alla-attapan in the chapter "Heptaparaparshinokh." The Alla-attapan is a device invented by Chinese twin brothers and, in part, shows how the three centers can function in man in the proper

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way. The various portions of the apparatus can be clearly seen to correspond to centers in man.

The knowledge of this concept of three centers is a prerequisite to Gurdjieff's treatment of the Law of Three or, as he calls it, Triamazikamno. It is quite an unusual concept and rarely, if ever, appears in contemporary scientific knowledge. Yet Gurdjieff maintains that it is the underlying principle in all noumena and also plays a very significant role in man's possible development. The Law of Three states that there are three, rather than two forces always in operation. Usually, of course, we know only positive and negative. To this, Gurdjieff adds the neutralizing force. One of the most poetic illustrations of this principle appears in the chapter "Purgatory," in which three beings unite in a special way in order to create a new being. This takes place in another solar system which might correspond to a certain stage of a person's development in which the three centers fuse and give birth to a higher state of consciousness. Perhaps this is the state of "oneness" which mystics write about.

In relation to the Law of Three, Beelzebub tells how each of man's three centers can play a part in his development through the use of consciously ingested and digested substances. Unfortunately, man in his present condition does not take in these substances and therefore does not fulfill his potentialities. At one point in the discussion of these substances required for spiritual growth, reference is made to alchemy and the changing of base metal into gold. The chapter "Hypnotism" goes into it even further, telling what these substances are, how they are to be ingested and digested, and what the results of this could be. It is interesting to note that one of the substances is the very air we breathe.

Toward the end of the book, in the chapter "Form and Sequence," Gurdjieff draws an interesting distinction between knowing and understanding. Understanding can only result through the conscious verification of knowledge. So, although the book presents knowledge, and perhaps knowledge of a very high order, it is not in itself useful unless one puts it to the test — digests it and converts it into understanding.

Throughout the book, Beelzebub often after an explanation of some principle or possibility, tells Hasein that he will give him further details after they reach their home planet Karatas. The narration of the story ends just before they reach this "promised land." Perhaps this implies that the reader needs to digest and use the ideas set forth in the book before further information or understanding will be forthcoming. But this Mecca is not always in the unforeseeable distance, because there are several points where Hasein is said to

see the "reflections of the lights of Karatas"—a glimmer of what is to come, inspiration to continue in that direction. Perhaps also for the reader this can take place.

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Interspersed with his stories, Beelzebub discusses various theoretical and philosophical subjects. At one point in their travels through space, Beelzebub's party learns of the impending appearance of a comet which will, if they cross its path, damage their ship. Beelzebub decides that the Karnak should wait in outer space until the comet has gone by. He makes use of this time to explain to Hassein the dynamics of space ships, much as the contemporary father explains the workings of an automobile to his young son, and also in keeping with the best tradition in science-fiction. But here, in allegory perhaps, are principles dealing with the methodology of "work on oneself." Included in his explanations is the idea of perpetual motion which Beelzebub puts forth in such a plausible way that one is hard put to find any theoretical flaw in it. Perhaps there are indications here of what kind of fuel could be used to keep oneself in perpetual effort to develop.

During this interlude in outer space, Beelzebub speaks about time, which he calls the Unique-Subjective (Beelzebub is not one to waste time). This chapter is very valuable for understanding the idea of relativity, and of parallel values on different planes. The meaning behind the use of "Unique-Subjective" is that all beings on whatever plane of existence, from microcosmic to macrocosmic, experience the flow of time in the same way; that is, the time duration for an event in the life of an amoeba is relative and comparable in length to a similar event in the life of a human being, even though in the case of the latter only three seconds may have appeared to elapse, whereas with the former an entire lifetime has gone by.

This chapter is also one of the most philosophically exciting in the book. A great many provocative statements are made: "Time in itself does not exist . . . cannot be understood by reason . . . only time has no sense of objectivity." Balanced against this, Gurdjieff indicates the possibility of understanding time through a direct experience of it (rather than through a mental process), an experience which he calls the Egokoolnatsnarian sensation.

Another exciting principle which Gurdjieff brings forth is the

Law of Seven or, as he calls it, Heptaparaparshinokh, to which he devotes a whole chapter. If one can in any way sum up the intricate logic of this law, it is that all events proceed in seven steps or "deflections," each step having specific attributes and properties which determine the progress of every activity. Gurdjieff links this law and its progressions rather intimately with the stages of a man's development.

The Law of Seven has at least several illustrations in contemporary knowledge—obviously in the music octave, but more profoundly in the periodic table of elements in chemistry. When the elements are lined up in tabular form, each series headed by an inert element, it can be seen that certain of their characteristics repeat in patterns of seven. It is interesting to note here that the electrons of inert elements have closed orbits; they cannot combine with the other elements of this world easily. Thus, we see that Gurdjieff's theories are not solely a product of his rich imagination, and it is fascinating to see how he finds psychological applications in them.

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In many ways, Gurdjieff seems to be trying to discourage people from reading *All and Everything*. In the introduction, which he calls "Arousing of Thought," not only thought, but many feelings are aroused—some unpleasant ones towards Gurdjieff himself. Gurdjieff helps to invoke these by such statements as, "cheerful and swaggering candidate for a buyer of my writing . . . before embarking in the reading . . . reflect seriously and then undertake it . . . you might lose your . . . appetite for your favorite dish and for your . . . neighbor, the brunette." Apparently Gurdjieff does this to keep the reader from being lulled or feeling complacent. He wants to agitate and unsettle us—shake us loose from our ordinary way of thinking and of receiving new impressions.

One of the aspects of the book that is quite decidedly "arousing" is the very manner in which it is presented. Sometimes there is digression upon digression, so that to the inattentive, Gurdjieff appears rambling and disconnected. But actually each seeming digression adds a new dimension to that which is being discussed.

Another problem is that people are so used to what Gurdjieff calls "bon ton literary language"—that which produces exciting

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images and lulling reveries smoothly and easily so that very little effort is required on the reader's part. Gurdjieff writes quite otherwise on purpose; he constructs sentences which are, at times, outlandishly long and complex — sometimes a quarter of a page in length.

Gurdjieff seems hell bent on disturbing one's equilibrium, for there is hardly a "quiet" moment in the book that is not disturbed by one of Gurdjieff's classic "Otherwises." This, as he explains in the introduction, is based on an injunction from his grandmother which states, "In life never do as others do . . . Either do nothing — just go to school — or do something nobody else does."

It is sometimes hard to determine when Gurdjieff is being humorous and when he is being serious. He will often discuss a most weighty problem in a tone which is light, sometimes facetious, often with tongue-in-cheek. A prime example of this is his discussion of our responsibilities toward, as he puts it, "Mister God." In reverse, in the chapter "America," Gurdjieff discusses many topics with mock seriousness — the American "dollar-business," drinking and prohibition, the Chatterlitz school of languages, a strange fellow from Chicago called Mr. Bellybutton and on and on. This chapter is really spiced with pungent wit!

One of the best elements of Gurdjieff's humor is his timing. He doesn't allow the reader to get heavy and ponderous, because he sprinkles his humor strategically throughout. Often when considering a most serious question, he interrupts with a quote from the Arab philosopher, Mullah Nassr Eddin. These quotes punctuate the book at the most unexpected moments. For instance, at the very end amidst a series of emotionally charged events in which Beelzebub is receiving something akin to sacred rites, Mullah Nassr Eddin is suddenly quoted as saying "Don't shed tears in vain like that crocodile which snapped at the fisherman and missed biting off his lower left half."

Also contributing to the fact that the course of the reading is not, again to quote Mullah Nassr Eddin, "Roses, roses," is the liberal usage of the Karatasian language — the strange words that belong to Beelzebub's vocabulary. These words are often an unusual assemblage of syllables with three or four consecutive vowels. Some of the roots are traceable like in Triamazikamno (tri = three) and Egoplastikoori and Legominism (ego = I), but always connected with them are syllables not so easily traceable. This is not to imply that Gurdjieff leaves the reader hanging, for he often goes to great length to define and illustrate these words. But an examination of their construction can no doubt shed even further light on them,

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and Gurdjieff offers quite an adventure in word exploration for those so inclined. There is the word "zion" in the names of two "searchers after truth" — King Konuzion and Makary Kronbernk-zion. There are also connections such as those between the Society of Akhaldans and a specific substance in the blood of the Astral body which is called Aiesakhaldan, possibly implying that the findings of the Akhaldan society bear directly on the understanding of what this substance is and how it can be acquired. Then there are words which seem to come directly from various Eastern languages, like the name of the space-ship Karnak that Beelzebub and his company are traveling in, which means "dead body" in Armenian.

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Despite all the inherent difficulties which Gurdjieff has implanted in the book — complexities in writing and in concepts, the rewards are there also. But in keeping with Gurdjieff's philosophy, the rewards are commensurate with the reader's struggle to find them. The book is well worth the struggle, for the man definitely has much to say of import.

In the last chapter, Beelzebub, in an exultant experience, is graduated to a state of higher Reason, which he has earned through his efforts to develop. The ritual connected with this has the solemnity of a religious ceremony and is deeply moving and inspiring. So, "An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man" ends with a triumphal sense of hope, of salvation, of redemption. But not before Hasein is invited to ask one final question of his grandfather. Hasein asks what hope there is for the salvation of people on Earth, and Beelzebub most aptly ends the story with the reply:

"The sole means now for the saving of the beings of the planet Earth would be to implant again into their presences a new organ, an organ like Kundabuffer, but this time of such properties that every one of these unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the

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inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests.

"Only such a sensation and such a cognizance can now destroy the egoism completely crystallized in them that has swallowed up the whole of their Essence and also that tendency to hate others which flows from it—the tendency, namely, which engenders all those mutual relationships existing there, which serve as the chief cause of all their abnormalities unbecoming to three-brained beings and maleficent for them themselves and for the whole of the Universe."

RE-BIRTH WITHOUT FEAR

*(The Psychedelic Experience by Timothy Leary,
Ralph Metzner & Richard Alpert)*
Gerald Heard

NO PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING MANUAL is more needed today than *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead*,¹ by Doctors Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert. For here, in present-day psycho-therapeutic terms, we are provided with a method which can give us essential aid and guidance in and for the most vital and most neglected phase of our lives. The text is, of course, a rendition of the Mahayana Buddhist *Bardo Thödol*. This is the Tibetan "office for the departing," "the last rites" performed to instruct and prepare the person who is leaving this physical body and this phenomenal three-dimensional world for the next, out-of-the-body experience. It gives the instructions whereby the lama informs and guides the dying person into the "intermediate" or "threshold" (that is, "Bardo") state that awaits the newly released soul as it reassembles itself after disengagement from the physique. But however necessary it is that our American and, indeed, all our "modernized" societies be taught how to get over our death phobia and so to be freed from the ridiculous tabu-dishonesties whereby we attempt to disguise our rightful exit, we shall not try out this method and undergo this training unless we can be reassured on two points, unless two quite sensible questions can be answered, two rational objections be met.

The first is: "How can a Westerner accept the Buddhist, ori-

¹New Hyde Park, N. Y.: University Books, 1964. \$5 (Psychedelic Monograph I.)