Biographical Sketches of Key Pupils

John Godolphin Bennett (1897–1974) was a scientist and philosopher who first met Gurdjieff in Istanbul in 1921 when he was working as an interpreter and personal intelligence officer in the British Army. In London that year Bennett began attending meetings held by Ouspensky on Gurdjieff’s teaching, and in 1922 he met Gurdjieff again. Bennett made brief visits to Gurdjieff’s Institute at Fontainebleau in February and August of 1923. In the 1930s Bennett formed his own group of followers, and rejoined Ouspensky’s group. In 1946 Bennett established an Institute at Coombe Springs, Kingston-on-Thames in Surrey. After a twenty-five year break Bennett renewed his ties with Gurdjieff in Paris in 1948 and 1949, at which time Gurdjieff taught him his new Movements. In 1949 Gurdjieff named Bennett his ‘official representative’ in England, with reference to the publication of Tales. After Gurdjieff’s death Bennett became an independent teacher, drawing from Sufi, Indian, Turkish, and Subud traditions. In 1953 he travelled through the Middle East hoping to locate the sources of Gurdjieff’s teaching among Sufi masters. By the end of his life he had written around thirty-five books related to Gurdjieff’s teaching.¹

Maurice Nicoll (1884–1953) studied science at the University of Cambridge before travelling through Vienna, Berlin, and Zurich, eventually to become an eminent psychiatrist and colleague of Carl Gustav Jung. Nicoll was a member of the Psychosynthesis group, which met regularly under A.R. Orage, and this connection led Nicoll to Ouspensky in London in 1921. After meeting Gurdjieff in London in 1922 Nicoll went on to study with him at his Institute in Fontainebleau a year later, before organising his own groups in England on Ouspensky’s advice. His five-volume Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff and P.D. Ouspensky (1952–1954) represent his lifetime work in reconciling the teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky with modern psychology. De Salzmann later endorsed these discourses. At the time he died Nicoll’s group numbered around six hundred members, and was kept going by his

close pupil and secretary Beryl Pogson until it split up into a number of factions. The largest faction joined the Gurdjieff Society of London.2

Charles Stanley Nott (1887–1978) first attended meetings held by Orage and Gurdjieff in New York and Boston in 1924. These meetings directly followed Gurdjieff’s Movements demonstrations given in America, which had greatly impressed Nott. Between 1924 and 1925 he alternated between Gurdjieff’s Institute in Fontainebleau and Orage’s group in New York, before settling in London in 1928. Meanwhile, in New York in 1927, Nott married Rose Mary Lillard, another prominent American pupil of Gurdjieff. After Orage’s death in 1934 Nott began associating with the Ouspenskys in London, while keeping in regular contact with Gurdjieff in Paris. Nott was proficient in the Movements and around this time gave semi-private Movements classes at Colet Gardens, where Ouspensky had established a residence for his groups. Before the publication of Nott’s second memoir in 1969 he founded and subsequently visited Gurdjieff groups in Sydney, Australia.3

Rose Mary Cynthia Nott née Lillard (1897–1979) was a pianist and Eurhythmics instructor who became the first American to attend Gurdjieff’s Institute. Between 1923 and 1928 she assisted Orage in group meetings and led Movements classes. In 1949, when the Gurdjieff Society was founded in London after Gurdjieff’s death, she taught and played piano for Movements in this group. She continued work on the Movements with groups in England and North America until her late seventies.4

Alfred Richard Orage (1873–1934) became a public speaker for the Theosophical Society in England for a decade from the mid-1890s and joined the Society around 1896. He later led the Plato Group and Leeds Arts Club where he discussed Theosophical ideas and became widely known as a Theosophical lecturer, as well as a writer in the Theosophical Review. From 1908 to 1921 Orage co-owned and edited with Holbrook Jackson The New Age, the most influential literary review in Britain, and moved in literary circles frequented by writers such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, e. e. cummings, Dylan Thomas, and Katherine Mansfield.5 Orage met Ouspensky in London in 1921 and met Gurdjieff a year later. At the age of fifty, Orage abandoned his former life to follow

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3 Pecotic, “Body and Correspondence,” 65–69.