



ARISING *as* EMBODIED LIFE 2022

For the Week of August 11 – 17: Transforming Practices: Sleeping and Resting



And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept.
- Genesis 2.21

"First Being-Obligolnian-Striving: To have in our ordinary being-existence everything satisfying and really necessary for our planetary body."

- G. I. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, p 386

This week we turn our focus on the importance of sleep and rest as the sixth exploration in our summer series of "transforming practices."

The notion of sleep is very much a part of the Work, in two ways.

First, sleep as a psychological state or condition is a core aspect of the Work's criticism of humankind: that we are *asleep*. In fact, Mr. Nicoll puts it this way: The Work does not speak of sin. The only thing the Work accuses us of is being asleep (c.f., *Commentaries*, "Letter to Mr. Busch," April 27, 1941, Vol. 1, p.9).

Second, sleep as an essential part of being a healthy physical body. Such sleep and rest is essential to life and well-being, and would fall within the category of a necessity for satisfying our planetary body, as Gurdjieff indicates in the [first striving](#). Our email will focus on this aspect of sleep, and its role in helping us rest and replenish our energies and maintain our health and wellbeing. Mr.

Gurdjieff famously did not sleep much, when he did sleep, he slept. At the Priory in Fontainebleau, Mr. Gurdjieff was notorious for hosting dinner meetings late into the night, and sometimes early morning hours. Some spoke of him seeming tireless – the last to bed and the first to rise.

Evidently, Mr. Gurdjieff's relationship to his own physical sleep and rest and care for the body, included broader aspects of this theory of energy (Hydrogens), and how energy and sleep relate to his teaching on the [centers](#). These ideas worthy of our pondering in depth, by way of citing Gurdjieff's teaching in his book, *Views from the Real World* and a talk Mr. Gurdjieff gave on January 30th 1923, nearly one hundred years ago:

“One thing is definitely known: one of the chief leakages of energy is due to our involuntary tension. We have many other leakages, but they are all more difficult to repair than the first. So, we shall begin with the easiest: to get rid of this leakage and to learn to be able to deal with the others. A man's sleep is nothing else than interrupted connections between centers. A man's centers never sleep. Since associations are their life, their movement, they never cease, they never stop. A stoppage of associations means death. The movement of associations never stops for an instant in any center, they flow on even in the deepest sleep. If a man in a waking state sees, hears, senses his thoughts, in half-sleep he also sees, hears, senses his thoughts and he calls this state sleep. Even when he thinks that he absolutely ceases to see or hear, which he also calls sleep, associations go on. The only difference is in the strength of connections between one center and another. Memory, attention, observation is nothing more than observation of one center by another, or one center listening to another. Consequently, the centers themselves do not need to stop and sleep. Sleep brings the centers neither harm nor profit. So, sleep, as it is called, is not meant to give centers a rest. As I have said already, deep sleep comes when the connections between centers are broken. And indeed, deep sleep, complete rest for the machine, is considered to be that sleep when all links, all connections cease to function. We have several centers, so we have as many connections—five connections. What characterizes our waking state is that all these connections are intact. But if one of them is broken or ceases to function we are neither asleep nor awake. One link is disconnected—we are no longer awake, neither are we asleep. If two are broken, we are still less awake—but again we are not asleep. If one more is disconnected, we are not awake and still not properly asleep, and so on. Consequently, there are different degrees between our waking state and sleep. (Speaking of these degrees, we take an average: there are people who have two connections, others have seven. We have taken five as an example—it is not exact.) Consequently, we have not two states, one of sleep and the other of waking, as we think, but several states. Between the most active and intensive state anyone can have and the most passive (somnambulistic sleep) there are definite gradations. If one of the links breaks it is not yet evident on the surface and is unnoticeable to others. There are people whose capacity to move, to walk, to live, stops only when all the connections are broken, and there are other people in whom it is enough to break two connections for them to fall asleep. If we take the range between sleep and waking with seven connections, then there are people who go on living, talking, walking in the third degree of sleep. Deep states of sleep are the same for all, but intermediate degrees are often subjective.” (*Views from the Real World*, Chapter Three, “Energy-Sleep”, Priory, January 30, 1923, p. 115 - 1). You can also hear this passage read to you [here](#).

Perhaps most interesting and unique to Gurdjieff's teaching is the claim that (1) the centers don't need sleep and (2) that physical sleep is the interrupted connections between centers. This may

explain why it is hard to go to sleep while your mind or intellectual center is preoccupied with thoughts. If one can disconnect from the intellectual center, slowly, one can fall asleep. The natural process of falling asleep must accomplish this “disconnection” seamlessly, and without our conscious control or effort. In fact, the less we mess with this process of disconnection the better. Various sleep aids or anesthesia chemically contribute to or speed up this process of disconnection, thus inducing sleep or even unconsciousness.

One certain upshot of this teaching is that physical sleep is vital for the rejuvenation of the body, what Gurdjieff calls “the machine” and its connections to the various centers. Apparently, the centers don’t tire – just the connections.

Given all that, before moving on, consider a final caution: it is wise not to interfere with one’s sleep. To let it be as natural as possible. It is unwise to go without sleep for too long. It is also unwise to get too much sleep. Both extremes, too little and too much, can cause potential damage to the connections between the various centers, at the least.

The Idea of Sabbath

The Work teaching on psychological and physical sleep is extensive. As mentioned, our email this week is mostly concerned with the important role physical sleep plays in our well-being. One way of approaching the spiritual importance of physical sleep is by way of the idea of the Sabbath.

Various traditions emphasize the importance of taking rest, but none makes this more central than in the teachings of Judaism. Indeed, Judaism’s very origin stories recorded in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis seem to structure the creation of the universe and the earth around the root practice of God’s rest on the seventh day, after all was created. If it was good for God, it was good for the people of God. This reverence for the sabbath day would continue into the legal code of Judaism, reaching its apex in the Mosaic code’s fourth injunction: *remember the sabbath and keep it holy*.

Interestingly, Jesus’ shifted the purpose of the sabbath reminding the religious leaders of the day that the sabbath was for made for man not man for the sabbath. In other words, its purpose was a day of rest and renewal.

The sabbath rest not only applied to the seventh day, resting from all work, but also to the seventh year – the jubilee year – where the fields were given a rest, allowed to lay fallow, and debts were forgiven, slaves freed, and other socially renewing gestures.

All this to say that rest is central to living a healthy, balanced life, personally and socially.

Sleep and Dreams

Lastly, our conversation on sleep and rest would be incomplete without mentioning the important role dreams play in our sleep and the unloading of psychic energies and content of the day through dreaming.

Recent brain and dream research also confirms that dreams not only play a therapeutic, purgative effect, they also can sometimes play a kind of intuitive prophetic role – a kind of symbolic language from the future, foretelling what might occur or what could unfold, and that one should pay

attention to one's dreams, as a source of time body work, a kind of listening in the present for the voice of the future.

Homework

- This week,
- What did you discover this week about your relationship with sleep and rest? Did anything change? What do you wish to remember and embody?

August Practice: Swimming

August is a good time to submerge yourself in the miracle that is water. Whether you dip, float, dive, plunge, jump, wade, or splash, do play with the gift of water and remind yourself of its life giving, thirst quenching, renewing powers. Water has unique way of energetically calming our nervous system. Perhaps it's the ions in the air around a body of water, or simply the fact that our bodies are comprised of 60% water, and we feel connected to and with water in literally a visceral way. Try entering into a body of water every week this month. See what you discover about yourself. Notice how your body feels in the water and then as you dry off after being in the water. What do you discover about yourself through this practice?

Attend The Journey School Thursday Class Tonight: All are encouraged and welcome to attend tonight's class for a review of these teachings and, importantly, to produce a container of beings seeking to be more conscious and whose efforts assist one another: 7:00 pm Central Time via Zoom only.

1. Click on this link and Zoom should open automatically on your laptop or tablet: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9961019778?pwd=aVFLZVQwNGZSNkQ4TDRTUW9yU1Ywdz09>, or
2. Open Zoom, click on Join Meeting and enter this meeting ID: 996-101-9778, passcode: CCH