

The Concept of Human Self: George Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson**

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Abstract

The Greco-Armenian spiritual master George I. Gurdjieff (1866–1949) has remained an important figure in twentieth-century Western esoteric thought. Gurdjieff claimed that people do not have a stable self-identity or, more radically, a soul, but instead comprise a set of personalities. There is only an opportunity for further gradual and conscious development of the highest parts of human existence. Depending on personal effort and choice, this opportunity can be used or not. However, being under the influence of different personalities, people do not live but involuntarily react to external events. Such automatism, according to Gurdjieff, is the result of abnormal conditions for human existence, which in turn are the outcome of a lack of knowledge of biological and cosmic laws. This article studies Gurdjieff's discourse on the human self, initiated in his book *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, which was published in 1950 as the first part of the trilogy *All and Everything*. This study is not only a useful tool with which to illuminate Gurdjieff's understanding of spiritual progress in the frame of Western esoteric thought but also a means to approach his concept of the self within so-called "self-spirituality."

Keywords: Western esotericism; George Gurdjieff; spiritual progress; the self; self-spirituality

Introduction

The notion of the self has been a significant and wide-ranging aspect of modern socio-cultural discourse.¹ Some scholars argue that Western modernity began (outside of exact timing and strict definitions) when everything began to be measured and viewed from the perspective of the individual self. Philosophically

1. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 2.

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or theologically detached from external authority, the self became its own authority. Anthropocentric ideology came about in different forms.² Discourses on spirituality, mysticism, and mystical/religious experience have necessarily included reference to human selfhood. As a result, in the twentieth century, the significance of the self in spiritual development reached its apex. The development of the self, based on a belief that there is potential in every person that is seeking an opportunity to be realized,³ has become a requirement in various New Age religious groups.⁴ From this perspective, the self has been described as an active agent, which necessarily implies a process of becoming; the view of the human self as a process dominated and was rarely questioned.⁵ Despite such an optimistic and progressive perspective on the human self, in the history of the Western esoteric tradition in the twentieth century there were teachers who were not very enthusiastic about human potential and suggested other approaches. One of these figures was George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866–1949).

Gurdjieff's teaching was described in numerous diaries and works of his students as pointing to the significance of work on the self and spiritual transformation. But in spite of the important place occupied by his teaching in the history of the spiritual culture of the twentieth century, and an increasing academic interest in his intellectual heritage,⁶ his approach to the human self has not been studied sufficiently. One of the reasons for such a situation is the unsystematic and intricate style of Gurdjieff's works and teaching, which has contributed to a plurality of interpretations and a neglect of internal consistency of various parts of his works. Western discourses on spirituality and esotericism in the twentieth century influenced the reception and interpretation

2. Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity*, 5.

3. Shils, *Tradition*, 10–11.

4. Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, 18.

5. Kusserow, "Crossing the Great Divide," 546.

6. Needleman, "G. I. Gurdjieff and His School," 359–60; Hunt, *Lives in Spirit*, 232–58; Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 176–80.

of his message in two ways. Firstly, it has drawn the interest of people from different backgrounds, resulting in a mass of interpretive literature.⁷ Secondly, these interpretations prepared the way for his teaching to enjoy wider acceptance and more influence.

Gurdjieff's ideas have been the object of commentary primarily by his students and adherents who endeavored to explain and justify them according to their own understanding and arrange them in a more structured way.⁸ Two dominant tendencies in the study of religion or mysticism – essentialist and constructivist approaches – can be found in interpretations of his works. In the first tendency, a system is compared with other systems to identify universal structures and essential meanings within. This approach was particularly elaborated in the works of William James and Rudolf Otto.⁹ In the second approach, developed in the works of philosophers and anthropologists, a great deal of prominence was given to concrete socio-cultural factors thought to have resulted in dissimilarities between systems.¹⁰ In Gurdjieff's case, these approaches are combined in attempts to identify the origins of his system, which has produced a lot of speculation on the subject.¹¹

The reading of Gurdjieff's works demonstrates the need for analysis of his system in line with elements found within his own oeuvre to minimize reductionist and essentialist approaches applied to his legacy. However, that does not mean that contextual analysis of the socio-political and intellectual en-

7. See works about Gurdjieff or connected with him: Shah, *The Sufis*; Perry, *Gurdjieff*, 1-2 and Osho, *Meetings*.

8. Among others see, for example, Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 9; Nott, *Teachings*, 3; Bennett, *Gurdjieff*, 11; Claustres, *Becoming Conscious*.

9. James, *The Varieties*; Otto, *West-östliche Mystik* and Stace, *Mysticism*.

10. Hick, "Mystical Experience as Cognition," 422-37; Wainwright, *Mysticism* and Katz, *Mysticism, Comparative Mysticism*.

11. Among advocates of the affiliation of the Gurdjieffian system to a concrete tradition, John G. Bennett advocated a Gurdjieff-Sufism connection. In more recent studies the opinion that it was a mix of traditions of Neoplatonic, Orthodox Christian, and Asian origins prevails. See Bennett, *Gurdjieff*, 26, and Azize, "Solar Mysticism," 18-26.

vironment in which Gurdjieff developed his ideas is unimportant, since it could well help to identify the role of his system in the history of twentieth-century esoteric thought. It is important to keep in mind that Gurdjieff endeavored to represent his teaching in a specific location — that is, Western Europe of the 1920s and 1930s.¹² It is also important to recognize the influence of philosophical and cultural trends that were appearing and flourishing in the period. Gurdjieff was not alone in his cosmic orientation and criticism of the human species. His teaching can be contextualized within emerging Western occultism, particularly within the Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky, or with the Traditionalist School concerned with criticism of Western modernity,¹³ or with Russian cosmism, which paved the way to space exploration. These currents shared a pessimistic perspective on human nature and history. As such, this article does not assume Gurdjieff as *sui generis* phenomenon. Nevertheless, the analysis of historical, intellectual, and social contexts in a study of his system should be complemented and balanced by structural and conceptual readings of original texts, in order to discern the complexity and integrity of his teaching.

The attempt of this article is to sketch Gurdjieff's concept of the human self — a basic notion in the Gurdjieffian system — through textual analysis of his magnum opus, *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*. The *Tales* are crucial for the evaluation of Gurdjieff's system. This text of 1,238 pages — divided into three books and forty-eight chapters — can be interpreted as the most complete and advanced expression of Gurdjieff's views on human culture, history, and, most importantly, spiritual development. Moreover, the *Tales* were perceived as a proposal for a new perspective on the human self.¹⁴ The plot of the story is organized around an extraterrestrial creature, Beelzebub, who travels with his

12. Although in the current paper Orientalism is not used as a theoretical lens, for further reading about Orientalist approach see Said, *Orientalism*.

13. Perhaps most fruitful would be a study comparing Gurdjieff with René Guénon (1886–1951), a key figure in the Traditionalist School. See especially Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World (La crise du monde moderne)*.

14. Bennett, *Talks*; Challenger, *Philosophy*, 10.

grandson, Hassein, and an old servant, Ahoon, on a spaceship. During this trip, he narrates his travels to Hassein, most of which are to the planet Earth. The framework of the *Tales* is therefore structured around Beelzebub's journeys, which he undertakes in order to understand men's inclination to kill each other. The result of this attempt is formulated in the tone of his remarks about human beings and the peculiarities of their existence: Gurdjieff's criticism of humans is conveyed through mockery and irony, which is expressed in Beelzebub's witty remarks, parody, anecdotes (particularly in his continuous references to Mullah Nassr Eddin), and dialogue (between Beelzebub and Hassein) throughout the story.

Methodologically, this article follows the systematization of concepts by identifying their characteristics, as used, for example, in the works of Jerrold Seigel for exploring the human self.¹⁵ It explores the notion of human self by identifying the objective and subjective reasons for the “deplorable state” of human life, as illustrated in the *Tales*. Following this task, the article consists of three parts. The first part describes the events closely related to the establishment of the context (abnormal conditions of life) – that is, the objective reasons for man's wretched situation. The second part formulates a range of phenomena created by people and inherent only to them. They explain further establishment of abnormality of human existence, clarifying the subjective reasons for human calamity. The final part focuses on the “ideal self,” represented in personal and collective models, showing the potential of the human self for spiritual growth.

External Reasons for the “Deplorable State” of Humans

The criticism of modern civilization is implied in the second part of the book's title, which is usually omitted: *An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man*. As it is written on the first page of the book in reference to all three series, the *Tales* accomplish one fundamental task: “To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs

15. Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, 5.

and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.”¹⁶ Accordingly, the goal of the first series is the recognition of the abnormality of human existence.¹⁷ The purpose of Gurdjieff’s teaching is to confuse and provoke the reader, and make him forget about his fixed habits.¹⁸ For this reason, Gurdjieff created his own model of the universe, elaborated in the “Ray of Creation.” It contains eight levels, corresponding to Gurdjieff’s Law of Octaves, which states that everything in the world changes. Every process increases or decreases in its scope, depending on the current position in the octave. Gradually as it descends, the Ray decreases – only a minimal amount of the divine energy reaching the Earth can be used by humans. Gurdjieff puts the planet Earth (in the solar system Ors) on the periphery of universe (in comparison to other systems, it is maximally removed from the Sun Absolute – the assumed center). Yet, as James Moore notes, despite such a remoteness, Gurdjieff’s anthropological model takes a radical approach to Cartesian dualism by establishing an ultimate connection between creature and transcendent Creator.¹⁹

Gurdjieff, by means of a cosmic genre, establishes a context which allows him to take a distant and critical perspective on humanity. In doing so, he employs a variety of tools, including alternative cosmic organization, neologisms, and heroic personages. Human beings, according to the *Tales*, live in conditions not suitable for their nature.²⁰ There are external reasons for this situation, specifically three catastrophes that happened to the planet Earth.²¹ The central, and first, among them is the

16. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, preface [n.p.]. Hereafter abbreviated as *Beelzebub*.

17. Gurdjieff does not explain what is meant by abnormality in one single place: it is mentioned through the whole text. In some chapters, he places emphasis on one or another thing. For example, in chapter 27 he mentions that “alcoholism, cocainism, morphinism, nicotinism, onanism, monkism, Athenianism” were invented by people (*Beelzebub*, 382), which can give a general picture of what is meant.

18. Bennett, *Talks*, 9.

19. Moore, “Moveable Feasts,” 3.

20. Gurdjieff particularly underlines this abnormality in chapters 32, 34, and 37.

21. Gurdjieff also mentions an earthquake and a flood (*Beelzebub*, 180–81), and a sand storm (*Beelzebub*, 252) as the second and third catastrophes.

collision of the Earth with the comet Kondoor, which occurred because of an error made by a concrete sacred individual responsible for calculating their orbits. The subsequent problem was how to keep two broken-off pieces of the Earth on their orbits without endangering the universe, and the first decision made by the Highest Commission of angels and archangels was to keep them by the “special sacred vibrations ‘askokini’,” which is a result of independent “deflection” of two sacred laws (Heptaparaparashinokh and Triamazikamno) in cosmic units of the Earth.²²

As for the cosmic units of the Earth, their development went naturally and harmoniously: “there began gradually to be crystallized in the three-brained beings there the corresponding data for the acquisition of objective Reason.”²³ Ironically, according to the plot of Gurdjieff’s story, this harmonious development would lead unavoidably to the understanding by future people of the reason for their existence: the maintenance of detached fragments and the production of “askokin.” As Gurdjieff supposes, creatures of the planet Earth would not stand this enslavement.²⁴ And here Gurdjieff twists the plot of the *Tales* and introduces the events crucial for understanding his mysticism. So, the second decision made by the Highest Commission of angels and archangels thereafter was “to implant into the common presences of the three-brained beings there a special organ with a property such that, first, they should perceive reality topsy-turvy and, secondly, that every repeated impression from outside should crystallize in them data which would engender factors for evoking in them sensations of ‘pleasure’ and ‘enjoyment.’”²⁵ This special organ was named Kundabuffer, a term coined by Gurdjieff most likely in mockery of the widespread and popular idea among Western audiences of the concentration of female energy (*kundalini*) in the lumbar spine. However, Gurdjieff’s term has an opposite meaning to the positive and desirable energy which can be activated.

22. *Beelzebub*, 81–84.

23. *Ibid.*, 87.

24. *Ibid.*, 87–88.

25. *Ibid.*, 88.

Kundabuffer is about “the engendering properties of which they [people] might be protected from the possibility of seeing and feeling anything as it proceeds in reality.”²⁶ In other words, it is an obstacle to spiritual growth.

In establishing context for his interpretation of Gurdjieff’s discourse on the soul, Michael Pittman interprets the special organ as a “fall of man story.”²⁷ He assumes that the organ Kundabuffer can be correlated with human ego or directly with egoism.²⁸ However, despite the obvious identification with human egoism, the meaning of the Kundabuffer is not as evident as it seems. In the first place, egoism is mentioned as a unique property of – and an essential part of – the human psyche. Egoism was formed after the implantation of the special organ.²⁹ Secondly, the Kundabuffer was implanted somewhere in the lumbar area to prevent an accurate perception of reality, and to promote the manifestation of pleasure sensations. Even though the organ was installed for three years, its consequences remain forever: some new traits of the human psyche (among which egoism can be listed) were formed *after* an extraction of the organ but still under its harmful influence.³⁰ Thus, the function and usage of the Kundabuffer relate to the question of reality, which occupies a key position in connection with spiritual perfection. The importance of a clear perception of reality is expressed as a special command of God: “Always guard against such perceptions as may soil the purity of your brains.”³¹ This perception is possible with the knowledge of basic cosmic laws and the structure of the universe.

Here, we come to the brief description of the basic cosmic laws and the human connection with the cosmos. First, Gurdjieff connects the need for self-development with a concept of time. Along with divine love, time remains

26. *Ibid.*, 1220.

27. Pittman, *Classical Spirituality*, 78.

28. *Ibid.*, 81.

29. *Beelzebub*, 375–76.

30. *Ibid.*, 89–90.

31. *Ibid.*, 144.

beyond any influence or control.³² Time itself does not exist, and can be understood only by means of a comparison with other phenomena; yet, for people, as for other beings, every period of their life is limited.³³ Second, in chapter seventeen, Gurdjieff connects the mechanism of the physical universe with a proper sense of reality. The false perception of the universe's structure is a result of a lack of "the instinctive sensing of reality."³⁴ Moreover, he introduces a cosmic Trogoautoegocratic process (the "exchange of substances" or "reciprocal feeding"). The theory of reciprocal feeding, central for understanding the anthropological picture of the *Tales*, can be described as follows: "Man exists for a purpose not his own. This includes all beings — animals, birds, insects and bacteria. Each species is designed for a certain cosmic use. The norm of man is the discharge of the design for which he was created — like a machine designed to do a bit of work."³⁵ As Moore observes, such a design is "astounding and frightening" because it suggests a human factory using various kinds of fuel to produce another type of energy that is needed by "Great Nature."³⁶

Together with this process, two fundamental cosmic laws, Heptaparaparshinokh (the law of seven) and Triamazikamno (the law of three), are the bases of the function of the universe.³⁷ Together with these two laws, the substance called "etherokrilno" (an elemental substance filling the whole universe³⁸) is the reason for the emergence of everything in the universe. Human beings have three centers (thinking, feeling, and moving) or brains.³⁹ These cen-

32. *Ibid.*, 124.

33. *Ibid.*, 125–26.

34. *Ibid.*, 134.

35. Alfred Orage, as quoted in Nott, *Teachings*, 194.

36. Moore, *Gurdjieff*, 54.

37. *Beelzebub*, 750. The Law of Seven and the Law of Three can be better explained through Gurdjieff's enneagram, which was first published by Ouspensky. See Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 294. See also Bennett, *The Intelligent Enneagram*.

38. *Beelzebub*, 137.

39. Ouspensky points to the number of centers being unclear (Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 55). Gurdjieff mentions (not in the *Tales*) at least two more centers: instinctive and

ters influence both physiological and psychological processes of human life. They exist as a result of the crystallization (actualization) of three holy forces (affirming, denying, and reconciling).⁴⁰ The difficulty with these centers is that they operate separately and constantly compete. As Gurdjieff explains, the situation when one center is more active than others can be compared with the three spiritual ways created by humans. The way of the *fakir* (Islam) relates to the moving center; the way of the *monk* (Christianity) connects with the feeling center; and the way of the *yogi* (Hinduism) relates to the thinking center.⁴¹ The problem is that people do not properly use these centers and as a result shorten their life duration.⁴²

Therefore, the collision of the planet Earth with the comet Kondoor and the implantation of the special organ Kundabuffer can be identified as the external factors which affected the formation process of the human self and its further development. In fact, these events explain reasons for a false perception of reality resulting in abnormal conditions of life, such as a shortened lifespan. Yet, Gurdjieff also points to factors exclusively connected with people.

Internal Reasons for the “Deplorable State” of Humans

Gurdjieff emphasizes that the main characteristics of human beings are the same as other three-brained creatures. They perceive reality with the three-brain system. Gurdjieff makes the development of the highest parts (*kesdjan*-body and soul) of human being dependent on perception of reality (including impressions, emotions, and reactions).⁴³ This process can be adjusted by Partkdolg-duty — Gurdjieff’s neologism for his method based on a correct perception of reality, which can be attained through conscious work and intentional suffering.⁴⁴

sexual; for a more detailed hierarchy of centers, see Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, 33–35.

40. *Beelzebub*, 143–45.

41. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 50. Ouspensky calls Gurdjieff’s teaching the “Fourth Way,” describing it as “more exact and perfect.”

42. *Beelzebub*, 131–32.

43. *Ibid.*, 104.

44. *Ibid.*, 409.

As previously mentioned, Gurdjieff suggests that some external events are crucial in the development of human beings. However, he connects other events with the responsibility of people themselves. Among the phenomena that have the most influence on this development, Gurdjieff names two as the most maleficent: religion and education. These two things affect the further manifestation of the properties of the Kundabuffer. The process of education has been reduced, according to Gurdjieff, to establishing a number of diverse artificial customs and traditions in the minds of children. The problem is that these artificial perceptions are detached and have no connection with reality: they are not experienced, but merely automatically manifested. As a result, children become “living mechanical puppets”:⁴⁵ any new information or impression is perceived by them automatically without attempting to think distantly and objectively. Consequently, “they are satisfied with that alone, which someone once consciously or unconsciously put into them.”⁴⁶

As for religions of the planet Earth (called *havatvernoni* in the *Tales*), their necessity and usefulness are determined by their ability to overcome the destructive effects of the Kundabuffer.⁴⁷ Here, the criticism of religions and religious institutions allows Gurdjieff to remain outside of the official discourse on religion and of any group or movement.⁴⁸ Under critique are five traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Lamaism. Chapter thirty-eight describes religion as an “obstruction” and one of the causes of the attenuation of three-brained beings on the planet Earth.⁴⁹ One can identify within this chapter some concrete reasons for, as Gurdjieff suggests, the misinterpretation of religious teachings: the notion of *good* and *bad* (and the creation of the ideas of heaven and hell), the immediate splintering into multiple groups

45. *Ibid.*, 1028–29.

46. *Ibid.*, 687.

47. *Ibid.*, 700, 715, 724–25.

48. Pittman, *Classical Spirituality*, 76.

49. *Beelzebub*, 694.

(“sects”), and the incorporation of religion into political affairs. However, the five aforementioned religions (particularly Christianity and Islam) can serve as support for the activation of inner divine impulses, such as love, hope, and faith.⁵⁰

Along with religion and education, the fragmentation of human personality is another internal reason for the deplorable state of human existence.⁵¹ As previously mentioned, Gurdjieff believes that man does not have a stable self-identity (“the centre of gravity”)⁵² but comprises various categories in his intellectual, emotional, and physical existence,⁵³ which are formulated in the *Tales* as thinking, feeling, and moving centers.⁵⁴ Without awareness of this multiplicity, personal development is problematic.⁵⁵ Gurdjieff provides a set of peculiarities of the human psyche that created the conditions for the further abnormal development.⁵⁶ These peculiarities are numerous and are spread throughout the whole story, which make them hard to scrutinize. Nevertheless, five of them seem specifically important in understanding Gurdjieff’s approach towards the human self. They to one degree or another have received more attention in Gurdjieff’s text. These features can be formulated as suggestibility, fanaticism, cruelty, pride, and adulation.

The first trait, suggestibility, is described in chapter thirteen. It is a human’s inability to draw conclusions independently, since this “strange trait of their general psyche, namely, of being satisfied with just what Smith or Brown says, without

50. *Ibid.*, 732–33.

51. Fragmentation of human personality as an essential part of modern readings of human selfhood was strongly articulated in sociological and psychological approaches to the human self in the beginning of the twentieth century. For construction of the modern self see Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, and of the psychological self, King, “Asian religions and mysticism,” 106–23.

52. *Beelzebub*, 31–32.

53. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 72.

54. Although Gurdjieff uses the term “three-brained” from the beginning of the novel, he first mentions “three centers” only in chapter 17. See *Beelzebub*, 164.

55. See, for example, “Breakfast with idiots.” This ritual was introduced by Gurdjieff in 1922. For further reading see Beekman, *Gurdjieff and Toomer* and Nott, *Journey*.

56. For example, chapter 11 is named “Piquant trait of the peculiar psyche of man.” Gurdjieff also uses different examples of human traditions, described in *Beelzebub*’s six visits to the Earth, to show the absurdity of human life.

trying to know more, became rooted in them already long ago, and now they no longer strive at all to know anything cognizable by their own active deliberations alone.”⁵⁷ However, here Gurdjieff makes clear that this trait is neither a result of the implantation of the organ Kundabuffer, nor its manifest consequence. It is a result of the conditions that people established, and they alone should be blamed for it.⁵⁸

The second trait is described in chapter eleven. It is a kind of punishment to “anathematize” someone who insulted you, usually in a religious context,⁵⁹ and can be understood as human fanaticism. Without doubt, this process of “anathema” is described with irony, yet this trait is crucial, since it naturally leads to something more dangerous – the third trait of the human psyche. This trait, according to Gurdjieff, is the same among all people: the “process of the destruction of each other’s existence,” or human cruelty, which is a result of an incorrect perception of reality.⁶⁰

The fourth trait, human pride, can be found in the idea that all human beings should consider only one place as the “centre of culture” for the whole of planet Earth.⁶¹ Beelzebub names it as the “one great secret of their psyche” and advises Hasein to pretend that he wants to learn something from people if he wants to succeed among them.⁶² The final trait, human adulation, which is intrinsically connected with the fourth trait, is described when Beelzebub, during his third trip to Earth, faces a tradition of “sacrificial offerings,” or destruction of other forms of beings in honor of the gods. This custom is based on the idea that in return for human offerings, “gods” and “idols” would support and help them.⁶³ In addition to these qualities one might also list egoism, self-love, vanity, conceit, and credulity, which are spread among all people regardless of where they

57. *Beelzebub*, 104.

58. *Ibid.*, 104–5.

59. *Ibid.*, 95.

60. *Ibid.*, 319.

61. *Ibid.*, 186.

62. *Ibid.*, 1075.

63. *Ibid.*, 182.

live or were born.⁶⁴ Thus, education and religion, along with the peculiarities of human nature such as suggestibility, fanaticism, cruelty, pride, and adulation, are proposed as the internal reasons for the abnormal human existence.

The “Ideal Self”

Represented by the image of ancient Asia in his works, or by an idea about the harmonious development of three centers, the “ideal” is a key aspect of Gurdjieff’s teaching.⁶⁵ According to the *Tales*, humans, as three-brained creatures, can use the localization of holy forces (centers) not only for the transformation of energy but also for personal development. However, one of the biggest mistakes of humanity is to think that the human soul exists from birth. The sacred forces are latent within humans, but their acquisition depends on personal effort.⁶⁶ In the *Tales*, the message is that one can realize one’s divine potential only by means of individual effort. This process can be achieved in two ways: collectively or personally.

As for a collective way, there is an example of an equipage consisting of a passenger, a carriage, a horse, and a coachman, which, perhaps, aptly represents Gurdjieff’s perspective. Despite the lack of originality — which Gurdjieff probably never claimed — this image seemingly points not to the plurality of human self but rather to the necessity of working as a group. The carriage corresponds to the body, the horse is compared to feelings, the coachman represents “consciousness” or mind, and the passenger sitting in the carriage is the human “I.” It is through successful work with all his parts that man may progress spiritually.⁶⁷ In this manner, Gurdjieff places a clear emphasis on the importance of group work and the transmission of knowledge.⁶⁸

64. *Ibid.*, 107.

65. In 1922 Gurdjieff established the Institute for Harmonious Development of Man in France; for a more detailed analysis of the ideal in Gurdjieff’s teaching see Tamdgidi, *Mysticism and Utopia*, 535–53.

66. *Beelzebub*, 226.

67. *Ibid.*, 1092–93.

68. On the account of community life see De Hartmann, *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* or Webb, *The Lives*.

An ideal collective model can be identified with the Society of Akhaldan, which originated on the continent of Atlantis.⁶⁹ This society is founded on the initiative of a person named Belcultassi, who has succeeded in the development of his highest being-parts. Belcultassi devotes himself to understanding the reasons for impulses such as self-love, pride, and vanity, which create the illusion of his “I.”⁷⁰ Moreover, one can also name the brotherhood of Olbogmek,⁷¹ or the club of adherents of Legominism⁷² as examples of ideal collective organisations.⁷³ The goal of all these groups can be stated as the comprehension of the laws of nature and their proper transmission in different forms.

As for a personal, non-collective model of the “ideal-self,” one can distinguish between human and non-human examples. Gurdjieff presents Beelzebub as a non-human model; a human model might be identified in the character of the Bokharian dervish Hadji Asvatz Troov. The figure of Beelzebub, as Anna Challenger suggests, can be read as relating to Gurdjieff himself,⁷⁴ or to the Islamic prophet Muhammed.⁷⁵ Yet, in my opinion, crucial moments of Gurdjieff’s life — the death of a young wife, travels to Central Asia, and a search for the laws of nature — can be found in the stories of other characters.⁷⁶ In this regard, a reader who tries to identify the author of the *Tales* with one concrete character could understandably become confused. One may assume, however, that a number of characters represent Gurdjieff’s personality and teaching, rather than a single personage.

69. *Beelzebub*, 294.

70. *Ibid.*, 294–95.

71. *Ibid.*, 349.

72. *Ibid.*, 453–54.

73. For a more elaborated account of group work and community life see, for example, Cusack, “Intentional Communities in the Gurdjieff Teaching,” 159–78.

74. For example, chapter 33, dedicated to the work of Beelzebub as a hypnotist, may strengthen this argument. For the Gurdjieff-hypnotism connection see Tamdgidi, *Gurdjieff and Hypnosis*.

75. Challenger, *Philosophy*, 94–95.

76. For a better understanding of the storyline of the *Tales* one can read the second part of the trilogy. See Gurdjieff, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*.

Beelzebub, an extraterrestrial creature from the planet Karatas, around whom the narrative of the *Tales* is structured, possesses, like humans, a three-brained nature. He has succeeded in the development of his highest parts and has reached the highest level of spiritual development possible for three-brained beings.⁷⁷ But which facts about Beelzebub's life and personality does Gurdjieff emphasize in this spiritual development? Firstly, Gurdjieff points to Beelzebub's rebellious character, which was probably a reason for his exile. Secondly, he has spent many years far away from his homeland, but due to his efforts he was pardoned. Thirdly, and as can be seen throughout the story, despite various troubles during his journeys Beelzebub retains a good sense of humor, constantly making jokes and sharp remarks. Perhaps this style helps to avoid a didactic tone in the *Tales*.⁷⁸ Moreover, Gurdjieff avoids a preachy style by introducing Mullah Nassr Eddin,⁷⁹ a character from Central Asian folklore famous for his witty remarks, as a teacher of Beelzebub.⁸⁰ The style of Mullah's jokes allows without a didactic tone to show realities of a human life, with which the audience of the *Tales* (in Central Asia, Caucasus, Russia) was familiar. Gurdjieff even makes Mullah a character in chapter thirty-four, where he describes different national groups, including Russians. He describes them as: "Half-with-a-quarter-plus-three-quarters."⁸¹ This playfulness can also be recognized in Beelzebub's remarks. One of the examples can be found in words for two types of religious groups, that are "Orthodoxhydooraki" and "Katoshkihydooraki," which make clear the author's intention ("doorak" is a fool in Russian).⁸² In this

77. *Beelzebub*, 1078.

78. Pittman, *G. I. Gurdjieff*, 13–14.

79. See, for example, Nasr-ed-din Khoja, *Tales of Nasr-ed-din Khoja*.

80. The reference to Mullah is often interpreted as a sign of Gurdjieff's affiliation to Sufism (Pittman, *Classical Spirituality*, 87–88). However, in his anecdotes and stories, as represented in the *Tales*, one can hardly find direct instructions that are of Sufi origin. In my opinion, it is rather the usage of a collective image which helps Gurdjieff to reveal, by means of humor and irony, the less attractive sides of human nature.

81. *Beelzebub*, 601.

82. *Ibid.*, 258.

manner, the use of numerous neologisms and terms within the text reinforces the importance of the ironic style in Gurdjieff's language.⁸³

Another component of Beelzebub's personality which should be mentioned is his "egoism." After a careful reading of the text, one may conclude that Beelzebub always puts his own interest first. For example, in chapter forty-one, when Beelzebub is asked to discuss his real nature, he waits for an appropriate moment in order not to harm himself. Such behavior, however, is connected with a "being-property of sensing the inner feeling of similar beings in relation to oneself."⁸⁴ Moreover, at the end of the *Tales* Beelzebub's creator mentions an ancient wisdom which states that "in order to be a just and good altruist one must first of all be an out-and-out egoist."⁸⁵ The goal of personal perfection from this perspective is the full use of given opportunities. In other words, one should strive to become a master of one's own feelings and desires.

An example of the human "ideal self" and the concrete characteristics of a developed person can be also found in the description of Hamolinadir, an educated man whom Beelzebub meets in Babylon. This character appears only episodically, yet significant components of a developed personality are mentioned in relation to him: "At the age he was when I first met him he already had his 'I' – in respect of rationality directing what is called the 'automatic-psychic-functioning' of his common presence – at the maximum stability for three-centered beings of the planet Earth at that time, in consequence of which during what is called his 'waking-passive-state' he very definitely expressed being-manifestations, as, for instance, those called 'self-consciousness,' 'impartiality,' 'sincerity,' 'sensitivity of perception,' 'alertness,'

83. The *Tales* were originally written in Russian and Armenian. Gurdjieff plays with different languages to create his neologisms. For example, the word "Partk-dolg-duty" is a repetition of the word "duty" in Armenian, Russian, and English (see *Beelzebub*, 143–44; 409). Another example is Gurdjieff's word for religion: "Havatvernoni" (*Beelzebub*, 182). This neologism consists of two words *havat* and *vera*, both meaning "faith" in Armenian and Russian.

84. *Beelzebub*, 876.

85. *Ibid.*, 1236.

and so forth.”⁸⁶ Here, Gurdjieff points to two important components of a developed personality — self-awareness and self-control — both of which relate to human intellect. In fact, human intellect occupies a significant place in Gurdjieff’s system, which may point to some similarities, for example, with the importance of self-discipline in the Sufi tradition. The significance of an intellectual approach is emphasized through the story, whether it is in the case of Hadji Asvatz Troov or in chapter forty-seven which concerns the inevitable advantages of impartial thinking. As for human reason itself, “this is only the sum of all the impressions perceived by him [human], from which there gradually arise in him data for comparisons, deductions, and conclusions.”⁸⁷

Another character that serves as a prototype for the “ideal self” is the dervish Hadji Asvatz Troov. This character can be analyzed as a model for a “perfect man” and as a spokesman for Gurdjieff’s affiliation to Sufism. Despite the implications of this character for Sufism, as in the case of Mullah Nassr Eddin, the Bokharian dervish appears rather to be an example of *dānesbmand* (a scientist or sage in Iran and Central Asia) or the perfect man.⁸⁸ What is more important about Hadji is that by means of hard (conscious) work he has reached the knowledge of two cosmic laws: the law of seven (Heptaparaparshinokh) and the law of three (Triamazikamno).⁸⁹ As for his representation as Sufi, even though the whole of chapter forty-one is dedicated to him, and he is often mentioned and cited in relation to the Sufi influence on Gurdjieff,⁹⁰ there is no concrete reference to Sufi teachings or rituals, except for the two details that Hadji had entered a “dervish order” and had a “shaykh.” Pittman also argues that Hadji’s Sufi identity is a secondary fact, and that Gurdjieff uses him as a universal model of

86. *Ibid.*, 332–33.

87. *Ibid.*, 344.

88. On the problem of a Gurdjieff-Sufism connection see Sedgwick, “Sufism and the Gurdjieff Movement,” 129–48.

89. *Beelzebub*, 901.

90. Challenger, *Philosophy*, 13.

spiritual transformation.⁹¹ However, a prior or secondary usage of a set of symbols – Sufi or not – shows the mobility of Gurdjieff’s system and his ability to create his own discourse, rather than to maintain an affiliation to one specific tradition.

Thus, the importance of the ideal to which man should strive is an essential part of the *Tales*’ concept of the human self. One can identify the following features of the personal and collective “ideal-self”: self-control and self-awareness, based on a recognition of wrong and undesirable impulses and the automatism of human life; a work with these undesirable elements; an activation of a proper/natural existence by means of intellectual efforts and knowledge of cosmic laws and, more crucially, one’s own nature.

Conclusion

This investigation has attempted to demonstrate how the systematization of concepts through identifying their characteristics can be used fruitfully for a clearer understanding of Gurdjieff’s method oriented toward personal perfection. It helps to consider various aspects of the system in question by identifying its central themes and features. Taking into account the inner structure and logic of the system, this strategy, on the one hand, prevents the oversimplified identification of concepts and ideas, and, on the other, suggests a more structured picture of the subject.

To sketch the concept of the human self and its meaning for Gurdjieff’s approach to spiritual development, the objective and subjective reasons for the deplorable human state are highlighted. Using a fairy tale genre, or “mythologized world-historical narrative,”⁹² Gurdjieff suggests that both external and internal influences are at play in the process of the formation of the human self. The collision of the Earth with the comet Kondoor and the implantation of the special organ Kundabuffer, which changes the perception of reality and establishes the pleasure impulses, have been identified in this

91. Pittman, *Classical Spirituality*, 101–2.

92. Tamdgidi, *Gurdjieff and Hypnosis*, 104–5.

article as the external causes of the deplorable state of human existence. In fact, even though these events are described as relatively independent and beyond human control, they are not the only reason for such a situation. Gurdjieff uses them to prepare the ground for further criticism of human nature – the focal theme of his teaching. First, under criticism are two phenomena created by humans: education and religion. They are blamed for the atrophy of rational thinking and the replacement of reality. Second, Gurdjieff describes different features of human nature, showing a colorful picture of the human character. Among them, suggestibility, fanaticism, cruelty, adulation, and pride are listed. Thus, education and religion along with peculiarities of human nature were identified as the internal reasons for the deplorable state of human existence.

However, despite this criticism, the way in which human beings are described and the place they occupy suggest that changes to their lamentable situation may be possible. The leitmotif of the story is that humans are three-brained beings. Although humans have lost many conventional qualities of the three-brained system, they have retained some of the advantages of this kind of creation, specifically an ability to use sacred forces for personal needs. In contrast to modern discourses on individuality, Gurdjieff presents a place of gradual and collective work in spiritual advancement. Although receiving different emphasis, both individual and collective efforts play a pivotal role. The image of the “ideal self” in both collective and individual forms is identified. This image is based on self-control and self-awareness, a recognition of the undesirable elements of human existence, working with these elements, and knowledge of cosmic laws and one’s own nature. Thus, Gurdjieff’s mosaic of the human self consists of various elements connected to a natural world (external reasons), specific human realities (internal reasons), and opportunities (the ideal) to overcome them.

While avoiding overemphasis on the question of the origins of Gurdjieff’s teaching, this study has presented a short outline of his concept of the self, identifying the objective and subjective reasons for the “deplorable state” of

human life, which are illustrated in the *Tales*. As above, such an approach could well be complemented by a contextual analysis of the socio-cultural environment in which Gurdjieff created his texts. Nevertheless, it is hoped that further studies will address the question of the self in Gurdjieff's work by taking into consideration the inner structure and logic of the texts they focus on, rather than merely through studying his background.

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WHY Gurdjieff? Because despite René Guénon's warning to "flee Gurdjieff like the plague," and although the man died a quarter of a century ago reportedly saying to his intimates, "*Vous voilà dans de beaux draps*" ("You're in a fine mess"), many people not infrequently endowed with real intellectual and spiritual potential continue to follow his groups in France, England, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, Australia, the Argentine, and elsewhere, considering him as "precursor of the New Age."

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Gurdjieff's anthropology: the concept of conscious human evolution

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Abstract. The main purpose of the article is the disclosure of the ideas of Gurdzhiyev's anthropological doctrine in which the possibility of spiritual transformation of the person and his conscious evolution are emphasized. The author claims that in the conditions of dissociation of approaches and positions in the anthropological thought there is a need of appeal to the anthroposophic systems designed to fill on-sidedness of such directions as psychoanalysis (in many respects absolutizing a role of unconscious processes), the behaviorism (concentrating on behavioral aspect of human existence), the existentialism (emphasizing hopelessness "abandonment of life in the world"). According to the author one of such systems is Gurdzhiyev's system of conscious evolution of the person, the so-called "The Fourth Way" which is eligible for the status of the translator of the experience of Gnostic tradition in the 20th century.

1 Introduction

Nowadays those scientific areas which operate with the universal values implanted in various world outlook systems gain the strength and find the general importance (about challenges for modern socio-humanistic sciences: Zhuravleva, 2018; about the relevant moments of the humanitarian vector: Lektorsky, Avtonomova, Dubrovsky, Zagidullin, Ivanov, Kasavin, Katunin, Kuznetsova, Levin, Pirozhkova, Porus, Pruzhinin, Smirnova, Trufanova, Chertkova, Filatov, 2018; about humanism: Subbotina, 2018). It is caused by the situation which developed at a turn of two Millennium when the civilization appeared in the face of the problems called global, posing the threat of physical extermination of the person as a species. In this regard the requirement of consideration of the human nature is updated.

2 Results and discussion. Ways of conscious evolution of the person

The way of conscious evolution titled as "The Fourth" was designed to open for the western culture the spiritual knowledge and traditions of mankind kept and transferred directly from

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the teacher to the pupil within the closed esoteric schools. This is a way which the person follows and following this way, he gets a chance of knowledge of the truth, a chance of finding of such properties which he does not possess birthright, but can transform in himself only thanks to the conscious efforts. P.D. Uspensky opens this title (*The Fourth Way*) in his work "In search of wonderful" (Uspensky, 2010) where he writes that all well-known ways to immortality can be divided into three: the way of the fakir, the way of the monk, the way of the yogi. Each of which (one is longer, another is shorter, one is more difficult, another is easier) leads or seeks to lead in one direction.

The longest and the most "unreliable" of them is a way of the fakir which consists of difficult exercises, sufferings, tortures of the body, development of physical will, achievement of the power over the body. The fakir can stand for years in one and the same position, he tortures himself by fire, cold, but as soon as he develops physical will in himself, he starts to develop other functions, emotional and intellectual. As a rule, by that time he is already too old to begin new work at school of yoga. In the East the person becomes the fakir because of religious feeling or because in the childhood the poor parents give him on the upbringing as a pupil imitating the teacher and often not realizing the sense of his actions. He gains will over his body, but loses everything what this will can be put to and he is not able to use this will for acquisition of knowledge about his emotional and intellectual sphere.

The way of the monk is the second way. It is followed by the person with strong religious emotions who spends years and decades for fight against himself and his feelings to subordinate all the emotions to one – belief. But the physical body and intellect can remain undeveloped. A part of work on the way of the monk consists in full obedience to the teacher, but the main thing is a faith in God, love for God and service of God.

The third way, the way of the yogi, the way of knowledge, is the way on which the person develops his intellect, understanding his condition and realizing the need of development of his physical body and emotions.

There is a common feature which unites these three ways: the movement on these ways begins with full renunciation by the person of everything "worldly", he has to "die" for the world, having gone to the desert, to the monastery, to school of yoga. These are the ways for those who wishing the development of the hidden abilities, tries to avoid manifestation of the general laws existing in everyday life. However, in living conditions of human society, in ordinary and practical life, even sated with philosophical, religious and scientific ideas, these ways become inaccessible. At the same time, it is difficult for the modern person to accept a thought that his abilities can remain undeveloped, and his opportunities can remain unrealized and "this condition would be really hopeless if *the fourth way* had not existed yet" (Uspensky, 2010, 67 p.).

"*The Fourth Way*" is not a simple combination of ways of the fakir, the monk and the yogi. It does not demand from the person of refusal of the "worldly" life, of family, profession, friends and relatives, as all the work (efforts on conscious transformation of himself) has internal character. According to P.D. Uspensky, "living conditions in which the person exists at the beginning of his work in which he is found by the work are *the best of all possible* for him, in any case, at the beginning of the work" (Uspensky, 2010, 68 p.). Any artificially created conditions will not be able to concern all aspects of his life at once, to make him the owner of all functions: intellectual, emotional and corporal. Working in parallel on three aspects of the being (intelligence, emotions and the body), the person following the fourth way can exclude from three ways everything that is not necessary in them: full ataraxy of the yogi, fasting and multiple repetition of a prayer of the monk for a

long time, physical pain and self-torture of the fakir. Therefore, the fourth way is called the most "direct", "the shortest", "the way of the cunning person". "The Fourth Way" is a spiritual direction of conscious evolution of the person according to which the disclosure of human essence begins with understanding of "the imperfect nature" and also the present possibility to eliminate this "imperfection", to carry out individual evolution in the course of knowledge of oneself, to reach the change of level of life and consciousness by means of elimination in oneself negative intellectual, emotional, instinctive and motional manifestations.

The founder of "The Fourth Way" was G.I. Gurdzhiyev (Gurdzhiyev, 2010) whose ideas about the person and the Universe were distributed among his pupils and followers as a result of their direct interaction with the teacher and were transferred as an oral tradition. Philosophical creativity of G.I. Gurdzhiyev is notable for originality, complexity for perception in view of unusual form of presentation which, according to M.A. de Zaltzman, serves the purpose "to make unusual impressions or to go in defiance of automatism of the reader" (Zaltzman, 2010, 7 p.).

Initial position on the issue of existence of the general regularities of development of the Universe, of the person, of phenomena and processes is the statement that behind all things in the world there are two primary laws called respectively the Law of Three and the Law of Seven. These laws are common both for the world, and for the person. Having understood the principles of one of the laws, manifestation in the world, at the same time it is possible to observe the action of the law in the person too. The second, but not less significant, idea of this doctrine is the following: The Universe and everything that exists in it are created and well-ordered.

3 Gurdzhiyev's anthropology

Ideologists of "The Fourth Way" are not eligible for the status of discoverers of the ideas about the created world existing and developing according to the laws of Three and of Seven. G.I. Gurdzhiyev and his followers refer to the existence of the "original, exact or objective" (Gnostic) knowledge about the Universe and about the person based on the ancient methods and principles of observation: knowledge of "things in oneself", accompanying "objective condition of consciousness" (Uspensky, 2011; Nicol, 2007; Collin, 2011; Burton, 2011). B. Nikolesku notes that Gurdzhiyev's doctrine about the law of Three belongs to new logic (not binary). According to Gurdzhiyev, "the law of Three" is the fundamental law creating all phenomena in all their variety. This situation, according to B. Nikolesku, is confirmed by quantum physics: "We can use an expression "antagonistic complementarity" because qualities of waves and corpuscles are mutually excluded. Now, from the appropriate level of reality of the quantum world as the third concept a quantum particle appears, not a wave and not a corpuscle, but which, from the point of view of the macrophysical world, can approve itself as a wave and as a corpuscle. In this sense the quantum is a reconciling force between the wave and the corpuscle. But at the same time, being neither a wave, nor a corpuscle and being shown at the other level of reality, the quantum certainly contradicts a wave or a corpuscle" (Nikolesku). The person being a product of space need also submits to this law ("the law of Three"). Nikolesku pays attention to the "anthropical principle" which is widely discussed within modern science which idea, according to him, is easily recognizable: the idea of existence of interrelation

between appearance of the person, of "reasonable" life in space and of physical conditions regulating evolution of the Universe.

According to Gurdzhiyev's cosmology organic life represents a necessary link in the chain of the worlds, it appears as a "transmission" link to fill, according to "the law of Seven", one of the intervals of the space octave.

The person is considered as a being of the dual nature. On the one hand, the person is a part of organic life on the Earth along with plants and animals (the lowest nature). In this context the person is a "perfect" and "finished" being, fully answering the mission of the Nature. For the Earth the mankind acts as the conductor of space influences and, developing certain vibrations, provides transfer of forces, energy to the growing Moon. On the other hand, the person is an "imperfect" and "incomplete" being, created as *an experiment* in spiritual self-development (of the highest nature), in possible transformation of consciousness for the purpose of achievement of new level of life, of intellect corresponding to the mission of evolution of the Universe.

Manifestation of the highest nature in the person is his *essence* defined as congenital, own internal structure of the person, basis of his physical and intellectual building, in distinction from the *personality* acquired in the course of upbringing, education, professional activity, etc. The *personality* is characterized as the qualities of the person borrowed "consciously or unconsciously" in the course of his interaction with other people.

According to the ideologists of "The Fourth Way", the first variant of influences surrounding the person are influences of the type "A". These influences are generated by the Law of the Case, by external circumstances in fight against which the person can live all his life. This type of influences operates the so-called "external", ordinary person who, according to B. Muravyev, "wanders in a circle of his life from the birth to the death along the broken trajectory with an unexpected and dangerous direction". The biography of one of such people (whom everyone can be) more or less is like the biography of other people: they were born on a certain day, passed a certain education system, worked, started a family, brought up the children, watched TV, etc. Mechanicalism of "life in circles" is shown by Pyotr Demyanovich Uspensky in the story "The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin".

Influences "B" are generated according to B. Muravyev (Muravyev, 1998) "out of the sphere of terrestrial life" and feed its intrinsic, but not personal beginning. If it is transferred by means of the book, record or the person who is not belonging to the internal esoteric circle, this is the influence of the type "B". The doctrine which is transferred directly from the spiritual mentor to the pupil, contains influences "C". This is the concentrated knowledge collected at school (religious schools, schools of "The Fourth Way"). Influences of the types "D", "E" are influences of higher (Divine) order which the people who reached the level of person No. 6, No. 7 (according to Gurdzhiyev's classification of the person) are capable to perceive.

4 Mental centers of the person

Followers of Gurdzhiyev's direction (for example Nicol, 2007, 2006; Bennett, 2000) consider that the main mental centers of the person are: intellectual, emotional and motional and instinctive (*the lowest*), the highest emotional and the highest intellectual centers (*the highest*). Depending on the dominance of the mental centers, different levels of consciousness of the person are allocated: the first level of consciousness is unconsciousness (conditions of unconsciousness are dream, coma), the second is vigilant

consciousness of "ordinary person", the third level of consciousness is consciousness of unified "I" and the fourth level is objective consciousness. Correlating knowledge about the levels of consciousness, about the mental centers of the person which found their justification in anthroposophy of "The Fourth Way" it is possible to present the classification of people as follows: the person No. 1 is a physical person with the prevailing instinctive and motional center, being at the first or at the second level of consciousness; the person No. 2 is an emotional person with the prevailing emotional center (the first or the second level of consciousness); the person No. 3 is an intellectual person whose intellectual center prevails over emotional, motional and instinctive (the second level of consciousness); the person No. 4 is a person being "in work on himself" which is capable to reach harmonization of work of three psychological centers (the second level of consciousness, the moments of sensibleness of his true "I"); the person No. 5 is a person reached unity and consciousness, understanding of his constant true "I" (the third level of consciousness); the person No. 6 is a person with the prevailing highest emotional center, who reached objective consciousness lying outside understanding of the ordinary person (the fourth level of consciousness); the person No. 7 is a person with the prevailing highest intellectual center which finds true will and reaches everything what the person can reach as a result of his individual evolution in general (the fourth level of consciousness). The person who is constantly "working on himself" is capable to pass all the way of transformation (Bennett, 2001). Evolution of the person in the context of Gurdzhiyev's ideas is considered as the opportunity given to everyone for the purpose of transformation of consciousness, achievement of new level of life, of intellect corresponding to the mission of evolution of the Universe.

5 Research methods

The methodological and theoretical basis of the research was made of the works of scientists thanks to which G.I. Gurdzhiyev's philosophy represents not simply "the metaphysical fairy tale", but the complete theoretical phenomenon, the parts of which were coordinated by his devotees and pupils. Among them, first of all, it is necessary to note Pyotr Demyanovich Uspensky, Maurice Nicol, John Godolfin Bennett, Charles Stanley Nott, Rodney Collin, Robert Earl Burton.

In the course of work, the hermeneutic method which gave the chance of understanding and specification of sense of human nature in the context of studying of works of G.I. Gurdzhiyev was used.

During the research the dialectic method which allowed to reveal the contradictions in individual development of the person characterized by the followers of "The Fourth Way" as contradictions between the personality and essence was used.

6 Conclusions

Thus, according to Gurdzhiyev, there are two types of evolution of the person. The first type is an evolution of masses or in the mass, in which the person like the reflection of circumstances, lives by influences of usual life (by influences A) and submits to the Law of the Case. However, there is other possibility of individual evolution, which allows the person to be interested in something, being outside the usual life, to be sensitive to the influences of higher order. The ability to perceive not only information widespread in

ordinary and practical life, but knowledge of special type about the essence of the person and about the Universe is the first step of conscious individual evolution of the person.

It is possible to carry out the transition of the ordinary person (any of three types, intellectual, emotional and physical) to the highest orders of life in the course of work on himself, crystallization and adjustment of the natural beginning – essence, making constant and invariable "I" in fight between the essence and the personality. In the course of this fight the essence gains strength and maturity. Both the essence, and the personality are necessary for this fight. The essence needs the personality who provides the person with material for studying of himself and who provides the personality with obstacles, temptations, illusions to give the chance to resist to them, to make them ineffective.

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G. I. Gurdjieff and the Work: Transformations of an Esoteric Teaching

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Introduction

G. I. Gurdjieff (c. 1866–1949) taught a highly original esoteric “system” which combined a complex cosmology with literary and artistic endeavours (including the Movements or sacred dances, the music composed with Thomas de Hartmann, and Gurdjieff’s spiritual writings).¹ Gurdjieff’s “Work” or “Fourth Way” was lived out in quasi-communal settings where intentional labour and inner exercises were combined with dancing and readings of the master’s texts.² In Gurdjieff’s lifetime he was not associated with esotericism or religion; the terms applied to him by outsiders, for example journalists, were “magician” and “charlatan.”³ When Gurdjieff died he had a relatively small number of followers, and had published only *The Herald of Coming Good* (1933), a short prospectus which he had recalled shortly after distribution.⁴ His posthumous Three Series *All and Everything* established him as a major force in twentieth-century esotericism, and one of the three putative sources of the “New Age,” with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) and his near-contemporary Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925).⁵

The academic study of Gurdjieff developed slowly, and his significance for the study of esotericism has emerged only recently. This special issue of

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1. Azize, “Gurdjieff’s Sacred Dances and Movements,” 297–330.
 2. Cusack, “Intentional Communities in the Gurdjieff Teaching,” 159–78.
 3. Landau, *God is My Adventure*, 233–264. This attitude still persists. See Storr, *Feet of Clay*, 21–44.
 4. Gurdjieff, *The Herald of Coming Good* (1933).
 5. Sutcliffe, “Gurdjieff as a *Bricoleur*,” 117–18.

Correspondences: Journal for the Study of Esotericism is the second to focus on esoteric, secret, and hidden aspects of the Work.⁶ The premier book on the esoteric, or mystical, aspects of the Fourth Way is Joseph Azize's *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, and Exercises* (2020).⁷ Other useful work includes: chapters by Harry T. Hunt in his monograph on Western secular mystics (2003) and Glenn Alexander Magee in *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism* (2016); and, entries by Jacob Needleman and James Moore in the *Brill Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (2006).⁸ The present collection of articles covers a range of topics relevant to esotericism and the Fourth Way, from aspects of Gurdjieff's biography, through references to Christianity in his masterpiece *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (1950).

New Directions in the Study of Gurdjieff and Esotericism

The first article, Joseph Azize's "Esotericism, Occultism and Magic: The Case of Gurdjieff and Crowley," examines meetings between Gurdjieff and Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and contextualises the two through a historical examination of three key phenomena: esotericism, occultism, and magic. Azize takes Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society as the starting point for a consideration of the esoteric and the occult in the twentieth century, and he links Blavatsky's theoretical approach to that of Gurdjieff's most influential pupil, Pyotr Demianovich Ouspensky (1878–1947). Two scholars, Frances Yates (1899–1981) and James Webb (1946–1980), are located at the head of a sympathetic approach to the occult, one which flowered with the establishment of the academic study of esotericism by Antoine Faivre (b. 1934) and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (b. 1961).

6. Cusack edited a special issue of *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* that was published in 2020. This featured articles by Azize, Cusack, David Seamon, Christian Giudice, and John Willmet.

7. Azize, *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, and Exercises*, passim.

8. See Hunt, "George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: A Near Eastern Inner-Worldly Mysticism in the Modern West"; Magee, "G. I. Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way"; Needleman, "Gurdjieff Tradition"; and Moore, "Gurdjieff, George Ivanovitch."

In his treatment of Gurdjieff's interactions with Crowley, Azize tackles issues attendant upon scholarly or quasi-scholarly treatments of the “gnostic” or “magical” aspects of Gurdjieff's teachings, including those of Constance Jones and P. T. Mistlberger.⁹ The core of his article addresses the possible commonalities between Gurdjieff and Crowley: Were they engaged in the same quest? Were Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man and Crowley's Abbey of Thelema intentional communities in similar ways? Crowley visited the Prieuré des Basses Loges in Fontainebleau-Avon on 10 February 1924 when Gurdjieff was absent, and again in mid-1926. Edith Taylor, Fritz Peters and Ethel Merston recorded the visit of the “Great Beast” to the Prieuré: he attended lunch, and likely stayed a few days at Gurdjieff's Institute, before departing without any “contest” between himself and his host eventuating.¹⁰ Azize's examination of these events provides strong critique of Tobias Churton's recent book on Gurdjieff; the second meeting between the two, noted by Crowley's biographer Gerald Suster, is accepted by Azize. The conclusion reached is that the differences between the two “magi” are much greater than their similarities.

The second contribution is Michael Pittman's “Deliteralizing Christianity: Gurdjieff and Almznoshinoo.” Pittman discusses references to Christianity in Gurdjieff's First Series, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, with a focus on a sacred ceremony, Almznoshinoo, which is initially mentioned in the discussion on Tibetan Buddhism (or Lamaism, the doctrine founded by “Saint Lama”).¹¹ Gurdjieff spoke of his teaching as “esoteric Christianity,” and interpretations of the Work of some pupils, like Maurice Nicoll (1885–1953), have stressed the Christian elements.¹² Through the figure of Beelzebub, Gurdjieff criticised Christianity and accused it of having been neutralised by splitting into various sects, and presently having strayed far from the teachings of Jesus. The description

9. Jones, “Gnostic Sensibility in Gurdjieff's ‘Work’,” and Mistlberger, *Three Dangerous Magi*.

10. Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, 314–15.

11. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, Chapter 38, “Religion,” 694–743.

12. Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts*, 237–38.

of the Almznoshinoo and the enlightened beings who conduct it (who all possess a *kesdjan* or higher-being-body or a soul) is focused on how the celebrants can feed the *kesdjan* body of the deceased for whom the rite is performed.¹³ While there are elements of Beelzebub’s description that recall the *bardos* of Tibetan Buddhism and the three bodies of the Buddha, Pittman’s analysis brings the Almznoshinoo into dialogue with the Christian Last Supper recorded in the New Testament.

Beelzebub assures Hasein his grandson that Jesus Christ had attained a planetary body and that his disciples were prepared for the Almznoshinoo ceremony by Jesus’ esoteric teaching in ways that the Tibetans were not. The gospel story of Judas’ betrayal is undermined (as Judas is Jesus’ most faithful disciple and possessed of elevated reason), and it is asserted that the love and suffering of Jesus were similarly compromised. Gurdjieff critiques the interpretation of scripture throughout Christian history, and the doctrinal/ideological understanding of Jesus. Pittman examines this material via various lenses, including psychologist James Hillman’s rejection of the literal mode of interpretation, which Hillman believes is a malady.¹⁴ The moving, feeling, and thinking centres must, in the Fourth Way, become aligned through “conscious labour and intentional suffering,” to bring about spiritual advancement.¹⁵

Vrasidas Karalis, in “Gurdjieff and C. G. Jung: *Life Is Real Only Then, When I Am*’ and the Question of Individuation,” offers an interpretation of Gurdjieff’s Third Series, a book of five talks and an additional chapter. For Karalis, the focus of the book is the *psyche*, and the question of whether humans possess such a thing. Gurdjieff’s psychology has been studied rarely, and arguably was developed most clearly in Ouspensky’s *The Psychology of Man’s Possible Evolution*.¹⁶ However, it is likely that Gurdjieff regarded psychology as part of modern culture that impeded people from doing and becoming a “real I”; the conversation

13. Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts*, 27–29.

14. Hillman, “A Note on Story,” 45.

15. Bennett, *Conscious Labour and Intentional Suffering*, passim.

16. Ouspensky, *The Psychology of Man’s Possible Evolution*, Lecture 1.

partner that Karalis provides is Gurdjieff's near-contemporary, the Swiss medical doctor and psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), who argued that the fundamental spiritual process that a human must engage in is individuation, which he also characterised as human beings becoming integrated and a true self. This idea has been compared to Jean-Paul Sartre's (1905–1980) concept of authenticity.¹⁷

In fact, Gurdjieff's teaching that humans are born without a soul or immortal part, and must work to integrate their disparate centres in order to achieve a "real I" (which is inextricably connected to the "coating" of their physical bodies in order to develop a higher-being-body, of which there are three: astral, mental, and causal), is very far from that of Jung, Sartre, and most modern psychologists and philosophers.¹⁸ Gurdjieff's esotericism is materialist, not merely psychological or spiritual, and basically not individualist. He envisages the business of "growing a soul" as happening in community, where pupils have access to a teacher, one who "knows."¹⁹

Carole M. Cusack, in "The Fourth Way and the Internet: Esotericism, Secrecy, and Hiddenness in Plain Sight," considers the history of the Fourth Way since Gurdjieff's death in 1949. His nominated successor Jeanne de Salzmann (1889–1990) created the Gurdjieff Foundation, which from its centres in London, Paris, New York, and Caracas established affiliated branches in many countries.²⁰ Independent lineages developed, such as that led by the British scientist John Godolphin Bennett (1897–1974), and the publication of works by Gurdjieff and Ouspensky meant that what had been an initiatory teaching became, in certain ways, public. However, the internet, and in particular the World Wide Web interface developed by Tim Berners-Lee, caused far greater

17. Shelburne, "Existential Perspective in the Thought of Carl Jung," 59.

18. Hunt suggests a range of thinkers that have in common the pursuit of a "this-worldly mysticism." These include: Plotinus and the Gnostics, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ernst Troeltsch, Aleister Crowley, Gurdjieff, and A. H. Almaas. See Hunt, *Lives in Spirit: Precursors and Dilemma of a Secular Western Mysticism*.

19. Cusack, "Intentional Communities in the Gurdjieff Teaching," 162–65.

20. Petsche, "A Gurdjieff Genealogy: Tracing the Manifold Ways the Gurdjieff Teaching Has Travelled," 65–67.

exposure than Fourth Way members might have imagined, and had unexpected consequences.²¹ Cusack connects the revelation of the content of esotericism to that of religions that have secretive aspects, and the proliferation and commercialisation of the Work online to the broader religious scene of the West in the twenty-first century.

The inner exercises that Gurdjieff taught are examined as a case study of clearly esoteric practices and beliefs that are now discussed openly and featured online in various ways, much of it due to the scholarly research that Joseph Azize has published.²² These, along with the Movements, are of particular interest to scholars, in that they were originally intended to be transmitted directly from teacher to pupil in a real-world context, and were not to be sullied by written instructions, choreographies, and other means of “fixing” the information outside of the minds and hearts of Fourth Way adherents. The online environment shows signs of becoming as important for the Work in the future as the residential farms and large properties that were used as sites of communal living and intense instruction in the twentieth century.²³

This issue of *Correspondences: Journal for the Study of Esotericism* has a linked special feature, an essay by Anthony G. E. Blake, a pupil of John Bennett and an innovative and important Fourth Way teacher himself. “Understanding What is Esoteric” is a reflection on how the concept of a universal and timeless wisdom that is available to a select group of students, who receive it from an enlightened teacher such as Gurdjieff, can be transformative.²⁴ Blake is concerned with charting the hazards as well as the rewards of taking such a path; in two linked autobiographical articles, he has sketched his life from birth to the present, with the fourteen years that he spent with Bennett as the formative period.²⁵ Bennett,

21. Pecotic and Cusack, “The (World Wide) Work 2.0: The Gurdjieff Tradition Online,” 96–100.

22. Azize, *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, and Exercises*. Azize published articles on a number of aspects of Gurdjieff’s inner exercises before the Oxford University Press book appeared in 2020.

23. Coates, “How Many Arks Does It Take?”

24. Blake, “Gurdjieff and the Legomonism of ‘Objective Reason’,” 239–40, 252, 263, and 265.

25. Blake, “The Fourth Way: A Hazardous Path,” and “The Fourth Way: A Hazardous Path (Part 2).”

a scientist and technologist, wanted to relate the Fourth Way to other bodies of knowledge, and developed Systematics in conjunction with young scientists, Blake among them, who were his pupils in the 1960s. The breadth of material that Bennett had mastery of, and the range of influences he acknowledged, still impress.

Blake's essay examines practices of learning, reading, and transmission in the context of the Gurdjieff tradition. He considers writers from the ancient world including Lucian of Samosata and Plato, as well as sacred texts, chiefly the Bible and Sufi works. He is aware of the multitudinous intersections of the sciences and the arts, and of the need to transmit knowledge of all kinds, not only the esoteric. In 1998, Blake and Karen Stefano founded DuVersity, an online institution with real-world seminars; Blake is convinced that DuVersity's model (where participants gather for brief periods of intense work with many teachers, attending workshops and reading groups) is the way of the future for the Work, rather than fixed groups with a permanent leader.²⁶

Conclusion

Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way emerged as a subject of academic study in the 1990s and has in the twenty-first century seen something of a flowering. This collection of articles is intended to extend the range of existing publications, which include works already referred to, such as Hunt's monograph, *Lives in Spirit: Precursors and Dilemmas of a Secular Western Mysticism* (2003), which brought Gurdjieff's life and work into dialogue with figures who generated fruitful comparisons. Johanna J. M. Petsche's notable *Gurdjieff and Music: The Gurdjieff/de Hartmann Piano Music and its Esoteric Significance* (2015) also merits praise, as it addresses a larger range of topics relevant to Gurdjieff and esotericism than the title might indicate.²⁷ Reference has also been made to Joseph Azize's *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation,*

26. Anthony Blake, personal communication; All and Everything Conference, Kendal (UK), 3–7 April 2019.

27. Petsche, *Gurdjieff and Music: The Gurdjieff/de Hartmann Piano Music and Its Esoteric Significance*, Chapter 8, "Three Purposes of the Piano Music in Light of Gurdjieff's Life Circumstances and Esoteric Teaching."

and Exercises (2020), which has especial importance for the study of Gurdjieff as an esoteric spiritual teacher and the Work as an esoteric tradition, and is the major academic study published to date. It is to be hoped that the Fourth Way tradition will continue to receive scholarly attention and become better-integrated into the broader study of modern esoteric spiritual thought.

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Intersubjectivity and Reciprocal Causality within Contemporary Understanding of the God-World Relationship

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Trinitizing the Universe: Teilhard's Theogenesis and the Dynamism of Love

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Abstract: The God-world relationship bears an ambiguous relationship between God's immanent life and God's life in history. The development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early Church gave rise to a distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*. Bonaventure's theology sought to express an economic trinitarianism without compromising the integrity of God's life, thus maintaining divine immutability and divine impassibility. Twentieth century trinitarian theologies challenge the notion of divine immutability in light of modern science and radical suffering. This paper develops on the heels of twentieth century theology by focusing in particular on the philosophical shifts rendered by modern science and technology. In particular, the insights of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin are explored with regard to Trinity and evolution, precisely because Teilhard intuited that evolution and the new physics evoke a radically new understanding of God. Building on Teilhard's insights, I suggest that divine creative love is expressed in a fourth mystery which Teilhard called "pleromization." Pleromization is the outflow of divine creative union or, literally, God filling the universe with divine life. Teilhard recapitulates this idea in the evolution of Christ so that *theologia* and *oikonomia* are one movement of divine love. My principal thesis is that the Trinity is integrally related to the world; the fullness of divine love includes the personalization of created reality, symbolized by the Christ. To explore this thesis I draw upon the cyborg as the symbol of hybridization and permeable boundaries and interpret Trinitarian life in evolution as cyborg Christogenesis. Using the Law of Three, I indicate why a new understanding of Trinitarian life involves complexification and thus a new understanding of Trinity in which the fullness of divine life includes created reality.

Keywords: Trinity; Teilhard de Chardin; cyborg; pleromization; evolution; Christogenesis

1 Introduction

In his groundbreaking book, *The Trinity*, Karl Rahner recognized the need for a vital doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity, he indicated, had become completely irrelevant, to the extent that if the doctrine were removed, it would make no difference to the practice of Christian life.¹ He attempted to overcome this divide by insisting on the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity summed up his famous *grundaxiom*: "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."² That is to say, the Trinity revealed in salvation history (*oikonomia*) is God's own life (*theologia*). God acts in history as

¹ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 10-11. "Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists,'" he wrote. We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged."

² Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

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God is in Godself. This claim was not entirely new, however, since one finds the roots of this trinitarian flow in the theology of Bonaventure who, in turn, developed his doctrine of Trinity based on the Dionysian self-diffusive good and the Victorine notion of love. Although Bonaventure's theology undergirds a movement from *theologia* to *oikonomia*, he maintained that God is impassible and immutable. It is only in the twentieth century that we begin to see a more integral connection between God's life and history, especially in the open theism of Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, where change and suffering are integral to God's life. By "open theism" I mean that while God is ontologically distinct from created reality, God is open to created reality in such a way that God's life can be affected by created reality.

This paper develops an open trinitarian theology in light of an evolutionary universe. Building on Bonaventure's Trinity of love, I suggest that divine creative love is expressed in a fourth mystery, which the Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin called "pleromization." Pleromization is the outflow of divine creative union or, literally, God filling the universe with divine life through created reality. Teilhard recapitulates this idea in the evolution of Christ so that *theologia* and *oikonomia* are one movement of divine love. My principal thesis is that the Trinity is integrally related to the world; hence, the fullness of divine love includes the personalization of created reality, symbolized by the Christ. Trinitizing the universe is Christogenesis or the evolution of the cosmic body of Christ wherein the God-world relationship is an emerging complexified union of love.

To explore this thesis, I will examine the challenges of evolution for theology and elucidate Teilhard's contribution to a new theology of evolution. I will focus on his ideas of pleromization and Christogenesis and explore the dynamic flow of Trinitarian life in materiality as integral to the self-definition of God.

2 The problem of Trinity

The early Church grappled with the God of Jesus Christ by holding in tension the self-communication of God and the immutability of divine nature. The doctrine of the Trinity emerged in the religious experience of the early Church, as theologians sought to understand the God of Jesus Christ. However, there was an inherent tension between the impassibility of God and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The pro-Nicene theologians who denied Arian subordinationism had to resolve the contradiction between the impassibility of God and the passion of Christ through a different avenue. Their solution was to make a distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, that is God in God's self and God for us. Medieval writers sought to bridge *theologia* and *oikonomia* through the New Testament revelation of God as love (Jn. 4:13). Charity, according to Richard of St. Victor, is the basis for showing the necessity of a plurality of persons in the Godhead.³ The perfect communication of love, according to Richard, must involve no less than three persons, since a perfect self-communication would not be possible if God were only one person and two persons could only share love for one another. As Zachary Hayes wrote, "there must be in God not only a *dilectum* but a *condilectum* as well. *Condilectio* is found where a third is loved by two in harmony."⁴ Bonaventure was influenced by Richard of St. Victor and developed an integral relationship between *theologia* and *oikonomia* in such a way that there is only one ecstatic movement or self-communication of God outward. The life of the Trinity originates eternally from the first divine person, the Father, who is infinitely fecund love expressing itself perfectly in the one who is Son and Word. This process reaches its consummation in the love between Father and Son, which is the Spirit. The images of "begetting" and "spirating" express the fecundity of God who is, from all eternity, a dynamic interchange of persons united in love. Catherine La Cugna states that "the eternal begetting of the Son and the breathing forth of the Spirit take place in God's economy [that is, in creation]. The centrifugal movement of divine love does not terminate 'within' God but explodes outwards."⁵ God creates the world as the Father begets the Son so that "creation is co-spoken in the Word that is the Father's self-utterance and co-loved in the Spirit breathed mutually by the Father and the Son."⁶

³ Richard of St. Victor, *De trinitate* 3.14-19 (PL 196, 924-27).

⁴ Hayes, introduction to *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, 17.

⁵ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 354.

⁶ Hayes, "The Meaning of 'Convenientia' in the Metaphysics of St. Bonaventure," 89.

Like Bonaventure, Rahner sought to preserve the deeply incarnational belief that God communicates Godself; creation is not merely the effects of grace. Rahner's insight that "God makes an eternal gift to the world of God's very self" was a radical turn in the tradition insofar as God was, in a sense, made subject to history. Like Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann rejected a sharp distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*. He claimed that we cannot say who or what God is in himself; we can only say who God is for us and this revelation reaches its peak in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In his view the event of the cross reveals God's *theologia* or immanent life to be a conflicted movement of love. The Father suffers the death of the Son and the Son suffers the abandonment of the Father. It is the Spirit of divine love who resolves this inner conflict as the Spirit of the hope and the Spirit of the future. God's being is defined eschatologically as a dynamic process of love; the fullness of God's being is expressed in his determination to fulfill his eternal purposes for humanity, despite the massive sufferings and setbacks of history.⁷ We find another type of open theism in the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg whose trinitarian theology assumes both pneumatological and eschatological importance. For Pannenberg, the Father has made himself dependent upon the course of history in which the Son's obedience to death on the cross and the Spirit's work in consummating the kingdom reflect supremely the dependence of the trinitarian persons on one another in the history of the world. He argues that God's unity cannot be derived "merely by considering the immanent Trinity before the foundation of the world and ignoring the economy of salvation."⁸ Rather God's transcendent unity-indivinity finds its fullest expression only when history has been finally and completely embraced within the divine life because God has chosen from eternity to make himself dependent upon his creation for his identity.⁹

3 The import of modern science

While the turn toward historical consciousness shed new light on the God-world relationship, it did not sufficiently address the radical philosophical shifts ushered in by the new science. In 1905 Albert Einstein published a paper on relativity which changed our understanding of the physical world. Contrary to notions of absolute space and time, Einstein posited that space and time are not fixed but relative to the speed of light and that energy and matter are equivalent. His ideas gave birth to a new understanding of the universe in which space and time are interrelated and unfolding. The universe is not fixed or static but began in a spontaneous eruption of hot, dense matter that rapidly expanded in the first few minutes of cosmic life. These discoveries gave birth to the Big Bang and the realization that our universe is about 13.8 billion years old with a future of billions of years before us. Einstein's theory of relativity showed that matter and energy are interchangeable, and that time and space are inseparable. In 1916 the Dutch physicist Willem de Sitter constructed a universe that could stretch in different directions "like taffy," a theoretical insight that received experimental support in 1928 when the astronomer Edwin Hubble "using the most powerful telescope of his day, found that every galaxy in the sky was moving away from us."¹⁰ Thus, the mechanistic view of the world associated with Newtonian physics was replaced with a dynamic, open-ended view of a dynamic, expanding universe. At the infinitesimal level of the atom and its subatomic particles, quantum mechanics uncovered a realm where time, space, and matter behave according to laws whose very functioning have uncertainty built into them.

If Aristotle thought that matter and form comprise the stuff of life, the post-Einsteinian world discovered that energy is the stuff of matter. Quantum physics showed that particles could not be clearly defined due to the property of wave-particle duality and that overlapping energy fields could give rise to quantum entanglement or non-local action at a distance. The relationship between energy and matter impelled scientists to revisit causal mechanisms in nature. The term "system" was more adequate to describe the organized behavior of entities. Austrian biologist Ludwig Bertalanffy described living organisms as open

⁷ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 337, 359.

⁸ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 327. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 327.

⁹ Pannenberg, "Problems of a Trinitarian God," 255.

¹⁰ Frank, *The Constant Fire: Beyond the Science vs. Religion Debate*, 146.

systems, meaning that entities feed on a continual flux of matter and energy from their environment. He set out to replace the mechanistic foundations of science with a holistic vision based on general systems.¹¹ Meteorologist Edward Lorenz showed that open systems conceal strange attractors. The strange attractor is a basin of attraction within the system yet different from it; over time, the strange attractor pulls the system into new repeated patterns of order called fractals.¹² Because open systems function as organized wholes and can be influenced by higher-ordered systems (top-down), as well as emergent properties (bottoms-up), they do not follow the classical laws of causality but the rules of complex dynamical systems.¹³

The new science of emergence sheds new light on this dynamic worldview marked by evolution and complexity. The whole history of the universe, and particularly the history of biological life on Earth, can be described by emergent evolution. Philip Clayton defines emergence as “genuinely new properties which are not reducible to what came before, although they are continuous with it.”¹⁴ Denis Edwards describes emergence as something that is constituted from components in such a way that it has new properties which are not reducible to the properties of the components.¹⁵ Teilhard de Chardin described evolution as a “biological ascent,” a movement toward more complexified life forms which allows qualitative differences to emerge. It discloses nature as creative and transcendent. He extended the term “evolution” beyond its biological meaning and applied it to the whole cosmic process. This progressive evolutionary movement, according to Teilhard, is one in which the consistence of the elements and their stability of balance lie in the direction not of matter but of spirit.¹⁶ Thus, he concluded, “there is only one real evolution, the evolution of convergence, because it alone is positive and creative.”¹⁷

Teilhard said that the whole universe is moving through evolution so that evolution is not descriptive of the biological sciences alone but all cosmic life. Nature is not ready-made but a slow process of unfolding life. He wrote:

It [evolution] is much more: it is a general condition to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must bow and which they must satisfy henceforth if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light illuminating all facts, a curve that all lines must follow.¹⁸

Because evolution affects every dimension of life, Teilhard indicated that evolution must be the starting point of any new theology. Raimon Panikkar wrote: “The very name of God is a cosmological notion. . . theology without cosmology is a mere abstraction of a non-existing God, and a cosmology without theology is just a mirage.”¹⁹ In his book *Deeper Than Darwin*, John Haught indicates that evolution requires a revolution in our thoughts about God because the whole cosmic process is narrative to the core. The science of evolution

¹¹ Von Bertalanffy, “The Theory of Open Systems in Physics and Biology,” 23-28. For a good discussion on opens systems, see Capra, *The Web of Life*, 48.

¹² Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 89.

¹³ Complex dynamical systems connote both biological and philosophical shifts in our understanding of reality. The rise of emergent evolution in which both matter and form change over time has given way to a new understanding of being. Alicia Juarrero writes: “With the discovery of evolution, contemporary biology demonstrated that the notion of “essences” is illusory. There is simply no such think as an organism’s “invariable nature,” unchanging immutable substance, or Platonic universal. Complex dynamic systems situate an entity in its environment so that sharp boundaries between the system and its environment are difficult, if not impossible, to draw. The openness of the system to its environment means that autonomy and identity give way to resilience and flourishing. Juarrero states: “Robust resilience, which in large measure is a function of connectivity and interdependence, plays a significant role in the dynamic integrity and flourishing of communities, organizations, and associations. With the advent of complex dynamical systems, therefore, the importance of interdependence replaces the former emphasis on autonomy—which now comes to be equated with isolation; and the importance of robust resilience replaces that of independence—which now comes to be associated with stasis and stagnation. See Juarrero, “Complex Dynamical Systems and the Problem of Identity,” 97-99.

¹⁴ Clayton, *Mind and Emergence*, 39.

¹⁵ Edwards, “A Relational and Evolving Universe Unfolding within the Dynamism of Divine Communion,” 136.

¹⁶ Teilhard de Chardin, *Activation of Energy*, 387-403; Teilhard de Chardin, *Phenomenon of Man*, 46-66.

¹⁷ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 87.

¹⁸ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, 219.

¹⁹ Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 187-88.

helps open up new windows of insight to the God-world relationship whereby we see creation not as a static world, but a relationship between the dynamic being of God and a world in process of coming to be. “Traditional theology,” Haught states, “has conceived of God too much in terms of the notion of a Prime Mover impelling things from the past.”²⁰ The openness of the cosmos to what is new, its capacity to leap forward, the emergence of intelligent beings, all direct the believer to the nature of the divine presence empowering the whole cosmic process. Evolution is a forward movement into greater complexity and consciousness; hence, it demands that we think of God as drawing the world from up ahead, attracting it toward the future. In one of his essays, Teilhard, asked: “Who at last will give evolution its own God?”²¹ “Half a century after Teilhard’s death,” Haught claims, “we have yet to answer this question satisfactorily.”²² Teilhard recognized that a new theology calls for a new philosophy and he sought to describe a philosophy of love based on the unitive and attractive nature of reality.

4 God and evolution

Teilhard focused on God and world as an interrelated pair, not opposite in nature but complementary, and it is this emphasis which led him to reject the metaphysics of *esse*, proposing instead an alternative metaphysics of *unire*. He insisted that there exists a genuine “complementarity” between God and the world, positing a type of cosmotheandricism: God and world are a coincidence of opposites and exist in mutually affirming union. In his view, modern physicists understand the relationships between such things as mass and velocity, electricity and magnetism, and thus provide insights to the relationship between Absolute and participated being. Similarly, he wrote: “What I have in mind here is a synthetic re-definition of being, which, taken in its most general form, would include, both simultaneously, an absolute term and a participated term. What makes the God-world antimony insoluble is that we first split up a natural pair and then persist in considering the two terms in succession.”²³ Being is not mere existence but existence toward the more—reflected in the process of evolution.

According to Teilhard, the optimal way to understand God and world is to perceive God as different from the world in nature but personally linked to it in a relationship of mutual complementarity. Instead of explaining participated being in terms of its differentiation from nonbeing, Teilhard defines it by its ability to be in “positive relation to God” and by “its power of entering into communion” with God.²⁴ It is not the complete dependence of the world upon God but the “complementarity” of God and world in such a way that one cannot adequately exist without the other. This God-world relationship may be more aptly described by insights from the new physics, such as “quantum entanglement,” or “wave-particle” duality.²⁵ Teilhard wrote: “What comes first in the world for our thought is not “being” but “the union

²⁰ Haught, *Deeper Than Darwin*, 164.

²¹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 240.

²² Haught, *Deeper than Darwin*, 164.

²³ Teilhard de Chardin, *Science and Christ*, 182.

²⁴ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 227.

²⁵ Quantum physics reveals the elusive nature of matter. What we think of as matter is actually the manifestation of energy, what physicists call quanta or little packets or lumps of energy manifesting themselves out of an infinite field. The double-slit experiment is based on the fact that particles are in many places at once and exist in multiple probable states. If an electron is fired through two slits of a screen, it will travel through both slits. Collapse of the wave function occurs when the observer is introduced. That is, once you introduce an observer (cameras, measurement), the particle only goes through one of the slits, rather than both. This experiment gave rise to the idea that light has a dual nature; in some cases it behaves as a wave, and in other cases it behaves as a photon. So is light wave or particle? The answer depends on the observer. The act of measurement collapses the wave function. Hence the fundamental property of matter is wave-particle duality wherein the act of observation is intrinsic to reality (See Geis, *Physics, Metaphysics and God*). In 1935 Einstein and two postdoctoral students, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen, performed a thought experiment based on insights from quantum physics to see if indeed particles could affect one another at a distance without interacting. Generally referred to as “EPR” experiment, their work quickly became a centerpiece in the debate over the interpretation of the quantum theory. The experiment centers on a quantum particle split in half with each half heading off in opposite directions. One half is spinning in one direction and the other half is spinning in the opposite direction. The total spin must be zero by the conservation of the spin at the point at which the parent split. If the

which produces this being.”²⁶ Although we have yet to work out a theology consonant with the new physics, Teilhard's insights suggest that the God-world relationship can be likened to a complex dynamical system in that God and world cannot be considered separately but must be considered in relation to each other. Joseph Bracken illuminates Teilhard's thought through an Aristotelian notion of being, defining being in terms of motion since, for Aristotle, motion is eternal and continuous: “There never was a time when there was not motion, and never will be a time when there will not be motion.”²⁷ If motion is eternal and constant and being is eternal and constant, then we can assume that motion and being are the same. To be is to be in motion. In this respect, the infinity of being is dynamic, not fixed. Being is a never-ending conversion of potentiality into actuality, a constant movement of creativity. It is precisely this eternal movement from potentiality into actuality that undergirds the absolute act of being or God. That is, divine being moves itself from potency to actuality in virtue of its own intrinsic dynamism. God is always active as the subject of the ongoing act of existence or the ongoing subject of the activity of existence meaning that God is continuously coming into being as God.²⁸

Teilhard suggested a similar idea through the eternal movement of love in which God is always coming into being through the dynamism of love; however, he reframes the God-world relationship from the point of evolution. The dynamic fountain fullness of divine love means that evolution is not only the universe coming to be, it is God who is coming to be.²⁹ Evolution is an ever newness of life born out of the ever newness of divine love, as the Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart wrote: “God is the newest thing there is, the youngest thing there is. God is the beginning and if we are united to God we become new again. It is in the coming to be that God is.”³⁰ What Eckhart suggests is that novelty is intrinsic to God's identity or as Gordon Kaufman wrote, God is creativity.³¹ Teilhard adds to this idea that God is coming to be because the world is coming to be; and the world is coming to be because God is coming to be. He explains this idea by saying that the complementarity of the created and the uncreated means that the two terms brought together, each in its own way, have an equal need both to exist in themselves and to be combined with each other, so that the absolute maximum of possible union may be effected *in natura rerum*.³² Elsewhere he states: “We are inevitably making our way to a completely new concept of being: in this the hitherto contradictory attributes of the *ens ab alio* and the *ens a se* of the world and God would be combined in a general synthetic function: ‘God completely other in nature than the world and yet unable to dispense with it.’”³³ If God is eternal movement from potentiality to act and evolution is the emergence of novel life, then these two movements are intertwined in such a way that the emergence of novel personal being best describes the God-world relationship.

particles are separated by distance, measurement of particle A as “up” will influence the measurement of particle B as “down.” The measurement on A does not merely reveal an already established state of B: it actually *produces* that state which renders the particles entangled. The object of the experiment was to show that measurements performed on spatially separated parts of a quantum system can apparently have an instantaneous influence on one another. Quantum entanglement is unmediated action at a distance, without crossing space, without decay, and without delay. See John Archibald Wheeler and Wojciech Hubert Zurek (eds.), *Quantum Theory and Measurement*, 137.

²⁶ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 227.

²⁷ Bracken, *The Divine Matrix*, 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 171-72.

³⁰ *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, 32.

³¹ Kaufman, *In the Beginning, Creativity*, 53-70.

³² Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 227.

³³ Teilhard de Chardin, *Science and Christ*, 182. Teilhard writes: “What I have in mind here is a synthetic re-definition of being, which, taken in its most general form, would include, *both simultaneously*, an absolute term and a participated term. What makes the God-world antinomy insoluble is that we first split up a natural pair and then persist in considering the two terms *in succession*” (Note 3).

5 The cyborg and Divine hybridity

Today, technology, especially artificial intelligence, is significantly changing human life insofar as technology is developing exponentially, as Gordon Moore predicted in the 1960s. From a philosophical perspective, technology has radically changed our understanding of nature as closed, static and fixed. In a talk to the American Philosophical Association Carl Mitcham noted, “a thousand or two thousand years ago the philosophical challenge was to think nature—and ourselves in the presence of nature. Today the great and the first philosophical challenge is to think technology. . .and to think ourselves in the presence of technology.”³⁴

Technology has destabilized our view of nature, giving rise to insights on the “plasticity” of nature, that is, the ability of nature to be hybridized across species. The term “cyborg” emerged in the 1960s with space travel, as humans were strapped with mechanical devices to sustain climates outside earth. A cyborg is an abbreviated version of “cybernetic organism” and connotes a fusion of the organic and machine in which the organism cannot be reduced to either the biological or technical.³⁵ Hence it connotes a hybrid, symbiotic relationship. As a cultural symbol, the cyborg signifies that human “nature” is not self-evident. Rather, nature is an emerging process of evolving life that is now marked by a co-creation among humans and nonhumans, machines and other partners. A cyborg body “is not bounded by skin but includes all external pathways along which information can travel.” That is, the boundaries are spatially and temporally situated and none of them is “necessary.” Anne Kull writes, “boundaries have meaning only for particular, locatable, and embodied subjects.”³⁶ Cyborgs are hybrid entities that are neither wholly technological nor completely organic, which means that the cyborg has the potential not only to disrupt persistent dualisms that set the natural body in opposition to the technologically recrafted body but also to refashion our thinking about the theoretical understanding of the body as a material entity and a discursive process. Hence what counts as human is not and should not be self-evident.

There is a relationship between cyborgs, Trinity and Christ, since the doctrine of the Trinity emerges out of the experience of Jesus Christ. That is, without Christ, we would not know God as triune. If we consider the doctrine of the incarnation as a union of natures, then the incarnation can also be considered, analogously, as a cyborg. The cyborg is a modern symbol of the incarnation in that divinity and humanity are hybridized. It conveys to us that what counts as God is not and should not be self-evident. God can and does become something new without collapsing divinity into materiality; rather God becomes something new and the newness is integral to God’s being. To say that Jesus Christ is the exemplary cyborg means God is to be found in a life recognizably like our own yet also obviously uniquely other. Kull writes:

The incarnation of Jesus the Christ can be understood, then, as neither a biological nor a sociological category but as a point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic, and the material social conditions. He would be the one who comes in many guises, and cannot be represented once and for all, and for everybody’s satisfaction. The concept of cyborg urges us to see in the Incarnation, and generally in embodiment of any kind, not a matter of fate and common sense but emancipation and choice. The cyborg directs our attention to various ways of becoming embodied, to what could be called the politics of incarnation. . . the cyborg exemplifies the fact that we do not have a clearly defined, exhaustive concept of humanity, let alone divinity.³⁷

The key to cyborg life is hybridization which is not unitive nor cooperative but a permeable openness of symbiotic entities. If Jesus Christ is aptly described by the symbol of the cyborg, and the Trinity is integrally related to Christ, then how does the cyborg shed light on trinitarian life?

³⁴ Mitcham, “The Philosophical Challenge of Technology,” 45.

³⁵ Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” 149-82; Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 15-40.

³⁶ Kull, “Cyborg Embodiment and the Incarnation,” 281.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 284.

6 Trinity as complexified love

The cyborg, as a hybrid organism, symbolizes relationships of complexity. The Trinity, especially the Cappadocian/Bonaventurian model, symbolizes relationships of communion. The cyborg symbolizes newness and permeability whereas the Trinity symbolizes perfection and participation. For the medieval mind, the number three was a cosmological number as much as a theological number. The medieval world seems to have taken to heart the words expressed in the Book of Wisdom (11.21): “All things are created in measure, number and weight”. Bonaventure, for example, thought the number three was the number of perfection since two extremes were united by a common center. Hence, the threeness of the Trinity could be thought of in binary terms: Father and Son; Son and Spirit, Father and Spirit. That is, Trinity is a binary with a common center—Father and Spirit centered in the Word. In his *Itinerarium* Bonaventure wrote that the “center is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere,” indicating that the Trinity is incarnate as Word and Spirit.³⁸ The Trinity is centered in Christ, as he wrote in his *Soliloquy*: “On the cross, the whole Trinity cries out to you.”³⁹ Bonaventure held that the relationship between the Father and Son united by the Spirit is the basis of all other relations. The Father, the fountain fullness of love, is always moving towards the Son/Word in the self-communication of love, and the Son eternally loves the Father in the Spirit. In as far as the one Word is the expression of the entire inner-trinitarian structure of God “that which is created is an expression of the Word which bears within itself the imprint of the Trinity.”⁴⁰

In an evolutionary world, numbers hold a different value, signifying relationships of complexity. The cyborg signifies a threeness in which the middle term is not a shared (arithmetical) center but a hybridized (cf. vector space) third. In this respect, binitarian relationships must yield to a new type of relationality that bears the weight of complexity. The Law of Three is an esoteric principle formulated by the Armenian George Gurdjieff (1890-1912) who traveled extensively in the Far East and was impressed by the cosmogeny of the East. He developed the “Law of Three” or the “Fourth way” as a way of describing humanity’s place in the universe.⁴¹ Contrary to binitarian relationships, the Law of Three posits a different set of relationships, since the interplay of two polarities calls forth a third, a “mediating” or “reconciling” principle between them. That is, it stipulates a third force that emerges as a necessary mediation of opposites, which in turn generates a synthesis at a whole new level. It is a dialectic of which resolution simultaneously creates a new realm of possibility. While binary systems seek completion in a “reabsorption into the Whole,” complex or ternary systems seek completion in a new dimension.⁴²

The Law of Three helps us reconceive the Trinity as a divine community of complexifying love and helps us make sense of trinitarian life in an unfinished universe. The openness of God to cyborgian life suggests that the Trinity may be less about communion and personhood (as Bonaventure posited) and more about change and transformation. Love, as the highest form of divine creativity, is an eternal movement from potentiality to act; an unoriginated fountain fullness of love that overflows into other. Here I would agree with Bonaventure that the fountain fullness of love (Father) is the unoriginated, self-communicative fullness of love while the Son is the responsive expression of the Father’s creative love; hence self-communicative or donative love and receptive expressive love are active centers of interpenetrating love. Yet each “person”

³⁸ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* 5.8 in Cousins, *The Soul's Journey Into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, 100.

³⁹ Bonaventure, *Soliloquium* I.38 in *St. Bonaventure: Opuscula Second Series*, 69.

⁴⁰ Hayes, “Incarnation and Creation in the Theology of St. Bonaventure,” 314; Hayes, introduction to *Disputed Questions on Mystery of Trinity*, 48.

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion on Gurdjieff and the Law of Three see Bourgeault, *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three*, 22-37. Bourgeault notes that “the most important thing to keep in mind here is that this third force is an independent force, coequal with the other two, not a product of the first two as in the classic Hegelian “thesis, antithesis, synthesis” (p. 26). The interweaving of the three creates a fourth, a whole new dimension “that transforms the triangle into a pyramid” (p. 28). In a recent article on Hegel and the Trinity, Peter Benson claims that that “Hegel himself never used the words ‘thesis, antithesis, synthesis’ to characterize the dialectical process,” although the word “antithesis” occasionally appears in his writings. Benson suggests that Hegel’s emphasis on the philosophy of three is more closely aligned to the biological concept of emergence and, I would suggest, shares an affinity with Gurdjieff’s notion of the Law of Three. See Benson, “Hegel and the Trinity.”

⁴² Bourgeault, *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three*, 19.

or personal center of love bears a distinct spirit. The spirit of the Father is self-donation while the spirit of the Son is receptivity. Whereas binitarian Trinitarian theology sees the Spirit as nexus or bond between Father and Son, the Law of Three suggests that the Spirit is the coincidence of self-donation and receptivity, since each personal center breathes forth love in relation to the other. The Spirit of God, therefore, is the center of receptive-donative love—complexified love—and, as such, functions like a “strange attractor” within the divine life. Since the Spirit is neither donative nor receptive love but both, the Spirit is like a basin of attraction that pulls the divine life into new relationships of love. That is, the “strangeness” of the Spirit within the divine life resolves itself by expressing itself in openness, outside God, in created reality. God’s transcendent “self” flows from the complexity of divine love so that God goes outside divine life to express divine love in personal otherness and this movement is integral to God’s own life. As Bracken indicates, Being itself is constituted by openness; God’s openness is consistent with divine love.⁴³ For God to “ex-press” love or “press love outward” is the act of creation in which the coming to be of one other than God is the divine movement of love impressed, hybridized and, in turn, creatively shared with another. Thus, God’s Spirit bears the weight of divine love’s urgency to be for another. To state this another way, God is love, love is personal and communicative, and the Trinity symbolizes the openness of divine love to personalization in created reality. In this respect, the Trinity is not God; the Trinity is the first expression of creative love who is God, that is, the dynamism of intersubjectivity, the communication of Being and the community that emerges from it. God, therefore, is a community of persons-in-love, a community which continues to grow in and through the world into ever greater unity. The threefoldness of divine life is symbolic of an asymmetrical-complexified relationship projecting love outward and calling new forms of being into existence, each of which bears the “meme” of divine relationality; thus the trinitarian dynamic “is a repeated pattern on every scale of the cosmic order.”⁴⁴ While we are used to thinking of the Trinity as just three Persons, this is only the minimum for community due to the nature of love. The divine community is continuously self-making, since love constantly flows from one divine person (or center of activity) to another in the perichoretic flow of shared life. There is nothing to say that there could not be more persons. It is precisely this idea that makes the hybridity of God in the incarnation the trinitizing dynamic of divine love in evolution; cosmic history is cosmic personalization, and cosmic personalization is the revelation of God as Trinity.

Teilhard de Chardin grasped this new understanding of God by speaking of the trinitization of evolution. In his view evolution is, in a sense, the movement from potentiality to act, as divine love creates, incarnates and draws together in greater unity. This trinitizing process is the rise of God in evolution or “theogenesis” as he wrote:

We might say that for the discursive reason two phases can be distinguished in ‘theogenesis.’ In the first, God posits himself in his Trinitarian structure (‘fontal being reflecting itself, self-sufficient, upon itself): ‘Trinitization.’ In the second phase, he envelops himself in participated being, by evolutive unification of pure multiple (positive non-being) born (in a state of absolute potency) by antithesis to pre-positated Trinitarian unity: Creation.⁴⁵

Teilhard saw creation as integral to God. For God to create, he said, is to unite himself to his work, “to involve himself in the world by incarnation.”⁴⁶ He believed that without creation, something would be absolutely lacking to God, considered in the fullness not of his being but of his act of union. He wrote: “If God was not triune we could not conceive the possibility of his creating (by being incarnate) without totally immersing

⁴³ Bracken, *The Divine Matrix*, 34.

⁴⁴ Bruteau, *God’s Ecstasy: The Creation of a Self-Creating World*, 14. On the notion of “memes” see Shifman, *Memes in Digital Culture*, 2. The word “meme” was coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976 to describe small units of culture that are spread from person to person by copying or imitation.

⁴⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 178. It is interesting to note that Bourgeault (*Trinity and the Law of Three*, 21) states that the Trinity should be approached “in its cosmically subtle role as an ordering and revealing principle, of which Christ is its culminating expression,” an idea consonant with Teilhard’s insights.

⁴⁶ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 182.

himself in the world he brings into being.”⁴⁷ The theory of creative union was not so much a metaphysical doctrine as a sort of empirical and pragmatic explanation of the universe. Teilhard wrote, “this theory came to birth out of my own personal need to reconcile, within the confines of a rigorously structured system, the views of science respecting evolution. . . which has driven me to *seek out the presence of God, not apart from the physical world, but rather through matter and in a certain sense in union with it.*”⁴⁸ In his view, creation, incarnation and redemption are three aspects of the same fundamental process, namely, the self-creating and self-involving love of God. He identified creative union as a *fourth* divine mystery, “the mystery of the creative union of the world in God, or pleromization.”⁴⁹ It is a *fourth mystery* because it is not merely divine-created union; rather, it is an entirely new union in the same way that the cyborg is irreducible to one term or another. Kull writes of the cyborg, “we cannot speak even of ‘partnership’ between machine and organism; rather they have a symbiosis, and it is managed by cybernetics, the language common to the organic and the mechanical.”⁵⁰ Similarly, the cyborgization of God, the ecstatic incarnation of divine love, reflected in pleromization, is a symbiotic/hybridized relationship whereby one nature cannot be reduced to the other. If God was not personal and communicative love, divinity could not be hybridized, for hybridization is based on the openness of divine love to more love; hence the ground of hybridization is divine, creative love.

7 Cosmic personalization

Teilhard claimed that love undergirds a fundamental law of attraction in the universe and this force of attraction is the basis of personal being. In this respect, trinitizing the universe is the flow of love which gives rise to personhood. Personhood, in turn, forms community and community grows as divine love is continuously hybridized and transcended in love. In this way, created personal being, that is, distinct entities, are integral to the ever-growing community of God as love; evolution is the personalization of divine love. Teilhard described this dynamic love of God incarnate in evolution as the birthing of the Christ or Christogenesis. The Spirit's creative love is the personalization of being-in-love. The hybridization of divine love expressed in cosmic personalization (Christogenesis) is the “fourth” dimension of Trinitarian life (pleromization), insofar as God's personalizing love finds its fullest expression, its “resolve” so to speak, in created reality. Hence the emergence of Christ in evolution is divine love trinitizing the universe; that is, divine love draws created reality into personhood and unified personal relationships. Trinitizing the universe, therefore, is the rise of the cosmic person in which God and world evolve into ever greater unity, symbolized by the mystical body of Christ; and it is precisely this union which is the differentiation of God and world.⁵¹ Joseph Bracken writes: “God as the primordial subject of the never-ending act of existence is a determinate reality here and now but with the unlimited capacity to acquire further determinations in later moments of the divine existence.”⁵² Although Bracken is suggesting unending fulfillment of divine potentiality within God, I am suggesting that trinitization, following the principle of the Law of Three, means that limitless fulfillment of divine potentiality includes creation, since the fulfillment of divine love includes the fourth mystery of pleromization or Christogenesis.

Divine-hybridity is the divine capacity to share life symbiotically with creative life. In this respect, the divine persons of the Trinity are better seen as divine personal centers of interpenetrating love whose complexifying love is resolved in ecstatic openness to personhood, outside God's life, which in turn enhances God's life. As Teilhard suggested, without creation, something would be absolutely lacking to God,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 157-58.

⁴⁸ Gray, *The One and the Many*, 34.

⁴⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 183.

⁵⁰ Kull, “Cyborg Embodiment and Incarnation,” 280-81.

⁵¹ In his *Phenomenon of Man* Teilhard writes that union differentiates, “the more ‘other’ they become in conjunction, the more they find themselves as ‘self’” (p. 262). While he is speaking of unitive entities on the level of physical evolution, the same principle can also be applied to God and world insofar as the incarnation of God is the personalization of God which rises to explicit consciousness in the person of Jesus Christ.

⁵² Bracken, *The Divine Matrix*, 34.

considered in the fullness not of his being but of his act of union.⁵³ The cyborg symbolizes the hybridity of God and created reality, such that a complexified divine-world relationship must be resolved in new expressions of personal love. God is ever newness in love and is creatively expressed in the evolution of personhood; thus, God is the source of creativity and emerges in divine glory from complexified creative relationships. Or to put it in Teilhard's words, God rises up in evolution as God for evolution. As divine ecstatic love is hybridized in creative union, evolution is pleromized, increasingly filled with God, so to speak. Yet, God is always the transcendent more of love, from fountain fullness to receptivity; from expressive love to receptive love; from donative-receptive love to ecstatic love. God is thus the future of creation, drawing created reality into new levels of personal unified love so that divine love incarnate evolves into the fullness of God and world. The complexified God-world relationship is like an ascending cascading wholeness in love in which Christ becomes the cyborgian symbol of the fullness of love. In Teilhard's vision, this birthing of the Christ in evolution (Christogenesis) is the growing fullness of the God-world relationship (pleromization).

Although Teilhard's dynamic language of divine self-involvement can be confusing, it also connotes the need for new language, as we seek to understand the Trinity in an evolving universe. In Teilhard's view, pleromization is trinitization and trinitization is the evolution of cosmic personalization, signified by the Christ. Creation does not become divine and divinity does not collapse into materiality; rather the hybridization of divine and human natures complexifies in a third—the christic—which by the very nature of its unstable, hybridized boundaries expresses itself outwardly in a fourth, ongoing new creation, which is ever growing in complexified personhood.⁵⁴

8 Conclusion

The self-involvement of trinitarian love, as an open system of divine hybridity, is a dynamic expression of self-creating and self-involving love rendering creation more than gift; creation is co-creative of God's trinitarian identity as a communion of persons-in-love. In this respect, creation is an active participant in God's own becoming as Trinity insofar as God's love is ever deepening in union with created reality. If creativity is the essence of divinity and the highest expression of divine creativity is incarnate love, then the resolve of the Trinity's creative love is eternal openness to hybridity and thus to creative personhood-in-love. God's love is an eternal movement from potentiality to act; from nonbeing to being; from interiority to expression. For God to be God is to love and to love is to give rise to personhood; hence God is always becoming God, as love deepens personhood. Where there is the possibility for creative love to express itself in created reality as receptivity and expression (and hence conscious love) there is the hybridity of God in creative pleromization.

Cyborgization and christogenesis are symbolic of all intelligent life in the universe where the capacity for love exists. It is the Spirit of God that is the self-constituting presence of God. In an evolutionary perspective, *theologia* is *oikonomia* as Christ becomes ever more the fullness of reality; that is, the essence of God is creative personhood. Trinitarian reality finds its meaning in pleromization whereby the creativity of God is hybridized in the incarnation. Christ is the exemplary cyborg, the mutational figure, who transcends all boundaries. Indeed, the symbol of the cyborg preempts any fear of ontological collapse or pantheistic tendencies of God and world, since boundaries are continuously created and transcended. It is the utterly faithful and unconditional love of a relational God that renders all reality personal, creative, complexifying in love, and oriented toward communion. In this way, the history of the world in all of its messy, centrifugal energy is not a betrayal of the path of Christ but its lawful and inevitable trajectory.⁵⁵

⁵³ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 182.

⁵⁴ Teilhard spoke of a "third nature" of Christ. In his writings he describes this nature as follows: "Between the Word on the one side and Man-Jesus on the other, a kind of "third Christic nature" (if I may dare to say so) emerges. . . that of the total and totalizing Christ." He spoke of a third aspect of the theandric (divine-human) complex as "the *cosmic nature*" which, in his view, has not been sufficiently distinguished from the other two natures (divine and human). See Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 179; Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin*, 183-196.

⁵⁵ Barnhart, *The Future of Wisdom*, 200.

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Fourth Way

The Fourth Way^[1] is an approach to self-development developed by George Gurdjieff over years of travel in the East (c. 1890 – 1912). It combines and harmonizes what he saw as three established traditional "ways" or "schools": those of the mind, the emotions, and the body, or of monks, fakirs, and yogis, respectively. Students often refer to the Fourth Way as "The Work", "Work on oneself", or "The System". The exact origins of some of Gurdjieff's teachings are unknown, but various sources have been suggested.^[2]

The term "Fourth Way" was further used by his student P. D. Ouspensky in his lectures and writings. After Ouspensky's death, his students published a book entitled *The Fourth Way* based on his lectures.

According to this system, the three traditional schools, or ways, "are permanent forms which have survived throughout history mostly unchanged, and are based on religion. Where schools of yogis, monks or fakirs exist, they are barely distinguishable from religious schools. The fourth way differs in that "it is not a permanent way. It has no specific forms or institutions and comes and goes controlled by some particular laws of its own."^[3]

When this work is finished, that is to say, when the aim set before it has been accomplished, the fourth way disappears, that is, it disappears from the given place, disappears in its given form, continuing perhaps in another place in another form. Schools of the fourth way exist for the needs of the work which is being carried out in connection with the proposed undertaking. They never exist by themselves as schools for the purpose of education and instruction.^[4]

The Fourth Way addresses the question of humanity's place in the Universe and the possibilities of inner development. It emphasizes that people ordinarily live in a state referred to as a semi-hypnotic "waking sleep," while higher levels of consciousness, virtue, unity of will are possible.

The Fourth Way teaches how to increase and focus attention and energy in various ways, and to minimize day-dreaming and absent-mindedness. This inner development in oneself is the beginning of a possible further process of change, whose aim is to transform man into "what he ought to be."

Contents

Overview

Three ways

Fourth Way

Origins

Teachings and teaching methods

Basis of teachings

Use of symbols

Working conditions and sacred dances

Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man

After Gurdjieff

References

Overview

Gurdjieff's followers believed he was a spiritual master,^[5] a human being who is fully awake or enlightened. He was also seen as an esotericist or occultist.^[6] He agreed that the teaching was esoteric but claimed that none of it was veiled in secrecy but that many people lack the interest or the capability to understand it.^[7] Gurdjieff said, "The teaching whose theory is here being set out is completely self supporting and independent of other lines and it has been completely unknown up to the present time."^[8]

The Fourth Way teaches that the soul a human individual is born with gets trapped and encapsulated by personality, and stays dormant, leaving one not really conscious, even as they clearly *believe* they are. A person must free the soul by following a teaching which can lead to this aim or "go nowhere" upon death of his body. Should a person be able to receive the teaching and find a school, upon the death of the physical body they will "go elsewhere." Humans are born *asleep*, live in *sleep*, and die in *sleep*, only *imagining* that they are awake with few exceptions.^[9] The ordinary waking "consciousness" of human beings is not consciousness at all but merely a form of sleep."

Gurdjieff taught "sacred dances" or "movements", now known as Gurdjieff movements, which were performed together as a group.^[10] He left a body of music, inspired by that which he had heard in remote monasteries and other places, which was written for piano in collaboration with one of his pupils, Thomas de Hartmann.^[11]

Three ways

Gurdjieff taught that traditional paths to spiritual enlightenment followed one of three ways:

- ***The Way of the Fakir***

The *Fakir* works to obtain mastery of the attention (self-mastery) through struggles with [controlling] the physical body involving difficult physical exercises and postures.

- ***The Way of the Monk***

The *Monk* works to obtain the same mastery of the attention (self-mastery) through struggle with [controlling] the affections, in the domain, as we say, of the heart, which has been emphasized in the west, and come to be known as the way of faith due to its practice particularly in Catholicism.

- ***The Way of the Yogi***

The *Yogi* works to obtain the same mastery of the attention (as before: 'self mastery') through struggle with [controlling] mental habits and capabilities.

Gurdjieff insisted that these paths, although they may intend to seek to produce a fully developed human being, tend to cultivate certain faculties at the expense of others. The goal of religion or spirituality was, in fact, to produce a well-balanced, responsive and sane human being capable of dealing with all eventualities that life may present. Gurdjieff therefore made it clear that it was necessary to cultivate a way that integrated and combined the traditional three ways.

Fourth Way

Gurdjieff said that his Fourth Way was a quicker means than the first three ways because it simultaneously combined work on all three centers rather than focusing on one. It could be followed by ordinary people in everyday life, requiring no retirement into the desert. The Fourth Way does involve certain conditions imposed by a teacher, but blind acceptance of them is discouraged. Each student is advised to do only what they understand and to verify for themselves the teaching's ideas.

Ouspensky documented Gurdjieff as saying that "two or three thousand years ago there were yet other ways which no longer exist and the ways then in existence were not so divided, they stood much closer to one another. The fourth way differs from the old and the new ways by the fact that it is never a permanent way. It has no definite forms and there are no institutions connected with it."^[12]

Ouspensky quotes Gurdjieff that there are fake schools and that "It is impossible to recognize a wrong way without knowing the right way. This means that it is no use troubling oneself how to recognize a wrong way. One must think of how to find the right way."^[13]

Origins

In his works, Gurdjieff credits his teachings to a number of more or less mysterious sources:^[14]

- Various small sects of 'real' Christians in Asia and the Middle East. Gurdjieff believed that mainstream Christian teachings had become corrupted.
- Various dervishes (he did not use the term 'Sufi')
- Gurdjieff mentions practicing Yoga in his youth but his later comments about Indian fakirs and yogis are dismissive.
- The mysterious Sarmoung monastery in a remote area of central Asia, to which Gurdjieff was led blindfold.
- The non-denominational "Universal Brotherhood".

Attempts to fill out his account have featured:

- Technical vocabulary first appearing in early 19th century Russian freemasonry, derived from Robert Fludd (P. D. Ouspensky)
- Eastern Christianity as detailed in the works of Robin Amis and Boris Mouravieff
- Caucasian Ahmsta Kebzeh (Murat Yagan^[15])
- Tibetan Buddhism, according to Jose Tirado.^[16]
 - Chatral Rinpoche believes that Gurdjieff spent several years in a monastery in the Swat valley.^[17]
 - James George hypothesizes that Surmang, a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in China, is the real Sarmoung monastery.
- Naqshbandi Sufism, (Idries Shah,^[18] Rafael Lefort)
 - The "stop" exercise is similar to the Uqufi Zamani exercise in Omar Ali-Shah's book on the Rules or Secrets of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order.^[19]
- In principle Zoroaster, and explicitly the 12th century Khwajagan Sufi leader, Abdul Khaliq Gajadwani (J. G. Bennett^[20])

Teachings and teaching methods

Basis of teachings

Present here now^[21]

We do not remember ourselves^[22]

Conscious Labor is an action where the person who is performing the act is present to what he is doing; not absentminded. At the same time he is striving to perform the act more efficiently.

Intentional suffering is the act of struggling against automatism such as daydreaming, pleasure, food (eating for reasons other than real hunger), etc. In Gurdjieff's book *Beelzebub's Tales* he states that "the greatest 'intentional suffering' can be obtained in our presences by compelling ourselves to endure the displeasing manifestations of others toward ourselves"^[23]

To Gurdjieff, conscious labor and intentional suffering were the basis of all evolution of man.

Self-Observation

Observation of ones own behavior and habits. To observe thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judging or analyzing what is observed.^[24]

The Need for Effort

Gurdjieff emphasized that awakening results from consistent, prolonged effort. Such efforts may be made as an act of will after one is already exhausted.

The Many 'I's

This indicates fragmentation of the psyche, the different feelings and thoughts of 'I' in a person: I think, I want, I know best, I prefer, I am happy, I am hungry, I am tired, etc. These have nothing in common with one another and are unaware of each other, arising and vanishing for short periods of time. Hence man usually has no unity in himself, wanting one thing now and another, perhaps contradictory, thing later.

Centers

Gurdjieff classified plants as having one center, animals two and humans three. Centers refer to apparatus within a being that dictate specific organic functions. There are three main centers in a man: **intellectual**, **emotional** and **physical**, and two higher centers: **higher emotional** and **higher intellectual**.

Body, Essence and Personality

Gurdjieff divided people's being into *Essence* and *Personality*.

- **Essence** – is a "natural part of a person" or "what he is born with"; this is the part of a being which is said to have the ability to evolve.
- **Personality** – is everything artificial that he has "learned" and "seen".

Cosmic Laws

Gurdjieff focused on two main cosmic laws, the *Law of Three* and the *Law of Seven*.

- The **Law of Seven** is described by Gurdjieff as "the first fundamental cosmic law". This law is used to explain processes. The basic use of the law of seven is to explain why nothing in nature and in life constantly occurs in a straight line, that is to say that there are always ups and downs in life which occur lawfully. Examples of this can be noticed in athletic performances,

where a high ranked athlete always has periodic downfalls, as well as in nearly all graphs that plot topics that occur over time, such as the economic graphs, population graphs, death-rate graphs and so on. All show parabolic periods that keep rising and falling. Gurdjieff claimed that since these periods occur lawfully based on the law of seven that it is possible to keep a process in a straight line if the necessary shocks were introduced at the right time. A piano keyboard is an example of the law of seven, as the seven notes of the major scale correspond exactly to it.

- The **Law of Three** is described by Gurdjieff as "the second fundamental cosmic law". This law states that every whole phenomenon is composed of three separate sources, which are Active, Passive and Reconciling or Neutral. This law applies to everything in the universe and humanity, as well as all the structures and processes. The Three Centers in a human, which Gurdjieff said were the Intellectual Centre, the Emotional Centre and the Moving Centre, are an expression of the law of three. Gurdjieff taught his students to think of the law of three forces as essential to transforming the energy of the human being. The process of transformation requires the three actions of affirmation, denial and reconciliation. This law of three separate sources can be considered modern *interpretation* of early hindu Philosophy of Gunas, We can see this as Chapters 3, 7, 13, 14, 17 and 18 of Bhagavad Gita discuss *Guna in their verses*. ^[25]

How the *Law of Seven* and *Law of Three* function together is said to be illustrated on the Fourth Way Enneagram, a nine-pointed symbol which is the central glyph of Gurdjieff's system.

Use of symbols

In his explanations Gurdjieff often used different symbols such as the Enneagram and the Ray of Creation. Gurdjieff said that "the enneagram is a universal symbol. All knowledge can be included in the enneagram and with the help of the enneagram it can be interpreted ... A man may be quite alone in the desert and he can trace the enneagram in the sand and in it read the eternal laws of the universe. And every time he can learn something new, something he did not know before."^[26] The ray of creation is a diagram which represents the Earth's place in the Universe. The diagram has eight levels, each corresponding to Gurdjieff's laws of octaves.

Through the elaboration of the law of octaves and the meaning of the enneagram, Gurdjieff offered his students alternative means of conceptualizing the world and their place in it.

Working conditions and sacred dances

To provide conditions in which attention could be exercised more intensively, Gurdjieff also taught his pupils "sacred dances" or "movements" which they performed together as a group, and he left a body of music inspired by what he heard in visits to remote monasteries and other places, which was written for piano in collaboration with one of his pupils, Thomas de Hartmann.

Gurdjieff laid emphasis on the idea that the seeker must conduct his or her own search. The teacher cannot do the student's work for the student, but is more of a guide on the path to self-discovery. As a teacher, Gurdjieff specialized in creating conditions for students – conditions in which growth was possible, in which efficient progress could be made by the willing. To find oneself in a set of conditions that a gifted teacher has arranged has another benefit. As Gurdjieff put it, "You must realize that each man has a definite repertoire of roles which he plays in ordinary circumstances ... but put him into even only slightly different circumstances and he is unable to find a suitable role and for a short time he becomes himself."

Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man

Having migrated for four years after escaping the Russian Revolution with dozens of followers and family members, Gurdjieff settled in France and established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Château Le Prieuré at Fontainebleau-Avon in October 1922.^[27] The institute was an esoteric school based on Gurdjieff's Fourth Way teaching. After nearly dying in a car crash in 1924, he recovered and closed down the Institute. He began writing *All and Everything*. From 1930, Gurdjieff made visits to North America where he resumed his teachings.

Ouspensky relates that in the early work with Gurdjieff in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, Gurdjieff forbade students from writing down or publishing anything connected with Gurdjieff and his ideas. Gurdjieff said that students of his methods would find themselves unable to transmit correctly what was said in the groups. Later, Gurdjieff relaxed this rule, accepting students who subsequently published accounts of their experiences in the Gurdjieff work.

After Gurdjieff

After Gurdjieff's death in 1949 a variety of groups around the world have attempted to continue The Gurdjieff Work. The Gurdjieff Foundation, was established in 1953 in New York City by Jeanne de Salzmann in cooperation with other direct pupils.^[28] J. G. Bennett ran groups and also made contact with the Subud and Sufi schools to develop The Work in different directions. Maurice Nicoll, a Jungian psychologist, also ran his own groups based on Gurdjieff and Ouspensky's ideas. The French institute was headed for many years by Madam de Salzmann – a direct pupil of Gurdjieff. Under her leadership, the Gurdjieff Societies of London and New York were founded and developed.

A number of offshoots incorporate elements of the Fourth Way, such as:

- Claudio Naranjo's teaching.
- Oscar Ichazo's Arica School
- Samael Aun Weor
- The Diamond Approach of A. H. Almaas.

The Enneagram is often studied in contexts that do not include other elements of Fourth Way teaching.

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External links

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George Gurdjieff

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff^[2] (/ˈɡɜːrdʒiɛf/; Russian: Геóргий Ива́нович Гурджи́ев, Greek: Γεώργιος Γεωργιάδης, Armenian: Գեորգի Գյուրջիւ, Georgian: გიორგი ივანეს ძე გურჯიევი; 31 March 1866/14 January 1872/28 November 1877 – 29 October 1949^[3]) was a Russian philosopher, mystic, spiritual teacher, and composer of Armenian and Greek descent, born in Alexandropol, Russian Empire (now Gyumri, Armenia).^[4] Gurdjieff taught that most humans do not possess a unified consciousness and thus live their lives in a state of hypnotic "waking sleep", but that it is possible to awaken to a higher state of consciousness and achieve full human potential. Gurdjieff described a method attempting to do so, calling the discipline "The Work"^[5] (connoting "work on oneself") or "the System".^[6] According to his principles and instructions,^[7] Gurdjieff's method for awakening one's consciousness unites the methods of the fakir, monk and yogi, and thus he referred to it as the "Fourth Way".^[8]

Contents

Biography

Early years

Travels

Business career

In Russia

In Georgia and Turkey

Prieuré at Avon

First car accident, writing and visits to North America

World War II

Final years

Children

Ideas

Self-development teachings

Methods

Music

Movements

Writings

Reception and influence

Pupils

Critics

Bibliography

Books

George Gurdjieff



Gurdjieff between 1925 and 1935

Born	George Ivanovich Gurdjieff <div>1866–1877</div> Alexandropol, Russian Empire
Died	29 October 1949 (aged 71–83) <div>Neuilly-sur-Seine, France</div>
School	Fourth Way (the "Gurdjieff Work")
Notable students	P. D. Ouspensky <div>Thomas de Hartmann</div> <div>Olga de Hartmann</div> <div>Jane Heap</div> <div>John G. Bennett</div> <div>Maurice Nicoll</div> <div>Olgivanna Lloyd Wright</div>
Main interests	Psychology, <div>perennial philosophy</div>
Notable ideas	

[See also](#)

[References](#)

[Further reading](#)

[External links](#)

[Fourth Way](#),
[Fourth Way](#)
[enneagram](#),
[centers](#), [self-](#)
[remembering](#)

Biography

Early years

Gurdjieff^[9] was born to a [Caucasus Greek](#) father, Yiannis Georgiades (Greek: Ἰωάννης Γεωργιάδης),^[10] and an [Armenian](#) mother, Evdokia (according to biographer Paul Beekman Taylor), in [Alexandropol](#) of the [Russian Empire](#) in the [Transcaucasus](#).^[11] The name Gurdjieff represents a [Russified](#) form of the [Pontic Greek](#) surname "Georgiades" (Greek: Γεωργιάδης). Greek-Georgian were also very common combinations in Kars Oblast and Georgia under Tsarist rule,^[9] which is also a possible root of his surname, as Muslims around Georgia call the Georgian people "Gurdji"^[12] (with [Russified](#) ending *-eff*). The exact year of his birth remains unknown; conjectures range from 1866 to 1877. Some authors (such as James Moore) argue for 1866. Both Olga de Hartmann, the woman Gurdjieff called "the first friend of my inner life", and Louise Goepfert March, Gurdjieff's secretary in the early 1930s, believed that Gurdjieff was born in 1872. A passport gave a birthdate of November 28, 1877, but he once stated that he was born at the stroke of midnight at the beginning of New Year's Day ([Julian calendar](#)). Although the dates of his birth vary, the year of 1872 is inscribed in a plate on the gravemarker in the cemetery of [Avon, Seine-et-Marne](#), France, where his body was buried.^[13]

Gurdjieff spent his childhood in [Kars](#), which, from 1878 to 1918, was the administrative capital of the Russian-ruled Transcaucasus province of Kars Oblast, a border region recently captured from the [Ottoman Empire](#). It contained extensive grassy plateau-steppe and high mountains, and was inhabited by a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional population that had a history of respect for travelling mystics and holy men, and for religious [syncretism](#) and [conversion](#). Both the city of Kars and the surrounding territory were home to an extremely diverse population: although part of the [Armenian Plateau](#), Kars Oblast was home to Armenians, Russians, Caucasus Greeks, Georgians, Turks, Kurds and smaller numbers of Christian communities from eastern and central Europe such as [Caucasus Germans](#), [Estonians](#) and Russian sectarian communities like the [Molokans](#), [Doukhobors](#), *Pryguny*, and [Subbotniks](#). Gurdjieff makes particular mention of the [Yazidi](#) community. Growing up in a multi-ethnic society, Gurdjieff became fluent in Armenian, Pontic Greek, Russian and Turkish, speaking the last in a mixture of elegant [Osmanlı](#) and some dialect.^[14] He later acquired "a working facility with several European languages".^[11] Early influences on him included his father, a carpenter and amateur *ashik* or [bardic poet](#),^[15] and the priest of the town's [Russian church](#), [Dean Borsh](#), a family friend. The young Gurdjieff avidly read Russian-language scientific literature.^[16] Influenced by these writings, and having witnessed a number of phenomena that he could not explain, he formed the conviction that there existed a hidden truth not to be found in science or in mainstream religion.

Travels

Influences

Not all known; but according to his *Meetings with Remarkable Men*: his childhood and adult teachers and his father; his book *Beelzebub's Tales* also mentions [Mullah Nassr Eddin](#);^[1]

Influenced

[Alfred Richard Orage](#) · [Jean Toomer](#) · [Frank Lloyd Wright](#) · [P. L. Travers](#) · [Peter Brook](#) · [René Daumal](#) · [Katherine Mansfield](#) · [Keith Jarrett](#) · [James Moore](#) · [Philip Mairet](#) · [Henry Miller](#) · [Barry Long](#) · [Arnaud Desjardins](#) · [John Anthony West](#)

In early adulthood, according to his own account, Gurdjieff's curiosity led him to travel to Central Asia, Egypt, Iran, India, Tibet and Rome before he returned to Russia for a few years in 1912. He was never forthcoming about the source of his teachings. The only account of his wanderings appears in his book *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Most commentators^[17] leave his background unexplained, and *Meetings* is not generally considered to be a reliable or straightforward autobiography.^{[18][19]} Each chapter is named after an individual "remarkable man"; many are putatively members of a society of "seekers of truth".

After Gurdjieff's death, J. G. Bennett researched his sources extensively and suggested that these characters were symbolic of the three types of people to whom Gurdjieff referred: No. 1 centred in their physical body; No. 2 centred in their emotions and No. 3 centred in their minds. He asserts that he has encounters with dervishes, fakirs and descendants of the extinct Essenes, whose teaching had been, he said, conserved at a monastery in Sarmoung. The book also has an overarching quest narrative involving a map of "pre-sand Egypt" and culminating in an encounter with the "Sarmoung Brotherhood".^[20]

Business career

Gurdjieff wrote that he supported himself during his travels with odd jobs and trading schemes (one of which he described as dyeing hedgerow birds yellow and selling them as canaries).^[21] On his reappearance, as far as the historical record is concerned, he had become a businessman. His only autobiographical writing concerning this period is *Herald of Coming Good*. In it, he mentions acting as hypnotherapist specialising in the cure of addictions and using people as guinea pigs^[22] for his methods. It is also speculated that during his travels he was engaged in a certain amount of political activity, as part of The Great Game.^[23]

In Russia

From 1913 to 1949, the chronology appears to be based on material that can be confirmed by primary documents, independent witnesses, cross-references and reasonable inference.^[24] On New Year's Day in 1912, Gurdjieff arrived in Moscow and attracted his first students, including his cousin, the sculptor Sergey Merkurov, and the eccentric Rachmilievitch. In the same year, he married the Polish Julia Ostrowska in Saint Petersburg. In 1914, Gurdjieff advertised his ballet, *The Struggle of the Magicians*, and he supervised his pupils' writing of the sketch *Glimpses of Truth*. In 1915, Gurdjieff accepted P. D. Ouspensky as a pupil, and in 1916, he accepted the composer Thomas de Hartmann and his wife, Olga, as students. Then, he had about 30 pupils. Ouspensky already had a reputation as a writer on mystical subjects and had conducted his own, ultimately disappointing, search for wisdom in the East. The Fourth Way "system" taught during this period was complex and metaphysical, partly expressed in scientific terminology.

In the midst of revolutionary upheaval in Russia, Gurdjieff left Petrograd in 1917 to return to his family home in Alexandropol. During the Bolshevik Revolution, he set up temporary study communities in Essentuki in the Caucasus, then in Tuapse, Maikop, Sochi and Poti, all on the Black Sea coast of southern Russia, where he worked intensively with many of his Russian pupils. Gurdjieff said, "Begin in Russia, End in Russia".

In March 1918, Ouspensky separated from Gurdjieff, settling in England and teaching the Fourth Way in his own right. The two men were to have a very ambivalent relationship for decades to come.

Four months later, Gurdjieff's eldest sister and her family reached him in Essentuki as refugees, informing him that Turks had shot his father in Alexandropol on 15 May. As Essentuki became more and more threatened by civil war, Gurdjieff fabricated a newspaper story announcing his forthcoming "scientific expedition" to "Mount Induc". Posing as a scientist, Gurdjieff left Essentuki with fourteen companions (excluding Gurdjieff's family and Ouspensky). They travelled by train to Maikop, where hostilities delayed them for three weeks. In

spring 1919, Gurdjieff met the artist Alexandre de Salzmann and his wife Jeanne and accepted them as pupils. Assisted by Jeanne de Salzmann, Gurdjieff gave the first public demonstration of his Sacred Dances (Movements at the Tbilisi Opera House, 22 June).

In Georgia and Turkey

In 1919, Gurdjieff and his closest pupils moved to Tbilisi. There, Gurdjieff's wife Julia Ostrowska, the Stjoernvals, the Hartmanns, and the de Salzmanns gathered the fundamentals of his teaching. Gurdjieff concentrated on his still unstaged ballet, *The Struggle of the Magicians* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=3FpwJ1zkUfUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:%22G.+Gurdjieff%22&hl=zh-TW&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjy8fzF1IzKAhXIFqYKHXq8B6IQ6AEINDAD#v=onepage&q&f=false>). Thomas de Hartmann (who had made his debut years ago, before Czar Nicholas II of Russia), worked on the music for the ballet, and Olga Ivanovna Hinzberg (who years later wed the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright), practiced the ballet dances.^[25] In 1919, Gurdjieff established his first Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.

In late May 1920, when political conditions in Georgia changed and the old order was crumbling, his party travelled to Batumi on the Black Sea coast and then travelled by ship to Istanbul.^[26] Gurdjieff rented an apartment on Kumbaracı Street in Péra and later at 13 Abdullatif Yemeneci Sokak near the Galata Tower.^[27] The apartment is near the kha'neqa'h (monastery) of the Mevlevi Order (a Sufi Order following the teachings of Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi), where Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and Thomas de Hartmann witnessed the sema ceremony of the Whirling Dervishes. In Istanbul, Gurdjieff also met his future pupil Capt. John G. Bennett, then head of British Military Intelligence in Constantinople, who describes his impression of Gurdjieff as follows:

It was there that I first met Gurdjieff in the autumn of 1920, and no surroundings could have been more appropriate. In Gurdjieff, East and West do not just meet. Their difference is annihilated in a world outlook which knows no distinctions of race or creed. This was my first, and has remained one of my strongest impressions. A Greek from the Caucasus, he spoke Turkish with an accent of unexpected purity, the accent that one associates with those born and bred in the narrow circle of the Imperial Court. His appearance was striking enough even in Turkey, where one saw many unusual types. His head was shaven, immense black moustache, eyes which at one moment seemed very pale and at another almost black. Below average height, he gave nevertheless an impression of great physical strength

Prieuré at Avon

In August 1921 and 1922, Gurdjieff travelled around western Europe, lecturing and giving demonstrations of his work in various cities, such as Berlin and London. He attracted the allegiance of Ouspensky's many prominent pupils (notably the editor A. R. Orage). After an unsuccessful attempt to gain British citizenship, Gurdjieff established the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man south of Paris at the Prieuré des Basses Loges in Avon near the famous Château de Fontainebleau. The once-impressive but somewhat crumbling mansion set in extensive grounds housed an entourage of several dozen, including some of Gurdjieff's remaining relatives and some White Russian refugees.

New pupils included C. S. Nott, René Zuber, Margaret Anderson and her ward Fritz Peters. The generally intellectual and middle-class types who were attracted to Gurdjieff's teaching often found the Prieuré's spartan accommodation and emphasis on hard labour in the grounds disconcerting. Gurdjieff was putting into practice his teaching that people need to develop physically, emotionally and intellectually, hence the mixture of

lectures, music, dance, and manual work. Older pupils noticed how the Prieuré teaching differed from the complex metaphysical "system" that had been taught in Russia.^[28] In addition to the physical hardships, his personal behaviour towards pupils could be ferocious:

Gurdjieff was standing by his bed in a state of what seemed to me to be completely uncontrolled fury. He was raging at Orage, who stood impassively, and very pale, framed in one of the windows.... Suddenly, in the space of an instant, Gurdjieff's voice stopped, his whole personality changed, he gave me a broad smile—looking incredibly peaceful and inwardly quiet— motioned me to leave, and then resumed his tirade with undiminished force. This happened so quickly that I do not believe that Mr. Orage even noticed the break in the rhythm.^[29]

During this period, Gurdjieff acquired notoriety as "the man who killed Katherine Mansfield" after Katherine Mansfield died there of tuberculosis under his care on 9 January 1923.^[30] However, James Moore and Ouspensky^[31] argue that Mansfield knew she would soon die and that Gurdjieff made her last days happy and fulfilling.^[32]

First car accident, writing and visits to North America

Starting in 1924, Gurdjieff made visits to North America, where he eventually received the pupils taught previously by A.R. Orage. In 1924, while driving alone from Paris to Fontainebleau, he had a near-fatal car accident. Nursed by his wife and mother, he made a slow and painful recovery against medical expectation. Still convalescent, he formally "disbanded" his institute on 26 August (in fact, he dispersed only his "less dedicated" pupils), which he explained as an undertaking "in the future, under the pretext of different worthy reasons, to remove from my eyesight all those who by this or that make my life too comfortable".^[33]

After recovering, he began writing *Beelzebub's Tales*, the first part of *All and Everything* in a mixture of Armenian and Russian. The book was deliberately convoluted and obscure, forcing the reader to "work" to find its meaning. He also composed it according to his own principles, writing in noisy cafes to force a greater effort of concentration.

Gurdjieff's mother died in 1925 and his wife developed cancer and died in June 1926. Ouspensky attended her funeral. According to Fritz Peters, Gurdjieff was in New York from November 1925 to the spring of 1926, when he succeeded in raising over \$100,000.^[34] He was to make six or seven trips to the US, where he alienated a number of people with his brash and impudent demands for money. Some have interpreted that in terms of his following the Malamatiyya technique of the Sufis, he was deliberately attracting disapproval.^[35]

A Chicago-based Gurdjieff group was founded by Jean Toomer in 1927 after he had trained in Prieuré for a year. Diana Huebert was a regular member of the Chicago group, and documented the several visits Gurdjieff made to the group in 1932 and 1934 in her memoirs on the man.^[36]

Despite his fund-raising efforts in America, the Prieuré operation ran into debt and was shut down in 1932. Gurdjieff constituted a new teaching group in Paris. Known as The Rope, it was composed of only women, many of them writers, and several lesbians. Members included Kathryn Hulme, Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson and Enrico Caruso's widow, Dorothy. Gurdjieff became acquainted with Gertrude Stein through Rope members, but she was never a follower.^[37]

In 1935, Gurdjieff stopped work on *All and Everything*. He had completed the first two parts of the planned trilogy but only started on the *Third Series*. (It was later published under the title *Life Is Real Only Then, When I Am*.) In 1936, he settled in a flat at 6, Rue des Colonels-Renard in Paris, where he was to stay for the rest of his life. In 1937, his brother Dmitry died, and The Rope disbanded.

World War II

Although the flat at 6 Rue des Colonels-Renard was very small for the purpose, he continued to teach groups of pupils throughout World War II. Visitors recalled the pantry, stocked with an extraordinary collection of eastern delicacies, which served as his inner sanctum, and the suppers he held with elaborate toasts to "idiots"^[38] in vodka and cognac. Having cut a physically impressive figure for many years, he was now distinctly paunchy. His teaching was now far removed from the original "system", being based on proverbs, jokes and personal interaction, although pupils were required to read, three times if possible, copies of his magnum opus *Beelzebub's Tales*.

His personal business enterprises (he had intermittently been a dealer in oriental rugs and carpets for much of his life, among other activities) enabled him to offer charitable relief to neighbours who had been affected by the difficult circumstances of the war, and it also brought him to the attention of the authorities, leading to a night in the cells.

Final years

After the war, Gurdjieff tried to reconnect with his former pupils. Ouspensky was reluctant, but after his death (October 1947), his widow advised his remaining pupils to see Gurdjieff in Paris. J. G. Bennett also visited from England, the first meeting for 25 years. Ouspensky's pupils in England had all thought that Gurdjieff was dead. They discovered he was alive only after the death of Ouspensky, who had not told them that Gurdjieff was still living. They were overjoyed to hear so, and many of Ouspensky's pupils including Rina Hands, Basil Tilley and Catherine Murphy visited Gurdjieff in Paris. Hands and Murphy worked on the typing and retyping of the forthcoming book *All and Everything*.

Gurdjieff suffered a second car accident in 1948 but again made an unexpected recovery.

"[I] was looking at a dying man. Even this is not enough to express it. It was a dead man, a corpse, that came out of the car; and yet it walked. I was shivering like someone who sees a ghost."

With iron-like tenacity, he managed to gain his room, where he sat down and said: "Now all organs are destroyed. Must make new". Then, he turned to Bennett, smiling: "Tonight you come dinner. I must make body work". As he spoke, a great spasm of pain shook his body and blood gushed from an ear. Bennett thought: "He has a cerebral haemorrhage. He will kill himself if he continues to force his body to move". But then he reflected: "He has to do all this. If he allows his body to stop moving, he will die. He has power over his body"^[39]

After recovering, Gurdjieff finalised plans for the official publication of *Beelzebub's Tales* and made two trips to New York. He also visited the famous prehistoric cave paintings at Lascaux, giving his interpretation of their significance to his pupils.

Gurdjieff died at the American Hospital in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France. His funeral took place at the St. Alexandre Nevsky Russian Orthodox Cathedral at 12 Rue Daru, Paris. He is buried in the cemetery at Avon (near Fontainebleau).^[40]

Children

Although no evidence or documents have certified anyone as a child of Gurdjieff, the following seven people are believed to be his children:^[41]

- Cynthia Sophia "Dushka" Howarth (1924–2010); her mother was dancer Jessmin Howarth.^{[42][43][44]} She went on to found the Gurdjieff Heritage Foundation.^[44]
- Sergei Chaverdian; his mother was Lily Galumnian Chaverdian.^[45]
- Andrei, born to a mother known only as Georgii.^[45]
- Eve Taylor (born 1928); the mother was one of his followers, American socialite Edith Annesley Taylor.^[41]
- Nikolai Stjernvall (1919–2010), whose mother was Elizaveta Grigorievna, wife of Leonid Robertovich de Stjernvall.^[46]
- Michel de Salzman (1923–2001), whose mother was Jeanne Allemand de Salzman; he later became head of the Gurdjieff Foundation.^[47]
- Svetlana Hinzenberg (1917–1946), daughter of Olga (Olgivanna) Ivanovna Hinzenberg and a future stepdaughter of architect Frank Lloyd Wright.^{[48][49]}



The body of Gurdjieff, lying in state, France. 'Every one of those unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests'.

Gurdjieff had a niece, Luba Gurdjieff Everitt, who for about 40 years (1950s-1990s) ran a small but rather famous restaurant, Luba's Bistro, in Knightsbridge, London.^[50]

Ideas

Gurdjieff believed that people cannot perceive reality in their current condition because they do not possess a unified consciousness but rather live in a state of a hypnotic "waking sleep".

"Man lives his life in sleep, and in sleep he dies."^[51] As a result of this each person perceives things from a completely subjective perspective. He asserted that people in their typical state function as unconscious automatons, but that a person can "wake up" and become a different sort of human being altogether.^[52]

Some contemporary researchers claim Gurdjieff's concept of 'self-remembering' is close to the Buddhist concept of awareness or a popular definition of "mindfulness." The Buddhist term translated into English as "mindfulness" originates in the Pali term "sati," which is identical to Sanskrit "smṛti." Both terms mean "to remember."^[53]

Self-development teachings

Gurdjieff argued that many of the existing forms of religious and spiritual tradition on Earth had lost connection with their original meaning and vitality and so could no longer serve humanity in the way that had been intended at their inception. As a result, humans were failing to realize the truths of ancient teachings and were instead becoming more and more like automatons, susceptible to control from outside and increasingly capable of otherwise unthinkable acts of mass psychosis such as World War I. At best, the various surviving sects and schools could provide only a one-sided development, which did not result in a fully integrated human being.

According to Gurdjieff, only one dimension of the three dimensions of the person—namely, either the emotions, or the physical body or the mind—tends to develop in such schools and sects, and generally at the expense of the other faculties or *centers*, as Gurdjieff called them. As a result, these paths fail to produce a properly balanced human being. Furthermore, anyone wishing to undertake any of the traditional paths to spiritual knowledge (which Gurdjieff reduced to three—namely the path of the fakir, the path of the monk, and

the path of the yogi) were required to renounce life in the world. Gurdjieff thus developed a "Fourth Way"^[54] which would be amenable to the requirements of modern people living modern lives in Europe and America. Instead of developing body, mind, or emotions separately, Gurdjieff's discipline worked on all three to promote comprehensive and balanced inner development.

In parallel with other spiritual traditions, Gurdjieff taught that a person must expend considerable effort to effect the transformation that leads to awakening. The effort that is put into practice Gurdjieff referred to as "The Work" or "Work on oneself".^[55] According to Gurdjieff, "...Working on oneself is not so difficult as wishing to work, taking the decision."^[56] Though Gurdjieff never put major significance on the term "Fourth Way" and never used the term in his writings, his pupil P. D. Ouspensky from 1924 to 1947 made the term and its use central to his own teaching of Gurdjieff's ideas. After Ouspensky's death, his students published a book titled *The Fourth Way* based on his lectures.^[57]

Gurdjieff's teaching addressed the question of humanity's place in the universe and the importance of developing latent potentialities—regarded as our natural endowment as human beings but rarely brought to fruition. He taught that higher levels of consciousness, higher bodies,^[58] inner growth and development are real possibilities that nonetheless require conscious work to achieve.^[59]

In his teaching Gurdjieff gave a distinct meaning to various ancient texts such as the Bible and many religious prayers. He believed that such texts possess meanings very different from those commonly attributed to them. "Sleep not"; "Awake, for you know not the hour"; and "The Kingdom of Heaven is Within" are examples of biblical statements which point to teachings whose essence has been forgotten.^[60]

Gurdjieff taught people how to increase and focus their attention and energy in various ways and to minimize daydreaming and absentmindedness. According to his teaching, this inner development of oneself is the beginning of a possible further process of change, the aim of which is to transform people into what Gurdjieff believed they ought to be.^[61]

Distrusting "morality", which he describes as varying from culture to culture, often contradictory and hypocritical, Gurdjieff greatly stressed the importance of "conscience".

To provide conditions in which inner attention could be exercised more intensively, Gurdjieff also taught his pupils "sacred dances" or "movements", later known as the Gurdjieff movements, which they performed together as a group. He also left a body of music, inspired by what he heard in visits to remote monasteries and other places, written for piano in collaboration with one of his pupils, Thomas de Hartmann.

Gurdjieff also used various exercises, such as the "Stop" exercise, to prompt self-observation in his students. Other shocks to help awaken his pupils from constant daydreaming were always possible at any moment.

Methods

"The Work" is in essence a training in the development of consciousness. Gurdjieff used a number of methods and materials, including meetings, music, movements (sacred dance), writings, lectures, and innovative forms of group and individual work. Part of the function of these various methods was to undermine and undo the ingrained habit patterns of the mind and bring about moments of insight. Since each individual has different requirements, Gurdjieff did not have a one-size-fits-all approach, and he adapted and innovated as circumstance required.^[62] In Russia he was described as keeping his teaching confined to a small circle,^[63] whereas in Paris and North America he gave numerous public demonstrations.^[64]

Gurdjieff felt that the traditional methods of self-knowledge—those of the fakir, monk, and yogi (acquired, respectively, through pain, devotion, and study)—were inadequate on their own and often led to various forms of stagnation and one-sidedness. His methods were designed to augment the traditional paths with the purpose of hastening the developmental process. He sometimes called these methods *The Way of the Sly Man*^[65] because they constituted a sort of short-cut through a process of development that might otherwise carry on for years without substantive results. The teacher, more adept, sees the individual requirements of the disciple and sets tasks that he knows will result in a transformation of consciousness in that individual. Instructive historical parallels can be found in the annals of Zen Buddhism, where teachers employed a variety of methods (sometimes highly unorthodox) to bring about the arising of insight in the student.

Music

Gurdjieff's music divides into three distinct periods. The "first period" is the early music, including music from the ballet *Struggle of the Magicians* and music for early movements dating to the years around 1918.

The "second period" music, for which Gurdjieff arguably became best known, written in collaboration with Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann, is described as the Gurdjieff-de Hartmann music.^{[66][67]} Dating to the mid-1920s, it offers a rich repertoire with roots in Caucasian and Central Asian folk and religious music, Russian Orthodox liturgical music, and other sources. This music was often first heard in the salon at the Priuré, where much was composed. Since the publication of four volumes of this piano repertoire by Schott, recently completed, there has been a wealth of new recordings, including orchestral versions of music prepared by Gurdjieff and de Hartmann for the Movements demonstrations of 1923–24. Solo piano versions of these works have been recorded by Cecil Lytle,^[68] Keith Jarrett,^[69] Frederic Chiu.^[70]

The "last musical period" is the improvised harmonium music which often followed the dinners Gurdjieff held at his Paris apartment during the Occupation and immediate post-war years to his death in 1949. In all, Gurdjieff in collaboration with de Hartmann composed some 200 pieces.^[71] In May 2010, 38 minutes of unreleased solo piano music on acetate was purchased by Neil Kempfer Stocker from the estate of his late step-daughter, Dushka Howarth. In 2009, pianist Elan Sicroff released *Laudamus: The Music of Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann*, consisting of a selection of Gurdjieff/de Hartmann collaborations (as well as three early romantic works composed by de Hartmann in his teens).^[72] In 1998 Alessandra Celletti released "Hidden Sources^[73]" (Kha Records) with 18 tracks by Gurdjieff/de Hartmann.

Movements

Movements, or sacred dances, constitute an integral part of the Gurdjieff Work. Gurdjieff sometimes referred to himself as a "teacher of dancing" and gained initial public notice for his attempts to put on a ballet in Moscow called *Struggle of the Magicians*.

Films of movements demonstrations are occasionally shown for private viewing by the Gurdjieff Foundations, and one is shown in a scene in the Peter Brook movie *Meetings with Remarkable Men*.

Writings

Gurdjieff wrote a unique trilogy with the Series title *All and Everything*. The first volume, finalized by Gurdjieff shortly before his death and first published in 1950, is the First Series and titled *An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man* or *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. At 1238 pages it is a lengthy allegorical work that recounts the explanations of Beelzebub to his grandson concerning the beings of the planet Earth and laws which govern the universe. It provides a vast platform for Gurdjieff's deeply considered philosophy. A controversial redaction of *Beelzebub's Tales* was published by some of Gurdjieff's followers as an alternative "edition", in 1992. [See Paul Beekman Taylor's' *Gurdjieff's Worlds of Words* (2014) for an

informed account.] On his page of *Friendly Advice* facing the first Contents page of *Beelzebub's Tales* Gurdjieff lays out his own program of three obligatory initial readings of each of the three series in sequence and concludes, "Only then will you be able to count upon forming your own impartial judgement, proper to yourself alone, on my writings. And only then can my hope be actualized that according to your understanding you will obtain the specific benefit for your self which I anticipate."

The posthumous second series, edited by Jeanne de Salzmänn, is titled *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1963) and is written in a seemingly accessible manner as a memoir of his early years, but also contains some 'Arabian Nights' embellishments and allegorical statements. His posthumous Third Series, (*Life Is Real Only Then, When I Am*), written as if unfinished and also edited by Jeanne de Salzmänn, contains an intimate account of Gurdjieff's inner struggles during his later years, as well as transcripts of some of his lectures. An enormous and growing amount has been written about Gurdjieff's ideas and methods, but his own challenging writings remain the primary sources.

Reception and influence

Opinions on Gurdjieff's writings and activities are divided. Sympathizers regard him as a charismatic master who brought new knowledge into Western culture, a psychology and cosmology that enable insights beyond those provided by established science.^[59] At the other end of the spectrum, some critics assert he was a charlatan with a large ego and a constant need for self-glorification.^[74] Gurdjieff had significant influence on some artists, writers, and thinkers, including Walter Inglis Anderson, Peter Brook, Kate Bush, Darby Crash, Muriel Draper, Robert Fripp, Keith Jarrett, Timothy Leary, Dennis Lewis, James Moore, A. R. Orage, P. D. Ouspensky, Maurice Nicoll, Louis Pauwels, Robert S de Ropp, George Russell, David Sylvian, Jean Toomer, Jeremy Lane, Therion, P. L. Travers, Alan Watts, Colin Wilson, Robert Anton Wilson, Frank Lloyd Wright, and John Zorn.^[75]

Gurdjieff's notable personal students include P. D. Ouspensky, Olga de Hartmann, Thomas de Hartmann, Jane Heap, Jeanne de Salzmänn, Willem Nyland, Lord Pentland (Henry John Sinclair), John G. Bennett, Alfred Richard Orage, Maurice Nicoll, and Rene Daumal.

Gurdjieff gave new life and practical form to ancient teachings of both East and West. For example, the Socratic and Platonic emphasis on "the examined life" recurs in Gurdjieff's teaching as the practice of self-observation. His teachings about self-discipline and restraint reflect Stoic teachings. The Hindu and Buddhist notion of attachment recurs in Gurdjieff's teaching as the concept of identification. His descriptions of the "three being-foods" matches that of Ayurveda, and his statement that "time is breath" echoes jyotish, the Vedic system of astrology. Similarly, his cosmology can be "read" against ancient and esoteric sources, respectively Neoplatonic and in such sources as Robert Fludd's treatment of macrocosmic musical structures.

An aspect of Gurdjieff's teachings which has come into prominence in recent decades is the enneagram geometric figure. For many students of the Gurdjieff tradition, the enneagram remains a koan, challenging and never fully explained. There have been many attempts to trace the origins of this version of the enneagram; some similarities to other figures have been found, but it seems that Gurdjieff was the first person to make the enneagram figure publicly known and that only he knew its true source. Others have used the enneagram figure in connection with personality analysis, principally with the Enneagram of Personality as developed by Oscar Ichazo, Claudio Naranjo and others. Most aspects of this application are not directly connected to Gurdjieff's teaching or to his explanations of the enneagram.

Gurdjieff inspired the formation of many groups after his death, all of which still function today and follow his ideas.^[76] The Gurdjieff Foundation, the largest establishment organization influenced by the ideas of Gurdjieff, was organized by Jeanne de Salzmänn during the early 1950s, and led by her in cooperation with other pupils of his. Other pupils of Gurdjieff formed independent groups. Willem Nyland, one of Gurdjieff's closest students and an original founder and trustee of The Gurdjieff Foundation of New York, left to form his

own groups in the early 1960s. Jane Heap was sent to London by Gurdjieff, where she led groups until her death in 1964. Louise Goepfert March, who became a pupil of Gurdjieff's in 1929, started her own groups in 1957 and founded the Rochester Folk Art Guild in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. Independent thriving groups were also formed and initially led by John G. Bennett and A. L. Staveley near Portland, Oregon.

Pupils

Gurdjieff's notable pupils include:^[77]

Peter D. Ouspensky (1878–1947) was a Russian journalist, author and philosopher. He met Gurdjieff in 1915 and spent the next five years studying with him, then formed his own independent groups at London in 1921. Ouspensky became the first "career" Gurdjieffian and led independent Fourth Way groups in London and New York for his remaining years. He wrote *In Search of the Miraculous* about his encounters with Gurdjieff and it remains the best known and most widely read account of Gurdjieff's early experiments with groups.

Thomas de Hartmann (1885–1956) was a Russian composer. He and his wife Olga first met Gurdjieff in 1916 at Saint Petersburg. They remained Gurdjieff's close students until 1929. During that time they lived at Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man near Paris. Between July 1925 and May 1927 Thomas de Hartmann transcribed and co-wrote some of the music that Gurdjieff collected and used for his Movements exercises. They collaborated on hundreds of pieces of concert music arranged for the piano. This concert music was first recorded and published privately from the 1950s to 1980s; then first issued publicly as the *Music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann*, Thomas de Hartmann, piano by Triangle Records, with 49 tracks on 4 vinyl disks in 1998, then reissued as a 3-CD set in containing 56 tracks in 1989. A more extensive compilation was later issued as the *Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music for the Piano* in 4 printed volumes by Schott between 1996 and 2005, and as audio CDs under the same title in four volumes with nine discs recorded with three concert pianists, by Schott/Wergo between 1997 and 2001. Olga de Hartmann (née Arkadievna, 1885–1987) was Gurdjieff's personal secretary during their Prieuré years and took most of the original dictations of his writings during that period. She also authenticated Gurdjieff's early talks in the book *Views from the Real World* (1973). The de Hartmanns' memoir, *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff* (1st ed, 1964, 2nd ed, 1983, 3rd ed 1992), records their Gurdjieff years in great detail. Their Montreal Gurdjieff group, literary and musical estate is represented by retired Canadian National Film Board producer Tom Daly.

Jeanne de Salzman (1889–1990). Alexander and Jeanne de Salzman met Gurdjieff in Tiflis in 1919. She was originally a dancer, a Dalcroze Eurythmics teacher. She was, along with Jessmin Howarth and Rose Mary Nott, responsible for transmitting Gurdjieff's choreographed movement exercises and institutionalizing Gurdjieff's teachings through the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York, the Gurdjieff Institute of Paris, London's Gurdjieff Society Inc., and other groups she established in 1953. She also established Triangle Editions in the US, which imprint claims copyright on all Gurdjieff's posthumous writings.

John G. Bennett (1897–1974) was a British intelligence officer, polyglot (fluent in English, French, German, Turkish, Greek, Italian), technologist, industrial research director, author, and teacher, best known for his many books on psychology and spirituality, particularly the teachings of Gurdjieff. Bennett met both Ouspensky and then Gurdjieff at Istanbul in 1920, spent August 1923 at Gurdjieff's Institute, became Ouspensky's pupil between 1922 and 1941 and, after learning that Gurdjieff was still alive, was one of Gurdjieff's frequent visitors in Paris during 1949. See *Witness: the Autobiography of John Bennett* (1974), *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*(1974), *Idiots in Paris: diaries of J. G. Bennett and Elizabeth Bennett, 1949* (1991).

Alfred Richard Orage (1873–1934) was an influential British editor best known for the magazine *New Age*. He began attending Ouspensky's London talks in 1921 then met Gurdjieff when the latter first visited London early in 1922. Shortly thereafter, Orage sold *New Age* and relocated to Gurdjieff's institute at the Prieuré, and in 1924 was appointed by Gurdjieff to lead the institute's branch in New York. After Gurdjieff's nearly fatal

automobile accident in July 1924 and because of his prolonged recuperation during 1924 and intense writing period for several years, Orage continued in New York until 1931. During this period, Orage was responsible for editing the English typescript of *Beelzebub's Tales* (1931) and *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1963) as Gurdjieff's assistant. This period is described in some detail by Paul Beekman Taylor in his *Gurdjieff and Orage: Brothers in Elysium* (2001).

Maurice Nicoll (1884–1953) was a Harley Street psychiatrist and Carl Jung's delegate in London. Along with Orage he attended Ouspensky's 1921 London talks where he met Gurdjieff. With his wife Catherine and their daughter, he spent almost a year at Gurdjieff's Prieuré institute. A year later, when they returned to London, Nicoll rejoined Ouspensky's group. In 1931, on Ouspensky's advice he started his own Fourth Way groups in England. He is best known for the encyclopedic six-volume series of articles in *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996, and Samuel Weiser Inc., 1996).

Willem Nyland (1890–1975) was a Dutch-American chemist who first met Gurdjieff early in 1924 during the latter's first visit to the US. He was a charter member of the NY branch of Gurdjieff's Institute, participated in Orage's meetings between 1924 and 1931, and was a charter member of the Gurdjieff Foundation from 1953 and through its formative years. In the early 1960s he established an independent group in Warwick NY, where he began making reel-to-reel audio recordings of his meetings, which became archived in a private library of some 2600 90-minute audio tapes. Many of these tapes have also been transcribed and indexed, but remain unpublished. *Gurdjieff Group Work with Wilhem (sic-Willem) Nyland* (1983) by Irmis B. Popoff, sketches Nyland's group work.

Jane Heap (1883–1964) was an American writer, editor, artist, and publisher. She met Gurdjieff during his 1924 visit to New York, and set up a Gurdjieff study group at her apartment in Greenwich Village. In 1925, she moved to Paris to study at Gurdjieff's Institute, and re-established her group in Paris until 1935 when Gurdjieff sent her to London to lead the group C. S. Nott had established and which she continued to lead until her death. Jane Heap's Paris group became Gurdjieff's 'Rope' group after her departure, and contained several notable writers, including Margaret Anderson, Solita Solano, Kathryn Hulme, and others who proved helpful to Gurdjieff while he was editing his first two books.

Kenneth Macfarlane Walker (1882–1966) was a prominent British surgeon and prolific author. He was a member of Ouspensky's London group for decades, and after the latter's death in 1947 visited Gurdjieff in Paris many times. As well as many accessible medical books for lay readers, he wrote some of the earliest informed accounts of Gurdjieff's ideas, *Venture with Ideas* (1951) and *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching* (1957).

Henry John Sinclair, 2nd Baron Pentland (1907–1984) was a pupil of Ouspensky's during the 1930s and 1940s. He visited Gurdjieff regularly in Paris in 1949, then was appointed as President of the Gurdjieff Foundation of America by Jeanne de Salzmann when she founded that institution at New York in 1953. He established the Gurdjieff Foundation of California in the mid-1950s and remained President of the US Foundation branches until his death. Pentland also became President of Triangle Editions when it was established in 1974.

Critics

Louis Pauwels, among others,^[78] criticizes Gurdjieff for his insistence on considering people as "asleep" in a state closely resembling "hypnotic sleep". Gurdjieff said, even specifically at times, that a pious, good, and moral person was no more "spiritually developed" than any other person; they are all equally "asleep".^[79]

Henry Miller approved of Gurdjieff not considering himself holy but, after writing a brief introduction to Fritz Peters' book *Boyhood with Gurdjieff*, Miller wrote that people are not meant to lead a "harmonious life" as Gurdjieff believed in naming his institute.^[80]

Critics note that Gurdjieff gives no value to most of the elements that compose the life of an average person. According to Gurdjieff, everything an average person possesses, accomplishes, does, and feels is completely accidental and without any initiative. A common everyday ordinary person is born a machine and dies a machine without any chance of being anything else.^[81] This belief seems to run counter to the Judeo-Christian tradition that man is a living soul. Gurdjieff believed that the possession of a soul (a state of psychological unity which he equated with being "awake") was a "luxury" that a disciple could attain only by the most painstaking work over a long period of time. The majority—in whom the true meaning of the gospel failed to take root^[82]—went the "broad way" that "led to destruction."^[83]

In *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (see bibliography), Gurdjieff expresses his reverence for the founders of the mainstream religions of East and West and his contempt (by and large) for what successive generations of believers have made of those religious teachings. His discussions of "orthodoxhydooraki" and "heterodoxhydooraki"—orthodox fools and heterodox fools, from the Russian word *durak* (fool)—position him as a critic of religious distortion and, in turn, as a target for criticism from some within those traditions. Gurdjieff has been interpreted by some, Ouspensky among others, to have had a total disregard for the value of mainstream religion, philanthropic work and the value of doing right or wrong in general.^[84]

Gurdjieff's former students who have criticized him argue that, despite his seeming total lack of pretension to any kind of "guru holiness", in many anecdotes his behavior displays the unsavory and impure character of a man who was a cynical manipulator of his followers.^[85] Gurdjieff's own pupils wrestled to understand him. For example, in a written exchange between Luc Dietrich and Henri Tracol dating to 1943: "L.D.: How do you know that Gurdjieff wishes you well? H.T.: I feel sometimes how little I interest him—and how strongly he takes an interest in me. By that I measure the strength of an intentional feeling."^[86]

Louis Pauwels wrote *Monsieur Gurdjieff* (first edition published in Paris in 1954 by Editions du Seuil).^[87] In an interview, Pauwels said of the Gurdjieff work: "... After two years of exercises which both enlightened and burned me, I found myself in a hospital bed with a thrombosed central vein in my left eye and weighing ninety-nine pounds... Horrible anguish and abysses opened up for me. But it was my fault."^[88]

Pauwels believed that Karl Haushofer, the father of geopolitics whose protégée was Deputy Reich Führer Rudolf Hess, was one of the real "seekers after truth" described by Gurdjieff. According to Rom Landau, a journalist in the 1930s, Achmed Abdullah told him at the beginning of the 20th century that Gurdjieff was a Russian secret agent in Tibet who went by the name of "Hambro Akuan Dorzhieff" (i.e. Agvan Dorjiev), a tutor to the Dalai Lama.^[89] However, the actual Dorzhieff went to live in the Buddhist temple erected in St. Petersburg and after the Revolution was imprisoned by Stalin. James Webb conjectured that Gurdjieff might have been Dorzhieff's assistant Ushe Narzunoff (i.e. Ovshe Norzunov).^[90]

Colin Wilson writes about "...Gurdjieff's reputation for seducing his female students. (In Providence, Rhode Island, in 1960, a man was pointed out to me as one of Gurdjieff's illegitimate children. The professor who told me this also assured me that Gurdjieff had left many children around America.)"^[91]

In *The Oragean Version*, C. Daly King surmised that the problem that Gurdjieff had with Orage's teachings was that the "Oragean Version", Orage himself, was not emotional enough in Gurdjieff's estimation and had not enough "incredulity" and faith. King wrote that Gurdjieff did not state it as clearly and specifically as this, but was quick to add that, to him, nothing Gurdjieff said was specific or clear.

According to Osho, the Gurdjieff system is incomplete, drawing from Dervish sources inimical to Kundalini. Some Sufi orders, such as the Naqshbandi, draw from and are amenable to Kundalini.^[92]

Bibliography

Three books by Gurdjieff were published in the English language in the United States after his death: *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* published in 1950 by E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, published in 1963 by E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., and *Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'*, printed privately by E. P. Dutton & Co. and published in 1978 by Triangle Editions Inc. for private distribution only. This trilogy is Gurdjieff's legominism, known collectively as *All and Everything*. A legominism is, according to Gurdjieff, "one of the means of transmitting information about certain events of long-past ages through initiates". A book of his early talks was also collected by his student and personal secretary, Olga de Hartmann, and published in 1973 as *Views from the Real World: Early Talks in Moscow, Essentuki, Tiflis, Berlin, London, Paris, New York, and Chicago, as recollected by his pupils*.

Gurdjieff's views were initially promoted through the writings of his pupils. The best known and widely read of these is P. D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, which is widely regarded as a crucial introduction to the teaching. Others refer to Gurdjieff's own books (detailed below) as the primary texts. Numerous anecdotal accounts of time spent with Gurdjieff were published by Charles Stanley Nott, Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, Fritz Peters, René Daumal, John G. Bennett, Maurice Nicoll, Margaret Anderson and Louis Pauwels, among others.

The feature film *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1979), loosely based on Gurdjieff's book by the same name, ends with performances of Gurdjieff's dances known simply as the "exercises" but later promoted as *movements*. Jeanne de Salzmann and Peter Brook wrote the film, Brook directed, and Dragan Maksimovic and Terence Stamp star, as does South African playwright and actor Athol Fugard.^[93]

Books

- *The Herald of Coming Good* by G. I. Gurdjieff (1933, 1971, 1988)
- *All and Everything* trilogy:
 - *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* by G. I. Gurdjieff (1950)
 - *Meetings with Remarkable Men* by G. I. Gurdjieff (1963)
 - *Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am': All and Everything...* ISBN 978-0140195859 by G. I. Gurdjieff (1974)
- *Views from the Real World* gathered talks of G. I. Gurdjieff by his pupil Olga de Hartmann(1973)
- *Scenario of the Ballet: The Struggle of the Magicians* ISBN 978-0957248120 by G. I. Gurdjieff
- *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941–1946* ISBN 978-0955909054

See also

- *In Search of the Miraculous*

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4. <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/58952> Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Edited by Michael Pittman. G. I. Gurdjieff: Armenian Roots, Global Branches. During the early period after Gurdjieff's arrival in Europe in 1921 he gained significant notoriety in Europe and the United States... In October of 1922, Gurdjieff set up a school at the Prieuré des Basses Loges at Fontainebleau-Avon, outside of Paris. It was at the Prieuré that Gurdjieff met many notable figures, authors, and artists of the early twentieth century, many of whom went on to be close students and exponents of his teaching. Over the course of his life, those who visited and worked with him included the French author René Daumal; the renowned short story author from New Zealand, Katherine Mansfield; Kathryn Hulme, later the author of *A Nun's Life*; P. L. Travers, the author of *Mary Poppins*; and Jean Toomer, the author of *Cane*, whose work and influence would figure prominently in the Harlem Renaissance... Numerous study groups, organizations, formal foundations, and even land-based communities have been initiated in his name, primarily in North and South America and Europe, and to a lesser extent, in Japan, China, India, Australia, and South Africa. In 1979, Peter Brook, the British theater director and author, created a film based on *Meetings with Remarkable Men*.
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External links

- [International Association of Gurdjieff Foundations \(http://www.institut-gurdjieff.com/iagf/\)](http://www.institut-gurdjieff.com/iagf/)
 - [Gurdjieff Reading Guide compiled by J. Walter Driscoll \(http://www.Gurdjieff-Bibliography.com/\)](http://www.Gurdjieff-Bibliography.com/). Fifty-two articles which provide an independent survey of the literature by or about George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff and offer a wide range of informed opinion (admiring, critical, and contradictory) about him, his activities, writings, philosophy, and influence.
 - [Writings on Gurdjieff's teachings in the Elizabeth Jenks Clark Collection of Margaret Anderson Papers \(http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.andersonm\)](http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.andersonm) at Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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P. D. Ouspensky

Pyotr Demianovich Ouspenskii (known in English as **Peter D. Ouspensky**; Russian: Пётр Демьянович Успенский, romanized: *Pyotr Dem'yanovich Uspenskiy*; 5 March 1878 – 2 October 1947),^[2] was a Russian *esotericist* known for his expositions of the early work of the Greek-Armenian teacher of esoteric doctrine *George Gurdjieff*. He met Gurdjieff in *Moscow* in 1915, and was associated with the ideas and practices originating with Gurdjieff from then on. He taught ideas and methods based in the Gurdjieff system for 25 years in England and the United States, although he separated from Gurdjieff personally in 1924, for reasons that are explained in the last chapter of his book *In Search of the Miraculous*.

Ouspensky studied the Gurdjieff system directly under Gurdjieff's own supervision for a period of ten years, from 1915 to 1924. *In Search of the Miraculous* recounts what he learned from Gurdjieff during those years. While lecturing in London in 1924, he announced that he would continue independently the way he had begun in 1921. Some, including his close pupil *Rodney Collin*, say that he finally gave up the system in 1947, just before his death, but his own recorded words on the subject ("A Record of Meetings", published posthumously) do not clearly endorse this judgement.^[3]

Contents

Early life

Career

Later life

Teaching

Fourth Way

Self-remembering

Published works

References

Further reading

External links

P. D. Ouspensky



Born Pyotr Demianovich

Ouspenskii

5 March 1878

Kharkov,^[1] *Russian Empire*

Died 2 October 1947 (aged 69)

Lyne Place, *Surrey*, *England*,

UK

Early life

Ouspensky was born in *Kharkov*, today modern day Ukraine, in 1878. In 1890, he studied at the Second Moscow Gymnasium, a government school attended by boys aged from 10 to 18. At the age of 16, he was expelled from school for painting graffiti on the wall in plain sight of a visiting inspector. From then on he was more or less on his own.^[4] In 1906, he worked in the editorial office of the Moscow daily paper *The Morning*. In 1907 he became interested in *Theosophy*. In the autumn of 1913, aged 35, he journeyed to the East in

search of the miraculous. He visited Theosophists in Adyar, but was forced to return to Moscow after the beginning of the Great War. In Moscow he met Gurdjieff and married Sophie Grigorievna Maximenko. He had a mistress by the name of Anna Ilinishna Butkovsky.^[5]

Career

During his years in Moscow, Ouspensky wrote for several newspapers and was particularly interested in the then-fashionable idea of the fourth dimension.^[6] His first work, published in 1909, was titled *The Fourth Dimension*.^[7] It was influenced by the ideas prevalent in the works of Charles H. Hinton,^[8] which treated the fourth dimension as an extension in space.^{[9][10]} Ouspensky treats time as a fourth dimension only indirectly in a novel he wrote titled *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*^[11] where he also explores the theory of eternal recurrence.

Ouspensky's second work, *Tertium Organum*, was published in 1912. In it he denies the ultimate reality of space and time,^[12] and negates Aristotle's Logical Formula of Identification of "A is A", concluding in his "higher logic" that A is both A and not-A.^[13] Unbeknown to Ouspensky, a Russian émigré by the name of Nicholas Bessarabof took a copy of *Tertium Organum* to America and placed it in the hands of the architect Claude Bragdon who could read Russian and was interested in the fourth dimension.^[14] *Tertium Organum* was rendered into English by Bragdon who had incorporated his own design of the hypercube^{[15][16]} into the Rochester Chamber of Commerce building.^[17] Bragdon also published the book and the publication was such a success that it was finally taken up by Alfred A. Knopf. At the time, in the early 1920s, Ouspensky's whereabouts were unknown. Bragdon located him in Constantinople and paid him back some royalties.

Ouspensky traveled in Europe and the East — India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Egypt — in his search for knowledge. After his return to Russia and his introduction to Gurdjieff in 1915, he spent the next few years studying with him, and supporting the founding of a school.

Prior to 1914 Ouspensky had written and published a number of articles. In 1917 he updated these articles to include "recent developments in physics" and republished them as a book in Russian entitled *A New Model of the Universe*.^[18] The work, as reflected in its title, shows the influence of Francis Bacon and Max Müller, and has been interpreted as an attempt to reconcile ideas from natural science and religious studies with occultism in the tradition of Gurdjieff and Theosophy.^[19] It was assumed that that book was lost to the Revolution's violence, but it was then republished in English (without Ouspensky's knowledge) in 1931. The work has attracted the interest of a number of philosophers and has been a widely accepted authoritative basis for a study of metaphysics. Ouspensky sought to exceed the limits of metaphysics with his "psychological method", which he defined as "a calibration of the tools of human understanding to derive the actual meaning of the thing itself". (paraphrasing p. 75.) According to Ouspensky: "The idea of esotericism ... holds that the very great majority of our ideas are not the product of evolution but the product of the degeneration of ideas which existed at some time or are still existing somewhere in much higher, purer and more complete forms." (p. 47) The book also provided an original discussion on the nature and expression of sexuality; among other things, he draws a distinction between erotica and pornography.

Ouspensky's lectures in London were attended by such literary figures as Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot, Gerald Heard and other writers, journalists and doctors. His influence on the literary scene of the 1920s and 1930s as well as on the Russian avant-garde was immense but still very little known.^[20] It was said of Ouspensky that, though nonreligious, he had one prayer: not to become famous during his lifetime.

Later life

After the Bolshevik revolution, Ouspensky travelled to London by way of Istanbul. In London, a number of eminent people became interested in his work. Lady Rothermere, wife of Harold Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Rothermere, the press magnate, was willing to promote *Tertium Organum*. The influential intellectual and

editor A. R. Orage became deeply interested in Ouspensky's ideas and promoted their discussion in various circles. Prominent theosophist and editor G. R. S. Mead became interested in his ideas on the fourth dimension.

By order of the British government, Gurdjieff was not allowed to settle in London. Gurdjieff eventually went to France with a considerable sum of money raised by Ouspensky and his friends, and settled down near Paris at the Prieuré in Fontainebleau-Avon.^[21] It was during this time, after Gurdjieff founded his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in France, that Ouspensky came to the conclusion that he was no longer able to understand his former teacher and made a decision to discontinue association with him. He set up his own organisation, The Society for the Study of Normal Psychology, which is now known as The Study Society.^[22]

Ouspensky wrote about Gurdjieff's teachings in a book originally entitled *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, published posthumously in 1947 under the title *In Search of the Miraculous*. While this volume has been criticized by some of those who have followed Gurdjieff's teachings as only a partial representation of the totality of his ideas, it provides what is probably the most concise explanation of the material that was included. This is in sharp contrast to the writings of Gurdjieff himself, such as *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, where the ideas and precepts of Gurdjieff's teachings are found very deeply veiled in allegory. Initially, Ouspensky had intended this book to be published only if *Beelzebub's Tales* were not published. But after his death, Mme Ouspensky showed its draft to Gurdjieff who praised its accuracy and permitted its publication.

Ouspensky died in Lyne Place, Surrey, in 1947. Shortly after his death, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* was published, together with *In Search of the Miraculous*. A facsimile edition of *In Search of the Miraculous* was published in 2004 by Paul H. Crompton Ltd. London. Transcripts of some of his lectures were published under the title of *The Fourth Way* in 1957; largely a collection of question and answer sessions, the book details important concepts, both introductory and advanced, for students of these teachings.

Ouspensky's papers are held at Yale University Library's Manuscripts and Archives department.

Teaching

After Ouspensky broke away from Gurdjieff, he taught the "Fourth Way", as he understood it, to his independent groups.

Fourth Way

Gurdjieff proposed that there are three ways of self-development generally known in esoteric circles. These are the Way of the Fakir, dealing exclusively with the physical body, the Way of the Monk, dealing with the emotions, and the Way of the Yogi, dealing with the mind. What is common about the three ways is that they demand complete seclusion from the world. According to Gurdjieff, there is a Fourth Way which does not demand its followers to abandon the world. The work of self-development takes place right in the midst of



Ouspensky's grave at the Holy Trinity Church in Lyne, Surrey, England, photographed in 2013

ordinary life. Gurdjieff called his system a school of the Fourth Way where a person learns to work in harmony with his physical body, emotions and mind. Ouspensky picked up this idea and continued his own school along this line.^[23]

Ouspensky made the term "Fourth Way" and its use central to his own teaching of the ideas of Gurdjieff. He greatly focused on Fourth Way schools and their existence throughout history.

Students

Among his students were Rodney Collin, Maurice Nicoll, Robert S. de Ropp, Kenneth Walker, Remedios Varo and Dr Francis Roles.^[24]

Self-remembering

Ouspensky personally confessed the difficulties he was experiencing with "self-remembering," which has later been defined by Osho as 'witnessing'. The present phraseology in the teachings of Advaita is to be in awareness, or being aware of being aware. It is also believed to be consistent with the Buddhist practice of 'mindfulness'. The ultimate goal of each is to be always in a state of meditation even in sleep. 'Self-remembering' was a technique to which he had been introduced by Gurdjieff himself. Gurdjieff explained to him that this was the missing link to everything else. While in Russia, Ouspensky experimented with the technique with a certain degree of success, and in his lectures in London and America he emphasized the importance of its practice. The technique requires a division of attention, so that a person not only pays attention to what is going on in the exterior world but also in the interior. A.L. Volinsky, an acquaintance of Ouspensky in Russia, mentioned to him that this was what professor Wundt meant by apperception. Ouspensky disagreed and commented on how an idea so profound to him would pass unnoticed by people whom he considered intelligent. Gurdjieff explained the Rosicrucian principle that in order to bring about a result or manifestation, three things are necessary. With self-remembering and self-observation two things are present. The third one is explained by Ouspensky in his tract on Conscience: it is the non-expression of negative emotions.^{[25][26]}

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External links

- [Ouspensky Today](http://www.ouspenskytoday.org/): Includes an archive of material and images celebrating Ouspensky's life and work. (<http://www.ouspenskytoday.org/>)
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