

DuVersity Newsletter 35 - 2014

The articles in this issue represent overviews of major subjects.

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New Online Magazine of the DuVersity - www.meaninggames.com/views

As a supplement to our hard copy newsletter we are experimenting with an online magazine called *Views*. It can contain coloured images, sound extracts and links to video.

The DuVersity Online Magazine is open for contributions primarily from the DuVersity membership and its specialist affiliates, but anyone is free to offer new material. However, the editor has the final word on what appears.

To explain our categories:

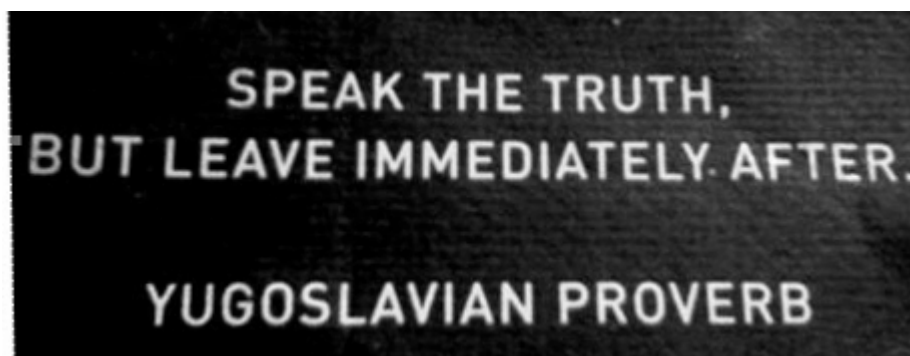
Articles are essays, poems, short stories and so on.

Moments are thoughts or expressions of the moment, a few paragraphs on a glimpse of a reality.

News is information about events

All material to be submitted to Anthony Blake

The aim is *towards diversity in depth*, so published items may appear to have no connection with each other, while others submitted may be rejected, according to unstated criteria.



THE STRUGGLE OF THE MAGICIANS: A COMMENTARY ON GURDJIEFF'S BALLET

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INTRODUCTION

Gurdjieff first surfaced in the West in 1914 when, at around age 40, he started teaching in Russia. From 1914 to 1922 he was forced to move his school from country to country due to the Russian Revolution and the first World War. In 1922 he settled in Paris where he was finally able to resume his work. The Institute was only open for two years before he closed it to pursue writing. Gurdjieff subsequently published four books: the best known are *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and his three volume opus *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. There is however, a body of work by Gurdjieff that remains unpublished. This includes transcripts of lectures given in Paris and in America, transcripts of questions and answer with Gurdjieff and variant drafts from his manuscripts. One of the most interesting pieces in this unpublished work is the scenario for the ballet *The Struggle of the Magicians*. The fact that Gurdjieff wrote a ballet is well known. Ouspensky talks about it in his book, *The Search for the Miraculous* and a sketchy outline of the scenario is included in James Webb's *The Harmonious Circle*. However, the scenario has never been published and the ballet was never staged.

The scenario is, apparently, the first extant piece of Gurdjieff's writings. The work on the scenario, the staging, the music and the choreography played a prominent role in Gurdjieff's early work in the West. Work on the ballet continued after the move to Paris but, when Gurdjieff had a tragic auto accident in 1924 and subsequently closed the Institute, he appears to have abandoned the ballet. Yet some of the music and the dance, especially, "The Initiation of the Priestess", was used when he resumed teaching after World War II.

Ouspensky quotes Gurdjieff saying the ballet is, "an interesting and beautiful spectacle" (1) which contains an allegorical story. He says that the choreography of the dance utilizes movement that visually reproduce certain laws and that these movements are derived from ancient temple rituals. Ouspensky says that it is not really a ballet but more of a "revue without comic elements". He calls it, "a series of dramatic and mimic scenes held together by a common plot, accompanied by music and intermixed with songs and dances". (2)

HISTORY OF THE BALLET

It was as a result of the ballet that Ouspensky first heard of Gurdjieff. In the winter of 1914, when Ouspensky was working as a journalist in Moscow, he spotted a notice in a local newspaper, "The Voice of Moscow", telling about the scenario of a ballet called *The Struggle of the Magicians*. The notice stated that the ballet included sacred dances of the East. Ouspensky had recently returned from a trip to India and took special note of the announcement. The piece said the opera was written by a Hindu and was set in India. Gurdjieff later informed Ouspensky that the person writing this notice was not fully informed. In 1914, neither the scenario nor the music were written and the ballet was only an idea in Gurdjieff's mind, an idea which was not further realized until Gurdjieff left Russia. In 1917, with the revolution in full force, Gurdjieff moved to Alexandropol and then to Essentuke where he rented a house and taught pupils. In 1918, he had forty students but by the end of that summer Gurdjieff was forced to organize an expedition to carry the students who remained with him away from the rapidly closing in forces of war. In January, 1919, Gurdjieff arrived in Tiflis where he made his next serious effort to establish an Institute.

At Tiflis, Gurdjieff acquired a room in a Tiflis Opera House and worked intensively on all phases of the ballet. During this time he began dictating the scenario and work was started on the staging. Gurdjieff included among his students the talented artist Alexandra De Salzman and the composer Thomas de Hartmann. De Salzman designed the stage set and on one of the sets he included a portrait of Mr. Gurdjieff. Thomas de Hartmann reports that Gurdjieff would work on the text during the day and the staging during the evening. Gurdjieff was planning a performance of the ballet for the following spring. Gurdjieff assigned de Hartmann to write the music for the first act and told him to write it, "as you wish".(3) For the second act Gurdjieff whistled the music while de Hartmann wrote it down.



Alexander de Salzman's Painting

The sets were designed for the first two acts. Gurdjieff even designed a paper mache doll which he rigged with lights that shine through especially devised holes and then he built a primitive rheostat to control the intensity of the light. Robert Bechfofer, who visited Gurdjieff in Tiflis, claims that Gurdjieff told him that some of the dances in the ballet were based on "movements and gestures which had been handed down by traditions and paintings in Tibetan monasteries where he had been".(4)

One year after his arrival in Tiflis, Gurdjieff announced that he was moving the Institute to Constantinople. As a result of this the paper mache doll and a number of other stage sets built by the pupils were destroyed. Ouspensky was already living in Constantinople giving lectures explaining Gurdjieff's basic teachings. By autumn of 1920, Gurdjieff opened his new Institute in its new quarters in Constantinople. Ouspensky reports that during this time the ballet had "the central position of his work". (5) The training at the Institute was built around the preparation for various aspects of the ballet. Work on the ballet, especially the dances was used to teach the

students to “acquire control over themselves, in this way approaching the disclosure of the higher forms of consciousness”.(6)

During this time in Constantinople, Gurdjieff worked with Ouspensky to get the scenario down in writing. Ouspensky reports that they worked all night one evening on a dervish song. Gurdjieff would go over the lines repeating each verse over and over and would then translate the verse into Russian. Ouspensky says Gurdjieff would go on for up to fifteen minutes translating into Russian and then tell him to make that into one line. By morning they had only translated four verses. The dervish song appears at the end of Act I.

In 1920, John G. Bennett learned of Gurdjieff and visited the Institute in Constantinople. He acquired a copy of the prospectus which listed Harmonic and Plastic Rhythm, Ancient and Oriental Dances, Medical Gymnastics and Mime as the four primary courses of study. Bennett attended a demonstration of the “rhythmic exercises and ritual dances”(7) and says he vividly remembered the dance of “The Initiation of the Priestess”. Bennett says that this was devised from a dance Gurdjieff witnessed in the temple caves of the Hindu Kush and he called it a “beautiful dance with strangely disturbing music”.(8) Gurdjieff told him that the exercises were to acquire control over the body through, “a powerful effort of mental attention”.(9) Gurdjieff claimed these were designed to train the body, the mind and the feelings and only by properly coordinating all these could the ritual movements be carried out correctly. He said these exercises worked to strengthen the ability to focus and hold attention.

Gurdjieff’s stay in Constantinople lasted from June, 1920 until September of 1921. By the time he left the scenario was finished and the music was nearly complete. He also had a cadre of about twenty people who were trained in various aspects of the dances. In late 1921 Gurdjieff went to Dresden, Germany where he hoped to re-establish the institute. When this was not possible, he went to London where he joined Ouspensky but the English government, suspecting him of being a Russian spy, would not allow him to stay. He went from there on to Paris.

By the fall of 1922 he was ready to establish the Institute outside Paris. He reassembled his students and started to work on what he now referred to as “rhythm and plastics”.(10) During the period of transition from Constantinople to Paris, he continued work on the ballet. He choreographed dances of Dervish and Sufi origins and worked with de Hartmann recalling the music he had heard in Asia many years before. Gurdjieff would whistle and hum the music while de Hartmann worked it out on the piano.

By December of 1923, after one year of practice, Gurdjieff was ready to give public demonstrations of the dances and movements. The first public performance was held in Paris at the Theatre des Champs Elysees. Then, in January 1924, Gurdjieff took his troupe and went to New York City for his first visit to America. A young American writer named Jean Toomer was in the audience when Gurdjieff gave the demonstrations in New York City. He had read Ouspensky’s *Tertium Organum* and was contemplating going to India in search of a teacher. When he attended the performance at the neighborhood Playhouse he was completely taken by the music, the dances and the presence of Gurdjieff. He felt that the music and dance awakened memories of an ancient world that he longed to know. The performances were an opening into a sacred realm from which he felt exiled. He was especially inspired by the dance of “The Initiation of the Priestess”. When he saw this dance and heard the music, he was so moved that he decided to go to the Institute in Paris and study with Gurdjieff. Here was the discipline and the system of training he had been seeking. He subsequently went to Paris and studied with Gurdjieff for a number of years. He was one of the first American students to return to America and teach Gurdjieff’s system.

In the summer of 1924 Gurdjieff was driving from his apartment in Paris to the Institute when he experienced a near fatal car wreck. He was several months in recovering and upon his

recuperation he announced that he was discontinuing work with students and devoting himself to writing. After this the ballet no longer held his attention. Gurdjieff did allow a small number of students to continue to live at the Institute and a number of American students came every summer. Following World War II Gurdjieff finished work on *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *Beelzebub's Tales* and once again resumed teaching. At this time he taught the movements and used some of the dances and music from the ballet, but he did not resurrect the ballet.

Two of the principle dance routines are the dance of the students of the White Magician and its counterpart, the dance of the students of the Black Magician. In the dance of the White Magician the movements are attractive and beautiful. In the dance of the Black Magician the movements are ugly and discordant. Gurdjieff liked to use the same dancers to perform both sets of movements providing them the opportunity to exercise the opposite polarities of their being.

The ballet was never staged and never performed in whole in public. Yet, during the period from 1919 until the summer of 1924, and particularly during the time in Tiflis and Constantinople the ballet was the central focus of Gurdjieff's work. The scenario of the ballet, while it remains unpublished, is available in the archives of various Gurdjieff groups. The music was also completed and has been preserved by Madame De Salzmann. Parts of the music can be heard on various recordings of Gurdjieff's music which are currently available. (11) Unfortunately much of the dance, especially the movements of the dance of "The Initiation of the Priestess" have been lost.

At Gurdjieff's funeral, held at the Russian Church in the Rue Daru in Paris, the eulogy read by the priest was written by Thomas de Hartmann. The last words spoken by the priest in front of the coffin were a quote from "The Struggle of the Magicians". These words taken from the last act of the ballet are spoken by the White Magician, "God and all his angels keep us from doing evil by helping us always and every where to remember our selves."

SYNOPSIS

The scenario to the ballet consists of four acts. The action is set in an unnamed Eastern city which is depicted as a sizable town with much commerce. There are four central characters: the first is Gafar, a thirty-five year old Parsi who is handsome with a neatly trimmed black mustache and dark hair. Next is Zeinab, a beautiful Indo-Persian woman about twenty-two years old; then the White Magician and the Black Magician. The White Magician is an older well-built man with a long white beard and a pleasant disposition. He wears a long flowing white robe with broad sleeves and a pendant on a thick gold chain. The pendant is in the shape of an enneagram with precious stone at the points of the enneagram. The Black Magician is a thin man with a short gray beard and uncombed hair. The other primary characters are Gafar's assistant Rossoula and Zeinab's confidant Khaila.

Gafar is part of the crowd in the marketplace. He is richly dressed in silks and brocades. He is wearing a turban and rings with emeralds and diamonds. His chief assistant, Rossoula, accompanies him. Gafar shops in the market with the indifference of the rich. He is patronizing with the people of wealth and treats everyone else with contempt. Gafar sees Zeinab moving across the market distributing coins to all the beggars. He immediately begins to make inquiries but no one seems to know her. She is carrying a roll of papers wrapped in sild and is accompanied by her plump, middle-aged confidant Khaila. Zeinab stops to care for the open sores on the arm of a child of a beggar woman. She uses a piece of the silk wrapping from her papers to bind the sores.

When Zeinab leaves the market Gafar has Rossoula follow her while he goes and attempts to buy the silk scarf that she used to bandage the beggar. When the boy's mother refuses to sell

it he throws a handful of money on the ground and forcibly takes the scarf. When Rossoula returns he informs Gafar that Zeinab is not a woman who can be approached and together they leave the market.

A dervish enters the market from one of the alleys. He is surrounded by a crowd of women and children. He begins to dance and to recite verse. In his verses he describes God as threefold, then sevenfold. He says that in totality God is one sounded yet in all his divisions many sounded. He says that God is everywhere but can only be observed by people depending upon their qualities. As evening darkens the market the Dervish is left reciting as the crowd swirls around preparing to depart.

The second act opens in the auditorium of the White Magician. The room resembles a laboratory or observatory full of unusual looking devices. There are objects made of glass and instruments which resemble microscopes and telescopes. The room gradually fills with students who are busy studying parchments and notebooks and working with the apparatus and instruments.

When the White Magician enters the students all bow. The White Magician has a special seat with a tall back like a throne. The throne has the sign of the enneagram worked into the wood. When the Magician sits down the enneagram lights up. The students all come forward to kiss his hand before returning to their various duties.

Zeinab enters late and out of breath. She goes to the Magician and kisses his hand. When the Magician rises to use the microscope the lights on the enneagram go out. As the Magician explains something to one of the pupils the rest all gather round. The Magician then goes to the telescope and opens the curtains to reveal the star lite sky. The students each approach the telescope and look through it as the Magician illustrates the point he is discussing.

When the Magician returns to the throne a servant enters bringing in the beggar woman and her child. The woman throws herself at the feet of the Magician and begs for his help. Zeinab goes forward and intercedes on their behalf. The Magician examines the wound. He pours some liquid on a scarf and wraps the wound with the scarf. Then he passes a staff made of ivory with a silver ball on one end over the wound. When he removes the scarf the wound is healed.

After the woman and child leave the students form themselves in rows in front of the Magician. They then do a series of movements resembling gymnastic exercises. At the end of the movements the Magician raises a curtain to reveal the first rays of the morning sun. The Magician and the pupils all kneel and pray.

The third act takes place in the home of Gafar. The room is described as Perso-Indian and is richly appointed. Gafar is pacing around the room obviously aggravated and impatient. Gafar has had Rossoula spying on Zeinab and trying in every manner to entice her into Gafar's harem. Gafar ordered Rossoula to get her at any price. Always before he has been able to acquire any woman he desires. Rossoula returns with bad news. Gafar has offered her many opulent gifts including ancient fabrics with gold embroidery, horses, furs, an emerald necklace and even a famous blue pearl known as the "Tar of Ceylon". When these failed to entice her he went so far as to offer her a castle as her own separate harem staffed with servants but she continued to refuse. While he is amazed at her refusal, it only enhances his desire and his respect for her.

Due to the circumstances of his birth his life has been arranged for him and at age seventeen he had his own harem. Now at age thirty-two he is still unmarried but desires to marry soon to please his aged mother. Yet he has not found a woman whose motives are pure enough for marriage. All women have become the same, different only in the manifestation of their beauty and passion. He considers women like the other pleasures of his life, like smoking or music. They are all just beautiful things to enjoy.

Rossoula has learned much about Zeinab. She is the only daughter of a rich man from a distant village. She is not betrothed and lives quietly with her servant Khaila. Her only interest seems to be her studies and the school of the Magician is the only place she visits. She has become an obsession to Gafar and he cannot stop thinking of her. He is willing to do anything to gain possession of her. He realizes he cannot acquire her the way he has acquired so many other women. He decides the only way to get her is to marry her. He sends an elderly woman relative to act as matchmaker and carry his proposal. With his wealth and position he is sure she will accept.

Rossoula, in an effort to entertain Gafar while he waits, orders a troupe of musicians to come play. The musicians carry in a number of stringed instruments from Afghanistan, India and Turkistan including a zitera, an anadoutas, a rabab, a tar, a suz, a caloup and a gysljabe. There are also wind instruments and percussion instruments. As the music begins the dancers from the harem enter in pairs. There are twelve dancers each dressed in the costume of her native land. They are from Tibet, Armenia, Causasus, Beloochistan, Georgia, Persia and India as well as a gypsy. However Gafar does not enjoy the dancers and seems distracted. During a group dance his elderly envoy returns and informs him that Zeinab has rejected his proposal. He is enraged and drives the dancers and musicians out of the room. Only Gafar and Rossoula are left.

Gafar has never felt such humiliation and wants, at any cost, to have revenge. They send for an old sorceress. When she arrives Gafar asks if she can bewitch a woman to do as she bids. The sorceress replies with confidence that she can but when she hears that Zeinab is a student of the White Magician she backs down and declares that, in this case, she can do nothing. Gafar offers her gold and other riches. She replies that while she can do nothing she knows someone who, for a very high price, can be persuaded. She offers to take Gafar and Rossoula to this person and, accompanied by servants carrying bags of gifts, they depart.

Act IV opens in a large chamber inside a cave. The cave houses the school of the Black Magician. A smoking cauldron sits in a recess in the cave wall, a skeleton can be seen and a large trident. The symbol of a pentagram hangs above a rock used as the throne of the Black Magician. The cave is littered with stuffed bats and toads, human skulls, parchment rolls, snakes and cats. The students are busy making potions, reading cards and practicing palm reading. They are hostile and ill-tempered with one another. The students gather round the throne and begin to make jerky, rhythmic movements. The movements are angular and sharp and the pace gradually quickens as they move into a ring and revolve around the throne. They become a frenzied chaos of movement until a loud knocking sound is heard off stage. The students push and shove and hurry to get back to their places. The Black Magician comes on the stage and all the students fall on their faces. He gazes at them contemptuously. He wears a gold pentacle around his neck on a silk cord. As he seats himself, the pentagram over the throne lights up. The students all come forward and kiss his bared belly. Then he has them form lines in front of him and perform various movements.

The old sorceress enters and slowly approaches the Magician. Once she has his consent she brings in Gafar and Rossoula and their bags of riches. Gafar fearfully tells the Magician what he desires. The Magician finally accepts, on the condition that Gafar can produce something that Zeinab touched. Gafar gives him the scarf she used to bandage the beggar boy. The students bring in his table and his tools; a wand, a gold ball, a lump of clay, some books and an urn with a bone sticking out of it. The Magician takes the scarf and places it in the middle of the clay and makes the clay into the shape of a human. He has some students form a chain-like circle around him. As he changes an incantation the pupils begin to contort in convulsive movements. The clay figurine begins to glow and starts to move and then gives off brilliant flashes of light. Zeinab's shadow appears over the cauldron. The Magician and the students are all making violent movements. Then an explosion is heard and the stage is cast into darkness.

When the light reappears the students are laying on the floor. They gradually recover their strength and slowly get up. The Magician wraps the clay figure in cloth and presents it to Gafar with some instructions. When Gafar and Rossoula leave the Magician scatters the gold and other gifts on the floor and the students fall on the floor wildly gathering it up. Then they begin to dance in a ring around the throne building up to the frenzy of depraved motion.

The fifth and final act is set in the school of the White Magician. The Magician is seated on his throne and all the students except Zeinab are lined up in front of him practicing the movements. Khalia rushes in and nervously kneels before the Magician. The Magician expresses surprise and dismay at the news she brings. The Magician then chooses one of the students and places him in a deep hypnotic trance. As the Magician questions the hypnotized student the room darkens and the back wall of the stage disappears, in its place we see Zeinab's room. Zeinab is by herself, obviously going through a great struggle. Her movements are nervous and agitated. In the midst of her despair and grief, Rossoula enters bearing gifts from Gafar. Khalia also enters the room as Zeinab is trying on the gifts before a mirror. Khaila realizes what is happening and pleads with Zeinab not to accept the offer. Zeinab does not seem like the same person and impatiently orders Khalia to be quiet. Zeinab then leaves with Rossoula. Khaila seems distracted and then seemingly comes to some decision and puts on her shawl and leaves. With this the stage lights come back up and the focus shifts back to the center stage.

The student is awakened from his trance and the Magician appears perplexed. He then comes to a decision and orders the students to prepare the room. They bring out a table and special robes and a hat. He dons a special rubber-like girdle and rubber shoes. The Magician then places two bowls on the table and connects them with a copper rod. The bowls are surrounded by candles, some lit and some not. He pours special liquids into the bowls and using his wand pronounces words over the bowls. Slowly a light begins to appear in the larger of the bowls. As this light appears the unlit candles burst into flame. As the Magician passes his wand over the bowl sparks are emitted. The vessel begins to make noises which increase until a loud explosion is heard, followed by complete darkness.

As the light gradually comes back we see the cave of the Black Magician at the back of the stage. The Black Magician appears to be in great agony. There is another loud explosion as the Black Magician falls from his throne to the floor and the stage is once again returned to total darkness. As the light returns the White Magician appears to be exhausted. The students remove the table and help him to a seat. The stage lights again grow dim, as they do we see Gafar's room at the back of the stage. We see Gafar on a sofa as Zeinab enters his quarters. Gafar rises to greet her and starts to escort her to a seat when they are both curiously frozen in their steps. Next they begin to move toward the door in slow robot-like motions as the scene vanishes in the darkness.

When the lights come back up Gafar and Zeinab enter the room. They move slowly like they are sleep walking. When the White Magician sees them he appears relieved and removes his outer robes. The students awaken Zeinab and explain what has happened. She quickly goes to the White Magician and kneels before him. He takes her hand and lifts her to her feet. Then he goes to Gafar and awakens him. Gafar is surprised and appears angry. The White Magician slowly explains the situation and as he does so a scene appears at the back of the stage. We see Gafar as an old man entering the marketplace. He is very happy and is honored by the crowd. As the Magician goes on, the scene changes and we see Gafar as an old man who is dissatisfied and unhappy. People who see him turn aside and avoid him. When this scene disappears Gafar appears perplexed and overcome with internal debate as the stage lights again dim. When the lights come back up, Zeinab is at the left hand of the Magician kissing his ring while Gafar kneels before him. The Magician raises his right hand and offers a prayer. He prays that everyone will be able to remember themselves at all times and by their remembrance

avoid the evil of involuntary activity. When the Magician finishes the students all gather around him and together they sing a request for everyone to come to true being. The Magician raises both hands in a blessing as they sing Amen. This concludes the action of the ballet.(12)

COMMENTARY

The first act begins in a market place filled with many different nationalities. It is a cross roads of the cultures of the Middle East. The nationalities depicted in the marketplace are those which Gurdjieff knew and studied. There are Tibetans, Buddhist monks, a fakir, a dervish, Russians, Armenians, Arabs, Afghans, Persians and Hindus. The main character is a Parsi, a follower of Zoroaster, one of the most ancient religious traditions still alive in the world. Gurdjieff never explicitly revealed the sources of his system and did not establish himself as a part of any lineage drawing freely from a number of ancient traditions. The marketplace in the ballet represents Gurdjieff's idea of sampling the intellectual, religious and philosophical wares of all these various traditions.

In speaking to Ouspensky Gurdjieff once remarked, "there are three ideas lying at the basis of 'The Struggle of the Magicians'". (13) These are; first, the importance of the movements as a vehicle for esoteric training. Second, the idea embodied in the Hermetic aphorism, "As above, so below" and third, the idea of overcoming the mechanicalness of everyday behavior by self remembering.

The action takes place primarily in the schools of the two Magicians. Gurdjieff had apparently studied in a number of different esoteric schools and the importance of schools was repeatedly emphasized. In the scenes in the schools there are several demonstrations of the movements. These movements, which Gurdjieff referred to as Sacred Gymnastics, reproduce or illustrate certain lows of human nature. The movements are still being taught in the Gurdjieff programs in America and Europe. The movements are accompanied by music. They begin with a short series of simple arm and leg movements done in time with the music. Gradually the pattern becomes more and more complex. As the pattern becomes increasingly complex it requires a total effort of concentration to perform the proper sequence of movements. To properly perform the movements requires a level of concentration and attention seldom called on in normal patterns of activity. This takes the practitioners to the limit of their power of attention and expands those limits. The practice of the movements requires consciousness to be constantly held at full attention. If your focus of attention shifts or is not held constant, then you lose track of the sequence of movements. In this way the movements are a self reinforcing reminder to hold attention to the task at hand. The movements are an exercise in what Gurdjieff calls "self remembering" As long as the practitioner is remembering what he or she is doing then the movements go smoothly, if consciousness drifts or wanders then the complicated procedures of the movements are lost.

The purpose of the movements, to hold consciousness to one central focus of attention, is characteristic of many different forms of meditation. In the Sacred Gymnastics the attention is held by keeping the body in sync with the proper sequence of the movements. This is particularly effective since, when attention drifts, then the order of the movements is lost and one is automatically reminded to return the attention to the sequence of movements at hand. Each time consciousness is brought back from its wandering and held to its central focus it develops a type of awareness based on self observation. In this way the movements serve as the practical expression of the knowledge passed along in esoteric schools.

The second of the three ideas is the so called Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistis, "As above, so below". At one point in the scenario the White Magician directs the pupils' attention to the night sky and gives them a lecture on the ancient principle, "As above, so below". He points out that each unity, of whatever dimension, is a cosmos in itself. He describes many types of

cosmos: the Megalocosmos, the Macrocosmos, the Alocosmos, the Deuterocosmos, the Mesocosmos, the Tritocosmos and Microcosmos. He explains that the basic laws are the same for each type of cosmos. Hence, once you understand one cosmos you can understand them all. He says that the Tritocosmos is the most accessible for study since it is the cosmos of humanity. Each person, by coming to an understanding of their own self, can also come to an understanding of everything else. Self remembering is the key to opening up the understanding of the cosmos as a whole. By through self-examination it is possible to understand the primary laws that govern the universe at every level of its operation.

In the final act, Gurdjieff presents the third of the three ideas that form the basis of the scenario. This idea he refers to as the "law of fate". On the last page of the scenario, the White Magician makes a short speech summing up the message of the ballet. This follows the scene where Gafar is forced to see the possibilities that lay ahead of him; the one as a cruel old man despised by all, the other as an old man who is honored. The Magician uses this to illustrate the relationship of our deeds to the passage of time. Only by improving on the past can a person be prepared for the future. This he refers to as the "law of Fate". Fate is not a fixed determination of the future course of events. Rather fate is determined by the activity of the present and the relationship of this activity to the past and the future. By taking the past and the future into consideration, fate can be assured and is not an indifferent determinate outside of personal control. The Magician then makes a prayer to the creator for help in remembering the self and by this to avoid the mechanicalness of involuntary activity. He says that evil becomes manifest when activity is done without self remembering.

The ballet is an allegory built on this theme. The Black Magician represents the evil inherent in automatic habituated activity done without self reflection. The White Magician, in turn, represents self remembering and the creative activity that springs for self consciousness. The magic of the White Magician is not magic that overcomes the natural order of the universe. Rather, it is the ability to overcome the inherent mechanicalness of our habituation, it is the ability to consciously do.

Footnotes

1. P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1949. p. 16.
2. Ibid., p 16.
3. Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 95.
4. James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky and Their Followers*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), p. 178.
5. Ouspensky, Ibid., p. 382.
6. Ibid., p. 382.
7. John G. Bennett, *Witness: The Autobiography of John G. Bennett* (Charles Town, West Virginia: Claymont Communications, 1983) p. 129.
8. Ibid., p. 59.
9. Ibid., p. 130.
10. Ouspensky, Ibid., p. 386.
11. *The Music of Gurdjieff/De Hartmann*, Thomas de Hartmann Piano, 1985. Triangle Editions, N.Y., Four record set. Sides 3 and 4 contain excerpts from the music from the ballet.
12. A hand written copy of the scenario, apparently written by Jean Toomer, during one of his summers at the Institute in Paris, is included in the Jean Toomer Archive. I had access to the papers while they were at Fisk University in Nashville, TN before they were moved to their current location at Yale University.
13. Ouspensky, Ibid., p. 17.

The Biosphere's Evolving Intelligence

An Essay by Richard Heath

see also online magazine <http://meaninggames.com/views/?p=284>

The Light and Dark, as Value and Fact, could be viewed as reconciled by an evolved mind, within the biosphere. They could indeed be the cause of the arising of mind, since existential situations in the Biosphere are of value for its beings whilst being factual. As Bennett points out, sex and death are innovations of the biospheric world, and we can now date their arrival during the Cambrian "explosion" (around 542 million years ago) when plants and animals (multicellular life forms) innovated sex to reproduce their organisms as a whole as well as regenerating their cells through cell division. Animals, unlike single-celled algae, are able to express action but must die to benefit from generational improvement by natural selection. Only by such means could the three brains of humans, motive, emotive and cognitive, be selected through their effectiveness in adaptation to living conditions within a variety of different biomes.

But there have been problems for humans in their maintaining a shared cultural harmony towards nature and the biosphere, due to the success of their cognitive brain capacity to solve environmental problems based upon facts. Technologies can arise whose consequences may conflict with social values that are somewhat weakly held to. Arguments can break out over values and the impact of technologies and those that wield them, but the factual benefits generally dominate other human views. The environmental argument is being lost whilst technology becomes an ever stronger threat to the biosphere as we know it. The modern world is simply the latest and greatest in which actions often clearly go against valuing the environment over the wealth it can create, and better-off populations have become used, inured and psychically hardened to human and biospheric tragedy.

The familiar types of religion were identified by John Bennett as worshipping God as Father, Mother, Son, and Spirit. Of these, it is the Spirit culture that best represents Nature and the biosphere, rather than the human need to have god "in the image and likeness" of the generative relationships; of father (authority), mother (nourisher), and male child (saviour). The Spirit culture is now identified with the East because "spiritism" was carefully removed from our world view by modern science, in order to "get at" the physical laws which such beliefs, in spirits behind phenomena, "hid" from being investigated and understood; as being factual and not involving spirits at all.

The norm for spiritism is to explain the biospheric world as due to four or sometimes five elements. The word "element", then came to be used for our chemical elements, having inherited that word from the precursor of modern chemistry, alchemy. The aim of alchemy was the transformation of material properties and, alongside this, the transformation of human understanding in the form of the philosopher's stone.

The displacement of four elements by (what would need to be called) the atomic elements, was a descent into the factual nature of what things were actually made of. But in the process of factual discovery the original purpose of the system of four Elements was lost sight of, namely; a workable system for understanding the world as being due to the interaction of but four types of characteristic properties within situations, that is as found within nature.

The Elements enabled the study of nature as a whole through the collation of diverse properties into states of materiality, on the basis of which concrete understandings were possible of interactions within the environment and indeed, within our own bodily and even psychic nature. Without seeing the world as being made up of these Elements, the whole world view, shared by Classical and ancient near eastern cultures, rendered that view ineffective. The chemical elements, whilst factually true, had displaced a form of understanding that was not based purely upon facts.

A similar system to the four Elements can be seen running in parallel within ancient modes of thought, in which three terms create triadic relationships; the gunas of post Vedic India and the trigrams of the Chinese I Ching.

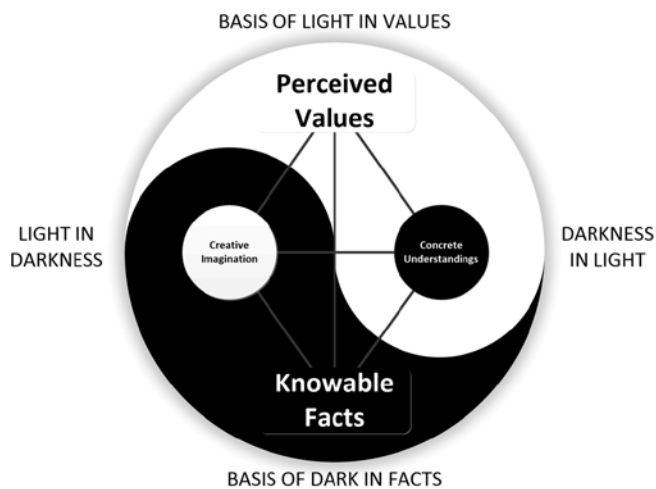
The virtue of a small number of Elements or terms, corresponds with the underlying belief that the world should be knowable by human beings, which is intelligible to us, as if ordained by whatever gave rise to the biosphere or even the universe. Since humanity have evolved in the biosphere perhaps it is quite factually possible for the world we live in to be knowable in a direct and simple way. Associated with the human need for simplicity in order to understand, and the corresponding intelligibility within Nature, is the question of what role the human being has within the biosphere.

The evolution of the present-day human is at least in part some kind of natural selection and if such selection is purely due to successful survival then, no purpose can be attributed to the arising of the human being. The idea that the biosphere has evolved the human would be absurd within a scientific framework and yet, the "climbing of mount impossible" as Richard Dawkins characterised the success of natural selection begs the question of what the impossible is. Achieving the impossible is considered *miraculous* and Gurdjieff says, as reported in Ouspensky's book *In Search of the Miraculous*, that higher levels of super-consciousness exist within human beings, which are fully functional but also hard to access. He called these the higher emotional and higher intellectual centres. It is only this distributed but sub-conscious seat of intelligence within the human population which could form part of an intelligent biosphere which could be purposive.

The problem with natural selection is that it deals only with the effect of facts upon biological selection; the facts either kill you and you can't breed or the facts are survivable and you do. However creatures also develop faculties and these are as much to do with factually intangible values, such as skills, experience, communication, persistence, and whilst all these are often now built in to natural selection, they participate in the domain of Value rather than Fact. Values are often held within patterns which, although these can often be recorded, what they mean have to be received by some kind of mind that is not oblivious to them. Such a mind, in other words, has to be sensitive and it is this sensitivity coupled to an appropriate apparatus which we call a mind which is distinguished by recognising values in environmental situations.

This sensitivity is required to perceive and manage the values which can be found in the biosphere including cultural situations. This led Chinese spiritism to propose that "The Supreme Will can only set in motion, It cannot control the things It has made". Things set in motion, not by us but within Nature, express both facts and values, though the values require a mind for their perception. These minds can imagine states of the world, scenarios which don't actually exist and such visions can themselves be creative. But minds can also develop concrete understandings which have emerged not from imagining an alternative to what exists but rather from work embracing both knowable facts and perceived values within the present moment, so as to generate new structures of will.

This relationship can be seen in the most powerful symbol of Chinese spiritism, The Tao.



Overlaid are the connectives of a Tetrad, a diagram used with Bennett's systematics but probably historically originated by Aristotle. It deals with an above and a below which, as a dyad, are unable to interact but do provide the motivation behind a horizontal dyad which provides an operational means to actualisation. Here the motivation is to study an **Activity** (the systemic attribute Bennett gave it in his systematics) which evidently exists within human beings; to work with the values we perceive in knowable and factual situations.

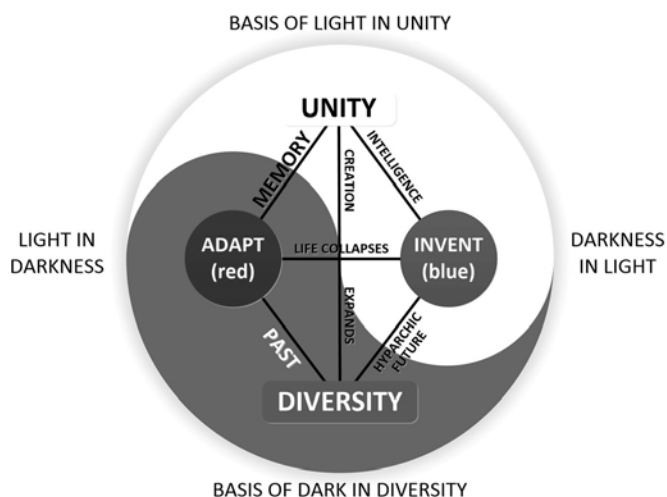
As we proposed above, we can work with facts in new creative ways by imagining situations which do not yet exist, but might be possible to achieve. This can then have a Cybernetic effect in which what is imagined can become instrumental in achieving something through our human agency within the world.

Learning to achieve something new in the world requires the formation of a **concrete understanding** which is, in effect, a new structure of our will. Rooted in existence, knowable facts can feed creative imagination which, having perceived a new value, can seek a suitable understanding to make that value a reality in the factual world.

The above led me, by adapting some of Arthur M. Young's thinking [in his *Geometries of Meaning*], to recognising the need for something which lies behind such a power for values within human experience. Within his own four fold systems, he suggests that systems cannot be creatively controlled without recognising their *sense of purpose*. He traces the causal sequence in which pigs accidentally get burnt and are discovered cooked. The idea of cooking reverses this received ordering by imagining the cooking of a pig by lighting a fire so as to eat the cooked pig, as previously discovered after a natural fire. Causality is reversed by grasping what is required as a whole situation with the purpose (or Will) to cook a pig to eat.

It is in the recognition of wholeness that such structures of will are born, in which the Unity of the whole (system plus environment) can act. Wholeness is grasped by recognising a possible state of affairs and the means of achieving it, all coalesced into a system of balanced terms by intelligence. This can be identified with the directing term of a Tetrad which then stands between Unity and Diversity, the latter being the result of the former in traditional Creational stories. Could it be that Unity is really more basic than value as being its source and Diversity more basic than Fact as being what facts manifest?

The above diagram can then be re-posed as:



The verb INVENT is a term which is directing whilst the instrumental term is ADAPT since the building of fires belongs to the skill development in which Life in general has adapted to the environment. Adaptation is cybernetic in the sense of evolving causal loops to cope with environmental needs and necessities. In contrast, invention breaks out of existing causal loops to form a new act of will, manifesting the intelligence of the Whole (unity) and creating a future structure of will. ADAPT and INVENT are coloured red ("the light [of the sun] seen through darkness") and blue ("the darkness [of distant hills] seen through [scattered] light") to express Goethe's phenomenology, in which a

complex or diverse situation is collapsed by Life to invent new ways of containing and hence simplifying the World, as a harmonious Unity of Will.

Pondering the Three Lines of Work

By Jeffrey Antman

Early on we hear and read about the three lines of work, primarily described as work on oneself, work with others, and work for the Work. Though they are presented as sequential, it may be nearer the truth to think of them like the enneagram; there is an external movement from 1 through 9, and the internal movement 142857. The movement from 1 to 9 is a movement in time. The internal movement 142857 is a movement in eternity.

It appears to us that we “find” the Work through the first line; I want something for myself and I find the Work. But how can “I” be the initiating force in this? Or, if in fact I am the initiating force, this passes away and I search elsewhere. Perhaps through every aisle of the contemporary spiritual supermarket. Perhaps sampling much and ending nowhere.

No, the initial affirming impulse comes from the Work itself. It calls me, often through miraculous and serendipitous paths. When I first see the worm on the hook I think, “What a clever fish am I,” never realizing there is a line, and a pole, and a Fisherman.

So very mysteriously I imagine I enter the path. Now I will learn how to “work on myself.” This practical know-how, along with the ideas, is merely a preparation. I am told I must “see myself.” But why? Do I even venture to ask this question? Or do I accept it as a fundamental belief?

One sees far too many stuck here. Plowing and preparing a plot of soil for 30, 50 years without a seed being planted. Nothing is wasted in the economy of the Work, so such manure is also needed. But that begs the question. It is quite sad on one level.

The field is not plowed for its own benefit. It is preparation for receiving something; seed, sun, air, water.

I am also told that I must work with others, and it is explained that this creates a necessary friction that will help me to see myself. True, as far as it goes, but still a very coarse and elementary thing. Why work with others? Those annoying, stupid, blind others!

Yet a basic fact of human existence is that there are others. I can't escape them unless I become a hermit, and even then, the others will simply people my inner world. We can say that only with others can the necessary energy be generated, and this is a less coarse and violent view of it. However, in a cosmos suffused with the universal Baraka, how can this be more than a term of art?

We're so conditioned to think in spacial and temporal terms, terms which only apply to this world of bodies and material objects. How can I be free from this? How can I open to the ever-present Mystery?

In a dialog with a Teacher, a friend once said, “right now it feels very near.” To which the sage replied, “It is not near; it is here.”

So we speak of three lines, when it is more like a ray of light passing through the prism of our perceptions which makes it appear to divide into three.

People speak glibly about “work for the Work,” each with his own subjective and often coarse understanding of that. For one it is cleaning the place of Work, for another, finding new group members, for yet another, making money, or time, or resources available for “Work purposes.” All these are correct and needed and have their place. But can I understand it in a larger sense than that? What is to be planted in the field I have prepared? What is to be tended and what harvest brought forth?

To some extent, this has to do with one's own understanding of what the Work, in the largest sense, IS, and with its purpose for being in this world. What is my own purpose for being in this

world, and yes, that of the “others” as well? Perhaps something of this is intimated in the ancient Christian formulation of “three persons in one God.”

These are very big things, very high things; and as we all know, our “inheritance” from Ouspensky is to be wary of such, for they are surely very, very far from me. But such an inheritance is in want of antidote, and fortunately others, John Bennett, Mr. Segal, Michel de Salzman to name a few, have called us to raise our eyes above the muck and mire of personal struggles and to try and feel in the marrow-bone our connection to something much higher indeed. Something that is our birthright as human beings, as the breathing links between heaven and earth. What could it mean to live consciously as such a link?

Like the dance of a Hindu god spinning Work worlds into existence and out again to the void, the three lines join, separate, change places and rejoin again in an eternal dance of higher djarktlom. I can marvel at the cosmic intricacy and unfathomable Mercy that lets me participate for my own brief eternity in the endless moment of Being.



Roman statue of a Sphinx from Colchester

GURDJIEFF AND THE LEGOMONISM OF 'OBJECTIVE REASON'

Anthony Blake

This is a chapter written for the Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production (ed. Carole Cusack and Alex Norman) published Brill, 2012. It is reproduced here without footnotes and bibliography for lack of space.

Every branch of science endeavours to elaborate and to establish an exact language for itself. But there is no universal language. For exact understanding exact language is necessary... This new language is based on the principle of relativity; that is to say, it introduces relativity into all concepts and thus makes possible an accurate determination of the angle of thought— making it possible to establish at once what is being said, from what point of view and in what connection. In this new language all ideas are concentrated round one idea. This central idea is the idea of evolution... and the evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness. G. I. Gurdjieff (Ouspensky 1949: 70).

This word Legomonism is given to one of the means existing there of transmitting from generation to generation information about certain events of long-lost ages, through just those three-brained beings who are thought worthy to be and who are called initiates (Gurdjieff 1950: 349).

Introduction

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866?–1949) was an iconic figure of the twentieth century. Roughly contemporary with many other 'teachers from the East' such as D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), and Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927), he came to be seen as the paradigm case of a guru transmitting esoteric knowledge. His personal impact on people he met was considerable. He also created music, dances, and writings that stand in their own right and have had widespread influence. For example, his magnum opus *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (1950) was included by Martin Seymour-Smith in his collection *The Hundred Most Influential Books Ever Written* (1998); and his pupil P. D. Ouspensky's record of his teaching *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949), the first published account of these ideas, has remained constantly in print.

Gurdjieff claimed that he was restoring and making available information known at certain times and places in the past but lost for centuries to the mainstream of humanity. He intimated that this knowledge had surfaced only because it is needed at the present time. His 'job' was to inject this 'esoteric' knowledge into contemporary culture, where it would find its way to those capable of putting it to use. What we know as 'religions'— that is the monotheistic systems of the Middle East and such Asian systems as Buddhism—arose around two thousand fivje hundred years ago, spreading a vision of human possibilities available to all, and taking the place of the mysteries known to only a few. The 'esoteric' perspective on humanity and its destiny is a return to the mysteries, and thus away from the universal claims of religion to speak to all. Gurdjieff could never be the maker of a new mass religion. Instead he might be regarded as a 'technician' serving some 'higher powers' (that supposedly oversee the destiny of humankind), having to experiment rather than deliver any doctrine. His aim would be to transmit know-how, an understanding of how things work, with no regard for the piety and idealism that underlie religions. This know-how was substantial, a union of knowledge and being, and in his *Beelzebub's Tales* was called objective reason (Gurdjieff 1950).

Various forces work against the development of objective reason, and primary amongst them is the prevailing belief people have that they are fully conscious, have free will, and know what

is going on. According to Gurdjieff, these are largely delusions and the very things that prevent people from striving to acquire reality. People 'forget' themselves and are caught up in fabrications. For those who wish to become free of their inner slavery, it is necessary to practice 'self-remembering'. Gurdjieff adopted and experimented with various methods of intentional work on oneself, which led to him developing several kinds of transmission. The orthodox line of Gurdjieff's followers claim, in line with older spiritual traditions, that the 'real' substance of the teaching can only be transmitted through a direct person to person lineage initiated by Gurdjieff himself. Historically, however we are now entering the fourth 'generation' after Gurdjieff and it is more than interesting that he himself predicted that by this time the authenticity of his line would have faded away (Claustres 2005).

After an automobile accident that left him weakened, Gurdjieff began the composition of his Three Series of Writings. He later said that these writings were his 'soldiers' and would serve him better than his pupils ever could. He seems to have rejected personal transmission as his primary mode of influence on the world. Gurdjieff appears to have been consistently innovative in his theoretical explanations and psychological techniques right up to his death in 1949, but in the process of transmitting these ideas his followers have divided along conservative and liberal lines. The latter have adopted the position that any authentic transmission of such ideas necessarily involves a creative contribution by the people concerned. That is particularly true of the transmission of his methods of thinking; indeed it is plausible to treat this transmission as a mode of creativity recreated by each person who takes it up. By its very nature this kind of thinking cannot proceed by imitation if it is authentic, though that may be a prejudice of Western culture.

Summarising Gurdjieff's psychological and historical ideas is not easy, but we should at least mention that he portrayed humanity as largely living in a bad dream from which only a few could awaken by 'working on themselves.' The way of transformation and liberation he offered became known as the 'Work.' Alternatively, it was called the Fourth Way, meaning a way that harmoniously integrated the three traditional ways based on mind, feeling, or body (characterised by Gurdjieff as Yogi, Monk, and Fakir).

Gurdjieff sometimes described himself as a 'teacher of dancing' and one of his transmissions involved 'Movements' or sacred dance, as Joseph Azize describes in his chapter in this book. Azize points out that the orthodox view is conservative, claiming that the authenticity of the Movements is guaranteed only by a personal lineage, which thus tends to restrict their transmission to an elite and frowns upon innovation. That is also largely the case with the transmission of what we can roughly call 'inner exercises' (to distinguish them from what is now popularly termed 'meditation') but since Gurdjieff's death pupils such as Jeanne de Salzmann and John Bennett have created their own versions. The inner exercises can be viewed together with the Movements as direct actions on the psyche of people who undertake them. Restraining their dissemination is therefore understandable, but it has held back any scientific investigation of what they do in terms of recent discoveries in neuroscience. It is questionable whether Gurdjieff himself was well acquainted with twentieth century science or even wanted to be.

This in turn relates to the notion of the 'sources' of Gurdjieff's teachings. Authority-driven thinking, in contrast to science-driven thinking, wants to know the 'lineage' of his teachings, rather than the universal principles and lawfulness behind them. Gurdjieff suggested that his ideas came from a source on a higher level than contemporary culture, but recognised that whenever such ideas—or 'influences' as he called them—entered and intermingled with a culture in such a way that ordinary people have no means of telling them apart from the rest, they will look no more 'conscious' than anything else. He says:

[m]an lives in life under the law of accident and under two kinds of influences again governed by accident.

The first kind are influences created in life itself or by life itself. Influences of race, nation, country, climate, family, education, society, profession, manners and customs, wealth, poverty, current ideas, and so on. The second kind are influences created outside this life, influences of the inner circle, or esoteric influences— influences, that is, created under different laws, although also on the earth. These influences differ from the former, first of all in being conscious in their origin. This means that they have been created consciously by conscious men for a definite purpose. Influences of this kind are usually embodied in the form of religious systems and teachings, philosophical doctrines, works of art, and so on.

They are let out into life for a definite purpose, and become mixed with influences of the first kind. But it must be borne in mind that these influences are conscious only in their origin. Coming into the general vortex of life they fall under the general law of accident and begin to act mechanically, that is, they may act on a certain definite man or may not act; they may reach him or they may not. In undergoing change and distortion in life through transmission and interpretation, influences of the second kind are transformed into influences of the first kind, that is, they become, as it were, merged into the influences of the first kind (quoted in Ouspensky 1949: 199).

The technical problems of usefully transmitting ‘higher influences’ were later discussed by the Sufi Idries Shah (1924–1996) who wrote many books on the subject. A decade after Gurdjieff’s death, Shah put himself forward as a representative of the very sources from which, so he claimed, Gurdjieff obtained his ‘ideas’. The enigma of Gurdjieff’s sources appears to be an essential part of his legacy; the very fact that different groups with different agendas try to claim him as ‘theirs’ is evidence of a universal meaning (Shah 1964). But Shah made many significant contributions to our understanding of ‘spiritual engineering’ (if we can call it that), and one of them was his concept of ‘scatter’. Ouspensky complained about Gurdjieff’s fragmentary way of transmitting information—the subtitle of his book was ‘Fragments of an Unknown Teaching’—and he spent the rest of his life trying to find the ‘complete system’. Shah turned this on its head by saying that such fragmentation is a characteristic property of the workings of a higher influence. This will be illustrated in the brief survey that follows.

This chapter will first look at obvious traces of Gurdjieff, particularly in the works of writers and musicians. Science fiction writers have been particularly well disposed towards Gurdjieff’s perspective, embracing alternative and extraterrestrial realities. Then we will take up the theme of Gurdjieff’s ‘objective reason’ as expressed in the understanding of structures defined by number. We will describe elements of this ‘structural thinking’ and the fate of two of Gurdjieff’s main creations (the Movements and the Enneagram) since his death. Finally, we will follow through a thread of influence from Gurdjieff that leads us into a ‘technology’ of the twenty-first century and brings us to the theme of enablement. That will lead us to conclude with a metaphor for the ‘Work’ as the ‘war with time’. Gurdjieff’s influence on contemporary culture as a creative person was considerable but this is only to consider such influence as a localised phenomena focused on what issued from him. There is a non-local or global influence of which Gurdjieff was one expression. This can be called “higher intelligence” (Blake 2010) and will be implicit in our discussion of various cultural developments.

Traces of Gurdjieff

Gurdjieff is said to have followed the path of *melamet* or ‘way of blame’, because he avoided manifesting as a spiritual or pious person. He could behave outrageously with his pupils and hurl abuse at them, while at the same time he could be extremely charitable and helpful to the ordinary people around him. His writings sometimes make for uncomfortable reading. Beelzebub’s Tales presents a searing “objective criticism of the life of man” from the standpoint

of cosmic normality in which Gurdjieff hammers home the idea that most people are nothing but deranged robots and that Western civilisation is hopelessly degenerate (Gurdjieff 1950).

He started writing the book in the 1920s but it was not published until 1950. Other critiques of the human race from a distant viewpoint were published in the 1930s, including Katharine Burdekin's *Proud Man* (1934), which one of Gurdjieff's pupils, British literary critic Alfred R. Orage, much admired. More closely connected with Orage, John O'Hara Cosgrave's novel *The Academy of Souls* (1931) depicted a Martian pontificating on the human condition and was almost certainly stimulated by Gurdjieff's ideas.

Gurdjieff's harsh view of human life meshed with the famous edict of Charles Fort (1874–1932); "I think we're property" (Fort 1941[1919]: 163). The idea was that some alien intelligence feeds off the negative emotion humans generate and we are kept in a kind of slavery where we cannot realise what is going on. Fort's speculative proposition was strangely close to Gurdjieff's statement that in ancient times higher powers implanted in us a device to prevent us seeing reality so that we would automatically continue to feed the moon. Although this device was later removed the effects of it have continued up to the present day. Asked about the purpose of human life, Orage once responded, "Mutton and wool!" That concept was taken to dramatic extremes, with Gnostic overtones, in the film *The Matrix* (1999) where mankind is kept in a state of illusion by powerful computers while being 'milked' of its energy. The world of graphic novels from which the filmmakers took their inspiration has long been absorbing esoteric lore and has used this to fuel its own way of myth-making and exposition. Gurdjieff has proved to be very much in tune with many cultural developments throughout the twentieth century.

In the England of the 1950s Gurdjieff's ideas influenced such 'meta-physical young men' as Colin Wilson, who challenged playwright John Osborne and other 'angry young men'. Wilson's bestseller *The Outsider* (1956) portrayed Gurdjieff and Ouspensky as 'knowing something' that other 'outsiders' including Wittgenstein and Camus failed to realise. His friend Stuart Holroyd wrote a play called *The Tenth Chance* (1958), based on stories of Gurdjieff in occupied Paris told to him by Gurdjieffian Kenneth Walker. Perhaps the best-known portrayal of Gurdjieff's way of thinking was the novel *Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing* (1952, in French) by the renowned Surrealist Rene Daumal. This book in turn inspired *Holy Mountain* (1973), the cult film directed by Chilean Alejandro Jodorowsky (b. 1929).



Beelzebub by Bob Jefferson.

Science fiction is a medium obviously suited to Gurdjieff's ideas of alternative realities and of developing a psyche strong enough to bear the contradictions between them. For example, in the novel by Brian Aldiss, *Barefoot in the Head* (1969), Jerry Cornelius, agent of entropy, is horrified to see his true self drive pass him after he arrives in Dover from a European continent barely recovering from being bombed with LSD. Only Gurdjieff's ideas make sense in this world of hallucinations. The chief of police in charge of Germany's autobahns devotes himself to manufacturing 'hydrogen 6' in his private laboratory; a substance beyond sex energy. A prominent musical feature on television includes a chorus of Gurdjieffian disciples. Aldiss picked up on Gurdjieffian ideas and combined them with 1960s New Wave science fiction. Horror and science fiction writer, John Shirley, is known to be an admirer of Gurdjieff (Shirley 2004) and has incorporated many of his ideas into novels such as *Demons* (2002). Even classic science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke may have been influenced in his

novel *Childhood's End* (1954) by hearsay concerning Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales*, since he portrayed his wise alien overseers of human evolution as having tails and horns, just like Beelzebub, the 'old devil'.

Then there is popular music. Kate Bush sang about "wonderful teachers" such as Gurdjieff in her song 'Them Heavy People' (1978), expressing the all-important idea that we have to 'work on ourselves'. Heavy metal guitarist Cynthia Witthoft put out a single in 2004 entitled 'The Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson.' Singer-composer Franco Battiato's 'Centro di Gravita Permanente' (1982 'Permanent Centre of Gravity'—a Gurdjieffian idea) is one of Italy's most popular songs. An interesting and more significant case of Gurdjieff's impact on popular culture is currently manifest in the 'Guitar Craft' educational work of Robert Fripp, founder of the widely-renowned group King Crimson. In essence, this course of study in musical performance introduces young people to many of the 'Work' or 'Fourth Way' ideas deriving from Gurdjieff without using any of its traditional jargon and with hardly any reference to Gurdjieff himself. Students can follow up on the ideas elsewhere and often do. A significant part of the transmission of Gurdjieff's ideas is done through craft because this transmission relates strongly to understanding how things work in practice. One of Gurdjieff's best-known remarks is: "If a man can make shoes one can talk to him."

Just as we can find parallels for Gurdjieff's ideas in various ancient traditions—Christian, Zoroastrian, Sufi, Rosicrucian and so on—so can we find modern thinkers independently coming up with notions similar to his or being subject to the same zeitgeist. A prime example is John B. Watson and the psychological school of Behaviourism. Gurdjieff is supposed to have met him one evening in New York. Certainly A. R. Orage, Gurdjieff's leading representative in the United States, told his students to study Watson's writings. In fact, Gurdjieff had considerable influence on leading intellectuals including Jungian Maurice Nicoll, a Sorbonne professor of literature Denis Saurat, the writer Katherine Mansfield (who died at Gurdjieff's Priuré), as well as the aforementioned Orage, a leading literary critic and socialist thinker, and was at least known to Aldous Huxley and T. S. Eliot (through Ouspensky). More popularly, Mary Poppins (1934), the novel by P. L. Travers, may have been written under the influence of Gurdjieff's ideas. Though she did not meet him until 1936 Travers had been studying Gurdjieff's ideas with Jane Heap for some years before that. Mary Poppins' assessment of being 'practically perfect' is an almost exact translation of Gurdjieff's highest possible degree of 'objective reason'.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Gurdjieff was admired by many American writers and thinkers such as Henry Miller, who even had a photograph of him in his bathroom. Two influential American researchers, Timothy Leary and John Lilly, received training in Gurdjieff's cosmology and, in a way reminiscent of *Barefoot in the Head*, applied that to rationalise and support their explorations of alternative realities. It has even been argued that Carlos Castaneda (1925–1998), who became renowned for his various books on the teachings of Toltec sorcery, drew heavily on Gurdjieff's ideas and recast the idea that sleeping man is 'food for the moon' into the Eagle that eats human consciousness. It is also reported that Castaneda saw a demonstration in Los Angeles of the Movements—the sacred dances created by Gurdjieff—and only later came up with his own 'tensegrity' shamanistic movements.

Among the many ideas and inventions stemming from Gurdjieff was a way of thinking entailing something akin to a mathematical discipline, and it is worth noting that when Gurdjieff was shaping his teaching, major advances were being made in the mathematics of alternative worlds. He referred to a circle of "inner humanity" as being able to "calculate" (Ouspensky 1949: 311), or come to objective knowledge without immediate perception of it. Objective knowledge in Gurdjieff's terms is not just 'scientific' or empirical per se but must be rooted in what he called 'objective consciousness'. This kind of knowledge he claimed comes from unity and is not composed out of parts. Later, his pupil John Bennett used the term "consciousness" only in

contrast with our ordinary “sensitive” state of neural reactivity, and designated it to be the first of the “cosmic” energies—that is, unlimited by space and time—that can awaken in us (Bennett 1964: 18).

Speculations about higher dimensions were popular in the late nineteenth century and at the start of the twentieth century, stimulated by the development of non-Euclidean geometries and geometries of four or more dimensions. Entry into higher worlds meant a different way of thinking and one of the many problems besetting someone who ventures outside of the ‘normal world’ is that she has no language for what she experiences and might see. At the same time, elements of an appropriate language will probably appear mystical, speculative, or meaningless to inhabitants of the ‘sleeping’ world. Higher or more ‘objective’ perceptions require a more developed language but this will necessarily be misunderstood in the ‘normal’ world, as described in the classic novel *Flatland* (Abbott 1884).

In *Beelzebub’s Tales* the theme of objective reason plays a major role. Gurdjieff, through his main character Beelzebub, explains that the acquisition of objective reason brings man closer to the Absolute Reason of the Creator. But through objective reason a man can also understand how the world works, why it came into being and its purpose, what has gone wrong, and also what he himself can contribute to the welfare of others in fulfilling his own potential. The development of objective reason is exemplified by Beelzebub himself, who, as we learn in *Tales*, has been exiled by the Creator Endlessness to our solar system. Once ensconced on Mars, Beelzebub becomes intrigued by the strange behaviour of the ‘three-brained beings’ of the Planet Earth and starts an investigation lasting for thousands of our years, an investigation which becomes of interest to many other advanced beings in the universe. The extraterrestrial sage Beelzebub is depicted as being rather like an anthropologist but also somewhat of an experimental scientist.

Gurdjieff manages to suggest that objective reason coalesces what we often regard as the opposites of faith and science, a theme he takes up in the Second Series of Writings, in which the religious sage Father Giovanni tells the young Gurdjieff,

...faith cannot be given to a man. Faith arises in a man and increases in its action in him not as the result of automatic learning, that is, not from any automatic ascertainment of height, breadth, thickness, form and weight, or from the perception of anything by sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste, but from understanding. Understanding is the essence obtained from information intentionally learned and from all kinds of experiences personally experienced (Gurdjieff 1963: 240).

Like other founders of esoteric movements such as Rudolf Steiner, Gurdjieff laid claim to a kind of superior science. Despite his criticism of Mendeleev and Newlands, pioneers of the periodic table, he must have drawn on their studies of octaves and triads and was well versed in nineteenth century scientific and philosophical thought. He advocated a radical materialism that appears to have much in common with the earlier German philosophy of *Kraft und Stoff*. He was also a pioneer of what is now called ‘organic’ philosophy and had a developed vision of the biosphere—which he called Great Nature—in relation to the solar system. He emphasised in a variety of ways the interdependency of all life and indeed all existence, saying for example, “[i]n all probability there is a law of the reciprocal maintenance of everything existing” (Gurdjieff 1950: 1095). He anticipated contemporary blends of morality and ecology, and at least one his pupils, John Bennett, believed he was working in consciousness of the emergence of a new sacred image of the holiness of Nature. Bennett himself was concerned with discovering forms of worship appropriate to the times and devised a prayer based on Gurdjieff’s ideas of reciprocal maintenance that is still being used in group gatherings.

In Arizona, in the late 1980s, a visionary group built Biosphere 2, a more than three-acre replication in miniature of Biosphere 1, our planet. This largely drew on the work of the Russian

genius bio-geo-chemist Vladimir Vernadsky (1863–1945), a contemporary of Gurdjieff and an exemplar of the Cosmists who also included Constantin Tsliokovsky, pioneer of space travel.²⁰ But behind the scenes, Gurdjieff's influence was profound, as were the ideas of John Bennett, and the latter's major work of interpretation and development of Gurdjieff's ideas, *The Dramatic Universe* (1953–1968). Biosphere 2's project managers made extensive use of Bennett's structural method of thinking called Systematics, which was in a direct line from Gurdjieff's thinking on objective reason, which will be discussed later. The project was eventually taken over by antagonistic business and academic interests so that its 'inner life' has remained in the shadows and only the outer constructions are to be seen today. Even in its heyday, however, the connection with Gurdjieff and Bennett was kept hidden. The destruction or occlusion of public manifestations of Gurdjieff's work is, unfortunately, par for the course.



Biosphere 2.

In coming to speak of Gurdjieff's way of thinking we must again make mention of his work on gesture and bodily movement since these 'sacred dances' were said to be like 'books' that could be read for the knowledge they contained. Gurdjieff's Movements were not 'just' dances.

In keeping with independent developments of dance in Europe since the late nineteenth century and with the symbolist movement in Russia, they embodied a view of human structure and were applied as a way of 'structural integration' of psyche and body. Gurdjieff went further, claiming they contained information about 'cosmic laws'. The complete approach to Movements thus included not only spectacle and performance but also inner work and contemplation of these 'laws'. This was rarely if ever realised in practice. Work on the Movements during the twentieth century was largely confined to people personally connected with Gurdjieff, and then with close pupils. The orthodox view was that only those engaged in psychological work in a 'properly organised' group should be shown the Movements, and information about them was jealously guarded. Only in fairly recent times have they become more accessible.



Enneagram Movement Sherborne House 1974.

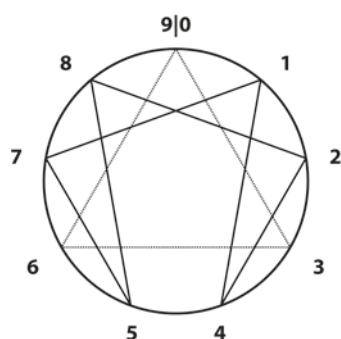
A parody of the Movements appeared in the cult movie *Wicker Man* (1973) in the scene where pagan rituals are enacted in a stone circle. These were directed by one of the actors, Diane Cilento, who had then just come from Bennett's International Academy. She also contributed to the BBC television series

One Pair of Eyes, which included interviews with Bennett and scenes from Movements classes.

One of the most interesting developments originated with the Indian guru Bagwan Shri Rajneesh (Osho), a fan of Gurdjieff's work, who directed some of his followers to acquire knowledge of the Movements, to 'steal' them as it were ('conscious stealing' is one of Gurdjieff's most provocative ideas). The inspiration for this came from theatre director Peter Brook's 1979 film of Gurdjieff's book *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. At the end of the film the character playing 'Gurdjieff' comes to a hidden monastery and is shown sacred dances and rituals, which are in fact Gurdjieff's own. The Osho group now includes its own versions of the dances that are becoming known to a general public and already somewhat deviant from Gurdjieff's original creations.

The arising of a form of the Movements as a glamorous spectacle, more widely known than the original, is paralleled by what has happened to other Gurdjieffian creations, in particular the best-known symbol of his thinking, the Enneagram. Students of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky applied the thinking of the Enneagram to practical subjects, even very mundane ones, such as running a kitchen. Perhaps its most esoteric application was in interpreting the story of Christ and hence, by implication, of all history in a spiritual light. Deviations from this line began to occur with Ouspensky's student Rodney Collin, who introduced astrology into the Enneagram in 1954. Things changed even more when an eclectic South American, Oscar Ichazo, suggested that the Enneagram was a depiction of human types and came from a source to which he was privy. As always, Gurdjieff himself had given no indication of the sources for the Enneagram so the coast was clear for rampant speculation and spurious claims. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* reported that Gurdjieff firmly stated there could be no science of human types. For all that, Ichazo and his colleague Claudio Naranjo went on to develop their system of types, which has turned into a veritable industry in the self-help business. The Enneagram had once been uniquely indicative of Gurdjieff and his ideas, but it has now become more widely known than Gurdjieff himself and associated with ideas quite at variance with his.

The fate of the Enneagram has something in common with that of the Movements, though things have not as yet gone so far with the latter. Both have ersatz substitutes that have become money-spinners. The originals are perhaps too 'tough' for a general public. One of Gurdjieff's central theses was that his way of transformation is only possible for a relatively few people. Thus the existence of spurious, populist versions of his ideas may be the best thing possible in the circumstances, since those who might be able to make use of the 'real' ideas will be capable of seeing behind the mirage. As Rumi said: "[t]he counterfeit is evidence of the Real."



A Basic Form of the Enneagram.

Gurdjieff claimed that his major work *Beelzebub's Tales* would become an inspiration to future artists and writers. But it is pertinent to quote some of the few words he offered on the subject of 'art':

[I]ove not art with your feelings. Real art is based on mathematics. It is a kind of script with an inner and outer meaning. In early times, conscious men—who understood the principles of mathematics—composed music, designed

statues and images, painted pictures and constructed buildings— all of which were such that they had a definite effect on the people who came in contact with them: on their feelings and senses (Nott 1961: 67).

The Cosmic Laws

Gurdjieff's magnum opus *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, the first of the Three Series of Writings entitled 'All and Everything', is among many other things a treatise on thinking in which great emphasis is placed on the role of intelligence in human life, and includes such terms as "active mentation," "striving to know more and more," "being-logical-confrontation," and above all "objective reason" (Gurdjieff 1950). The ability to reason correctly involves being as well as knowledge. This is only possible when thinking is in harmony with the two other major functions of feeling and moving. For a person to become whole and have their own 'I' each of the three—thinking, feeling, and moving—has to be spiritualised, which means realising its own will and initiative in harmony with the others. Only when thinking, feeling, and moving are in an active relation-ship can there be understanding.

This tripartite vision of man was in accordance with Gurdjieff's claim that what he taught was 'Esoteric Christianity' (perhaps to separate himself from the 'Esoteric Buddhism' of Blavatsky and Theosophy). The Trinity overshadows many of his teachings, most obviously in his 'Law of Three'. Here we will find one of the pillars of his way of thinking, known to anyone in touch with his ideas. Avoiding both the idealism of Hegel and dialectical materialism, Gurdjieff's triadic thinking was in accord with Newton's three laws of motion (concerning inertia, force, and balance) and to some degree with the Samkhya system of Kapila (c. 555 BCE). The connection with Samkhya was explored by some of Ouspensky's pupils (including John Bennett), but most expertly by the Hindu sage and Baul, Sri Anirvan (Reymond 1984 [1971]).

Triadic thinking involves going beyond classical binary logic, and three-valued logics and other alternative non-Aristotelian logics have been explored by many philosophers and logicians in modern times. In its Gurdjieffian form, the triad was depicted as composed of three forces called 'active', 'passive', and 'neutralising'. The term 'force' is used loosely and the neutralising force in particular hardly seems a force at all (in Newton's third law it appears in the sense expressed as 'action and reaction are equal and opposite'). The third force was also called 'reconciling', a term that has religious and moral overtones. In the first draft of *Beelzebub's Tales* (1930) the third force of God, the Holy Reconciling, was said to enter into every triad even at the lowest level of existence. In the eventually published version this image of an all-pervading compassion was withdrawn or at least hidden. The third force in general is something new and independent from the other two, far more significant than the role given it in the Christian (Western) creed as 'proceeding from the Father and Son together' and certainly far more than in the Eastern version of emanating from the Father alone.

Gurdjieff denounced our usual ideas about 'good' and 'bad' as disastrous for our welfare and capacity to understand anything. We can see the fundamental errors made in opposing the two when we try to increase the 'good' over and against the 'bad' as if they followed a simple arithmetic. When we try to resist what is 'bad' and put a stop to it by force, errors accumulate that are blatantly obvious in public affairs everywhere and in all moralising. It is interesting to recognise the meaning of Christ's injunction to 'resist not evil' in the light of the triad. The usual dyadic perspectives of positive and negative, affirming and denying, good and bad are superseded. We are led to a view of life and evolution that sees beyond win-lose struggle and competition and subtly implies the prevalence of a possible win-win intelligence everywhere—but never as a 'force' driving any process and never perceived by us unless we have 'eyes to see' and 'ears to hear'. Gurdjieff proposed that in general man is 'third force blind' (Gurdjieff 1950). This is perhaps his most important edict. It means that in terms of the Gurdjieff teaching we do not understand how anything works because we do not see it as a whole and thus, in particular, how God or what is higher works in practice—as evidenced by the misconceived utterances of our contemporary advocates of 'intelligent design'.

John Bennett recreated Gurdjieff's Law of Three in his highly original identification of it with will. In common parlance, will is grossly misunderstood by equating it with active force as in the generally accepted idea of 'will power'. According to Bennett, it is equally passive in various shades such as 'receptive' or 'denying'. Gurdjieff emphasised this point of view by speaking of the holy denying force and urging us to understand its necessity and virtue. But will is even more than the first and second force, because it is also reconciling. A complete act of will involves all three forces.

It is impossible to ascertain with any confidence whether Gurdjieff's concept of the third force was behind such developments as the arising of a third force in psychology in the late 1950s. The 'first force' was mechanistic as exemplified by Watson and behaviourism. The 'second force' largely came out of psychoanalysis and centred on the unconscious. The 'third force' arose as humanistic psychology based on meaning, exemplified by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. All we know is that the idea of a third force, spoken of as such in psychology and

international relations, had become commonplace by the end of the twentieth century. 'Objectivity' as in 'objective reason' begins with the law of three. One can say that the third force 'sees' the other two impartially. With only two terms, both are forced to be subjective.

Gurdjieff complemented his Law of Three with a 'Law of Seven', also known as the 'law of octaves'. The Law of Three deals with relatedness; the Law of Seven with process. The Law of Seven might be seen as part of a tradition that stretches at least as far back as Pythagoras. As the law of octaves it obviously has musical roots and the study of musical structures within the octave has occupied brilliant minds for millennia as a guide to how the law of heaven can be brought into the domain of earth (Godwin 1995). However, Gurdjieff gave this a very dramatic and practical twist.

In the truly primordial state 'before creation' the Law of Seven indicated a continuous sequence of equal steps for every process so that every movement was unhindered and automatically completed. A completing process was signified in terms of an octave going from a note do to the next higher do' (a doubling of frequency). However 'after creation' the smooth procedure of the primordial octave is broken in two places and the relevant process requires an additional energy at each of these places to bring it forward to the next step. Gurdjieff associated these two critical intervals with the semi-tone intervals between mi and fa and between si and do' of the major diatonic scale. Why Gurdjieff chose this particular scale is not known. Given that his aim was probably to point out the intrinsic 'law-conformable' hazards of any process of change, it is perhaps understandable that he would eschew the twelve-note or dodecaphonic scale of semi-tones (used by Schoenberg) or the six-note whole-tone scale (used by Debussy). But there are several possible scales with special semi-tone intervals in different places from each other. As far as we know, no other esoteric teacher besides Gurdjieff had ever made much of the two special intervals in the major diatonic scale. The change he spoke of from the pre-creation to the creation state of the universe corresponds to what in physics is called 'breaking of symmetry'. This makes for an interesting, evolving (really changing) universe or, as John Bennett was later to call it, a *dramatic universe* in which things could go wrong.

Of course, the deep traditions of all cultures have all contained some realisation that 'error' or 'sin' was fundamental to the spiritual reality possible in our universe. Gurdjieff made much of this way of thinking in his concept of legomonisms or "knowledge intentionally transmitted to future generations through art" by means of placing such significant knowledge just where something unexpected appears. Special significance has been given to 'deliberate errors' in the art of both West and East (Douglas 2007; Weightman and Safavi 2009). A metaphor for the structure of Gurdjieff's 'octave' is making a journey to some desirable goal one has never reached before. The two 'shocks' needed to bridge or pass through the critical intervals are different in kind. The first comes from within the journey itself, as in finding a guide, but the second comes from the finish of the process and can be called the 'God' of the situation or, in more secular terms, the 'wholeness'. Help is both immanent and transcendent.

The Law of Seven has direction and Gurdjieff distinguished its two senses as ascending and descending, the first called 'evolution' and the second 'involution'. Involution proceeds as it were mechanically but evolution is always conscious or intentional. The creative power that made the world had a much easier time than we humans who seek to evolve. The way up and the way down may be, as the Hermetic tradition avers, one and the same but in practice the way up is far harder than the other. Gurdjieff had a saying, "[e]verything turns into its own opposite," and it is possible that this saying has crept into fairly common usage. It stems from the Law of Seven. At each of the two critical intervals, if the right intervention does not occur the line of the process deviates. Eventually then it turns through 180 degrees and runs in quite the opposite direction to which it began. Clearly this is a precise insight into most public affairs as well as into the ineffectiveness of our attempts to improve ourselves. Rhetoric about will-power, ideals (doing

'good'), and success is a cover-up and often leads to claiming disastrous results to be achievements. How systems go wrong is now a prominent field of study. As Gurdjieff noted,

[i]n literature, science, art, philosophy, religion, in individual and above all in social and political life, we can observe how the line of development of forces deviates from its original direction and goes, after a certain time, in a diametrically opposite direction, still preserving its former name (Ouspensky 1949: 129).

John Bennett understood that the Law of Seven showed that hazard is intrinsic to the conditions of existence (Bennett 1976). An evolutionary process requires the exercise of free intelligence (parallel in some ways with the 'free energy' required for life forms to exist) but still within the conditions of existence. That is, it can happen only when there are certain kinds of 'gap' in existence. This gave rise to his notion of a 'dramatic universe.' In the 1940s, before he embarked on writing his own magnum opus *The Dramatic Universe*, he was obsessed with the idea of making a fusion between Gurdjieff's ideas and those of modern physics. To this end, with the collaboration of his colleagues R. L. Brown and M. W. Thring, he devised a five-dimensional geometry and wrote a paper that was published by the Royal Society of London, "Unified Field Theory in a Curvature-Free Five-Dimensional Manifold" (1949). The first volume of *The Dramatic Universe* (1953) dealt with 'natural philosophy' or science and contained further mathematical treatments. It also laid out the first version of the structure of thinking he had evolved from Gurdjieff's treatment of cosmic 'laws.'

The Enneagram and Systematics

Gurdjieff himself indicated that his two fundamental laws could be combined in the Enneagram, the symbolic figure we mentioned previously. Initially he explained this figure as an emblem of a secret society but did so in the context of discussing the history of symbolism. The Enneagram was said to apply to any 'cosmos' or organised whole (these days we would say any 'self-organised' or autopoietic whole although these terms are inadequate).³¹ It was also described as an encyclopaedia, capable of containing all knowledge. Just as an organism requires three foods, so does every whole require the weaving together of three 'octaves' (for sustenance, reproduction, and evolution); the Law of Three and the Law of Seven meet and combine in the Enneagram.

The Enneagram was adopted as the chief symbol for Gurdjieff's enterprise and appeared, for example, on the cover of the brochure for his Institute of Harmonious Development of Man. The closest parallel to this symbol in other spiritual traditions is the Tree of Life of Kabbalistic thought, probably devised in the thirteenth century, but the Enneagram goes further in embodying uncertainty and contradiction and presents itself as an open system not hermetically sealed. A sign of truly understanding what it says is the perception (not merely the conception) of it as moving and containing the spectator.

John Bennett and his students produced a striking manifestation of the Enneagram by building a 'temple' based on its geometry. This building was called the djameechoonatra after the reference in Beelzebub's Tales to the 'refectory' where beings obtain their 'second being food,' or air. Its main purpose was to house performances of the Gurdjieff Movements. After finally being completed in 1965 this unique construction was demolished a year later, when Bennett gave the estate on which it stood to the Sufi teacher Idries Shah, who then sold the land to

The Djameechoonatra



example of the loss of a manifestation of Gurdjieff's ideas which foreshadowed the effective 'destruction' of Biosphere 2 a generation later.

One of the most striking manifestations of the survival of the original Gurdjieffian Enneagram has been its application to management and self-organising systems. One of the earliest examples was Donald Campbell's *Fisherman's Guide: A Systems Approach to Creativity and Organization* (1985). The material was derived from the work of Albert Low who studied Bennett's work extensively.³⁴ The Enneagram also gets a mention in Stafford Beer's *Beyond Dispute: The Invention of Team Syntegrity* (1994), and is the mainstay of Richard Knowles' *The Leadership Dance* (1998). Knowles' work in particular strikes a blow for robust dynamic systems and dialogue in place of static idealistic systems, including so-called 'new paradigms.' To emphasise the depth of the structural thinking that can be associated with Gurdjieff, we can also cite the essays of Dermot Furlong and David Vernon of Trinity College Dublin on 'Relativistic Ontologies, Self-Organization, Autopoiesis, and Artificial Life: A Progression in the Science of the Autonomous' (1992) which included John Bennett's Systematics alongside material from the mathematician George Spencer-Brown and Francisco Varela. More will be said of Systematics later in this chapter.

It should also be noted that the Enneagram found meaning as an expression of the Divine Mother or *shakti* in the Hindu tradition, associated with power and doing (Norelli-Bachelet 1978). So it appears that Gurdjieffian ideas and methods have some viability in the realm of understanding complex and evolving systems. The Enneagram has certainly appealed to many people in the practical arts of management, design, and performance. A leading United States magician, Steffan Soule, recently published *Accomplish the Impossible* (2011), which explains how to use the Enneagram for improving performance in 'business, art, science and life'.

Number and geometry have been essential for emergence of the modern world but they also have mystical overtones in the perspective of 'ancient knowledge'. Sophisticated geometry in the guise of 'sacred science' has enjoyed a revival in the past hundred years, from the phenomena of crop circles to research into the mathematics of megalithic constructions. Similarly but contrastingly, engineering and systems thinking have opened up structural approaches concerned with materials and design, as manifested for example in the work of Buckminster Fuller. It was in this context that Bennett evolved his own approach to Gurdjieff's idea of 'laws.' From Ouspensky he picked up the idea of three dimensions of time as well as of space and began to explore the meaning of other number-ideas besides those of 3 and 7. His highly ordered mathematical approach led him to seek a way of structuring the core Gurdjieffian ideas in a coherent scheme. Gurdjieff had produced his ideas in a deliberately piecemeal way. (He may have been experimenting to see which ideas 'took' with the people he spoke to). In his own writings he resorted to mythological modes of thought rather than the quasi-scientific ones of his Russian period.

Bennett came to see that he could present the bare bones of Gurdjieff's material in a startlingly simple progression of oneness, twoness, three-ness, and so on, that extended and fulfilled the principles espoused by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), going on to however high a number one cares to go (the infinite system Bennett identified with 'God').³⁶ All the 'fragments of an unknown teaching' Ouspensky referred to could be slotted in place, in particular Gurdjieff's two laws. Material from diverse traditions could also be accommodated and modern developments included. The series of number-systems could be a universal language embracing both materialistic and spiritual ideas. Thus was born what Bennett came to call Systematics, which promised to become a new method of thinking. A journal of that name was started in 1963 and ran for eleven years, welcoming contributions from numerous sources over a wide field.

Bennett's Systematics was a natural outcome of Gurdjieff's ideas on the structure of experience but it was also—inadvertently of course—a strong contender for the *Glass Bead*

Game (1943) visualised by Herman Hesse in his novel of that name. The different number systems represent different 'worlds' and overlay each other in a way that has been best explored by the novelist and thinker William Pensinger (1994), an admirer of Bennett's work.³⁸ However, the pragmatism of the Fourth Way cannot be overemphasised. One of the core meanings of the label applied to it—the 'Work'—concerned understanding how things work. Practical experience was primary. The basic paradigm was a human being doing something in the world in such a way that he himself was transformed. Bennett himself observed that the real value of Gurdjieff's contribution was not in his ideas as such but in the practical methodologies he brought to bear, many of which have to be transmitted from person to person.

Bennett's approach was not merely a summary of Gurdjieff's ideas but looked into their generation. He understood the 'cosmic laws' to be manifestations of a universal intelligence, reflected in us in our two invisible centres of higher emotion and higher intellect. This led him into technology and invention to simulate the workings of higher mind, even if only as a mere shadow of objective reason.

Games and Techniques

In order for a transmission from a 'higher source' to work, it needs to be recognised for what it is by someone. This cannot be done unconsciously. Gurdjieff's pupil John Bennett later described this situation in terms of learning how to communicate with higher intelligence. This proposition was made in the context of his vision of humanity entering a 'synergic' epoch based on co-operation between itself and the higher powers governing evolution. Bennett's concern with communication and co-operation led him to develop new technologies. From the outside, these can seem as totally 'within life' or exoteric, having nothing to do with any supposed higher source of information. We mentioned Hesse's literary metaphor of possible higher intelligence—the Glass Bead Game—but in his novel it was portrayed as a fundamental failure, just as Umberto Eco's *The Search for the Perfect Language* (1995) concludes that such a language is a mirage. In brief, the ideal forms of the past cannot work, an idea that reflects on the fundamental problem of religion.

In esoteric lore, as explored by Ouspensky in his own writings independently of Gurdjieff, such devices as games—for example the Tarot—were considered to be inventions designed to propagate certain insights (Ouspensky 1913). Games that would sufficiently entertain people would reproduce themselves over centuries and even millennia. Their secrets would yield only to those 'initiated' by some means. Bennett's Systematics can be seen as the precursor to a new set of 'games' and initially found application in the 'soft sciences' of management and education. The leader of a team that developed one of the first pocket calculators claimed their success was due to his use of Systematics. John Allen, leader of the Biosphere 2 project wrote a practical book for managers based on Systematics (Allen 1986). But there were also ersatz imitations. In the United States a very successful management consultant took Bennett's materials and, strangely, altered key elements of the content. He propagated this distorted version to thousands of managers.

The game-like character of Bennett's Systematics was developed further as an educational tool. He and his colleagues invented an educational technology from it with 'hands-on' implementation. This included the design and construction of an electro-mechanical teaching machine.

The method was called 'structural communication,' which later evolved into 'LogoVisual Technology' (LVT). For those who have seen behind the scenes as it were, it is fascinating that such a process as LVT contains significant insights into the nature of consciousness and the structure of thinking without ever speaking about such things explicitly. The technology is

geared to the user and dictates nothing. It is there for people to use as they wish. Perhaps a very few will see through the technique to its source.

If there are superior methods of achieving something then how could they be protected against misuse by the unworthy? In essence that is brought about by their not being so effective and easy as to make them unmistakably advantageous. Gurdjieff stated pretty clearly that what was made available to the public and even to his own pupils left something out which individuals had to find and contribute themselves: "... if it is now ... made available to all, it is only in an incomplete and theoretical form of which nobody could make any practical use without instruction from a man who knows" (Ouspensky 1949: 294). The claim of the Fourth Way is that it might enable a relatively few people to achieve their inherent potential in such a way that they can serve the purpose of conscious evolution. Inevitably, however, all its teachings must necessarily be absorbed and mixed into the general drift of culture and become indistinguishable from countless other influences.

LVT is a sign of the times in enabling people to 'think together' in a creative way. It is presently being applied in education and management, though not on a large scale. The ideological component has faded into the background behind the technology. To put it crudely, ideologies or 'teachings' have to tell people what is 'good' and 'bad' and this is always a fundamental mistake, as we have seen. A spiritual influence such as Gurdjieff's Fourth Way cannot operate politically, by propaganda, force or even persuasion, or by the sentimentality and wishful thinking of 'New Age' movements. Its most common media, as Gurdjieff described, are those of art and philosophy but perhaps the most appropriate form is that of games because these require participation. Their wisdom lies in their rules and design, which recreate the essence of the 'framework conditions' governing existence. Gurdjieff once remarked that; "[t]he teaching by itself cannot pursue any definite aim. It can only show the best way for men to attain whatever aims they may have" (Ouspensky 1949: 99).

The line from Gurdjieff's cosmic laws through Bennett's Systematics to LVT marks stages of the manifestation of an original form of structural thinking, but it is unlikely that someone coming across LVT will even suspect its origins in *Beelzebub's Tales*, for instance. The changes of form and appearance of this thinking can be regarded as evidence of a decline or at least a 'transformation down' making it available to people operating at lower mental levels or, as Idries Shah would have put it, 'soup of the soup of the soup' (Shah 1964). It can also be seen as doing just what is required, which is to make the higher ideas operative in general human life just as 'work on oneself' enables our ordinary centres to accommodate the influences from our higher centres.

We have said that Gurdjieff's innovations were not so much doctrinal as technical. They were designed to enable people to do things other- wise hardly possible by means of their own strength and virtue. A very strong theme in the various 'Work' groups associated with Gurdjieff was enablement. Gurdjieff himself emphasised three distinct aspects of making a change: to wish—to be able—to do. He pointed out that almost all people wish to improve themselves (whatever this means) but very few actually do so. What is required is not only an insight or idea but also a substance that makes this enablement possible. This substance can arise at certain times, for certain people, and in certain circumstances. It can be seen as the 'missing ingredient' we mentioned before, linked with the strength of the present moment.

The War with Time

Time was an obsession for many of the followers of Gurdjieff, including Ouspensky who was captivated by Nietzsche's retelling of the Pythagorean belief that we repeat our lives over and over again. Gurdjieff was sceptical of Ouspensky's understanding, but added;

“[t]his idea of repetition,” said G., “is not the full and absolute truth, but is the nearest possible approximation of the truth. In this case truth cannot be expressed in words. But what you say is very near to it. And if you understand why I do not speak of this, you will be still nearer to it. What is the use of a man knowing about recurrence if he is not conscious of it and if he himself does not change? . . . Why should he make any efforts today when there is so much time and so many possibilities ahead—the whole of eternity?” (Ouspensky 1949: 250).

Maurice Nicoll was another example of a Gurdjieff follower captivated by the enigmas of time, which he wrote about in *Living Time* (1952). More recently Jacob Needleman provides another example (Needleman 2003). However, J. G. Bennett was probably the main exponent.

The concept of the ‘present moment’ was developed by Bennett as an expression of his insight into a third kind of time capable of reconciling the ‘timeless’ with time as successiveness. This kind of time—‘anti-time’ it could be called—enables a moment to hold itself together in the face of the dispersive, entropic flow of ordinary time. Indeed Bennett often referred to ‘the war with time’ as the crucial task of ‘the Work.’ In the development of this line of understanding such moments or events could sustain themselves to the degree that they are quasi-immortal in history: that is, evolving in their own time. ‘Strong’ moments are more real than what is just happening now. The common sense that what is happening now is more real than past and future is then considered to be an illusion.

We briefly alluded to many Gurdjieff pupils’ passionate concern about the events of the incarnation, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ. These events are prime exemplars of ‘strong moments’. There is a sub-text in which it appears that only by participation in such events can we gain enough reality to be who we really are. The presence of a Master may be of this character because he or she is distinguished by having a larger/stronger present moment. In a sense if the Master does not pay attention to us, then we barely exist. The technical arts of Gurdjieff are all concerned with increasing the ableness of the present moment. Supreme among them is ‘self-remembering’. Henri Tracol, one of Gurdjieff’s pupils, reported that in his moments of self-remembering this entailed ‘being seen’ rather than ‘himself’ becoming more conscious. Self-remembering cannot be taught because it is not a process; it is a glimpse of another world of anti-time.

Bennett’s ableness-to-be of the present moment very much relates to Gurdjieff’s objective reason, which is based on understanding and not on any state of consciousness. It is this understanding or logos that, as a third or reconciling force, holds the moment together. Gurdjieff’s transmission thus opened up a new line of enquiry into the meaning of immortality, not in the naive sense of continuing after death in linear time but as being real ‘now’. In the light of this possibility we can return to the Enneagram and possibly approach it as representing a design for an apparatus to overcome time.

All such, legomonisms are necessarily incomplete and call upon the individual ‘initiate’ to realise them in practice. They are only available to someone who remembers himself, that is, is conscious of recurrence; and they are dependent on the zeitgeist or ‘energy of the time’, and especially *kairos* or ‘propitious time’:

[t]he fourth way is never without some work of a definite significance, is never without some undertaking around which and in connection with which it can alone exist. 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 (Ouspensky 1949: 312).

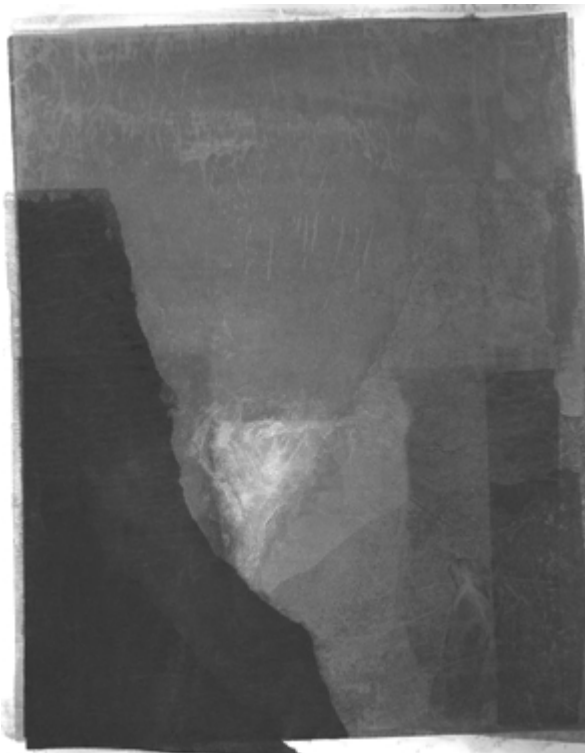
Conclusion

This chapter has traced the influenced of key Gurdjieff concepts that have become detached from the Work as traditionally understood. These Work teachings include the Movements and the Enneagram, which were both developed as original cultural products by Gurdjieff and which were originally known only to his pupils and those in direct line of succession in the initiatory esoteric tradition. However, teachers in the Gurdjieff tradition like John G. Bennett, moved away from the orthodox groups and creatively developed Gurdjieff's ideas, and certain important cultural products, chiefly Systematics and LogoVisual Thinking, were the result. These new ways of thinking have limited, but significant, penetration into mainstream society in the twenty-first century.

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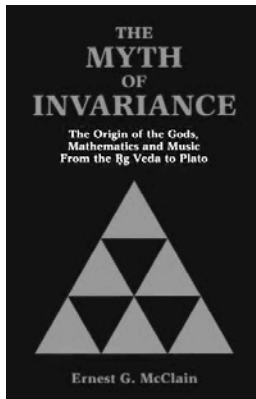


The Tissue Paper Collage process invokes the beauty and mystery of our imagination. This process opens to our inner world in a way that transforms unconscious content into visible form so it can be processed, understood, and integrated. An inner peace arises from this process that can unwind our minds, supercharge our creativity and rekindle delight. On this retreat we will create collages, engage in dance/movement, group meditation, and explore how the story of our inner landscape informs our lives.

For more info contact Karenstefan@icloud.com

ERNEST MCCLAIN (1918-2014)

Ernest McClain passed away the evening Friday, April 25th in his flat in Washington. Karen and I had the rare privilege of meeting with him and we managed to record various video and audio pieces with him. We were due to meet with him again in May. He pioneered the interpretation of ancient scriptures in terms of harmonic theory, first published



as *The Myth of Invariance* in 1976, a unique and seminal work. In his view, ancient writers from the Sumerians and at least up to Plato constructed their narratives and symbolisms on the basis of structures of tonality. He believed that this underpinned all theologies. He strongly

engaged with Richard Heath, who developed for him the Harmonic Explorer software to facilitate his work and was strangely appreciative of my work on the 'lattice of understanding' (or lattice of systems). He was

open to many people with diverse views. Nearly every day he would engage via email in discussions on the meaning of texts.



Ernest McClain holds a model of the Lattice of Systems given him by Anthony Blake (Washington May 2013)

