

Gurdjieff , Enneagram and the Fourth Way

This essay will survey Gurdjieff's central ideas, locate his sources and delineate the main reasons for his "Work"; explain chief methods and evaluate his place in the history of ideas and in the contemporary visions of human condition. His life, one of the great adventure stories of the 20th century is not our concern (an interested reader can consult Riordan-Speeth's book (*I*) as the best introduction to all things Gurdjieffian) - ours is a more critical and investigative, even inquisitive approach.

1. Gurdjieff's Vison of Human Machine

Gurdjieff can be best described as a blend of operating Theosophist and the protagonist of Neopythagorean/Rosicrucian-Hermetic doctrines in vogue these times (turn of the 19/20th century.)

What the Theosophical movement had been teaching in last two decades of the 19th century, Gurdjieff, armed with his vitalist temper and adventurous spirit tried to achieve in practice. For all the nice talk about India and "Masters", Theosophists remained an influential, but rather impotent debate club. Our hero, Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, yearned for "the right stuff" of superhuman mastery and actualization of the "miraculous", a pervasive theme during the fin de siecle.

And now we shall expose what has been found in search of the miraculous- and the shameless quackery, too.

1a. Bodies

Gurdjieff's's Theosophical "roots" can be traced in his analysis of a human being: he divides man (I'll use Biblical chauvinist Yahwespeak) into four "bodies":

1. Carnal or Physical Body
2. Astral/Kesdjan Body (feelings, desires)
3. Mental or Spiritual Body (mind, mental faculty)
4. Divine or Causal Body ("I" consciousness, will, *soul*)

From this survey, one can easily extract a few observations:

a) evidently, the doctrine of multiple bodies comes straight from Theosophy (and its offshoots). We can find it in developed Western esoteric traditions only in rudimentary forms (only hinted at in Plotinus's "Enneads", casually mentioned as jism-i-latif/subtle body in Sufism, zelem in Kabbalah, fiery carriage of Nous/Mind in Hermeticism or various soul-bodies in medieval and Renaissance Christianity)- but its true source is Hindu-Buddhist Yogic and Tantric lore assimilated in many wisdom doctrines: the "theory" of 5 koshas or sheaths which can be lumped

in 3 bodies: physical (including bioplasmatic, "pranic" sheath) , psychic and causal bodies. The vital difference lies in Gurdjieff's insistence on non-existence of "higher" bodies in normal human beings (as we shall see, he was inconsistent re this matter- just as in many others. Also, the achieved immortality is also equivocally stated: sometimes it is confined to this solar system, sometimes to all solar systems (a rather bizarre definition), and sometimes not spatio-temporally restricted.)

b) Gurdjieff didn't use the bodiless terminology, both East and West (Atman, Buddha Nature, Spirit, Inner Christ, Ar-Ruh al-Qudsi (Supreme Spirit), Hsing/Original Nature). For him, (potentially) transtemporal and indestructible "spiritual" element in human being remains equal to (not encased within) a "higher" body. This posits interesting and unanswered questions on the "unicity" of the whole Gurdjieffian doctrine, because all ancient wisdom teachings, East and West, describe the relation of essential human soul and the ground of the Universe in similes suggesting continuity of existence- either in radical non-dual monist version (Advaita Vedanta, Ch'an/Zen Buddhism) or in a more differentiated approach (Hermetism, Gnosticism, the majority of Sufism, Kabbalah, Suddha Vedanta). Frequently encountered metaphors suggesting this relation (soul- cosmos) are rays from the sun or waves in the ocean. In this respect Gurdjieff, although intimating at emanationist doctrines and having retained an equivocal stance, in the bulk of his writing pretty radically departed from virtually all esoteric teachings. In his case, strenuously won immortality nevertheless restricts indestructible being to isolated whizzing to and fro within confines of a cosmos (later defined in chapters on Gurdjieffian cosmology), never allowing it/him/her the possibility of "cosmic consciousness" or temporary loss of expanded selfhood- whatever this or that passage taken out of context may aver.

c) Gurdjieff's vision of human composition is in many respects strangely similar to Assagioli's Psychosynthesis (10, 11; for both of them, the central attribute of the innermost self is will). Although, some dubieties remain: looks like Assagioli has been subtler re the indestructible self: in shallower and lower levels of disidentification it is a pure witnessing "I". In deeper and more potent dimensions of its "life" it is Transpersonal or Higher Self- virtually bodiless Atman or Spirit.

d) like most Theosophists, Gurdjieff calls the 4th body *soul*. It is the *soul* Gurdjieff's "Work" is all about. But, equally ironic, in his version of thanatology Gurdjieff (not unequivocally) radically departs both from traditional wisdom doctrines and Theosophy: if not worked upon sufficiently and not awakened, even *soul* is mortal. It is "eaten by the Moon"- probably the weirdest destiny that has ever befallen the spiritual element in man. So, in his rather incongruous blend of Theosophy, Neopythagoreanism, Rosicrucianism and Alchemy, even (in a few interpretations, (4)) the inborn spiritual self is doomed to post-mortem extinction in ordinary human beings.

We shall address other dubieties of Gurdjieffian esoteric physiology in following paragraphs.

1b. Essence and Personality

These two crucial concepts can be taken as the central human polarity.

Essence: A Mutable Concept

Essence is, so to speak (in astrological parlance), the sum total of individual incarnational/behavioral tendencies one is usually not aware of, but lives their mechanical life according to the essence promptings. Essence grows, decays,..but a person is generally not aware of its processes. It's innate, the mould of one's personality and the matrix of a human being's conscious life.

With a bit of stretch, the essence could be compared either to temperament, or to the Freudian Id, or at least to a host of rudimentary subconscious quasientities emerging out of it. We can equate it to the psychoanalytic subconscious.

(A short remark: essence is nothing "spiritual"; this term has completely different connotations in other wisdom doctrines. Also-Gurdjieff is, as usual, confusing re this concept (12): "A small child has no personality as yet. He is what he really is. He is essence. His desires, tastes, likes, dislikes, express his being such as it is. But as soon as so-called "education" begins, personality begins to grow. Personality is created partly by the intentional influences of other people, that is, by "education," and partly by involuntary imitation of them by the child itself. In the creation of personality a great part is also played by "resistance" to people around him and by attempts to conceal from them something that is "his own" or "real."

.....A man's real I, his individuality, can grow only from his essence. It can be said that a man's individuality is his essence, grown up, mature. But in order to enable essence to grow up, it is first of all necessary to weaken the constant pressure of personality upon it, because the obstacles to the growth of essence are contained in personality..."

From this passage it is obvious that the goal is not the return to the quasi-Freudian infantile state, but the "maturing" of the unconscious (at this juncture, various strata of the unconscious are not differentiated, but, evidently, the essence is the Freudian Id or the "subconscious". How subconsciousness can possibly be transmuted into superconsciousness (even through the concentrated exercises of the Fourth Way)- remains one of many Gurdjieff's inconsistencies and weak points.) To end with the bang: "Moreover, it happens fairly often that essence dies in a man while his personality and his body are still alive. A considerable percentage of the people we meet in the streets of a great town

are people who are empty inside, that is, they are actually already dead" (12))

So, while the most frequent Gurdjieffian (ab)use of the word "essence" simply refers to the unconscious, sometimes he means the subconscious only, and (though, rarely) espouses a weird doctrine of the "death of essence". Just to add to the confusion, further esoterics who are indebted to Gurdjieff (Oscar Ichazo, E.J.Gold, John Lilly, R.A.Wilson) generally returned to the more conventional Oriental designation: essence is Supreme Self, Buddha Nature and personality a false, ego-centred individual consciousness consisting of a host of subpersonalities, spurious "I"s or selves.

Personality

Personality is something inauthentic, a sort of fluctuating mask a human being adopts in dealing with the world (inner and outer). Essentially, it can be compared to ancient "persona", false series of "I"s or "acting" spurious self one uncsciously adopts as optimal (from their viewpoint) in dealings with the life's challenges. Gurdjieff insists on multiplicity of false "I"s- one could apply to them Satan's illuminating answer: "My name is a legion".

Succinctly: Gurdjieff's insistence on the dichotomy between essence and personality is just another weapon more in his arsenal, stored for attack on "ordinary man's" hypnotized, sleepy and inauthentic existence. Both building blocks of human being are just raw, mechanical matrices of human bondage. Polarity between "carnal" and "spiritual" is alien to Gurdjieff "Work". There is no "struggle for one's soul" (conventionally speaking) one encounters in all monotheistic traditions. True, he frequently plays with these concepts, but, evidently, his "God" is a reflection of the deistic Enlightenment Deity not interested in human affairs or a Gnostic God cut off from the worlds left to the whims of Demiurgic generally hostile forces; it's some weird and concocted mechanical laws (not more convincing than one can encounter in the Jain cosmology, bending under inflatio numeri gone berserk) operate on both inner and outer worlds (something like the Newtonian paradigm pushed to the extreme and utterly improbable conclusions.)

Both concepts are fundamental to Gurdjieff "Work" and integrated with the rest of his psychology: for instance, crucial Fourth Way elements of human transformation, centres, are frequently described as "being contained in essence".

1c. Three "Stories"/"Brains" and Respective Centres

Gurdjieff has divided a human into three "stories"/compartments (metaphorically, "brains", although this has nothing to do with the anatomical organ). Roughly, the division goes as follows:

1. Upper story (Intellectual center plus Higher Intellectual center)

2. Middle story (Emotional center and Higher Emotional center)
3. Lower story (Sexual center plus Instinctive center plus Moving center)

"Higher" centers in upper two stories are only potential; existing, yet dormant. They are accessible and (hopefully) operating in men and women who have passed through strenuous exercises of Gurdjieffian "Work".

What virtually all Gurdjieffians ignore (or simply haven't deigned to ask) is: where these centers reside? Conventionally, the answer is that they are located in physical body (lower story in abdomen, middle story in chest and upper story in head). But- anatomy is sufficiently advanced to discover anything resembling these "centres" if they exist in this mortal coil. Yet- nothing so far of it. We are left with a host of possible choices:

a) as a Theosophist, Gurdjieff includes "etheric", or, in modern parlance, bioplasmatic or bioenergy ("Kirlian photography") body into the physical body framework. Essentially, this corresponds to the Yogic "vital sheath". The question which naturally arises is how these centres, located in such a "low" body, could give rise to supramundane consciousness, especially considering the fact that Gurdjieff, in his cosmology, adheres to quasimaterialist explanations? If a center is constrained to a specific "vibratory level"- how can it skip other levels and whizz across the emanationist ladder which is deterministically structured? In normal physics language, it would be as absurd as expect a hydrogen atom to contain *all* uranium energy levels. The "answer" is given in the following chapters on Gurdjieffian alchemy- although I don't find it convincing at all.

b) centres are positioned in respective bodies: the "lower" ones in physical, "emotional" in astral and "intellectual" in mental (this is a classification one can find in Ouspensky's works). Fine. Just- again nothing (the "lowest" centres) visible/detectable in the physical body. Realistically- the centres concept is most vulnerable to the banal question: why accept their existence at all? They seem to combine in an awkward manner Platonic and Thomist psychology (where centres are psychological functions located in a body-soul compound: vegetative soul, passionate/animal and rational soul- this triple division corresponds exactly to Gurdjieff's three stories or "brains") and Theosophical/Hindu idea of energy wheels or chakras located in subtle supraphysical bodies. The confusion arises because these two approaches are not harmonized: for, "orthodox" chakras don't have any psychological functions (save in New Age interpretations). The majority of them are dormant (like Ajna in the head), while Plato's psyche/logistike/rational soul is perfectly functional in an ordinary human. Also, in Oriental traditions some say spiritual pole is dormant, and physiological active -with the exception of "lower" centers which don't have even dormant spiritual function.

c) expanding on the Platonic metaphor, one could ponder something like this: Plato speaks of immortal soul. Evidently, his "centers" are located not in physical, but in supraphysical "soul body", which is not further dissected. Such a view is endorsed in chief dialogues, "Apologia", "Phaedo" and "The Republic". Socrates, as the story goes, will (probably) lead an immortal life, conversing with Homer, Orpheus and comp., with all his mental and emotional functions/centres operating. As a simple paradigm, it would fit nicely with

Gurdjieff's views, save for a few irreconcilable points: Gurdjieff-Ouspensky "theory" contains more than one body. More, the Caucasian Master has elaborated an intricate web of interrelated connections between centres leading to aberrant or functional behavior, all set in a materialist lingo (emotional center steals energy/substance for its gratification etc.). Multiplicity of bodies in Gurdjieff's system and unity of one, soul body with various functions/centres in Plato's psychology are mutually exclusive. A subvariant of "protoplatonic" interpretation (although a bit stretchy) is that a center in a "lower" body acts as a focus or radiating "centre" for higher body, which is termed a centre, but in actuality is a whole "higher" body. But, as I said: this is, to say the least, not very probable interpretation.

d) in his posthumous work (5) Gurdjieff casually gave the most plausible (to the modern mind) and at the same time cursory and offhand brief review of the centers: he equated them with various plexuses and sympathetic/parasympathetic nervous systems combined with parts of brain (a rather fuzzy description). Needless to say- this is completely at variance with virtually everything he had been talking on the subject for more than 30 years.

Leaving the question of location unresolved, we shall point to the most probable source of Gurdjieff's doctrine of higher centres: it is, as one might expect, Theosophy. Here it is, in a characteristically turgid and exasperating style (18):

"..... the lower man is a composite being, but in his real nature is a unity, or immortal being, comprising a trinity of Spirit, Discernment, and Mind which requires four lower mortal instruments or vehicles through which to work in matter and obtain experience from Nature. This trinity is that called Atma-Buddhi-Manas in Sanskrit, difficult terms to render in English. Atma is Spirit, Buddhi is the highest power of intellection, that which discerns and judges, and Manas is Mind. This threefold collection is the real man; and beyond doubt the doctrine is the origin of the theological one of the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The four lower instruments or vehicles are shown in this table:

Real Man: Atma, Buddhi, Manas,

Lower Vehicles:

The Passions and Desires,

Life Principle,

Astral Body,

Physical Body.

These four lower material constituents are transitory and subject to disintegration in themselves as well as to separation from each other. When the hour arrives for their separation to begin, the combination can no longer be kept up, the physical body dies, the atoms of which each of the four is composed begin to separate from each other, and the whole collection being disjointed is no longer fit for one as an instrument for the real man. This is what is called "death" among us mortals, but it is not death for the real man because he is deathless, persistent, immortal. He is therefore called the Triad, or indestructible trinity, while they are known as the Quaternary or mortal four. Let us recapitulate..... The Real Man is the trinity of Atma-Buddhi-Manas, or Spirit and Mind, and he uses certain agents and instruments to get in touch with nature in order to know himself. These instruments and agents are found in the lower Four -- or the Quaternary -- each

principle in which category is of itself an instrument for the particular experience belonging to its own field, the body being the lowest, least important, and most transitory of the whole series."

or, from the founder herself (19):

"THE UPPER IMPERISHABLE TRIAD.

(e) Manas -- a dual principle in its functions // Mind, Intelligence: which is the higher human mind, whose light, or radiation links the MONAD, for the lifetime, to the mortal man // The future state and the Karmic destiny of man depend on whether Manas gravitates more downward to Kama rupa, the seat of the animal passions, or upwards to Buddhi, the Spiritual Ego. In the latter case, the higher consciousness of the individual Spiritual aspirations of mind (Manas), assimilating Buddhi, are absorbed by it and form the Ego, which goes into Devachanic bliss.*

(f) Buddhi // The Spiritual Soul // The vehicle of pure universal spirit.

(g) Atma // Spirit // One with the Absolute, as its radiation."

Now, things are much more transparent: Gurdjieff equated his concept of *soul* with Blavatsky/Besant Higher Ego or Spiritual Soul (after all, this is a correct correspondence in theosophical worldview-if we toss aside traditional Sankhya or Vedanta doctrines). *Soul* is Higher Manas/Mind dwelling in causal body. Theosophical "Buddhi" is Gurdjieff's "higher emotional center", and "Atma" corresponds to "higher intellectual center". Not surprisingly, Gurdjieff's "Man number 5" is the one who has acquired *soul*, but has still two more steps to go to become "Man number 7". A juicy part is that, in all probability, Gurdjieff went beyond original Theosophy and tacitly incorporated the Adhyar Theosophy esoteric innovations originated by C.W. Leadbeater, who changed Blavatsky's teaching of the Monad so as to add another two "upper levels/planes" (20, 21) (this change was adopted by voluminous and turgid Neo-theosophical writer Alice Bailey). In Gurdjieff's system one can easily detect a curious feature: the summit of human development according to the Fourth Way, "Man number 7", has two worlds above-unattained. This clearly indicates that Gurdjieff felt that Neotheosophical Monad and Logos are beyond his practical interest, but not outside his "theoretical" framework.

Just to make things a bit more complicated: now, when all seems to fit nicely, one must not overlook the central Gurdjieffian ogre of contradiction: in the majority of his writings, he insists that "higher" bodies do not exist (clearly, a non-Theosophical concept), but have to be created-something more reminiscent of the Taoist alchemy than any other wisdom doctrine, whether traditional or post-19th century. This issue shall be addressed in more detail in chapters dealing with cosmology and psychology.

The final question is: why all the fuss about this? Well- because entire Gurdjieffian "Work" and the "Fourth Way" rest on harmonious development of a human being (2,3,4,5,6,7,8), which, in his system, means work on all centers through a structured network of very elaborate exercises aiming at empowerment, harmonization and coordination of various centres that would (at least, that's the theory) facilitate crystallization of permanent "I" or *soul*.

If there are no centres (for instance, one can dismiss the Gurdjieff system completely by pointing to achievements of neurophysiology, brain research or cognitive sciences, and "attack" his esoteric edifice from the standpoint of modern materialist/physicalist paradigm where consciousness is an epiphenomenon of brain & CNS)- then, apart from a few exercises good for health and strengthening of perception, his central goal is null and void-just another specimen in a procession of human self-deceptions.

1d. A Hackney Carriage Metaphor

Here, Gurdjieff retells an analogy already present in Upanishads, which gives ancient Hindu insight into human condition. Just- our Georgi Ivanovitch consciously misread Upanishadic (at least in Advaitin interpretation) metaphor: a carriage (human/physical body) is drawn by a horse (emotions/astral body). A shabby coachman, with meagre powers and understanding (intellect/mental body) tries his best, but the central problem is that a passenger in a box (whatever "I" turns out at the moment, a false self or subpersonality instead of true self or *soul*) is asleep (probably snoozing). The central aim of Gurdjieff's "Work" is that the passenger become Divine body/*soul*, fully operating and possessing authentic will.

Needless to say, the majority of monist doctrines speak of the passenger in completely different terms: "He is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer,....Other than he there is no seer, other than he there is no hearer,....He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal" (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad). One could cut Gurdjieff some slack by allowing the passenger to be equated to jiva, or jivatman- a deluded "soul spark" of Vishista-Advaita or small "self"/"I" of Assagioli's Psychosynthesis, the ray from Transpersonal or Spiritual Self. This would make a frame of the Fourth Way at least coherent re spiritual psychology: one wouldn't expect Supreme Self and cosmic consciousness, but the empowered and fully conscious jiva in causal/divine body. But, these nuances are beyond Gurdjieff's more practical and pragmatic approach.

2. The Fourth Way

Gurdjieff's rather weird claim on originality of his entire esoteric system stems from his description of other wisdom doctrines. Briefly- he has relegated all human spiritual endeavor from time immemorial to disharmonious overdevelopment of one of his "brains" or "stories". These are (we are told) ways of the faqir (who works almost exclusively on the lower story/center/physical body), monk (whose chief battlefield is middle story/heart/emotions) and yogi (who focuses on upper story/mind/thinking). According to Gurdjieff- those who practice strenuously one of these "ways" can (probably) achieve a non-mechanical existence, but at the expense of having other faculties degenerate and atrophy in time. A classic example would be a monk whose intense devotional life is followed, ineluctably, by mental and physical decrepitude (because he has not exercised, as far as the story goes, his intellectual and corporeal faculties). This may be an overstatement, but completely in line with Gurdjieff's teaching. Also- Gurdjieff insisted that his system would outtop any other (which *must* fall into the Procrustean 3 "stories"/"brains" categorization) in "speed" necessary to achieve the desired goal of overcoming the ordinary, dull and mechanical man's condition.

What can we conclude from this cartoon ? Evidently, judging from numerous historical examples (Bodhidharma, the founder of Ch'an/Zen Buddhism also introduced a set of physical exercises that were later used in martial arts by Buddhist monks as a means of self-defence; great French philosopher, mystic and scientist Pascal's life consisted of eruptions from both "heart" and "mind")- Gurdjieff's scheme is too crude and simplistic. Faqir (Man number 1), monk (Man number 2), yogi (Man number 3) are grotesque stereotypes. But- it looks like they served the purpose of accentuating supposedly new Gurdjieff's approach to human development- the Fourth Way.

The Fourth Way is, according to its proponents and followers, original and "modern" because it "works" on all centres from the outset. In short- its aim is a harmonious human being (unlike supposedly onedimensional previously mentioned "types"). In the history of European culture this is not anything new- the ideal of kalokagatia from ancient Greece (in Plato's "Republic" schools teach physical exercises/gymnastics for physical centre, music for emotional or passionate, and mathematics for intellectual center) that achieved full blossom in the notion of the "Renaissance man" and Leonardo Da Vinci as the ideal model. On a more "esoteric" level- this is the universal archetype of magus or adept, as exemplified in semi-mythological figures such as Christian Rosenkretz in the West and Gorak Nath in India. So, those who trek the Fourth Way land are just retracing the steps (in a modernized and adapted version) of ancient "men of power and wisdom", a somewhat motley company that includes Pythagoras, Empedocles, Apollonius of Tiana or culture heroes like Hermes or Padma Sambhava. As the conclusion, one might encapsulate Gurdjieffian Fourth Way: this is the old archetype of magus or occult adept so refurbished as to make it digestible to the 20th century mindset.

3. Cosmology: Macrocosm and Microcosm

3a. The Laws

Before delving into Gurdjieff's "cosmological" ramblings, we have to put forth a few ideas describing his notorious "laws": "The Law of Three"/Triamazikamno and "The Law of Seven"/Heptaparaparshinokh, which supposedly govern everything existing. The exposition is mainly based on Ouspensky's books (*12,13*), since Gurdjieff's own pubescent efforts in (*4*) are completely arid and empty of any cognitive value.

The Law of Three/Triamazikamno postulates that worlds are governed by three omnipresent forces: positive, negative and neutralizing (or in pompous Gurdjieffspeak: Holy Affirming, Holy Denying and Holy Neutralizing). These "forces" resemble the three gunas from Sankhya/Yoga system of Hindu philosophy, but differ insofar as they change their respective roles: positive can "switch" to negative in fuzzily defined circumstances and so on. More: the Fourth Way people insist in "finding" Triamazikamno everywhere in life- similar to orthodox Marxists and Engels's "Laws of Dialectics" or Christian esotericists and the omnipresent Trinity. This sloppy reasoning is reinforced by mentally excavating various trinities from archaic cultures: the three bodies of Buddha in Mahayana Buddhism, three substances in Western post-Paracelsian alchemy, three faces of Hindu God,.....one could go on forever. Just- this has nothing to do with existence or nonexistence of three forces. And here starts the real trouble: The Law of Three/Triamazikamno was not discovered in any physical or chemical experiment. It cannot explain any existing physical law (say, any law of physics, from Newton's laws in Classical Mechanics through

Maxwell equations governing electromagnetism to Schroedinger and Dirac equations serving as pillars of Quantum Mechanics), nor can it contribute in any way to "deeper" understanding of forces ruling physical nature-it would be meaningless to even infer to the "supernature". Watching Gurdjieffians hopelessly trying to find The Law of Three in the world and ascribing various arbitrary concepts (say: positive force is equated to proton, negative to electron, and neutralizing oscillates between neutron and electromagnetic field) to the laws of physics or chemistry can be termed a sad spectacle, indeed. So- what is this Triamazikamno ? Evidently, a remnant of archaic and magical thinking that has survived in esoteric circles and feeds on the disciples's gullibility and lack of scientific culture. In any respect- Triamazikamno is an example of concocted quasiintellectual esoteric dogma which cannot be verified nor tested, but imparts its adherents a sense of superior Gnosis cloaked in scientific language.

One important corollary of The Law of Three is Gurdjieff's version of alchemy; actually, this is an elaborated scheme his pupil Ouspensky has recorded in his works and which serves as the "theoretical" pillar for practical exercises (better, describes their functioning in a quasi-matrilist manner). Needless to say, this is purely fantastic, incoherent and arbitrary scheme. We shall address it briefly for the sake of completion: it connects Gurdjieffian cosmology and psychology (therefore Macro- and Microcosmos) and tries to translate archaic alchemical worldview into something even faintly acceptable to the modern world. In short, The Law of Threefoldness can be expressed thusly: when a substance is the conductor of active force, it is called carbon and designated as C; when a substance is the conductor of passive force, it is called oxygen and designated as O; when a substance is the conductor of the neutralizing force, it is called nitrogen and designated as N.

When a substance is taken without relation to the force manifesting through it, or, more frequently, when a substance is acted upon by all three forces, it is called hydrogen and designated by letter H.

What can we conclude from this information ? First, it plays arbitrarily with the established chemical notation; second, it is completely dependent on The Law of Three and expressed in dualistic, "force-matter" manner; third, although it claims origin in the ancient doctrine of 4 elements (water, fire, earth, air), it is at variance with it because Gurdjieffian "hydrogen" contains (so to speak) C-O-N triad. The origin of this peculiar notation is again theosophical: we read in Blavatsky's "The Secret Doctrine" (22):

""The numbers 3 and 4 are respectively male and female, spirit and matter and their union is the emblem of life eternal in spirit on its ascending arc and in matter as the ever resurrecting element by procreation and reproduction ... The former (the 3) is invisible (as spirit) and the latter (the 4) is on the plane of objective perception (as matter). This is why all the matter of the universe, when analyzed by science to its ultimates, can be reduced to four elements only C-O-N-H; and why the three primaries, the noumena of the four, or graduated spirit or force have remained a terra incognita."

So, aside Gurdjieff's originality in further development (vibratory levels-wise) of the C-O-N-H symbology, we can see that he has adopted the theosophical alchemical notation and remade it to fit his pseudomaterialist mythology. With this, he got raison for the Work: the entire project could now be summarized as the transformation of substances that constitute different levels of vibratory universe, human being and the food (the food connoting everything, from cereals to thoughts and impressions)-and the "Work" is the the most expedient way of transmutation since

substances are "stuff consciousnesses are made of" and the harmonious human development equals expansion and unification of consciousness/being.

The next is the most "musical" Gurdjieff's law-The Law of Seven or The Law of Octaves. Simply stated, this "law" sets forth Gurdjieffian cosmology using septotonic musical scale as conceptual blueprint. Why a musical scale, why seven-tone scale, why this particular arrangement, and, finally, why would anyone consider seriously this bizarre matrix of universe and man- these are, in all probability, questions only faith can answer.

3b. Cosmology: The Ray of Creation

One of the most extravagant and bizarre occult cosmologies to emerge as yet is Gurdjieff's, presented as clearly as possible in works of his most articulate disciple, P.D.Ouspensky. Gurdjieff himself gave scattered hints in his voluminous fiction "Beelzebub's Tales" (4), where he mentions various cosmoses, but only in Ouspensky's books we can get all the intricacies of this

fantasy on rampage expressed in a twisted quasi-scientific lingo. First, we shall succinctly present the main scheme, and then plunge into a more detailed analysis.

Gurdjieffian cosmology is reminiscent of various emanationist metaphysics of ancient times (both East and West); also, it contains a few peculiarities that betray its eclectic nature, the most prominent being: the musical scale as the conceptual matrix of the universe, vibratory nature of different levels of reality, utterly strange enumeration of laws and naming of cosmoses, "original" (to say the least) version of materialism-according to Gurdjieff, all his "atoms" and "cosmoses" are material, but it is evident that these words have little or nothing in common with ordinary usage of the terms.

This cosmology is represented in the famous "Ray of Creation", which "stitches" together emanated levels/layers/cosmoses of the universe and the musical scale. It goes as follows:

Note World Number of laws operating

Do	Absolute	1
Si	All Galaxies	3
La	All Suns	6
Sol	Sun	12
Fa	Planets	24
Mi	Earth	48
Re	Moon	96

Furthermore, there are intervals/"shocks", in two instances: between Do and Si, and between Fa and Mi.

A careful reader can easily detect weak spots and absurdities:

1. Why would anyone try to explain or describe universe (or multiverse) using the language of a musical scale, since other, much more powerful explanatory sets of symbols and transformations (various branches of mathematics and exact sciences), possessing endlessly superior cognitive value, are available ?

2. Gurdjieff's own claim that his "system" stems from Babylonian antiquity is ludicrous: ancient cosmologies were confined to the solar system and its planets- they don't operate with Galaxies except in the case of astrology, when their geocentric cosmos is set against Zodiac. In this, essentially Hermetic-Ptolemaic spherical onion-like cosmos with earth in the centre- there is no emanationist ladder encompassing Milky Way or Galaxies. Evidently, ancient musical, "provincial" geocentric universe (17) has been "adapted" to include astronomical chart of post-Renaissance science. Also, Gurdjieff followed typical theosophist fascination with number seven (adding a few innovations of his own- "shocks", vibratory "elements" etc.).
3. The most nonsensical feature is that all these "cosmoses" (as Gurdjieff called different layers of emanation, from Protocosmos to Microcosmos) are simply elements of *this*, physical universe. It amounts to linguistic depravity to assign familiar names like Milky Way or Sun to supposedly supraphysical realities (reminiscent of theosophical "planes" or Kabbalistic worlds) and insist that these "cosmoses" are subjected to various number of "laws", defined as rather arbitrary combinations of The Law of Three. To state that different laws of physics rule the Sun (by the way-how can one equate "All Suns" with "Milky Way" ?) and the Moon is utterly preposterous.
4. Gurdjieff's claim to antiquity of his "Ray of Creation" can be simply refuted: he (mis)uses septotonic or seven-tone musical scale as the explanatory matrix. Fine, but this scale was formed only after the 10th century C.E.- the old Middle East and Greece used pentatonic or five-tone scale. His assertion that septotonic scale was first discovered, then forgotten, and then discovered again (12) doesn't merit a serious discussion.

3c. Gurdjieffian Synthesis: Cosmology and Alchemy

In a gist, if one could ignore Gurdjieff's inconsistencies which will be discussed thoroughly later in the text, the central vision of the "Work" can be summarized thusly (I'll omit critique of the weird peculiarities in order not to mess the presentation beyond articulateness) : Gurdjieff has interconnected his cosmology, psychology and soteriology. Bearing in mind his vibratory material quasi-emanationist picture of the universe, one must also take notice that he characterized every level of the vibration/cosmos with a particular substance- previously mentioned hydrogen oscillating at certain frequency (thus we got H6, H12,...etc.). Since according to Gurdjieffian anthropology human beings are composed and function according to definite laws of ingestion, behavior and *live* at certain frequencies/hydrogen levels, the aim of the "Work" is to set them free from constricting circumstances/"laws" by a variety of techniques which include self remembering and specifically designed movements (plus other exercises galore). According to the doctrine, these exercises ("supereffort") will cause alchemical transmutation in human beings, generating and/or solidifying "higher" bodies and centres (which operate with different hydrogens)- enabling one to crystallize and shift their consciousness/being to the higher ladder of vibration. Hence, one's being undergoes (al)chemical transformation, and lives on higher frequency substances (hydrogens, ie C-O-N triads), achieving "level-wise" immortality and permanent expanded consciousness. Gurdjieff has set a table of correspondences, which we will reproduce only upper parts of (in his terminology, "Men" numbers 1 to 4 are still too "earthbound"-even Man number 4):

Worlds	"Man number X"	Characteristics
_____	_____	_____

Absolute	?	?
All Galaxies	?	?
All Suns/Milky Way	7	Man number 6 plus higher intellectual center (located in mental body and working with H 6). All centres developed and functioning harmoniously. Immortality within Milky Way.
Sun	6	Man number 5 plus higher emotional center (located in astral/Kesdjan body and working with H 12)
Planets	5	Crystallized causal body. Permanent individuality and immortality at this level.

Two elements of these table are especially conspicuous: Gurdjieff has left two highest worlds beyond human achievement (actually-he populated them with superhuman entities like Demiurge and Archangels), in sharp distinction to the majority of wisdom/esoteric doctrines; second, he somehow "elevated" Man number 5 by insisting on "switching" permanently on centres which are located in "lower" bodies- a strange development, indeed; as if further ascent requires "going back". Since author's opinion is that he just reinterpreted Blavatsky's theosophist Atma-Buddhi-Manas doctrine (which is unidirectionally ascending) so as to fit within his neo-alchemical framework- this is not as bizarre as it might seem at the first glance. Also, I would say that he got stuck between his variant of alchemy and Leadbeater/Bailey vision of the universe: his top two levels, tacitly unattainable for human beings, are simply Neotheosophical highest planes of Monad and Logos.

4. Enneagram

The most important "mystic" or "occult" symbol Gurdjieff's "Work" has introduced to the West is enneagram, an occult glyph resembling in some respects Rosicrucian geometrical constructs or Kabbalistic Tree of life. As the story goes (1,7,8), it is prominent among Islamic mystics, Sufis. But- there is a little problem. Not one known Sufi order (and there are more than hundred of them, most notable being Naqshbandis, Mevlevis, Chistis, Qadiris at al.) knows of and uses this symbol.

Enneagram represents a modified remnant of Neo-Platonic and Hermetic tradition that has percolated and survived in Islamic "esoteric" circles; especially a branch of Ismaili Shiites, spiritual descendants of the sixth Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq, his co-worker Jabir Ibn Hayyan (Geber in Latin), the most influential Islamic alchemist and famous Ihwan-al-Safa (men of learning, an encyclopedic group flourishing around 8/9 century C.E.). The last strand were dreaded and slandered (French scholar Henry Corbin has done much to rehabilitate them) Assassins, a secret society on its acme at 11/12 century C.E., until their

mountain strongholds in the Caucasus had been destroyed during Mongol invasion in the 13th century. A branch of Ismaili esoterics, centered around Sarmoun monastery in the Pamir area, is said to keep the remnants of the enneagram gnosis.

Before embarking into more detailed analysis of the enneagram, a few comments have to be made:

1. Considering a few branches of mathematics (algebraic topology, plus some subvariants like graph theory or lattice theory), any 2 dimensional graph/glyph immediately loses its Pythagorean mystique. If one can functionally transform a graph, "distort" it, rotate, "stretch" (topologically, a square is equal to a circle)- the supposition of a graph as a container of profound mysteries becomes ludicrous & preposterous. If a circle and an ellipse are topologically identical, there is no need to become pathologically addicted to one or another. Identically, all medieval graphs (the pentagram, triangle, various variants of the cross,...) purportedly containing "compressed" paranormal powers (or serving as inducers or transformers of supraphysical energies) are, when confronted with modern (19/20th century) mathematical paradigms, emptied out of their supposedly inherent "spiritual power".

2. However, things can be argued in a slightly different manner: true, there is nothing "paraphysical" per se in any known n-dimensional geometrical object. But, during human history certain glyphs became "charged" with spiritual/paranormal energies due to perpetual focusing and refocusing of human mind in the course of sacral and initiatory ceremonies or contemplation, thereby creating a "ladder" between "Heaven" and "Earth". More, such glyphs can be divided in several classes, and enneagram can be interpreted in a few ways that make sense (none of them Gurdjieffian): either as a summary of alchemical process or as the mandala covering both Macrocosmos and Microcosmos according to the ancients' worldview (and these approaches, as we shall see, overlap). As for the latter view- this is as close to the concept of "hologram" as possible within the framework of the pre-scientific Weltanschauung. In sum- mandala/hologram enneagram is the symbolic representation of **everything** existing.

We shall proceed with the critique of Gurdjieff's interpretation of the enneagram and expound a meaningful enneagram exposition at the end.

4a. Critique of Gurdjieffian Enneagram

Gurdjieff's use of the enneagram symbol is most visible in his Russian (post -1915) and European years, when he gathered a cluster of disciplined devotees and made stage appearances with them, both in Europe and the US (mainly in the 1920ies). Usually, his disciples danced, performing enneagram-based Gurdjieffian "movements" (there are 39 of them), self-observing themselves, until under Gurdjieff's command "Stop !" they would freeze up in an act of (supposedly) self-remembering, when, at least in theory, Gurdjieff would transmit spiritual (or, more likely, bioenergy equivalent to Taoist ch'i) to their susceptible psyches with the aim to elevate and expand their consciousness and being- an exercise in some points resembling the transfer of Sufi barrakah (blessing, spiritual energy) or Tantric shaktipat. Also, the profile of dances, devised by Gurdjieff himself, betray influences of

Sufi, various Caucasian, Central Asian and Vajrayana/Tibetan traditions.

The symbol doesn't figure prominently in Gurdjieff's own writings (he preferred to ramble on the so-called "Law of Three" or "Triamazikamno" and the "Law of Seven" or "Heptaparaparshinokh" - as noticed earlier, these are not "laws" in modern sense of the word since no corpus of cognitively worthy data or observations follows from their application (more, there is no detailed application, just a few murky hints. Even if we restrict ourselves to non-exact "sciences" or humanities like philosophy, branches of psychology or history- we are in no better position.) Gurdjieff's fullest exposition of his "laws" lies in chapters 39 and 40 of "Beelzebub's Tales" (4), but, alas, even a careful reader with the guide cannot profit much from this jabber. So, the majority of enneagram "studies" rely on Ouspensky's "In Search of the Miraculous" (12), as well as other secondary works of Bennet, Collin et al. A fairy tale-like "history" of the enneagram Gurdjieff has presented in his unreliable autobiography "Meetings with Remarkable Men" places the origin of the glyph in the times of Sumero-Babylonian civilization, ca 2,500 years B.C.E. and purports that esoteric knowledge it contains has survived barely unchanged till the present era, when Gurdjieff has acquired gnosis of the enneagram in the monastery of the Sarmoun brotherhood-as we have said, an "occult" society affiliated with Sufism and Ismaili esotericism, somewhere in the area of Hindu Kush, Pamir and east Afghanistan. So much for the story.

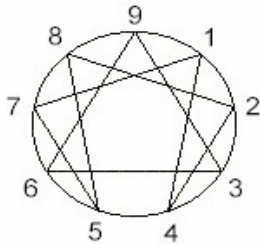


Fig.1

The enneagram (Fig.1.), as represented and interpreted in Ouspensky's and hinted at in Gurdjieff's works, is characterized by following features:

1. The points on the circle satisfy the relations: they are connected by two figures- one connects the number 1 to 4 to 2 to 8 to 5 to 7 and back to 1; the other connects 3, 6 and 9. The 142857 sequence is based on the fact that dividing 7 into 1 yields an infinite repetition of the sequence 142857. In fact, dividing 7 into any whole number not a multiple of 7 will yield the infinite repetition of the sequence 142857. Wow ! Enneagramaficionados are stunned ! Just- they failed to notice a few logical inconsistencies: if the law of three is "embedded" into enneagram by the triangle 963 (or 369 or 396- take your pick), how come that the law of seven is not simply represented by 7 interconnected points ? Instead, we have 6 points which "subtly" stand for The Law of Seven by.....division of 7 into 1. If we were to cling to consistency, 963 sequence (or any similar, say, 396) should point to a rational number of the form $1/q$, where q is somehow "magically" connected to 3. Of course- nothing of it. So, the internal "logic" of the

enneagram is: three you got because there are 3 points, but seven is not equal to seven points, but six, which only "point to" seven by division. And this division ($1/7$) yields one of those repeatable sequences, what is one among many seemingly "miraculous" occurrences and properties number theory abounds with. This, without any further assignment of even semi-rational variables (psychological, cosmological, esoteric, metaphysical) to the points relegates the entire enneagram numerology to the field of rebuses and crossword puzzles, and nothing more.

2. Gurdjieff-Ouspensky contention that enneagram goes back to Babylon (at least, if one follows their "numerological" interpretation of the glyph) can be easily dealt a death blow: since $1/7$ is equal to 0.142857142857....., it couldn't have possibly be ca. 4,500 years old since the decimal point, necessary for the representation of the 142857 sequence was not known in Europe before the 14/15th century (or in the whole world as early as the story goes, because it was adopted by Arabs from India not before the 8/9th century C.E., and enneagram has never been associated with India. More- even in this case, zero as a number is not nearly as ancient as the "Sarmoun" story would necessitate.)

3. The enneagram symbol appears for the first time with Gurdjieff and his circle (that is, before and during WW1). There is no single trace of it in the works of other authors in any time before, nor was it found in a single document (parchment, chiseled stone, paper, clay seal) elsewhere. That it, apart from Gurdjieff and his followers (and emulators), there is not a shred of evidence that such a symbol existed anywhere in the world. Or- it if did (and does), being at best a marginal presence, it hardly deserves such an attention.

4. Everything that was said re Gurdjieffian cosmology and the falsity of ascribing the holiness of number seven to them, since this notion originates with Theosophy, applies to the enneagram equally: if one of the two central ideas contained within the glyph is "The Law of Sevenfoldedness"- the Gurdjieffian interpretation collapses due to unimportance of the "seven mythology" for the ancients's numerology. Or, to put it in a slightly more nuanced way: number seven was "sacred" for ancient peoples only with regard to their geocentric cosmology and its concomitant symbols. Their numerologies (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Syrian, Arabic) don't give number seven much importance.

5. However, the strongest objection to Gurdjieffian enneagram is not aimed at its incoherence (or spuriousness of its supposed origin), but at its aridity and sterility. In short: cognitive power contained in Gurdjieff's interpretation of the enneagram is virtually nil. Even if we accept Gurdjieff's musical cosmology, alchemy, psychology, hydrogens and the rest- we gain nothing from enneagram. The guru-trickster's teaching is not encoded in this glyph, and there are no correspondences (let alone new illuminations) between the enneagrammatical structure and central Gurdjieffian tenets. Any nine-pointed symbol could serve the purpose, and probably, if one were a Fourth Way "addict", better and more comprehensive glyph could be constructed (avoiding ludicrous Sumerian references).

In Gurdjieffian circles enneagram is generally used to "explain" rather trivial human activities, like cooking or planning a date. Also, the Fourth Wayfarers frequently try to glue to the clockwise motion on the enneagram circle some crucial Gurdjieffian concepts like transformation

of hydrogens in food digestion (or other activities, physical and psychological)- in my opinion, sad examples of self-delusion. The so called Gurdjieffian movements are "enneagram based"-at least in theory. Many adherents of the eclectic Gurdjieffian tradition perform Movements around the enneagram points and lines. But, this is just a strand in the web of bizarre fate that has befallen the old glyph.

The "enneagram industry" has virtually exploded, flooding the spiritual supermarket, in the late 60ies, when Bolivian-turned-American guru Oscar Ichazo made the enneagram the central symbol of his occult school Arica, which is a blend of reinterpreted traditional doctrines like Kabbalah, Tibetan Tantricism, Zen and modern psychoterapies. Similarly, he also changed the enneagram interpretation- and, one might say, radically. In this "tradition" (which includes Chilean psychiatrist Claudio Naranjo, American writer Helen Palmer and a host of ex-Catholic monks) enneagram has become a sort of pop-psychological tool for personality typing. Needless to say, this kind of enneagram has nothing in common with the Gurdjieffian one (except one trait: arbitrariness and illogicality). The "personality types and growth" enneagram hit the market and has been an immense success since. It is the veritable irony of history that a fossil of palaentological spiritual cognition has become a New Age icon. As Charlie Brown would put it: "My mind is reeling with cynical remarks."

4b. The Traditional Enneagram

We shall briefly address the traditional interpretation of the enneagram as a precursor of the "hologram" view of the universe, ie., as the universal mandala. This part is based on fusion of scholarly works, oral instruction and other means of information. I shall retain privilege of not disclosing my sources, as well as giving complete sketch, but not a too detailed picture. A reader is expected to do some research for themselves.

First and foremost- enneagram is rooted in ancient Mediterranean/Middle Eastern esoteric worldview, and this Weltanschauung considers Cosmos and Man as two poles of one Reality. Therefore, we got exact correspondences between unfoldment of the Universe and psycho-energetic processes in human beings as described in alchemy (or, a part of alchemy that is not purely medical or "mineralogical"). Enneagram as a glyph contains the story of creation/unfoldment of the universe and the transformation of human being on the road to immortality and deification. The story is told in ancient terminology with now obsolete concepts (if taken literally); also, I shall use more familiar Greek and Latin terms to describe various stages of the process- not abstaining from sprinkling the story with comparative notions familiar in other wisdom doctrines.

Three various interpretations shall be addressed: one that operates with essentially "Tantric" concepts (in the broadest sense of the term) and which aims at fusion with the Spiritual Self will be more elaborated; others, more "practical" and "magical", only sketched . All these views work with similar concepts, but differ in significant ways. However, these views are permeated with ideas which are considered dated nowadays. In sum: adept's "Work" is the effort to:

- a) uncreate his conditioned and unfree position in the manifested Universe
- b) move the center of his being from the "periphery" to the "centre" of the Cosmos
- c) from that point as liberated Self to assist in transformation and growth of the Cosmos.

What this quest means shall be described in following paragraphs.

4c. Enneagram in Tantric Alchemy: Macrocosm

In the Fig. 2 we can see the process of cosmic unfoldment in general agreement with Tantric worldview.

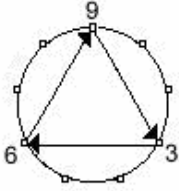


Fig. 2

In this Weltanschauung, the circle denotes the Unmanifest Absolute. This is En Sof of Kabbalists, Dhat or Amma/Darkness of the Sufis, Wu Ch'i of Neo-Confucianism, Paramashiva of Kashmir Shaivism, or ineffable Godhead beyond The One of later Neoplatonists like Iamblichus. The Emptiness/Fullness no one can even speak of nor can think of.

The next step is the emerging of primal "I AM", the Manifest Absolute (one can freely discard arrows in the picture since they don't tell the story). In the glyph, this corresponds to the point 9, and is equal to the Keter of Kabbalists, Wujud or God's Being of the Sufis, Shiva/Shakti in embrace of Kashmir Shaivism, Tai Ch'i or the Grand Ultimate of the Neo-Confucianists or The One/To Hen of Neoplatonists.

Then, the unfoldment of the Absolute takes the radical split in manifestation, as represented in primitive thought as "Primeval Male/Active Principle" and "Primeval Female/Passive Principle" (positioned on points 3 and 6). In essence- this is Mind and its Creative Energy. Also, these principles are frequently (but not always) equated with different levels of supraphysical existence: worlds, planes, lokas.

Mind or Consciousness is designated (approximately) as: Hokmah in Kabbalah, Aql-i-Kulli/Universal Intellect of the Sufis, Shiva in Kashmir Shaivism, Yang (or, sometimes, Ch'ien) of Neo-Confucianism and Nous/Mind of the Neoplatonists. Also, in semi-mythic mindset of Hermetic-Neoplatonic eclectic worldview, this equals Noetic or Causal Universe.

The Creative Energy is Binah in the Kabbalah, Nafs-i-Kulli/Universal Soul of the Sufis, Yin (or, sometimes, K'un) of the Neo-Confucianists, Shakti in Kashmir Shaivism and Psyche/Anima Mundi/World Soul of Neoplatonism. In Western esotericism it is frequently associated with Psychic or Imaginal Universe.

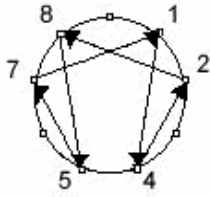


Fig. 3

The final steps (Fig. 3) in the manifestation of the universe are as follows: Neoplatonic Hyle (Sufi Hayula or Western Alchemists's Prima Materia) is the essential matter of Physical Universe. In somewhat clumsy terms, active-passive principles polarity is reflected on this level (these notions appear in Jabirian alchemy which penetrated and was later modified in the West) as "Sulphur" (point 4) and "Mercury" (point 5). In this, still macrocosmic stage of manifestation of the Absolute, these are not to be confused with chemical substances, but are polar forces acting in Prima Materia/Ether, further manifested/emanated as four principal elements: fire (1), air (2), earth (8) and water (7).

This exactly replicates centres in Tantric Yoga where we have, bottom up: four elements, ether, Sun and Moon (active and passive principles) of the "third eye" and the Shiva/Shakti embraced in the crown center/Sahasrara-utter transcendence of the Unmanifest beyond any centre.

Succinctly, in the language of Western Gnosis which uses the terms of later Neoplatonism:

1. The Unmanifest Absolute
2. The Manifest Absolute/To Hen/The One
3. Nous/Mind
4. Psyche/World Soul/Anima Mundi/Energy
5. Hyle/Prima Materia/Primal Matter manifested in four elements, which combine to build everything in physical universe

Points after 2 can be also rendered as:

3. Noetic or Causal Universe
4. Psychic or Imaginal Universe
5. Physical Universe

4d. Enneagram in Tantric Alchemy: Microcosm

Since our chief concern is a concise expose of enneagram's raison d'etre, we won't delve into intricacies of Kundalini Yoga, which is essentially nothing but internal alchemy. Enneagram originated in the milieu of "the Greater West" (from Rome via ancient Greece to Islamic sects like Ismailis and their branch Assassins in the Caucasus), and I shall summarize their alchemical Work, which is equivalent to the Tantric Eastern Yogic approach in essential way, but differs in

so far that it avoids direct work with energies which is the trademark of "energetic" Hindu and Tibetan Yogas.

As has been pointed out (23):

"Alchemists relied mainly upon deductive reasoning based on two a priori assumptions - the unity of matter and the existence of a Philosopher's Stone.

Alchemy is said to have arisen in the temples of ancient Egypt and China. And from beginning to its end alchemy remained bound up with religious beliefs. In fact some of the alchemical strands may be traced back to ancient mythological systems other than those found in the forms of religion practiced by Jews, Christians, Gnostics, Neo-Platonists, Muslims, Hindus and Taoists/Buddhists.

Medieval works on alchemy abound in references to the sulphur-mercury theory. According to this theory Nature brings forth all metals from mercury mingled with its own sulphur. When mercury and sulphur are perfectly pure and combine in the most appropriate natural equilibrium then the product is the most perfect of metals that is gold. Different kinds of metal exist because sulphur and mercury are not always pure and that they do not always unite in the same proportion. So the defects in purity and proportion lead to the formation of 'base' metals but since the base metals are also essentially composed of the same constituents as gold or silver the accidents of combination may be rectified.

To alchemists achievement of the Stone was the greatest and final goal. To them it represented imperfect man's search for perfection."

In sum: on the microcosmic level, the would-be-adept works with different chemical substances and elements in order to achieve the crown of the alchemical Work: Lapis Philosophorum, Elixir Vitae - Philosopher's Stone which is the Supreme Self.

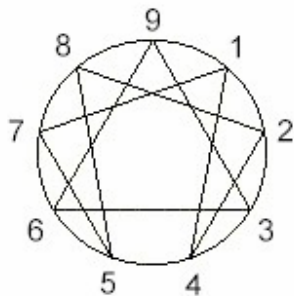


Fig. 4

Before describing the process (Fig. 4), I must emphasize one point: there is no step-by-step retracing the process in the Western esotericism. One can do exactly this in Tantric Yoga, but, then, one could discard the enneagram completely. Internalized spiritual alchemy, or Kundalini Yoga, operates directly with "elements" which are assigned to the centres below throat. Western adept, on the other hand, works with "animated" chemical substances like lead and copper, and by transforming them (and himself in the process), arrives at the same destination. The opus is

partially described in Burckhardt's work on alchemy (15), complemented by Nasr's rendition of Ikhwan-al-Safa (16)- with the notable exception that Burckhardt's interpretation is based on the European alchemy and stops at the stage of solar consciousness: he patiently told the story of attaining the Sun/gold, but hasn't said anything on the Philosopher's Stone. Without going into minuscule details of the alchemical process one can find at page 184 et passim of the mentioned book, I will assign different metals, symbolized by "planets", to the enneagram points and show the reason of the Work.

The points are as follows:

4-gold/Sun
2-iron/Mars
1-lead/Saturn
8-copper/Venus
7-tin/Jupiter
5-silver/Moon

These are metals of the alchemical process. Alchemical works try, desperately, to describe why quicksilver/Mercury is not a part of the process-with meagre success. Also, they drop sulphur out of the story. Since sulphur and mercury (this time not as polar forces of Prima Materia, but as, so to speak, higher levels of solar and lunar consciousnesses) are essential for the attainment of Lapis or Elixir Vitae and, at the same time, discontinuous from other steps of the Magnum Opus, I shall set them apart from other substances just as the triangle in the enneagram is clearly separated from the other lines and points.

So:

6-quicksilver/Mercury
3-sulphur
9-Lapis Philosophorum, Elixir Vitae, Spiritual Self

The alchemical process begins with Nigredo, spiritual crisis represented by lead/Saturn/1 (on the enneagram). Then, we can follow all the steps via interior lines of the enneagram:
lead/Saturn/1--tin/Jupiter/7--silver/Moon/5--copper/Venus/8--iron/mars/2--gold/Sun/4

We have got the gold/Sun, the goal of "ordinary" alchemists (of course, theoretically speaking). This process, which includes "active" or "male" substances/"planets" on the right side and "passive" or "feminine" on the left side of the enneagram looking from the top, has left us with solar and lunar consciousnesses (or states of being) at points 4 and 5 respectively. To complete the Opus one must move around the circle to the points of the base of the triangle, "sulphur"/3 and "mercury"/6, interpreted (this time Gurdjieffian lingo becomes useful) as higher "octaves" of "gold" and "silver", or, tantrically speaking, solar and lunar poles of the center located in the pineal gland/Ajna chakra. When these energies fuse in the point 9, Philosopher's Stone or Elixir Vitae, equated with the Supreme Self, is attained.

N.B.1: I have presented here traditional and "older" version of alchemy. As a result of innovations brought forth by Paracelsus, Swiss polihistor, doctor and occultist, virtually all post-16th century alchemy operates with three "elemental substances": sulphur, mercury and salt.

N.B. 2: There is an alternative, not "mystic" reading of terminal steps of the Opus, as embodied in the triangle of the enneagram. According to this tradition, an alchemist stays "confined" within physical universe, and sulphur and mercury are exactly what they have been all the time: polar forces of Prima Materia/Ether. In this case, the point number 9, Philosopher's Stone or Elixir Vitae, has nothing to do with the Spiritual Self, but is, as it were, the "condensed" Ether or Primal Matter in "pure state". Then, it can be used as a magical tool for performing miraculous transformations in *this*, physical world (healing, chemical transmutations or anything similar). The phase state of Elixir Vitae is mutable: liquid, condensed, "plasmatic".

N.B. 3: Two other, completely consistent views on the enneagram will be only sketched, since the author has neither time nor interest to reveal in detail everything he (or his friends and associates, be they "here" or "there") was given:

1. In one reading, the circle corresponds to the Nous/Mind, and the triangle to the Psyche/Anima Mundi/World Soul- three points denoting classical triple division of human soul, but this time on Macrocosmic scale: vegetative, animal and rational. Internal hexagram is Hyle/Prima Materia with four "elements".

2. In still another, the closest to the tradition (but not the most operating), interpretation, we got the following: considering that Islamic "science" (or, better, corpus of cultural tradition) of abjad (Arabic version of Hebrew gematria- numerology operating with letters of the alphabet) pretty clearly connects various numbers with substances/"planets"-one can get a realistic archaic cosmology and alchemy working with more traditional assignments: in this case, one does not get entangled in "extreme" metaphysical concepts like the Unmanifest Absolute, but proceeds from the circle which simply designates Hyle/Prima Materia. Alchemy, on the other hand, places mercury on the top of the triangle/9, and other substances follow from the numerological correspondences where "planets" are "tied" to elemental forces of classical 4 elements.

5. Gurdjieff's Sources and Phases

I'll omit here interesting adventure story of Gurdjieff's pre-teacher life (one can find it in (1)) and concentrate on sources of his doctrine.

Gurdjieff in his early phase can be best described as a crossbreed of operating Theosophical teacher, drawing the majority of his ideas from Rosicrucian-Hermetic doctrines in vogue these times, and quasi-Oriental adept who combined various Tantric practices he became acquainted with in the Theosophists's Holy land, Tibet, into an "original eclectic" Gnosis.

5a. Theosophy

One can detect Theosophical influence in his "bodies" doctrine, "inner circle of humanity" concept which corresponds to the Theosophical "Masters", plus the central concept of evolution. Evidently, the concept of "master" or "adept" caught Gurdjieff's imagination through the medium

of Theosophy (although he frequently spoke of Theosophists in a derogatory manner, publicly mocking their ideas and aspirations- this was nothing but covering his tracks). He might have been sincerely irritated by the air of pomposity and impotence surrounding the entire "movement", but his esoteric edifice is unimaginable without Blavatsky and Leadbeater. Gurdjieff was deeply read in Theosophy, which can be confirmed by analyzing many of his crucial "theoretical" notions: his occult chemistry (hydrogens), his esoteric physiology which is indebted to Theosophical musings of "higher planes" and centres (but not exactly xeroxed) and typically Theosophical penchant for cross-cultural occult eclecticism. Also, relative "coldness" and disinterestedness of the Theosophists's "God" coincided with Gurdjieffian worldview- his Absolute manifests His Will only on the level of All Worlds. Afterwards, things proceed mechanically via Triamazikamno and Heptaparaparshinokh (plus a host of bizarre entities like Demiurge and weird "processes" recorded in "Beelzebub") and there is no use in invoking God- He cannot reach us directly.

5b. Rosicrucianism

Another strand, far less visible, is the Rosicrucian one. It had been "in the air" for years (14), and became most prominent in Gurdjieff's Moscow and St.Petersburg teachings, where he expounded his elaborate (and contradictory) cosmology and "psychochemistry". Rosicrucian movement of the age was saturated with ideas of "scientific spirituality" (they still possess many labs), and a multitude of their crucial concepts (food diagram, octaves, world as a vibratory universe, strange chemistry based on Dalton's works on atomic structure, but "intrepreted" beyond recognition- although, as we have seen, Gurdjieff used Theosophical notation for his alchemy) form the basis of Gurdjieff-Ouspensky school (Nicoll, as well as Bennet, are effectively Ouspenskians). Plato Ouspensky was kicked out by Socrates Gurdjieff in the mid 20ies, but, since he was able to express esoteric ideas in a more readable manner (and with a touch of "academic" rigor)- the majority of contemporary Gurdjieff's "schools" are in essence Ouspensky's spiritual progeny. Two remarks have to be added:

a) Gurdjieff's ideas from Russian and early French/Prieure period (and best articulated in Ouspensky's two magna opera (12, 13)) are an occult thrill. One gets the whole stuff: cosmology, psychology, centres, secret schools, mysteries,...On the other hand, works written by Gurdjieff himself are not nearly as captivating. Bizarrely enough- Gurdjieff's own five or six books almost consciously ignore all the "hot esoteric stuff" that is Ouspensky's main attraction. No graphically rendered Ray of Creation, no hydrogens from the Absolute and diagrams of substances's transmutation, no spectacular reports on telepathy..... In his magnum opus (4) Gurdjieff tackled a massive esoteric and exoteric tour de force interspersed with personal indulgences: essentially, this is exposition of his ideas, tastes and distastes- all cloaked in a form of a science fiction novel with little or no action. Gurdjieff rambles through more than 1000 pages on German national "character", "higher beings" (sorts of Archangels or Demiurge), masturbation, various drugs, humorous treatment of different religions and their supposed origin, vibratory levels of the Universe etc etc. The most conspicuous trait of the book is a host of mind-numbing neologisms, derived from many languages (Greek, Armenian, Russian, Turkish,..) and which only dogmatically pronounce "Great Laws"

of the Universe, "Triamazikamno" or the "Law of Threefoldedness", and "Heptaparaparshinokh" or the "Law of Sevenfoldedness". One gets an inescapable feeling: for all the science fiction scenery, this is an exposition of principles having originated in the Bronze Age and refined in the early period of Western civilization. No doubt that Ouspensky, with his quasischolarly and didactic approach (and esoterica galore) is a much more visible influence.

b) although Gurdjieff was evidently heavily influenced by Rosicrucian ideas, he behaved towards them as an "original eclectic". He introduced many novel concepts (shock points, a confusing quasimaterialist emanationist cosmology, food diagram adapted for centres, man-as-a-machine crucial paradigm); also, he rejected reincarnation and Neoplatonist emanationism of Rosicrucians. His bent was on "tough materialism", and he made sure his disciples would be well aware of that. And, the author's last word on this subject: in my opinion, for anyone acquainted with ideas of the 20th century physics *and* "perennial philosophy", Gurdjieff- Ouspensky "esoteric" cosmology, chemistry, physiology and "natural philosophy" are, to say the least, a monumental nonsense and exercise in futile jabberwock. Probably those contaminated by Gurdjieffian myth would furiously disagree, but, as Luther said: "Hier stehe Ich. Ich kann nicht anders."

5c. Sufism and Ismaili Gnosis

Gurdjieff himself was evidently fascinated with Oriental-Islamic culture, especially its Turkish subvariant: interestingly enough, since his Armenian and Greek ancestry and long history of Ottoman oppression (and in his time, genocide over the Armenian people) would logically imply at least a distaste for all things Turkish. Quite the contrary !

Since he spoke Turkish fluently, frequently referenced a legendary figure of Turkish folklore Nasruddin Khwaja/Hoja, gave numerous hints suggesting his association with Naqshbandi order of Sufis, traded with Persian rugs, enjoyed wearing parts of Turkish apparel even in Paris- a legend emerged that Gurdjieff was "essentially" a Sufi and that his teaching is Sufism accommodated for Western audience. But any serious analysis reveals that Gurdjieff, while ostensibly a westernized Sufi, did not share Sufis's worldview nor was influenced by central Sufi concepts. Sufism, being Islamic mysticism, has developed an elaborate network of metaphysics, psychology, soteriology, theology and philosophy-all expressed in a highly articulate and complex, Arabic-based technical vocabulary. The fact that Gurdjieff was not a practicing monotheist rules out any Sufi affiliation. Also, his esoteric doctrine, when set against a background of Sufi metaphysics and psychology, shows that these are worlds apart.

Virtually the only thing that Gurdjieff assimilated from Islamic esotericism is the symbolic central glyph of his school, enneagram. Yet, since this mandala originated in a branch of Ismaili sect, heavily influenced by Neoplatonism and alchemy- the Sufi connection (apart from Gurdjieff's personal contacts and preferences) can easily be dismissed. But- if he didn't care for Sufi theory and almost entire Sufi practice, Gurdjieff certainly studied, adopted and re-designed dances which originated in Turkish and Caucasian Islamic milieu, in the area permeated by Sufi cultural influence.

Gurdjieff's use of the enneagram symbol is most visible in his Russian (post -1915) and European years, when he gathered a cluster of disciplined devotees and made stage appearances with them, both in Europe and the US (mainly in the 1920ies).

According to some reports, his disciples danced along enneagram points and lines, self-observing themselves, until under Gurdjieff's command "Stop !" they would freeze up in an act of (supposedly) self-remembering, when, at least in theory, Gurdjieff would transmit spiritual (or, more likely, bioenergy equivalent to Taoist ch'i) to their susceptible psyches with the aim to elevate and expand their consciousness and being- an exercise in some points resembling the transfer of Sufi barrakah (blessing, spiritual energy) or Tantric shaktipat. Also, the profile of dances, devised by Gurdjieff himself, betray influences of Sufi and Vajrayana/Tibetan traditions.

Enneagram doesn't play a prominent role in his own writings, and, apart from his early and middle periods (1915- 1920ies, with the significant pause in 1925., when he barely survived a car-crash), it is mainly preserved in Ouspensky's books. Later "enneagrammatoros", from Arica's Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo to the contemporary pop-psychologizing Jesuits and Salesians have been already mentioned.

5d. Tantric Tradition

Probably the most enduring legacy Gurdjieff has bequeathed to the West (and going far beyond the adherents of his "Work") is a set of exercises which he picked up in Central and East Asia, and which are prominent in Buddhist and Hindu Tantric traditions. (Although the most important exercise, vipassana/vipasyana or "insight" meditation is central also in non-Tantric, southern Theravada Buddhism of Sri Lanka, Burma and Indochina Gurdjieff, by all accounts, didn't have physical contacts with). Essentially, the most widespread "non-energetic" Tibetan Yoga, Mahamudra, consists of two parts: shamatha (or concentration/absorption) and vipas(h)yana ("insight" or mindfulness-variously termed). Gurdjieffian self-remembering (and to a lesser degree, self-observation) is an example of curious blend of shamatha and vipasyana reshaped to suit his system. For, being an integral practice of unitary monism of Cittamatra/Yogachara school, vipasyana has only one goal: to recognize, in a flash of insight, the identity between one's essential nature (variously termed: Buddha Nature, Original Nature, True Nature-in Sanskrit, Buddhata) with the Dharmakaya (literally, the "Doctrine's body", which is equivalent to the Western Absolute/Abyss of Godhead.)

In the most famous version, this is the grand Upanishadic equation: Atman (essential human soul) and Brahman (Ground of the Cosmos) are one and the same.

The Tantric exercise reaps the harvest of insight only after practice of mindfulness has dissolved all the skandhas/constitutive elements which have created an illusory sense of ego/mano-vijnana. We won't delve into intricacies of Cittamatra psychology, but will only point out to the central aim of non-dual doctrine that is perfectly expounded in Mahamudra (9) (and its part, vipasyana/mindfulness) or Ch'an/Zen Buddhism, which is essentially identical in theory and similar in practice: for non-dual doctrines, the sense of selfhood or "ego", at whichever level/layer is nothing but a vortex in Illusion of mundane consciousness/perception. For them, the only Reality is supracosmic Void/Shunya.

Vipasyana/mindfulness exercise gradually dissolves illusory layers of "normal" waking consciousness until ignorance (avidya) bursts out into the insight into the identity of

one's essential self/Buddhata and the Ground of All/Dharmakaya/Shunya.
(True, there are less radical interpretations within different schools of Vajrayana Buddhism, but it is uncertain whether Gurdjieff contacted Nyingma order or even heterodox Bonpo, that practice (among other things) a powerful Dzogchen exercise, in many respects similar to Vipasyana, but subtler in emphasizing state of "unity in multiplicity" (I'll use their terminology) of the Nature/Buddhata and Essence/Shunya. In their own words:
"While the essence is like the vast expanse of a clear, sunlit sky, the nature is like the light itself, the sky's luminosity.")

Anyway- in both variants, it is a far cry from Gurdjieff's *soul* awakening and empowering project. Gurdjieff's intention was entirely different: the accent is on the awakening of evolving "essential *soul*", perpetually growing yet indestructible inner self, the true protagonist and "privileged" agent of cosmic evolution. Gurdjieff's world is a too real and dynamic place to afford its inhabitants a luxury of escapist quietism and the "river into ocean" loss of selfhood. Hence he creatively fused concentrated effort of shamatha with non-attachment of vipasyana in his main exercise: self-remembering.

6. Pieces of the "Work"

6a. Self-observation

Self-observation is, in short, a process whereby individual is perpetually engaged in attentive "monitoring" of their actions, sensations, impressions, thoughts, reactions,....and assigning every isolated perceived event to a specific centre. This exercise is essentially dis-identification from one's body/emotions/thoughts compound and intensification of it by dispassionately cataloging everything experienced. Having roots in ancient and modern exercises of "witnessing" (as various as Raja Yoga and Husserl's Phenomenology) of imagined "pure I", it nevertheless makes sense only in Gurdjieff's system. If we put aside all objections re his "centres" (practically, it doesn't matter where some sensation is assigned to but only that it is recorded and categorized), we can immediately see positive as well as negative effects of this exercise.

On the positive level: a person, in due time, achieves certain level of "inner freedom", of still assuredness she/he is a self different from the vortex of bodily sensations, emotions and thoughts they used to consider their being. Categorization, as it were, "externalizes" one's psychophysical functions and frees oneself from clutches of previous habitual, frequently mechanical behavior. Gurdjieff and his disciples tried (sometimes) to "explain" these effects in their "chemical substances" lingo (harmonization of centres, redistribution of bodily (al)chemical energies in a desirable manner), but this is of minor importance. The crucial positive effect remains growing freedom from the claws of bodypsyche domination (which is, by the way, natural condition of an ordinary human).

But- here lies a danger of disintegration: a sane human person is unity of this

"compound". If exercised radically and isolatedly, without other "unifying" or humanizing practices, self-observation could at best lead to devaluation of one's experience of total life, which is preferably to be lived rather than analyzed, or, at worst, to schizophrenia-like symptoms of alienation from one's own body and psyche.

The battle against mechanical behavior can assume mechanical characteristics:

a "self-observation addict" is a sort of robot-like creature focused primarily on apperception and categorization of their inner and outer world.

Not a desirable way of life, I'd say.

Also, from a practical standpoint- a person easily gets bored with such a not instantly rewarding discipline and generally not spectacular at all: futile witnessing one's sensations-mostly trivial stream of consciousness. Even worse: witnessing and cataloging may sometimes block genuinely creative impulses. Finally- I would say that "unnaturalness" of self-observation exercise makes it simply unattractive to the majority of even "selected" introverts.

6b. Self-remembering

The central Gurdjieffian practice is dis-identification intensified and "compressed". Accounts of self-remembering go something like this: one "sees" one's bodypsyché in a flash of insight ("takes a mental photo"), with sensations, feelings and thoughts not sequentially categorized, but apperceived in a timeless "instant".

Evidently, self-remembering is (at least in its form) a variant of Tantric vipasyana and shamatha combined: while walking, sitting, eating, defecating, speaking (and, if possible, sleeping and dreaming) continually dispassionately witnessing one's perceptual world, and, simultaneously focusing one's attention in the manner that resembles shamatha technique (at least partially). Here is a fine example of self-remembering (12):

" I was once walking along the Liteiny towards the Nevsky, and in spite of all my efforts I was unable to keep my attention on self-remembering. The noise, movement, everything distracted me. Every minute I lost the thread of attention, found it again, and then lost it again.....I reached the Nadejdinskaya without losing the thread of attention except, perhaps, for short moments.... I reached the Nevsky still remembering myself, and was already beginning to experience the strange emotional state of inner peace and confidence which comes after great efforts of this kind...."

Or, when activation of previously dormant self/jivatman is more prominent (7):

"..Although I was aware of my surroundings-the forest and fields and the hot sun, they were only a background to the inner experience; all anxieties and cares of ordinary life dropped away; at the same time I saw myself and my relations with people quite clearly..... It was as if for a few moments I had entered into my real life; and the outer life, which had seemed so important and took up all my time, was not the real life but something ephemeral, a sort of cinema film with which I was identified. Only the inner something was eternal-I, the real self of me. I AM. "

Gurdjieffian self-remembering adds a Gnostic urgency to the act: Tibetan Tantric vipasyana, assured in the ever-abiding presence of enlightened Buddha Nature within, patiently goes on, without hurry (at least in theory), practicing mindfulness meditation which will, eventually, dissolve all the defilements that keep the Mind/Citta in delusional state of normal consciousness. *Festina lente* would be their motto. With the perpetual practice of vipasyana/mindfulness, the immanent Bodhi/Enlightenment will manifest of itself, following the gradual weakening of the hypnotic attraction the Samsara (inner and outer) holds on a person's consciousness.

Not so in Gurdjieffian self-remembering. One is expected, literally, to "fight" one's natural "sleepy human condition". An effort, something unnatural, is needed to activate human attention to full and intense apperception of one's bodypsyche complex and its intrer-relation with the "world". Self-remembering means going against the current of ordinary slumber called human life. This trait, surprising on the surface, reveals an undercurrent one could hardly expect and refocuses our attention to another non-dual doctrine: Zen or Ch'an Buddhism. But, as other scholars have already mentioned (24), Mahamudra and Zen are essentially the same.

Two contemplative "ways" of Zen are *chih* and *kuan*: witnessing contemplation and concentration. Interestingly enough, Gurdjieff has "extracted" essential traits from both contemplative disciplines (as I have said with regard to the Tibetan Mahamudra, which is a combination of shamatha/concentration and vipasyana/mindfulness, but in different conceptual framework), but strongly emphasized kung/koan-like nature of self-remembering. Curiously- he has "cloaked" witnessing in an essentially sharp and focused concentration exercise (with all energetic concomitant phenomena present- sweating, strong perspiration, energy flashes, probable kundalini arousal) to awaken one's previously dormant *soul* - but not as a passive witness. In Hindu Tantric parlance: self-remembering succeeds in activating jiva-consciousness of immortal soul-spark, but falls short of attaining cosmic consciousness (whichever level) of Paramatman. Or, Zen practitioners would find similarities with their concept of *kensho*, which is a far cry from *satori*.

True, in deeper levels of vipasyana, similar effects occur, but they are classified according to their *Weltanschauung*. The main difference is that the everpresent Bodhi/Enlightenment only waits to manifest itself, while no such state or being exists in Gurdjieff's mythology. For Gurdjieffians, *soul* is asleep, and only concentrated effort of self-remembering can lead to its transient awakening. Otherwise, when a man dies, his *soul* will remain immortal within the confines of the Solar system (or, in "loonier" versions of the "system", will be eaten by the Moon), but equally snoozy and impotent. As is the case with all true Gnostics- it's now or never.

Interpretations of successful Gurdjieffian self-remembering will vary according to one's worldview: non-physicalists will probably consider it an example of consciousness expansion and recentering one's being/"I" closer to the Higher Self; physicalists/materialists will describe it as an altered mental state produced by biochemical/physiological changes induced by extraordinary stress or effort.

6c. Conscious Labor and Intentional Suffering

I shall consider only this exercise among many others Gurdjieff's followers practice

in the "Work" (various Gurdjieff-designed dances, a multitude of psychological exercises, suppressing anger and "negative" emotions, conscience development, etc.).

Although various authors differ in their reports, conscious labor and intentional suffering could be described briefly as development of one's strength of will and patience. On an "esoteric" level, conscious labor can be considered a distant progeny of ancient *askesis* (ascetic practice), thought to generate willpower necessary to subdue "lower" or "passionate" nature. This exercise is done in succession of meaningless, boring and unpleasant acts- which is supposed to crystallize one's will and help harmonize human centres. Also, it can take on the form of strenuous mental and physical exercises, exhausting manual labor or prolonged self-imposed restrictions-an echo of Christian *vita purgativa*.

Intentional suffering is essentially patience, ranging from self-control to almost Christian ideal of humility. Both these practices are considered the prerequisite for harmoniously developed human being (usually defined in terms of optimally functioning centres) who will be able to sustain ever more prolonged states of *soul* consciousness generated by self-remembering with the ultimate goal of being more or less permanently (or at will) centered in *soul*.

7. Recapitulation: an Afterthought

We have briefly addressed pillars of Gurdjieffian psychology that range from Western-type alchemical Hermetism (enneagram, his bizarre "chemistry" and the rest one can find best described in Ouspensky's works (12,13)) to the more "Eastern" exercises of creating/awakening a "witness", a disidentified permanent "I", different from psyche perceived as a spatio-temporally restricted flux of thoughts, emotions and sensations (such practices can be found in various branches of Tantricism, both Hindu and Buddhist, as well as in some types of alchemical Taoism).

Be as it may, Gurdjieff remained throughout his entire opus equivocal re the nature of this "I". Sometimes, he stubbornly denied its existence, insisting that a person can only through various psychophysical strategies (conscious labor, self-observation, self-remembering) "create" or "develop" such an entity, which would, in due course, enable an individual to survive physical death. The parallels with early alchemical Taoism, where a human being is sentenced to mortality, and the only chance of escape from the inexorable fatum is to create immortal "spiritual essence"/Shen, are striking (never mind that later Northern Taoism insisted on the given and already indestructible self).

However, in the majority of instances Gurdjieff admitted that the subject of witnessing is always here, but asleep/deluded-therefore no need for some pseudochemical "effort" that would "extract" permanent "I" out of the body in claws of mortality and decay; "only" a set of strenuous exercises with the aim to re-awake the benumbed and unconscious *soul*.

And, as the last observation: Gurdjieff's exercises and, I would say, "the Gurdjieffian myth" are mesmerizing for a particular type of personality: someone not "at home" in this world, not satisfied with the common human lot as circumscribed in "Ecclesiastes", and being possessed of something one might term as the "Ur-Gnostic" temperament, whose *cri de coeur* can be summarized thusly : maybe "Ye shall be like Gods" is an overstatement, but "More than human" is, hopefully, a reachable goal that makes life worth living.

8. Summary

After having briefly delineated sources and phases of Gurdjieffian "Work", I would like to summarize the main points of this doctrine- its characteristics and differentia specifica from other "perennial wisdoms":

Gurdjieff was, to put it succinctly, a vitalist Gnostic. His central worldview is a Gnostic one, but having passed through various phases and mutations, fragments of his "system" (never fully articulated) gave rise to conflicting interpretations: deism (12) vs diluted Gnostic theism (4), materialism vs spirituality, ...More: since accents during various phases shifted from one concept to another (and since he "invented" a new vocabulary along the way (for instance, "handbledzoin" for something akin to "bioplasmatic field" or "magnetic (in Mesmer's parlance) force")), it is impossible to gather his opus in corpus of a coherent "teaching". One can only detect various twists and turns and their inconsistencies. His "vitalism" is evident not only in his tumultuous life trajectory, but even more in essential "toughness" and energetic quest for realization of one's *soul*, which is given in terms of incessant strife for acquisition of *soul's* will and power- certainly not an escapist Gnosis of a Buddhist or Gnostic Christian variety. This "power mad" characteristics combined with "scientific occultism" was something new in his era and Gurdjieff can be righteously termed the spiritual progenitor of Castaneda, Arica's Oscar Ichazo, clownish E.J.Gold and, to a lesser degree, of Scientology and all "Ye shall be like Gods" ideologies available on modern spiritual supermarket. Permanent loathing of such human traits like melancholy, morbid introspection, imagination and self-pity are trademarks of Gurdjieffian mythos. Hamlet would certainly not fare well in this worldview.

For all his emphasis on "investigation" and "repeatability", Gurdjieff was, no doubt, a charismatic occultist, something of a Western Guru or Renaissance Magus like Flood reincarnated (no traces of Faustian hybris). Hence- any idea of impartial or "scientific" investigation of the "Work" is out of question. This is essentially an initiatory cult, and such secret societies shun the "outsiders". What I find more intriguing is the following: his writings (and his conversations with pupils, as well as their works) show his lack of interest for stormy ideas that had transformed Western culture from, say, 1900 to 1940. There is no indication (apart for casual and shallow remarks) that he was acquainted (or even paid attention to) with anything scientific above the purely technical level: relativity or quantum physics or radiation physics hadn't made way into his work. Also, speculative ideas and artistic movements that changed his era passed him by: psychoanalysis, existentialism, phenomenology, expressionism, cubism,...Curiously enough, phenomenology's insistence on "inauthenticity" of ordinary human life didn't sit well with Gurdjieff. Once formed, his Weltanschauung remained essentially fixed and impenetrable (shifting accents only emphasized incongruity of his primary sources). All the talk about an all-encompassing "teaching", spanning the spectrum from cosmology, psychology, theology ...to chemistry, ethics, art and "evolution" evaporated into thin air. This is even more striking considering the fact that he harped on "objective art" and similar concepts. One can only ask whether he had ever heard of poor "subjectives" like Titian or Rembrandt.

My final verdict (Georgi Ivanovitch would certainly explode in a riotous laughter could he read these sentences): Gurdjieff "Work", once important, even inspiring force, has spent itself. Ancient wisdom doctrines, transplanted and adapted to the West, do it better. On the other hand, contemporary Consciousness studies, groping and hoping to discover, analyze and synthesize, to use Gurdjieff's title, "All and Everything", in inquisitive nondogmatic efforts, ranging from non-Copenhagen interpretations of Quantum theory to Cognitive science and Complexity: they all are on a completely different track where newly emerging paradigmata may have not achieved a universally accepted corpus of knowledge yet- but, in these fields (if they intend to grow) Gurdjieff is destined to remain something of a curiosity.

In St.Paul's words:

When I was a child,
I spake as a child,
I understood as a child,
I thought as a child:
but when I became a man,
I put away childish things.

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