

Gurdjieff on the phone

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George Gurdjieff
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George Ivanovich Gurdjieff

this is the name by which it was known in the century in which the philosopher, writer, mystic and musician master of dances of Greek-Armenian origin lived.

His doctrine is a combination of ancient wisdom and the knowledge of modern psychology, fused with aspects of mysticism, especially of Sufism and qabalah, as well as with profound aspects of religion, drawing in particular from the Hindu traditions of Sankhya, Buddhism and esoteric Christianity.

Born at the end of 1866 in the city of Alexandropol from a Greek father and an Armenian mother, raised in the Turkish city of Kars, he received a religious education from his tutor, the dean Borsh, with whom he studied medicine and engineering. In his early twenties he went to Istanbul to study the Mevlevi and Bektaşi dervishes.

Numerous journeys take him from Central Asia to Tibet, where he tries to get in touch with the "Brotherhood of Sarmoung", although there is no certainty of the existence of this circle, which leads to the legend of Shiva's annual descent from the summit of Kailash to meet the disembodied souls around the lake Manasarovar.

In 1912 he formed a research center in Moscow, and another in St. Petersburg. After three years of activity, Pëtr Dem'janovich Uspensky joined the Moscow circle and became the go-between for Gurdjieff's thought in the West, just as the composer Thomas de Hartmann and his wife Olga Arkadieвна de Hartmann will be for music. After the Russian revolution he resumed his activities in Essentuki, near the Black Sea, where he founded the "Laboratory of Awareness", in which Alexandre Gustav Salzmänn and his wife Jeanne Matignon de Salzmänn will participate, who will consolidate the movements of the dances.

Gurdjieff on the phone

Summary of Gurdjieff's teachings transcribed by Ouspensky in «The Fourth Way», reported here with reasonable but not arbitrary degrees of freedom.

«Gurdjieff on the telephone» is not a book in the standard sense as much as the selection of operating instructions for applying the teachings of the «Fourth Way» system. The absolute synthesis with which these are returned does not mean that full understanding of the system for awareness given by "The Fourth Way" is possible without studying the book entirely, which is recommended to be done.

"Gurdjieff on the phone" is not a shortcut, but a device of instructions. It can be used for simple reading, but its optimal use is as a meditation tool to be stabilized for at least a month, grafting the reading into the fresh mind in the morning, immediately upon awakening, according to the following dosage:

after having washed your hands and face and expelled the residual liquids, prepare a cup of hot water (it can be softened with tea, honey, barley);

after drinking it (as hot as possible), evaluate whether the expulsion phase has been completed, then take a sitting position and lip-read the instructions, trying to maintain a suitable posture, with an upright spine;

accompany each verse by inhaling before enunciating it; followed by breath holding for seven seconds after each utterance.

Each section for a week, every day. This job lasts a month.

Cover image: photo by George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, author unknown, public domain

Gurdjieff on the phone

I

Summary of Gurdjieff's teachings transcribed by Ouspenskiy in «The Fourth Way», reported here with reasonable but not arbitrary degrees of freedom.

How to use the instruction: assume a sitting position and lip-read the instructions, trying to maintain a suitable posture, with the spine erect. Accompany each verse by inhaling before uttering it and then holding the breath for five seconds after each utterance. Then in the text, each section for a week, every day. This job lasts a month.

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In this volume:

I, who?

Mechanical 'I's

Not me

Neither do you. Antidotes to identification

I. I, who?

1.1 We don't have a single self. Each ego that lives there claims to be the only one, because it has its own memory, its own imagination and claim to will.

1.2 We are lost in the magical power of imagination, which controls us like machines.

1.3 Each "I" gives itself powers to do and to choose which are completely imaginary.

1.4 Our truth as machines revolves around four circuits: instinctive, motor, emotional, mental.

1.5 Emotions feed illusions, the failure of which produces negative emotions that we believe we must constitute as elements of the personality, as everyone does.

1.6 In reality no negative emotion is obligatory, but we fall into the trap because we have been taught to think wrongly.

1.7 The possibility of evolution of each person is based on the ability to escape the mechanical laws that keep us prisoners in captivity.

II. Mechanical 'I's

2.1 We attribute to ourselves qualities that we do not possess. Among these, the illusion of being aware.

2.2 The human being is a lying animal who lies to himself about himself: we always think and act as if we knew the truth and instead we have nothing but ill-founded opinions.

2.3 The alleged "I"s are but machines that depend on external circumstances.

2.4 Also, the machine malfunctions. Every so-called "I" is a house of masterless servants, where no one does their job and everyone produces imagination and illusion.

2.5 We confuse the will, which requires awareness, with the mechanisms of attraction and repulsion, which are mechanical, i.e. determined by external circumstances.

2.6 Of our multiple 'I's, not one is in control. The result is that we are mechanical, i.e. determined by external influences. Above all, we are not what we think we are.

2.7 We talk too much about things we don't know, about which we have only futile opinions.

2.8 The increase of knowledge cannot lead to a change of state without the increase of awareness. Being grows in level only when knowledge, through experience, becomes knowledge.

2.9 The risk is to identify with one of our secondary "I", one of the false personalities. This identification, temporary and inconsistent, makes us machines.

2.10 Machines are not made to understand each other. The good intentions of the false personality are vain because of the illusion they contain.

2.11 Misunderstanding generates negative emotions. The expression of negative emotions declares the limit of the unfounded self.

III. Not me

3.1 The human being is incomplete. What completes it is the attainment of awareness.

3.2 Moving, thinking, feeling, having sensations: all this happens mechanically. Under ordinary conditions it is very difficult to be aware.

3.3 Speech is almost always mechanical. We need to observe and fight this trend.

3.4 Above all, we need to learn not to express negative emotions.

3.5 The emotion produces identification with the alleged "I", which in reality is but a false personality.

3.6 Control takes place with attention and is based on the recognition of the illusory imagination produced by mechanical egos.

3.7 In identification, all possibility of control is lost.

3.8 The mechanical part of the intellectual center compares only two things: it knows everything or it knows nothing; immediately look for the opposite.

3.9 The mechanical part of the emotional center claims to do the work of the intellectual centre, the same claims the moving center with its cliches repeated by hearsay.

IV. Neither do you. Antidotes to identification

4.1 First admit that you are not aware.

4.2 To think and act as if we possess the truth is to lie to oneself about oneself.

4.3 I is a lie. Opinions are worthless. Identifying with one's own opinions is the trap of mechanical egos.

4.4 No one likes to lose illusions. This is why the Path is for a few.

4.5 The illusion of being free, of being able to do, of being able to choose: it is a lie.

4.6 Words do not have a permanent meaning.

4.7 Mechanical selves tend to avoid effort. Bad deeds, once done, generate impulse and compulsion to repeat. Repentance is almost never able to overcome the impulse.

4.8 The unconscious being has no will of its own. Things happen to him under external influences that he doesn't know and cannot govern.

