



THE ANCIENT GODS

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The Ancient Gods

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The Ancient Gods

Chapter 1
Cosmogony

The Absolute

The Absolute is a specific concept of Eastern philosophy. It deals with a primordial source of the universe, very different from the personalized God of Judeo-Christian-Islamic religions.

It was raised by the discipline called Taoism in China, many centuries before Christ.

It is worth giving an idea on this matter.

The Tao

There is a mythical Chinese character named Lao Tse who lived almost five hundred years before Christ. Some regard him as one of the immortal Chinese, others, as a sage or a monk.

One day, heading for the Tibet, he arrived at a fort which was guarding the Chinese border. There he was requested to write down his knowledge before crossing this frontier.

The monk agreed and his work was the famous Tao-te-king, that is, the Tao book. Then he crossed the border westward, into the Tibet, disappearing forever.

—And what is the Tao? —asks a friend not very fond of philosophy.

I knew that the answer of the book would be a bizarre Chinese tale for him, therefore, I told something that apparently had nothing to do with the subject.

I told him about an ice hotel.

A hotel made entirely of ice is built in a tourist resort in Sweden every year. It is obtained from the river Torne, a river which is frozen most of the year and melts when the short summer arrives. In the same way, the ice hotel turns into water that returns to the river.

Not only the rooms are built of ice but also the tables, chairs, beds, plates and glasses, the ornaments and even some sculptures made by the tourists themselves. But the sun reappears on the Swedish horizon, and the ice hotel begins to melt down.

There is a video where an architect walks among the remains of the ice and reflects. —The furniture was the river; the glasses, the beds and the walls have been always the river. That's the fascinating thing—he says, because everything was the Torne river and everything comes back to it.

So, returning to the subject, it turns out that Lao Tse wrote something similar, before his final trip.

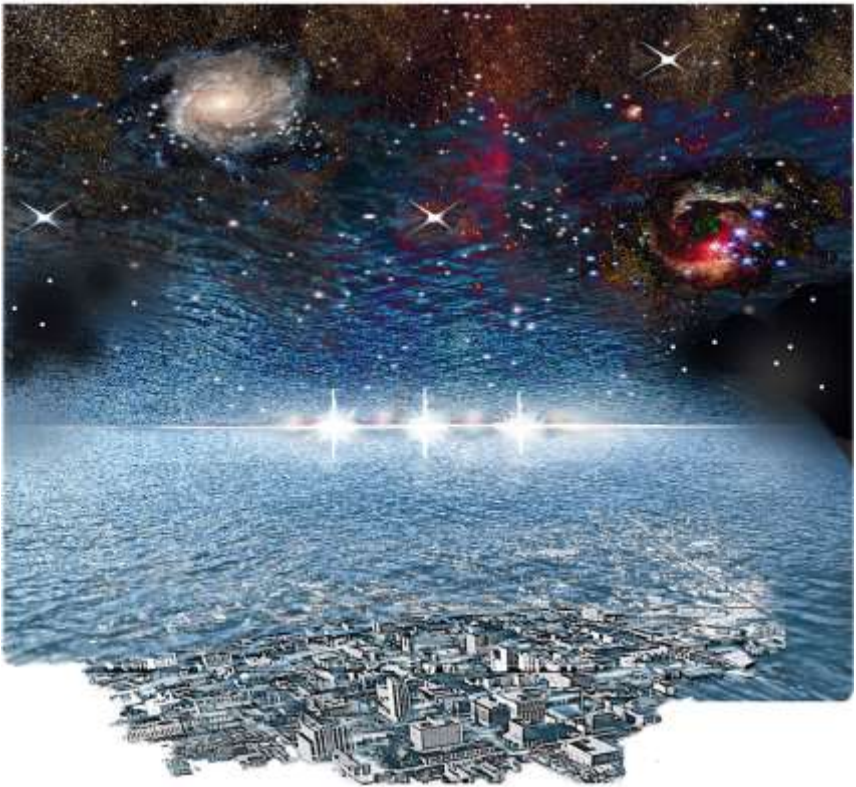
He said that there will be a time when all beings and things will go back to the source that is behind all existence, returning to a primordial origin.

Something like a great river that the old monk called the Tao.



The idea of the Absolute is like that. Something as vast and impersonal as the sea.

An ocean of consciousness that crystallizes in all kinds of worlds.
In worlds that will, one day, return to the sea.



Intro

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a European woman managed to penetrate the forbidden land of ancient Tibet. She had instructors who could be called coaches, because they imposed practices in very demanding and, sometimes, dangerous conditions.

She learned breathing techniques to survive in the extreme cold and slept in a small room without blankets, with half the roof uncovered, only with her trainee tunic.

I felt very proud, she said, because I don't ever catch a cold. However, four thousand yards at the foot of the Himalayas, she could easily have died of pneumonia.

Her name was Alexandra David-Neel, and she showed to the West the esotericism of Tibet, India and China.

* * *

Perhaps the greatest exponent of profound esotericism was George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, also at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Trained in monasteries of Central Asia, he was an instructor of very hard techniques applied to internal development, and the bearer of teachings unknown in the Western world.

It is said that the testimonies of these true practitioners, stored in something called chains of knowledge, are like an underground river running for millennia.



Are ideas that lie behind of the beliefs, myths and religions.

And the purpose of this work is trying to summarize those concepts.

More about Gurdjieff

This work is mainly based on his teaching, and there are a couple of reasons to do it. One is that he achieved a direct relationship with the chains of knowledge.

To say "chains of knowledge" is a generalization, a way of referring to teachings in certain specialized instruction and training sites, whose location is not publicly known.

In his book *Encounters with remarkable men*, Gurdjieff recounted the difficulties that he and his companions had to overcome to locate these centers, in a search that took them several years. Of course, he was careful to avoid any information about their true location.

Anyway, locating them would be useless. They could be compared to training centers for Olympic athletes, whose coaches would only accept those with special skills.

But here I go to the main point. One of his most important disciples, Ouspensky, asked him if there existed in the East some "schools" of knowledge that would give an integral preparation, because his teaching had all the appearance of something very complete, a very structured set of knowledge.

And Gurdjieff answered:

“Speaking of schools, there are only special schools; there are no general schools.

Every teacher, or guru, is a specialist in some one thing. One is an astronomer; another is a sculptor; a third, a musician.

And all the pupils of each teacher must first of all study the subject in which he has specialized. Then, afterwards, another subject, and so on.

It would take a thousand years to study everything.

But how did you study?

I was not alone. There were all kinds of specialists among us. Everyone studied on the lines of his particular subject. Afterwards, when we forgathered, we put together everything we had found.”

(Ouspensky, 2001, pp.15-16)

As you can see, it is not just Gurdjieff but the set of specialists who paid a high price for their knowledge, assuming the task of unifying them in an integral scheme, a paradigm endowed with a consistent structure.

Gurdjieff brought the legacy of a millenary knowledge stemming from the chains of knowledge, which was assimilated and compiled by a set of true practitioners, his companions

The theory was called "the teaching" and the practice was "the work".

The other reason is that he taught in Occident, in the twentieth century.

It is not very surprising, some would say, because it was the century of the *new age* that produced the emergence of all kinds of gurus, orientalists and charlatans. Even the Beatles had their own guru.

This is true, but there is a small difference. Allow me to tell you an anecdote by Ouspensky himself, taken from his book *In search of the miraculous - Fragments of an unknown teaching*. It was 1916, before the new age.

When he decided to work with Gurdjieff, he asked him to show some "facts". He had been in India and other eastern places and was not convinced by mystical discourses. He wanted evidence of other capacities, a demonstration of personal power beyond words.

"There will be facts," said G, *"I promise you. But many other things are necessary first."* — (p.23)

And he fulfilled his promise in a meeting with Ouspensky and two other practitioners, a year later. It took place during a pause, a moment of silence in the gathering.

This is what Ouspensky recounted:

There was a fairly long pause. He sat still saying nothing. After a while I heard his voice inside me as if it were in my chest near the heart. He put a definite question to me. I looked at him; he was sitting and smiling. His question provoked in me a very strong emotion. But I answered him in the affirmative.

—Why did he say that —asked G., looking in turn at Z. and Dr. S—. Did I ask him anything?

And he at once, put another, still more difficult, question to me in the same way as before. And again I answered it in a natural voice. Z. and S. were visibly astonished at what was taking place, especially Z.

This conversation, if it can be called a conversation, proceeded in this fashion for not less than half an hour. G. put questions to me without words and I answered them speaking in the usual way.

I was very agitated by the things G. said to me and the things he asked me which I cannot transmit. The matter was concerned with certain conditions which I had either to accept or leave the work. — (p. 262)

Of course, Ouspensky accepted the conditions. This is only an example, since there were many witnesses of different unusual "facts" among his disciples, not publicly known.

Gurdjieff was a demanding and sometimes tough instructor. He did not accept mystical ideas or the unusual facts that he himself was capable of executing. He denied having these capabilities in front of public opinion.

In a meeting with new disciples, an old woman said that some time she left her body, and stayed floating over the street. Gurdjieff rebuke her: --*Crazy woman, you soon [will be] on a straitjacket.*

He had drastic positions about mysticism. He was against a common eastern belief about rebirth or reincarnation, denying all possibility of existence after death.

However, when Gurdjieff had already died, a young disciple revealed that several times she tried to leave the work but never could do it.

She even reproached this situation to Gurdjieff himself, who replied that it was her father's influence. Because her father understands the value of staying at work.

- Mr. Gurdjieff, my father died several years ago.*
—*I know. But he does not want you to give up the work.*
—*Do you say that's my father? Where is he?*
—*Around you.*

He sustained that individual evolution also would benefit our ancestors: parents, grandparents, etc. Obviously he was talking about the dead, but only in a private, personal and confidential way.

Gurdjieff always avoided talking about reincarnation or recurrence, considering it a theoretical topic that did not help the concrete work. Only Ouspensky managed privately, and just for once, to question him about recurrence or the possible reality of the "repetition".

—This idea of repetition —said G.—is not the full and absolute truth, but it is the nearest possible approximation to the truth. In this case truth cannot be expressed in words. But what you say is very near to it.

And if you understand why I do not speak of this, you will be still nearer to it. What is the use of a man knowing about recurrence if he is not conscious and it himself does not change?

One can say even that if a man does not change, repetition does not exist for him. If you tell him about repetition, it will only increase his sleep. Why should he make any efforts today when there is so much time and so many possibilities ahead -the whole of eternity?

Why should he bother today? This is exactly why the system does not say anything about repetition and takes only this one life which we know.

[...] But if he changes something essential in himself, that is, if he attains something, this cannot be lost. — (p. 250).

Therefore, the strategy used by Gurdjieff was to deny there were other opportunities. There was only one life to achieve the objectives and if the person failed, then its death would be in vain. An iron alternative.

But it was only directed at practitioners, at his disciples.

I think this is not well understood by those who study or try to understand the teaching. They may think that these drastic positions are aimed at the general public. It's not like that.

The intention of his training was to obtain results at all costs. He wasn't like a kind and spiritual teacher. Instead was as rigorous as an elite troop instructor; like a green beret.

He was able to perceive other aspects of reality that would change definitively our idea of the world, if we could see them.

However, he did not want to spread them without reservations. Would he have his reasons, I do not doubt it, but what a pity! They could have been remarkable.

In 1916, in front of Ouspensky and a few others, he developed a complete panorama of the cosmogony and psychology of profound esotericism.

Gurdjieff never exposed those ideas again so widely and in such detail. Not even in his own writings.

And trying to summarize those concepts, is the main intention of this work.





The scale of the cosmos

The word cosmos, in the teaching, did not mean the complete universe but each rung of a living ladder of seven rungs, which descends from the Absolute down to the microcosm.

It is supported by a basic concept: each rung is part of the Absolute. There's not a creator on the one hand and a creation on the other.

In Gurdjieff's words, the universe exists within the Absolute.

And here is the scale of the seven cosmoses.

The Absolute

|

All the worlds

|

All the suns

|

The sun, the solar system

|

The earth, the planets

|

The human beings

|

The microcosm

This represents a scheme of creation as an inverted tree where the roots, which are above, are the unmanifested Absolute.

The main trunk is "All the worlds", that is all galaxies, the universe or the cosmos in the current sense.

The branch "All the suns" is our galaxy, the Milky Way.

And one of the innumerable branches of the galaxy is the sun, which has sub-branches on each planet, etc. It is a line that goes from the roots of a huge tree to our world.

But Ouspensky explains this scale at length in his book *Fragments*. Therefore, it does not make sense to repeat his explanation here.

Though the relevant question is: what is the scale presented for? Well, to highlight a subject that even Gurdjieff did not know.

This scale was part of that exposition that he made during several months, in 1916. Nothing in particular made it stand out from the set, except for one detail. At that time no one knew that the galaxies existed, not even Einstein.

Einstein presents the complete relativistic physics in 1915. For him, as well as for Newton centuries ago, the stars of our galaxy were the universe and that was all that existed: they were the Cosmos.

It was not until 1926, with the first large telescope in Mount Wilson, when it was confirmed that a "nebula" in the Andromeda constellation was actually a huge cluster of stars.

It is the great galaxy of Andromeda, our nearest neighbor, at a distance of two and a half million light years away.

It should be noticed that the astronomers at the time did not easily accept this news.

The existence of other galaxies is a huge idea, which extends the meaning of the cosmos to another scale.

But Gurdjieff's cosmos came from ancient sources where the term galaxy had not existed yet. In that time, they were other worlds.

I transcribe part of Gurdjieff's explanation about those other worlds:

[...] "For the sun, in its turn, the 'world' is our world of stars, or the Milky Way, an accumulation of a vast number of solar systems.

Furthermore, from an astronomical point of view, it is quite possible to presume a multitude of worlds existing at enormous distances from one another in the space of 'All worlds.' These worlds taken together will be 'world' for the Milky Way." — (Ouspensky, 2001, p.76)

Gurdjieff assumed the existence of a multitude of worlds similar to the Milky Way, when the consensus was that only the stars existed. It was the beginning of the 20th century and for scientists at that time there were no other kinds of worlds out there.

Years later, when the existence of galaxies was confirmed, some astronomers called them "island universes"; a concept similar to the worlds of other times.





The time scale

One dawn, I was with my father in a bar, waiting for more people to come to a meeting.

—Have you read the news? A star exploded yesterday —my father commented, trying to have a chat with someone who was not a morning person, and knowing that I was interested in those topics.

—Yes, I read it, but the explosion was not yesterday but a long time ago —I said.

—Nope. It exploded yesterday, that's what the news said.

—They saw it yesterday but, actually, it exploded fifteen thousand years ago. *

I remember that he looked at me; he was surprised. He was a lawyer and a politician completely located in daily life, but he knew that those topics were my liking, and he didn't doubt that I was serious.

—It was a star that had burst before Christ, before the pyramids. The blast of the explosion has travelled in deep space for millennia and that light reached the earth yesterday, at dawn.

He stared at me for a moment and then, with a tone of real astonishment, he said: —But people know nothing about that!

* The star that exploded was the 1987A supernova in the Large Magellanic Cloud, but from a distance greater than 150,000 light years, not 15,000. That number (in years) seemed huge and not very credible to my father. So I made a small discount.

He was quite right. Everyday life dazzles, drags like a tsunami, without giving an opportunity to understand what our true size is, our scale in that infinity out there.

Actually, the most difficult thing to understand is not the size, but the scale of time.

One of the most deeply rooted beliefs, considered as evident and indisputable, is in the perception of an instant: what happens now, at this precise moment. The idea we have when we say right now.

It is taken for granted that all living beings perceive this as we do. Be human, ant or elephant, a second means the same for anyone.

But from the distant past, the chains of knowledge say the opposite. They affirm that each level of being has its own perception of time: a relative duration for each level of that old scale.

Science is currently testing, through experiments, that small animals have a faster speed of perception than ours. They see more details in one second.

For them, everything happens more slowly.

Something similar to watching events such as a moving projectile in a slow-motion film, to show the impact with many normally invisible details.

Both small animals and their predators have an accelerated metabolism. They need a faster reaction speed to survive or to get food. For those beings, their time is normal and ours would be like living in slow motion.

When filming ants with close-up lenses, we see them moving like in the old Chaplin films: with sudden, hasty, unnatural movements.

If the projection could be delayed until we would see them moving as naturally as a dog does, for example, we would be able to have an idea of the time difference between a person and an ant.

Something similar happens with the swarm of small insects that we see fluttering on a summer afternoon among the trees, like bright spots dancing against the rays of the sun.

For us, they are just dancing, but in fact, they are performing a courtship of fast and complex mating that we cannot achieve to perceive.

Those tiny beings live a few days.

In that period, they grow up, mate, age and die.

It is obvious that they cannot experience time as we do.

They cannot see our presence because we move as slowly as the sun in the sky. They do not perceive that we are living beings.

For those ephemeral creatures, we are simply part of the landscape.



Little things

There is another, even shorter, time scale; a scale of milliseconds or millionths of a second. An "ordinary" lapse for particles like the electron, in the realm of quantum physics.

Let's see the magic that appears working in such reduced times.

Images did not really exist in the first TV sets with a vacuum tube screen. There was a single point of light sweeping the entire screen at high speed, several times per second.

Our eyes could maintain the vision of the whole sweep, composing a complete image of virtual reality. It was not like a photograph on paper or the celluloid stills of the old cinema.

We could "see" them by the persistence of the images in the retina. The brain was responsible for processing those millions of successive flashes. There was never a real image on the screen, but in our mind.

It can't be the same in small beings with shorter times of perception.

By creating a mental example, we could imagine a town of people so tiny that they can only see a single flash at a time.

The small town

For the small people, the TV screen was as big as the sky. There were flashes of light with many colors like fireworks, exploding just one at a time.

They all met to watch them and bet how the following would be.

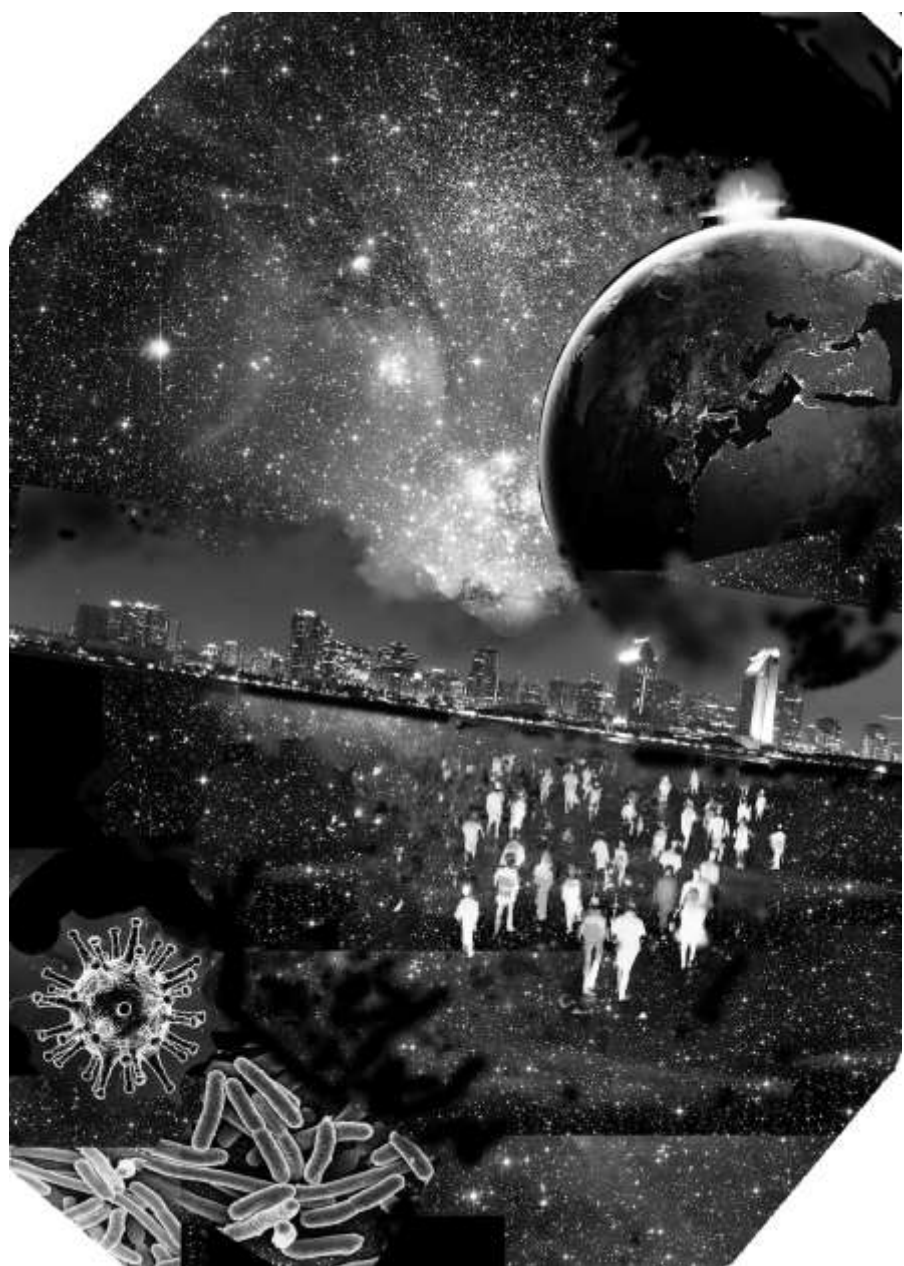
They remembered some very striking ones, such as Slow44Fire or BlueThatDances696, to compete with the latest designs.

But among them, there was a well-known seer saying something strange about those fleeting lights in the sky.

He claimed that the flashes came from huge gods, even bigger than the sky. Almost immortal gods who lived for thousand and thousands of generations of the small people.

And something even stranger: that these gods could see all the light flashes together. They saw those that had already happened and those that will come, all of them gathered at the same time.

—What a nonsense! —some said— For what would that mixture of past and future serve?



A matter of scale

Several years ago I read the book *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan. I was amazed by his ability to divulge biology topics. A subject that never had interest for me, except to pass the boring biology course at school.

Sagan, on the other hand, knew how to convey a sense of wonder into it. — (Sagan, 2004, p. 272)

Do you know that a virus is a programming? In *Cosmos* appears as a tube made with several segments where the first would be the head and the last the tail. A virus has something in the head that allows it to penetrate the walled enclosure of a cell. An enzyme to decrypt the input code, which is called reverse transcriptase.

The virus is a hacker but, unlike human hackers, it does not look for the passwords of bank accounts. It seeks to seize the resources of a cell to make copies of itself. It is a replicant biological machinery.

It cracks the cell's genetic information to make more virus that are clones of itself. The virus is not a bug. it is genome with a protein coat. To make it simple: is a piece of DNA wrapped in a soft case.

It does not have its own metabolism nor is it self-sufficient. Biologists do not consider it a living being.

In contrast, a cell has its own metabolism and is much larger, hundreds or thousands of times larger than a virus. It looks like a citadel with an external wall and a closed core, similar to the forbidden temple of the Chinese emperors, which governs the entire cell.

Small organelles such as mitochondria and ribosomes live outside the nucleus; they are very specialized workers performing specific and quite complicated tasks.

A cell is a living being in its own right, a highly complex organism.

Our body is like a ginormous building whose bricks are those tiny beings. And one wonders if a single cell could become aware of the size of this set.

Very difficult, probably impossible, even if it's a brain neuron. We are like a galaxy with billions of cells, instead of stars. Our body is out of scale for that little being.

But it is very likely that it may perceive and communicate with other cells in its environment. That environment would then be its own world, the place where its existence goes by.

If it could perceive the immense size of our body —very doubtful— it would see it as something frozen, motionless, as we see the stars in the night. For a cell, time is very fast. Comparatively, we move as slow as the moon crossing the sky.

Even supposing that a cell could perceive all our body, it would not have a chance to perceive that this immensity moves in a super space that is inconceivable for it. A non-existent dimension that for us is simply the space where we exist and run around.

That space can be our home, the city, the entire planet for travelers, and even outer space for select travelers, such as the crew of the space station.

The cell lives in its world and we in ours.
It is a matter of scale.

Maybe there are living beings much bigger than us, who knows?

They say that one of those enormous beings, according to what the ancient chains of knowledge affirm, would be the Sun.

Although this is an idea that sounds silly: that burning ball cannot be alive in any way. Humans can believe in a god, in various gods or angels, but that is a matter of faith.

Instead, the sun is something concrete and if it were alive, then we would realize. This is obvious and reasonable: an evident conclusion.

It seems that there is not much more to say on the subject.

I can only add that I was struck by an old proverb: *"Man sees in the sun what the sun has of human."*

An enigmatic phrase that suggests things of the sun that we do not perceive.

We know that it gets its energy by converting hydrogen into helium, as a fusion reactor would do. But, was there something unusual or invisible discovered in the sun?

Well, actually there was.

The size of its magnetic field—which is part of the sun—was discovered to go far beyond the orbit of Pluto. It extends more than three times the distance to Pluto.

It is an invisible bubble of colossal size. And according to scientists, that is the true size of the sun.

If it is a living being, as they say, then it would be really huge.

Now, in a hypothetical way as in a mental game, let's accept for a moment that the sun is a living entity with a high level of consciousness, as the seers of the old chains of knowledge affirmed.

What could be deduced, considering such an amazing hypothesis?

To begin with, its size would be absolutely out of scale with anything in our world, even with our own planet. The whole group of planets inside that gigantic bubble is as close to the luminous center as the seeds in an apple.

Its existence, extended for billions of years, is a totally alien period for any living being that we know of. None of them comes closer, even remotely.

This places us in a position similar to that of a cell in front of the whole body, at least.

I'm saying that its true size would not only be immeasurable but, given its time scale, it would be seen completely inert, frozen and without movement. That's because just one second in the Sun's time scale, could mean months for us.

Of course we know that the sun rotates, moves around the galaxy and many other technical details. But we are talking about what this hypothetical entity would do as a living being.

It could be acting in some kind of undetectable space. Something non-existent for us but habitual for its own scale. *Similar to what happens with our human world facing the world of a cell.*

Imagining that the Sun just moves in the galaxy could be wrong, because resembles one cell trying to imagine the movement of our body in our world. —It doesn't work. The cell's world is inside our body.

So, could we imagine the Sun's world, living inside its true size?

Compare the degrees of freedom we have, going back and forth on the planet and even outside it, with a cell confined to the body.

In the jargon of the chains of knowledge, we are subject to fewer "laws" than a cell. — The Sun, they say, is governed by far fewer laws than us.

Its degrees of freedom are unimaginable for us, just as a cell cannot conceive the freedom of movements that a human being has.

In short, the space where the Sun moves doesn't exist for us at all. The Sun lives in its world and we in ours.

And, to top it off, we would stumble upon a more unbridgeable barrier than space or size. The real problem is in its time scale.

In an existence of billions of years, a brief moment of its own time would encompass our entire life. The present for that being, the now, the current moment, would extend through generations.

There is no way to imagine the reality that such a beast would be perceiving.

But this is just a theoretical exercise. We can keep calm because if this were something real, then we would have to assimilate the fact that we are living inside the beast.

Don't look at me that way, that's what the scientists say.

We are within the Sun's realm.



This picture was sent by the Cassini spacecraft orbiting Saturn. The bright spot, down to the right, is the Earth. The smallest point below, if you can see it, is the Moon. —(NASA-ESA, 2004)

Far from the cities, in the open field, the stars look like jewels on black velvet. Faced with this immensity, it may be easier to realize that perhaps we resemble the small town.

For us, that starry sky is simply part of the landscape.

The teaching states that there are greater existences than ours, not just in size but also in the time scale. Entities the size of planets or suns, with lives of billions of years.

I never saw a similar idea in other philosophies, myths or religions, either from India, China or Tibet —to name the most outstanding—. No one raised the existence of real beings on such an amazing scale.

If planetary and stellar entities exist, then a time barrier separates us.

The millennia that the light of the supernova took to get here, would mean only a few minutes on that time scale, perhaps as the lapse between lightning and thunder for us.



This is the next theme, based on a thousand-year-old cosmogony.

An idea of the world that comes from the old chains of knowledge.

It is a paradigm from other times, and the origin of the ancient gods.

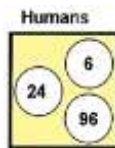


And there is the real difference with the Western paradigm, with our traditional science, summarized in the following paragraphs:

The diagram does not represent beings based on organic chemistry, but levels of existence that have consciousness in various degrees, although some are very elementary.

But all of them come from the same and unique origin: The Absolute, the source of initial and final consciousness, the alpha and the omega.

We can take the box of human beings as an example.



The numbers come from a very complex chart ordering each level of beings by the density of their matter. A larger number means a denser level. A minor one is a subtler, more evolved level.

- The number 24 is the "materiality" or average human density.
- The 96 is what humans eat, that is invertebrates according to the diagram, because those are the level of beings that have this average density.
- And 6 is whom the human beings feed: *An Archangel*.

Obviously we must clear what such a conclusion means.

In the diagram, above the human level, there are two levels of beings. About these, Gurdjieff said: *"These are classes of creatures we do not know: let's call them angels and archangels."* — (p.323)

He did not refer to the supernatural beings of the religious sphere. He spoke of real beings on a planetary scale, at a stellar level.

The term "angel" applied to Earth -for example- considering our planet as some kind of living entity, a true conscience operating on a very different time scale from that of any other organism, a scale of billions of years.

It is in the ancient myths: many indigenous communities spoke of the "mother earth", the "pachamama" or other names evoking the maternal. They saw the earth as a deity or a supra-natural entity.

In the sixties, the Gaia hypothesis posed a somehow similar idea. Earth as a living entity, called Gaia, would behave as a self-regulating system. The biosphere, for example, would be responsible for temperature and the atmospheric chemistry in land and oceans, similar to a cybernetic system.

Gurdjieff used the term "archangel" to refer to the Sun.

He said that it belongs to the first level of beings in direct relation with the Absolute. That the maximum possible degree of human development is related to the level of the Sun, which he considered a conscious being of a huge level, an intelligence of another scale.

And that we, within the set of living beings on earth, are the part that evolves. That is why we can provide some type of "substances" that animals or plants do not produce.

One wonders, then, what would be the substances that we provide to the solar archangel?

In general, they seem to be related to all the experiences we have in the world. There are several references in the esoteric orders about techniques to remember the past.

They consider that it is a kind of debt that we have with life and will be settled in one way or another, since those memories also arise spontaneously when one is leaving this world.

However, the subject is much more complex.

It is stated that we fulfill functions at the level of the Solar System. This is a central plot in the cosmogony that Gurdjieff brought.

Humanity as a whole, on a massive level, produces thoughts, emotions and sensations every second, for centuries and millennia.

The chains of knowledge consider that this very subtle "material" is being broadcast abroad, outside the planet, fulfilling some kind of function in the Solar System, considered as a super-organism that processes these emissions, in another time scale.

And that organism, the Solar System, is really inside the Sun. This latter is not taken from esotericism but from astrophysics, I clear.

The kingdom of the Sun

It was the deity of many cultures in history, for example: Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, India, China, Japan, Greece, Rome.

In America the Aztecs, Incas, Lakotas, Muiscas, Pueblo, etc.

It was named Shamash, Mitra, Ra, Helios, Inti, the eagle, the solar archangel.

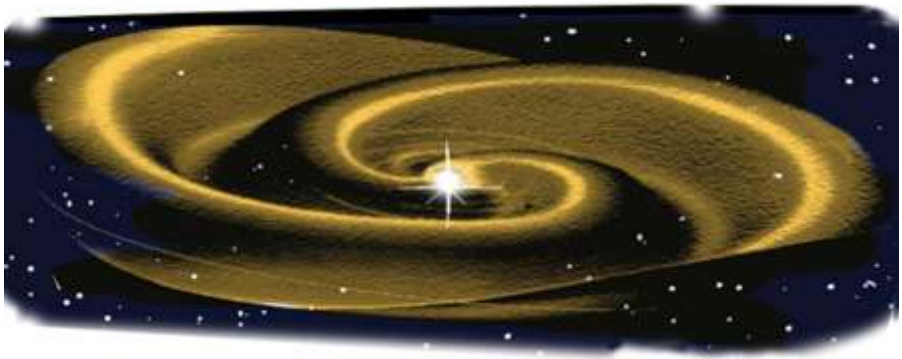
And this is the astrophysics part. In the new millennium we discovered something unbelievably large. For starters, let's say the Sun has rotation, it spins like all the planets in our system.

While it spins, is emitting jets of particles at high speed in all directions. They are invisible micro-particles with electric charge, that scientists call the solar wind. So, as the sun is spinning, the wind of particles comes out turning and waving like the skirt of a dancer.

Scientists knew that the invisible wind traveled far, but the limit was still unknown. In 1977 they launched a probe called Voyager towards the great planets and the confines of the Solar System. It recorded the presence of the solar wind throughout its journey.

That ship crossed the orbits of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, sending photos of all but Pluto, because it was not in its path. It kept on with this journey beyond Pluto and the solar wind continued.

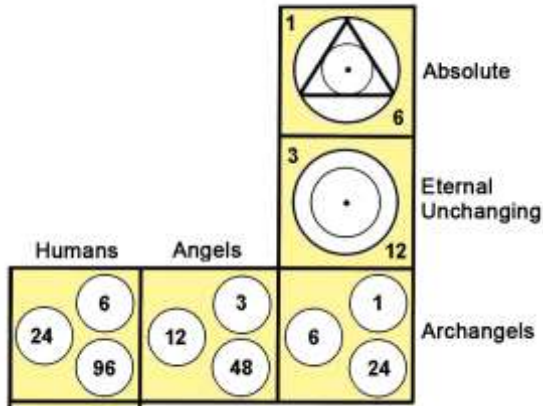
In 2012 it finally reached the heliopause, the limit where the solar wind stops, after an epic journey that lasted 35 years. The probe found that the wind reached three times the distance to Pluto.



The sun is a giant bubble, with a radius that reaches the triple of the distance to Pluto, at least.

The Galaxy

In the graph, above the planets and the suns (that is, the angels and archangels), there are two boxes leading the diagram: the "Eternal Unchanging" and the "Absolute".



The Eternal Unchanging is our galaxy, the Milky Way, a set of billions of suns joined together by their own gravity and also, as we now believe, by gravitation of dark matter.

Maybe they call it unchanging because it is self-sustaining, it is renewed on the inside with the material of the stars that have already died.

That material is agglutinated again by gravity, starting other nuclear reactions inwards that group. There, new stars are born; other suns.

This box has only two numbers because it is not food for anyone. It is the same configuration as the one of the Absolute.

It is considered that the galaxy is some kind of being or entity, with a scale of size out of all proportion with something human, moving on scales of time that border on eternity.

An ocean of suns, of stars, with a size that takes more than a hundred thousand years for light to travel across it. We are talking about twenty times the known history, traveling at a speed that no space ship can reach, even remotely.

That immensity has a very slow turn, with a period of rotation estimated at about 250 million years, on average.

For that gigantic entity, a single rotation would be something "natural" in its time scale, another turns in its life period, which duration is currently unknown.

So from the point of view of the galaxy and considering its own time scale, what would the whole of humanity look like during its majestic slow dance? How do generations pass in the midst of that turn of hundreds of millions of years?

Let us compare a single rotation of the galaxy with the age of our species, currently estimated at two and a half million years.

It is a very short lapse from the point of view of the galaxy. It barely reaches one percent of what it takes to make a single turn.

Now suppose that the galaxy, as a living entity, can perceive us. That it can notice the dim beings who inhabit a rocky planet, so small in comparison to the gaseous giants, as it goes around a star.

Another star among the millions that populate the Milky Way.
It's doubtful that could perceive us, but let's suppose it can.

What the galaxy would see about us in that stretch of two million years, during its immense dance of hundreds of millions?

It would see that generations pass as the hundredths of a second in the clock.

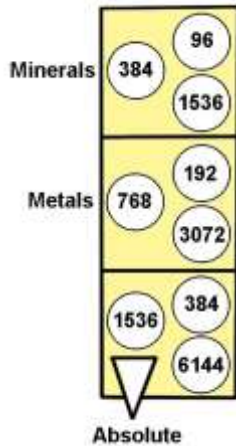


This is why the teaching says that all human possibilities realize at the level of the Sun. We lack entity in front of the galaxy.

It is simply out of scale.

Return

We complete this diagram overview with the lower levels.



Three levels close the diagram: one box for minerals, another for metals, and a third box that has no name.

Finally, below all, the Absolute appears again.

According to Gurdjieff, the box without a name is a matter that does not exist in our world. Using another religious term, he said that it lacks the "holy spirit" because has no possibility of transforming itself into something else, of evolving. It is an extremely dense, immutable, inert matter.

This box, he said, gets in contact with the Absolute.

“Do you remember the prayer *Holy God, Holy the Firm, Holy the Immortal?*

This is *Holy the Firm.*” — (Ouspensky, 2001, p.132, p.323)

It could refer to the massive stars that collapse into a super-dense matter at the end of their lives, known as neutron stars. Maybe it's the final gravitational breakdown: a black hole.

But we should remember this was said when there was neither relativistic physics nor quantum physics with the level of development that they currently have. They had no concept about neutron stars, far less about black holes.

Gurdjieff only presented the premises of an ancient knowledge.

Of course, suggesting that the ancients already knew about contemporary physics is naïve nonsense. If they came to these concepts, they used something very different from the scientific method, whatever it was.

Those old concepts remind me a feature of black holes according to current theoretical models. The matter that falls into the black hole ceases to exist as it was. It is completely transformed into energy that increases the size of the event horizon.

A black hole is empty, it is pure energy. And it's outside of the space-time where we live. It has its own space enclosed on itself, and another time lapse.

That own time of the black hole turns out to be very strange.

Inside, the course of a few months can be equivalent to the life time of the universe itself, assuming that it will arrive to an end.

And it makes us think such a long time scale, almost frozen in time, could have something to do with that's called *eternity*.



With a return to the Absolute, which is also at the end of the road.

Triad

For a real, concrete, physical fact to occur, it is necessary that three forces happen to be acting. They call it law of three and it is a millennial concept, one of the oldest in the knowledge chains.

The will of the Absolute manifests as three principles or three forces. One is active and could also be called positive, the other one is passive or negative, and there is a third force more difficult to define, called neutral or neutralizing, a name that does not explain much.

It seems that it acts as a catalyst.

I'll give an example. We know that water is H_2O , that is the hydrogen gas bound with oxygen.

Then, inside a glass container, we inject the two gases. Do we see that water is produced?

No, nothing happens.

But applying an electric spark, we notice that several droplets of water have appeared in the glass, inside of the container.

The spark is a catalyst: it produces or helps to produce something.

The three forces that emanate directly from the Absolute produce what in the teaching are All the Worlds, the cosmos, not in its current state but in the initial moment, which we call the Big Bang.

This initial triad then branches into many others, in a process of increasing complexity that I will try to summarize later.

It is the origin of the Catholic Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



Also of the Hindu Trimurti, which is a bit more specific in defining a creative principle that is Brahma, another that destroys or recycles called Shiva, and a third that holds or controls the evolution of creation, called Vishnu.

In the water example, the third force represented by the spark is of a subtler nature than the gases.

Gurdjieff claimed that, in our usual state of consciousness, we failed to perceive the presence of that third force.

He gave an example: At the moment of the conception of a child there is a masculine and a feminine principle, plus a third principle that is a very subtle material coming from the solar system.

—*It's a color* —Gurdjieff said.

And another outstanding disciple, Orage, pointed out that they are substances originating in the sun and the planets of the system.

They are concentrated mainly in the solar plexus. Do not belong to the chemistry of the earth and at the time of death they return to the source. — (Orage Essentials, p.3)

Alexandra David-Neel affirmed that they are feelings, living energies that evolve in different individuals and do not belong to a certain person. Some may be in an actual person, but any of those energy sparks could previously have been part of other people, even individuals who lived in the distant past. — (David-Neel, 1970, pp. 42-43)

The initial triad are three forces or three laws, according to Gurdjieff, which govern the totality of the cosmos, the entire universe.

Each galaxy has a relative independence, it is subject to the laws of the whole, but is autonomous at its own level. The Milky Way is under six laws: three of its own level plus three of the cosmos.

Each one of the suns depends on the general laws of the galaxy, and on three forces that sustain their own level. The Sun is under twelve laws: three of its own, plus six of the galaxy, plus three of the cosmos.

The increase of these laws is progressively automatic. Therefore, they move away more and more from the consciousness and full will of the Absolute.

At the planetary level there are twenty-four laws acting. The earth is subject to three laws of its own level, plus twelve of the sun, plus six laws of the galaxy and finally under the initial triad of the entire cosmos.

The biosphere, that fine tissue of living beings that surrounds our planet, is subject to forty-eight laws. It is a hard world, according to Gurdjieff, similar to the glacial Siberia where survival already means an effort, something that in other worlds is given in addition.

He did not elaborate on the nature of those other worlds.

But he affirmed that it is possible to free oneself from several laws and obtain greater degrees of freedom, basing on the internal development of latent capacities in every human being.

The next chapter is referred to personal practice, and there is a set of three functions of our organism that, in teaching, are called the intellectual center, the emotional center and the moving center.

It is the basic triad of the work on oneself.

* * *



Chapter 2
The Work

The three centers

Can we drive a car with only the intellect?

No. It can't be done. The reasoning is too slow to decide each movement, especially in streets with a lot of traffic. There is a need to "automatize" the handling of the steering wheel, the pedals and the bios of march, without having to deduce every movement.

This learning is done by the moving center. Gurdjieff claimed that it is as a separate mind, different from the intellect, which learns by imitation and repetition, not with reasoning.

Faster than the intellectual center, it has learned to walk, run, and a lot of everyday habits such as dressing or combing, which are difficult routines for a small child, who learns through imitation.

Then there is a third mind faster than the moving center. Is the emotive or emotional center, the fastest and most powerful of the three minds. Is another subtler mind than the intellect. It can process information as the intellect, but with greater scope, more power.

It can reach conclusions where logic has nowhere to lean on.

For example, someone enters a room where there is a couple, a marriage. Each spouse is engaged in some task, but they greet the newcomer very kindly. Everything is in order and the behavior of the couple is normal.

However, the visitor knows that there was a discussion.

There is no reason or indication to support this, but the visitor knows that there were problems. It is the perception of the emotional center working, highlighting the invisible.

Our emotions decide who our partner will be or our friends. They drive important decisions such as emigrating to other countries, or even if we are continuing to live in this world.

They are the force that drives our lives, says Gurdjieff. However, it's the most controversial center because it has almost no education or training, not like the intellect or the motor center, which do receive this formation.

It sounds strange to educate the emotions. Actually this concept is alien to Western culture, although books have been written about "emotional intelligence". There are only advices, admonitions and social pressures to behave "properly".

We could argue for years about the education and training of children and young people, with all the theories currently in vogue.

But let me present the opinion of someone who was a true practitioner, someone who did receive education and training:

"An educated emotional center, functioning normally, is what you call a clairvoyant.", said Gurdjieff.

A hint about that education or training would be interesting.

The teaching recounts an example about training elephants. We know it's not the same as training people, but it comes to the case.

Domesticating wild elephants is not easy, they weigh tons and can be very dangerous. How do they train them?

They use two tamed elephants and tie them to the wild elephant, one on each side. Slowly, the savage learns what he should do, subjected to the limits of his peers.

A similar problem arises with the training of emotions. You have to use the intellectual center and the moving center.

It seems easy to distinguish them, but it is not so simple because, in the everyday language, we confuse intellect and emotion often. For example, when we say "I think that trip will be very pleasant".

But for the intellect there is no pleasant-unpleasant thing. There is only one true or false reasoning, right or wrong. We can demonstrate that a theorem is false, but not that it is unpleasant.

On the other hand, for emotion there is only I want-I do not want, I like it-I do not like it. The reasons of the intellect have no place. That's why they say: the heart has motives that reason does not understand.

And here is the problem. The emotional center is the most powerful of the three but, without education, is almost in a wild state.

Therefore, a balance is sought by using the intellectual center and the moving center; being relatively disciplined, they can work together to harness the strength of emotions.

Suppose we are alone, remembering an incident that altered us. The emotion we had in that incident reappears: the anger.

Instantly, that emotion opens the library of the intellect which provides the arguments to support and justify its existence. Also in that moment the motor center contracts muscle groups such as the stomach, the neck or the face, for example.

This feeds the entire process in a loop that activates the three centers. In a matter of seconds, the process can be explosive.

Now, suppose that anger appears in someone already trained.

This person already knows that emotion should not be repressed or blocked by force. This would be a mistake. Instead, uses the other two centers. Stops the action of the intellect by closing the argument library that supports the anger, or the arguments against it. —Silence.

Acts on the moving center by focusing on the groups of contracted muscles and begins to relax them in a circular process that tests, over and over again, the contracted muscle groups.

Meanwhile, the anger continues to vibrate. But, with the intellect in silence and the muscles in relax, that emotion remains alone, in the air.

And the practitioner "observes" it. He notices how it stirs without fighting or back it up. He just only contemplates. He doesn't identify with it.

Gradually, anger dissipates like the fog when sun rises.

Of course. This can not be done without prior training. The question continues to be: what does this training consist of?

The training begins as a building: with a basement, with a foundation. It is based on self-attention, on a degree of alertness over internal processes in addition to what happens outside.

It is a state of presence, the opposite of being outside of oneself, as it happens when we are totally immersed in daily life.



Presence

Gurdjieff's line of work is supported on a basic concept. Our normal state of consciousness, the one of every day, is not considered as a state of lucid attention, but of dreaminess.

We are constantly thinking about one thing or another, associating ideas from the present with the past or with a hypothetical future.

An automatic flow of ideas, images and sentiments parade all day and night, like a never ending leash.

The teaching considers that state to be an anomaly, an unacceptable waste of energies, a compulsion that acts by inertia without a defined purpose, like the images of dreams.

That's being asleep, he said. He was not referring to normal sleep in bed, but to the fact of walking and acting like someone awake, with dreams going around in the head the whole time.

Being "asleep" referred to an associative state of consciousness.

He said to his disciples:

—*You think and think and think. I see.*

And also:

—*Stop that thing, stop it.*

Those were not just words. Ouspensky recounted the results of his practices about "being awake", walking on a street in Russia.

Two or three days after Gurdjieff's departure, I was walking by Street and suddenly I saw that the man who was coming towards me was asleep. I could not have the slightest doubt about it.

Although his eyes were open, he was manifestly submerged in his dreams, which ran down his face like clouds. I started thinking that, if I could look at him for quite some time, I would see his dreams. That is, I would understand what he was seeing in his dreams. But the man went by.

Then another came, equally asleep. A sleeping coachman passed with two clients asleep. And suddenly I saw myself in the situation of the Prince in "The Sleeping Beauty". Everyone around me was asleep. It was a precise feeling that did not leave room for doubt.

I understood that we can see, with our eyes, a whole world that we do not see usually.

[...] But I at once made the discovery that by trying to remember myself, I was able to intensify and prolong these sensations for so long as I had energy enough not to be diverted, that is, not to allow things and everything around me to attract my attention.

— (Ouspensky, 2001, p. 265)

The self-remembering cited by Ouspensky is a fundamental concept in teaching, being the basis of work on oneself.

Let's say that it is the attention to the body itself and what it perceives without being in ramblings, although this is a very simple explanation.

The remembrance of oneself

I have a personal anecdote on this topic.

I was surrounded by a grove of trees at sunset, between the flight of the birds looking for a place and a chorus of crickets announcing the night.

I started the practice of remembering myself, trying to feel my presence in that place without being distracted by other thoughts. It was just one more practice of the many ones I tried to do for years.

But this time it turned different. This time it really worked.

The bushes and the great trees were powerful presences that moved slightly with the breeze. The air seemed to wave with a stealthy beat. And the silence was solid, astonishing.

I had the clear feeling of being clinging to what surrounded me. Everything had a tangible sharpness. It was like that for several seconds.

Until I thought: there is too much silence, crickets are no longer singing. That thought took me out of concentration. Everything went immediately back to normal and the cricket concert slowly resumed its task.

I waited several minutes and restarted the practice. That powerful perception came back and, this time, the crickets lowered the volume as if they were whispering. I had a clear emotional certainty: they were detecting my presence.

The energy of something alive had suddenly appeared in their world, and obviously it was not another cricket. So they kept a prudent silence until, after a few seconds, that presence disappeared.

Before this experience I had been about half an hour in that place. I realized that, during that time, I had no presence.

I had been, as always, in the middle of this procession of thoughts, feelings and images that normally goes around in our heads. Maybe, for those little beings at that moment, I was like a zombie without entity.

The result of remembering oneself, of obtaining presence, is not just something internal and subjective. It is a real, detectable force.

I read an article by a journalist who attended, as a guest, a meeting with Gurdjieff, along with several other people. They waited for him for a few minutes until he entered the meeting place.

The reporter's opinion was that *his presence filled the room*. He also said that G. was a man *whose silence was different*.

These are ways of perceiving someone who lives in self-remembrance or in self-awareness. Maybe not always but, at least, most of the time. That requires a lot of very high level energy. My little experience did not even remotely approach that level. However, it showed me that the state of presence is a true force.

Some fiddler crickets told me that secret.



Moreover, I practiced for a long time a kind of in-motion meditation, simply walking through the city without a fixed direction, observing buildings, people and traffic as a video camera would do: registering only what is there, without associating my own ideas with it.

Avoiding judgments about what I see, I feel the body in each step and the aromas that brings the breeze, the noises of the city, and I experience the effect that being here and now produces on me, even for a few seconds.

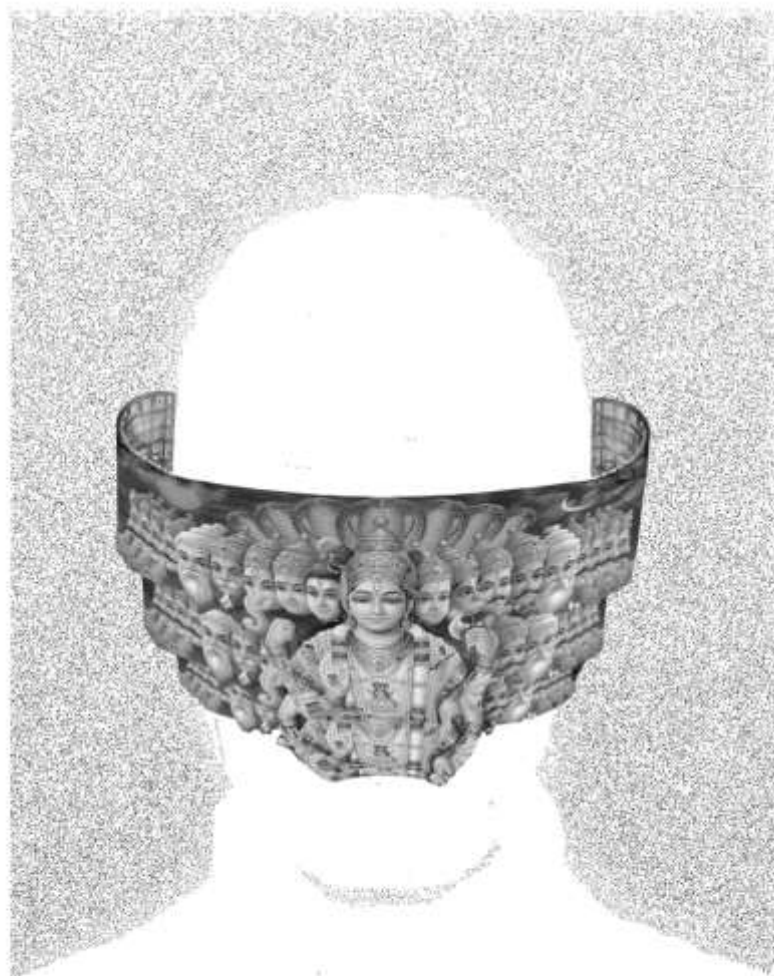
It is an instant vacation and the body immediately takes advantage of it. Free from unnecessary muscular tensions, because the practice requires relaxed movements, the body is very wise to recover itself.

We don't burden the body with present, past or future concerns, because the exercise consists of attention to perception, what I perceive with my eyes and what I hear, the sensation of the whole body moving in the landscape here and now, in the current moment and absolutely nothing more.

*There is no past, nor future,
neither an "I" to defend.
I am merely a creature
walking over the world.*

This can be a complement for those who find it difficult to have the classic meditation that involves sitting and being motionless for quite some time.

It leads to physically feel the result of having presence.



The idea of "I"

According to the teaching, we do not have a single individual "I".

"Instead, hundreds and thousands of separate small I's, very often entirely unknown to one another, never coming into contact, or, on the contrary, hostile to each other, mutually exclusive and incompatible.

Each minute, each moment, man is saying or thinking 'I.' And each time his I is different. Just now it was a thought, now it is a desire, now a sensation, now another thought, and so on, endlessly.

Man is a plurality. Man's name is legion." — (Ouspensky, 2001, p.59)

Gurdjieff paraphrase a saying from Christ about the multiple "I's". Also the Buddha affirmed that each individual is a set of components or "aggregates", and that the idea of "I" is an illusion.

This is the idea Alexandra David-Neel actually presented when she spoke about feelings or energies as I's of very diverse classes, which are not owned by a person but come from a massive source.

These are very strange ideas for our culture. We can accept to have many moods with different expectations, but not that we are different "I's". That could happen in psychiatric cases of multiple personalities, if such a thing really exists.

But we have to remember these are old concepts not easy to translate to our times. They are not referred to psychiatric problems, but to concrete issues of daily life.

I'm walking towards my home. I greet a neighbor with a certain mood, certain gestures and body posture. When I just enter my house and close the door, my mood changes subtly, perhaps it becomes less sociable and the body posture is already different, less upright. Thoughts focus on domestic stuff.

I discuss minor issues with my wife, then a friend comes to visit. I immediately change the tone of my voice which becomes wittier, and also my posture and gestures.

Now look at this detail: if moods change from one moment to another, change perception and ideas, posture and gestures, we could ask if despite all these changes I'm still me, then what remains unchanged?

The only thing that remains solid is the integrity of the body and the memories I have of me, of people and facts. Without those memories the sense of oneself collapses, even with the same body.

Gurdjieff's line of work began by observing those alterations without interfering, only "registering" the continuous changes without being identified with them, avoiding the belief that this is me or how I am.

Self-observation leads to self-remembering, to having presence.

—But I'm always watching myself —another friend commented— because I take care for my position in a meeting; the tone of my voice, the presence.

That is to worry about one's own image. Self-observation does not tend to take care for one's own image, but to be implacable with it.

Implacable in what sense? In avoiding the deceit of taking each momentary feeling or each passing thought and identify myself with it, assuming these are "me", and that's the way I am.

That continuous parade sustains our own image, and we defend it tooth and nail at all times, with a huge waste of energy.

A practitioner tries to be free from the obsessive task of feeding the own image and the imaginations that it provokes, to use the liberated energy for internal work. Otherwise, only remains would be left.

The inclination to daydream is due partly to the laziness of the thinking center, that is, its attempts to avoid the efforts connected with work directed towards a definite aim and going in a definite direction, and partly to the tendency of the emotional and the moving centers to repeat to themselves, to keep alive or to recreate experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant, that have been previously lived through or 'imagined'.

Daydreaming of disagreeable, morbid things is very characteristic of the unbalanced state of the human machine.

After all, one can understand daydreaming of a pleasant kind and find logical justification for it.

Daydreaming of an unpleasant character is an utter absurdity.

And yet many people spend nine tenths of their lives in just such painful daydreams about misfortunes which may overtake them or their family, about illnesses they may contract or sufferings they will have to endure. — (p. 111)

These Gurdjieff concepts show that the work over the centers tries to avoid automatic daydreams and, over all, the painful ones, because they are part of the negative emotions, considered a true plague of humanity.

Negative emotions

Within the work, they say: "*Negative emotions are never right*".

It is a concept of the teaching that takes time to understand. Words can be understood but the reach and consequences of the idea are profound and opposed to our everyday ideas.

I am angry, fearful or envious, depressed or feisty but, in any case, I always have at the tip of my tongue a bunch of arguments that prove, irrefutably, that I am right.

And even if others give supposed reasons to show I'm wrong, I don't really care. I still feel bad. It means that I am wrong because of something concrete, not because I've invented it.

Of course there is always something concrete. The matter is how I react.

There are usually two aspects, one is emotion and the other is arguments. The intellect is the one which provides the arguments and, in everyday life, is almost always at the service of pressures and emotive demands.

Therefore, those arguments are emotions disguised as reasons.

And the problem arises when it comes to negative emotions because then, they are never right. Gurdjieff has an explanation that I didn't find in other disciplines or philosophies. He says that there is no organic basis for the existence of these emotions.

He claims that negative emotions are artificial, their existence is not rightful because none of the three centers produces them naturally. Young children do not have them but first they mimic the external gestures of adults and, later, they begin to produce the real emotions.

The first step of the work is not to give them reason immediately, automatically. Then, one learns to observe them when they appear and notices how they dissipate by not identifying with them, by not accepting they are something that belongs to me.

Later it can be verified that the body appreciates when they leave, because they are toxic, they are bad chemistry and contaminate the organism with garbage.

Finally, a certainty arises. External events are not responsible for the appearance of negative emotions, but the absence of an own internal management.

* * *

And now we pick up the initial theme: the presence of a real "Self".

From a practical point of view, the seed or the kernel of a true self begins with self-attention, when one notices that some thought or mood appears, such as the breeze on a calm day or when a cloud shows up in the clear sky.

The practitioner does not say "that's me" but contemplates how internal processes happen, seeing them as routines that have been formed for a long time.

That unattached and objective "realization" is the seed of the Self.

It is not a contempt for one's own ideas or feelings. It's about achieving a level of internal silence capable of seeing those processes. That observer is like turning on a light in a shaded room. The light does not judge, criticize or grant. Just show what's there.

It becomes clear that several internal processes can only act in the shadows, especially the most insidious ones. If the attention light focuses on them, they can no longer move the strings behind the stage.

The self that contemplates is only born in the inner silence.

This is the basic objective pursued by meditation. Each thought is considered as if it were a cloud traveling through the sky. We see it go by without judging it until it disappears and another one arises, then another cloud behind it.

I read somewhere that you can think in killing your mother, but in meditation it is just another cloud that appears and then go away. (!)
It was a crude example on what meditation is about.

It is not about morality or ethics. It is a technique.

With practice, the distance between each cloud, between each idea or feeling, keeps getting bigger. Thus, the internal silence arises.



Food

A scientific magazine on the internet (in Spanish) had an article about chocolate that caught my attention. It had the following title: 'Eating chocolate consciously makes us happier'.

And then a subtitle: 'Chocolate lifts the mood; especially when it is consumed with full attention'. — (Investigación y Ciencia, 11/23/2016)



I can assure you that during the twentieth century, except perhaps at the last stages, every scientist would have said that, if chocolate can improve our mood, it would be just a matter of chemistry.

And perhaps they would add that conscious and full attention is just mystical garbage.

But the study proved that eating consciously makes a real and verifiable difference. In Gurdjieff's concepts, this difference is fundamental for internal work.

Everything that enters the body and is processed is considered food.

It applies to the three kinds of food: the traditional solid or liquid as well as air and sensations. The last one, sensations, are what the body registers as heat, touch, smell, sounds and images.

Gurdjieff said that without food we can survive for several days; without water, for a few days; without air, a few minutes and without sensations, if it were possible to stop them completely, it would be like unplugging a machine, causing a sudden, instant death.

— (Ouspensky, 2001, p.181)

To consider as food what is perceived through senses sounds rather strange. However, this technique of meditating in motion, walking without judging, without associations, is actually a practice of attention to perceptions. The results are real.

The term "prana" of yoga is well known as some kind of subtle energy that is extracted from the air, and a branch of yoga called Pranayama is the one that deals with these procedures.

Gurdjieff said that certain "substances" of higher quality than usual can be obtained from the air when consciously breathing, instead of the automatic breathing of the motor center.

These higher quality substances allow subtler emotions because they get a more refined "fuel" for the emotional center. Without them, there are only rude, low level emotions.

Perhaps for some it is strange to speak of "spiritual" development giving importance to a topic as banal or everyday as food.

It is the influence of religious dogmas where the word spirit is a vague concept, little defined, that implies something immaterial or a kind of body-spirit division that everyone imagines in their own way.

However, in teaching everything is material, though subtle or imperceptible, with all the characteristics that matter has, for example that it only exists in a limited quantity, because there is nothing in the real world that can exist in infinite quantity.

Even what they call knowledge only exists in definite quantity.

It does not refer to the theoretical knowledge of books but to concrete substances that accumulate in the body and allow an internal development at an essential level, that is, an increase in the level of consciousness.

In each era there is a definite amount of that material knowledge that is present not only in food but also in the air and especially what enters the body through the senses.

And it is striking that even the experiences lived by a person are considered a kind of food.

It is a strange idea for our culture to consider experiences as food. But think about the following: Can an adult convey his experience to a teenager?

You can only convey words and demonstrate attitudes or behavior towards the facts. But the life experience is not transferable: it is not only in memory but also in body chemistry.

The growth of the body requires what we usually call food, but the development of the level of consciousness also requires a kind of subtle but concrete matter, which enters the body from the air and what the senses perceive: a very special food.

You can only assimilate that kind of food in a state of presence.

The chains of knowledge do not accept the idea that there is a spiritual development in the sense of something totally immaterial. They do accept that this development requires assimilating increasingly subtle substances.

Gurdjieff called impressions what we now call sensations.

Nature transmits to us through our impressions the energy by which we live, move and have our being. If this energy influx is interrupted, our machine would cease to work immediately.

Therefore, of the three kinds of food, the most important are impressions. — (P. 181)

The concept of food refers to obtaining higher quality substances for energy management, an alchemy that opens the physical possibilities of conscious evolution at the level of being.

Real internal growth rests on the body. It is an organic fact. It is not simply changing habits or ways of thinking.

It is more similar to changing the course of a river.

* * *



Essence and personality

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. — (Ouspensky, 2001, p.163)

This phrase by Gurdjieff talks about "essence" as a psychological aspect of the person, which has no relation to the classical Western psychology practice.

He affirms that essence is the psychological material we are born with. The only aspect that can be considered as something we own, a personal, singular attribute.

Then personality appears, which is the material we acquire through the contact with other people and their beliefs, at a certain time and place. Psychological guidelines of other people that one adopts as our own.

Everything that exists is material, according to the teaching, even the subtlest or the invisible. Essence and personality would be concrete and detectable material. Gurdjieff did not consider them to be theoretical ideas but real facts.

He said that in the East, several procedures are known to see this aspect separately, numbing one or the other temporarily with the use of hypnosis, drugs or certain kind of exercises.

And Ouspensky witnessed one of those procedures. — (pp. 252-253)

Gurdjieff announced this practice would take place and chose two disciples. One was a senior man of high social status, and the other an unruly young man.

They were in a room. The older man talked heatedly about politics, Christianity, war, and a lot about himself. The young one mixed up the topics, played the buffoon and entangled everything.

—Now, watch. —said G. in a low voice.

The older of the two, who was speaking heatedly about something suddenly became silent in the middle of a sentence and seemed to sink into his chair, looking straight in front of him. At a signal from G. we continued to talk without looking at him. The younger one began by listen to the talk and then spoke himself.

All of us looked at one another. His voice had become different. He told us some observations about himself in a clear, simple, and intelligible manner without superfluous words, without extravagances, and without buffooneries.

Then he became silent: he smoked a cigarette and was obviously thinking of something. The first one sat still without moving, as though shrunken into a ball.

—Ask him what he is thinking about. —Said G. quietly.

“I?” He lifted his head as though waking up when he was questioned. “About nothing.” He smiled weakly as though apologizing or as though he were surprised at anyone asking him what he was thinking about.

They couldn't get a word from him about the issues he had been recently arguing. He said he did not remember anything, he did not know those matters, he was not interested in those things or understood what they were about.

—If you were asked what you would like, what would you say?

Again a wandering glance. —I do not want anything.

—But think, what would you like?

The man was slow to respond, looking to one side or the other as if this was a matter to be considered and finally, in a very serious tone, he said: *—I think I should like some raspberry jam.*

—Why are you questioning him? —the youngest asked from the back of the room, with a voice hardly recognizable.

—Don't you see he's asleep?

—And yourself? —asked one of us.

—I, on the contrary, have woken up.

—Why has he gone to sleep, while you have woken up?

—I do not know.

And so the experiment ended, Ouspensky said, refusing to tell the procedures that Gurdjieff used to carry it out. Later, none of the two men remembered what had happened.

It was evident that the young man had a developed essence, while the essence of the older man was on a child level. Only his personality intended to show him as a serious adult with important ideas.

The growth of the essence stops, in most cases, during teenage. But there are also frequent cases in which essence remains in childhood: about four, five or six years.

Personality takes control and relegates the essence to the background. Gurdjieff assured that personality trends can be very different from the essence, and even totally antagonistic. Two people can be attracted to each other and form a couple by having personalities that are attracted between them, but essences may be incompatible. Sooner or later, this essential antagonism ends up imposing itself.

To live in contact with nature favors the growth of the essence because natural forces nourish it, serving as food for it. In this cases personality is the one that usually gets relegated to the background, receiving little intellectual material, little cultural training. It does not understand the reason for facing an internal work.

The absence of a certain degree of culture hinders work on the line of Gurdjieff, which requires to act on the three centers, including the intellect. On the other hand, a childish essence is also a pitfall.

They say that an important stage of internal work begins when one starts to distinguish what is ours from what we have borrowed from others, whether they are habits, beliefs or behaviors we think belonged to us.

As an example: Not feeding negative emotions, we can see they are learned routines unnecessary to support. They are fake and artificial.

Most of our fears are imaginary, because we keep them fed with the horror movies created by the imagination. Do we make these scripts every day? - I think so.

It is the opposite of the cardinal virtue called faith, which is not what people believe. Faith is not belief, says Orage: *Faith is Trust*.

"It's like the lion walks in the jungle." — (Orage Essentials, p.4)

The essence grows in that state of confidence, perceiving the world without imaginary fears, free to perceive the pure present, here and now.

Do you all remember Gurdjieff's explanation of multiple lives? He argued this information could not produce real change.

On the contrary, he finally said, if an essential change is achieved on oneself, *if the essence grows, that result cannot be lost.*

That result, then, will go with us to the other side.



Oil and acrylic on canvas 40" x 60" - Lucas Aguirre



Chapter 3
Closing Notes

Relations

A few years ago I saw a documentary about the first astronauts who traveled alone. Towards the end, a voiceover commented on the last of them that made a flight.

Walter Schirra, the last solo astronaut, was orbiting the earth for almost an hour. Like all his fellow astronauts, he had been a test pilot.

And according to the slogan of the test pilots, 'higher, faster', Walter Schirra was, during those minutes up there, the best pilot in the world.

We can understand and appreciate that elegant correlation of ideas.

However, it may be difficult for a child to understand it and perhaps would ask to us: —Is that astronaut the best pilot in the world?

We would say no, trying to explain the relativity of considering him the best pilot, only during that flight.

—Then who is the best in the world now? —the child could ask.

Well, I wish you good luck on explaining that the world's best pilot doesn't exist. Thinking in absolute terms is actually a bit naive.

Relative thinking is difficult.

The relateness of time passing by, for example.

For generations, philosophers like Kant or scientists like Newton considered time as an absolute, because its passing was unalterable. No event in all the universe could modify it.

Only relativistic physics could dethrone that intuitive idea. Time runs slower in the fiery center of our planet because there is much more energy than there is on the surface, and faster in the space station because it is far from the center of planetary mass.

That's why I was struck by the concept of relative time of the chains of knowledge, explained much earlier than Einstein's physics. The difference was they had another approach. The ancients spoke of a scale of living beings and their relative perception of time. Those who are bigger perceive that time passes more slowly.

Relativistic physics is not about living beings but about clocks. On the clock of a GPS satellite one second is not equal to the one dialed by another clock on the ground.

To geolocate, relativistic equations are used to compensate for these time differences. Otherwise there would be errors of many yards and even miles.

But it is still striking that there were millenary ideas talking about the relativity of time. The ancients had also their knowledge, it seems.

Another relative concept is the origin of the human being.

The great monotheistic religions conceive a creator who is called God, Allah or Jehovah. The creator of everything that exists in the universe and, of course, also the creator of human beings.

The chains of knowledge say something similar, but there is a hierarchic difference. They speak of a creator of the universe on a large scale who has not been directly the creator of human beings.

The teaching affirms that the Sun is the origin of the human being.

The Sun's intelligence is divine -said Gurdjieff in a religious tone- because it has a direct relationship with the Absolute.

The Sun is considered the origin and the only responsible for the human being.

One could say it is God in a practical sense, even if it was not the creator of the universe nor the almighty Absolute.

And you can add that, for human existence, the Sun has a purpose.

According to Orage, that purpose is summarized in the following aphorism. — (Orage Essentials, p. 2)

«We, becoming sentient beings, are the mind of God. »

Being the mind of God would be like a return to the source.

The fusion with an intelligence of another scale.

And, for the Sun, it could be something similar to a biological development of its own.

* * *



The Ancient Gods

The difference between the monotheistic religions dogma and these ideas is remarkable. The Sun is a very atypical deity.

It is not an Olympus divinity: it is a living entity, not supernatural in a mystical sense, but a being with a very high level.

It is not for discussion it has an immense degree of consciousness in relation to ours. Actually incomparable. Out of scale.

But at its own level, the Sun is one more among the billions that make up that colossal structure named the galaxy.

It is the relative god of the chains of knowledge.

And since it is a living being, no matter how powerful it is in relation to us, things that happen to all living beings also happen to it.

It does not always get what is proposed. It has to fight.

That shows the imperfection of the human world, to put it mildly, from another perspective. —*We are not the fruit of an almighty.*

The idea of the universe in the chains of knowledge implies a gigantic network of existences at all levels.

For us, only the galaxy is a disproportionate entity. However, science has proven that there are more galaxies than grains of sand in all the beaches and deserts of our world.

The complexity of existences that they can hold, is really something unmentionable. We are just peeking into that infinity.

And perhaps one day we will verify that the ancient gods were always there, from the beginning of time.



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I presented the first note on 'The Absolute' to the writer Nico Loss and my daughter Gabriela, a theater graduate. Both approved it without reservations and, I can assure you, they are not easy to convince. I understood I had obtained the right style.

There were several meetings on the subject at the home of the psychologist Walter Krainbuhl, a lucid and friendly young man. Others, in the house of my son Lucas, who is a plastic artist, and his partner Josefina Ábalos who brought in her anthropology studies.

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The copywriter and proofreader Lucía Malvido revised and corrected my English version of this book, with the best of her knowledge.

I made the illustrations with the advice of my son Lucas, who was the main support on concepts and art, at all times.

I have been living with my wife Marita during 40+ years. She belongs to that lineage of women who take care of children and elders, pets and plants. She has a traditional Catholic education that does not causes conflicts between my exotic ideas and the dogma.

—I only pray to the Virgin for my people —she says, and it seems very consistent because women like her, I think, are the closest to the virgin which is possible in this world.

As you can see, I was never alone.

Carlos Aguirre
www.cosmogony.org

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