











**From Gurdjieff to Gremlins:  
Teaching Methods of a Present-Day Fourth Way School**

by

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## ABSTRACT

In the early years of the twentieth century a man named Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866?-1949) began teaching in Russia a system of personal growth that would become known as the Fourth Way. Despite Gurdjieff's personal eccentricities, he developed a loyal following and on his death left the continuation of his system in the hands of one of his students, Jeanne de Salzmann. De Salzmann created the Gurdjieff Foundations, dedicated to preserving Gurdjieff's teachings as they stood at the time of his death. In a paper presented to the CESNUR-INFORM Conference in 2001, Sophia Wellbeloved identified Gurdjieff groups as falling, roughly, into two categories: those who followed Gurdjieff's teachings to the letter, without additions or alterations, to the best of their abilities, such as the Gurdjieff Foundations, and those who preferred to teach the work *in the spirit of* Gurdjieff, adapting the work over time. Tribe is a Fourth Way school located in Navasota, Texas which falls into the second category, incorporating contemporary books that would fall under the category of self-help, and rituals drawn from Wicca and Lakota practices into their teaching materials. In this paper I seek to examine the teaching methods and materials of Tribe in relation to Gurdjieff's original teachings of the Fourth Way.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate my thesis to the memory of two of the most inspiring men I have ever known: my grandfather, Dr. John Ross, who instilled in me my passion for learning, and Monty Galloway, who recognized in me more than I could see in myself, and showed me the path to find it.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction: Who was Gurdjieff and where did this "present-day school" come from? .....	1
Chapter 2: Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and the basics of the Fourth Way .....	14
Chapter 3: Categorizing Tribe as a Fourth Way School .....	29
Chapter 4: <i>The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution, Taming Your Gremlin, and The Four Agreements</i> .....	53
Chapter 5: Rituals and Ceremonies .....	77
Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	92
Bibliography .....	94

## Chapter 1: Introduction: Who was Gurdjieff and where did this “present-day school” come from?

James Webb perhaps said it best in *The Harmonious Circle* when he wrote: “Neither a church nor a sect nor a school of philosophy, [the Fourth Way] is extremely difficult to define.”<sup>1</sup> What we can say, regardless of its stubborn refusal to be easily categorized, is that the Fourth Way, alternatively also known as “the Work” or “the Gurdjieff Work”, is a system of growth centered on the individual that is based on the teachings of a man named Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866?-1949). Although Gurdjieff himself never used the term the Fourth Way, it came into use from his teachings concerning other methods of personal evolution. Despite evidence to the contrary, Gurdjieff did not claim to have invented this system; he maintained that it was a very ancient teaching that he had uncovered, but which could be seen in fragments in other teachings and methods. Those other incomplete methods he identified in three categories: the way of the fakir, the way of the monk, and the way of the yogi. These three ways each achieved evolution through developing one of the body’s three main centres of function; the moving centre, the emotional centre, and the intellectual centre respectively.<sup>2</sup> Gurdjieff’s method presented a fourth way which was, in his view, superior to the other three because it was the only way that incorporated all three centres in a balanced approach. It is from this that his system takes the name the Fourth Way.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1980), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Gurdjieff described humans as machines, specifically as malfunctioning machines. The three centres were the major parts of this machine and he taught we could bring the machine back into correct function by properly balancing these centres. For more on this, see Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> Sophia Wellbeloved, “Ways/Fourth Way,” *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 221-22; Garrett Thomson, *On Gurdjieff*, (South Melbourne: Wadsworth, 2003), 28.

Very little is known for certain about Gurdjieff before he started teaching the Fourth Way in Russia in about 1911, largely because the only real record we have of his past up to that point is his own mythologized autobiography.<sup>4</sup> In this autobiography Gurdjieff concocted a story about the origin of his teachings as esoteric knowledge passed on by various spiritual leaders he had met during his travels in the Middle and Far East. While there are certainly influences from a variety of spiritual teachings in the Fourth Way (including, for example, Eastern influences, nineteenth-century Russian occultism and theosophy), it is unlikely that this system originated anywhere other than in Gurdjieff's own imagination.<sup>5</sup>

In 1915, while he was teaching the Fourth Way in Moscow, Gurdjieff was introduced to Pyotr Demianovich Uspenskii (P.D. Ouspensky to the English-speaking world).<sup>6</sup> This fateful meeting began a relationship that would ultimately shape how the Fourth Way was transmitted to future generations. Indeed, the roles of these two men were so intertwined that it is virtually impossible to study the origins of the Fourth Way without looking at the work of both men together, particularly since much of the early literature that is most frequently quoted was written by Ouspensky about Gurdjieff. These two remarkable men, who were ultimately still at odds with each other at the time of their deaths, represent the two sides of the Fourth Way coin. While Ouspensky had the writing skills and analytical mind to come up with the works that would present Gurdjieff's

<sup>4</sup> This autobiography is *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, the second volume of *All and Everything*. Sophia Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, xxiii. William Patrick Patterson also describes an incident in 1930 where Gurdjieff burns "all his personal papers, correspondence, certificates, passports – anything which might throw light on his past," which would seem to indicate that Gurdjieff intended this ambiguity. William Patrick Patterson, *Struggle of the Magicians: Exploring the Teacher-Student Relationship*, (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 1996), 142.

<sup>5</sup> Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, xxiv-xxv.

<sup>6</sup> J.H. Reynier, *Ouspensky: the Unsung Genius*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 36-37.

teachings in a coherent fashion, Gurdjieff had the inspiration and charisma to develop the working system.

When Ouspensky first met Gurdjieff in 1915, he had long been trying to answer questions about the nature of existence for himself, particularly concerning what he believed lay beyond the world we perceive everyday. Before he met Gurdjieff he had already published *The Fourth Dimension*, in which he proposed a mathematical theory of the fourth dimension that operated on higher laws – a proposal that not only contradicted the conventional view among theorists that the fourth dimension was just another yet-unknown aspect of our own three-dimensional existence,<sup>7</sup> but also fit well with Gurdjieff's conception of the seven levels of existence,<sup>8</sup> descending from the Absolute. He had also written "several other books on occult subjects"<sup>9</sup> that were later incorporated into two of his better-known larger works, *Tertium Organum*, completed before the meeting with Gurdjieff, and *A New Model of the Universe*, which was published shortly after they met.<sup>10</sup> However, despite his impressive publication history, Ouspensky felt that he had not yet found the answers he was looking for – that something else remained that was still just beyond his grasp.

After Ouspensky's initial meeting with Gurdjieff, despite their geographic distance,<sup>11</sup> he was to have many conversations with Gurdjieff, attend many of his lectures and even arrange for Gurdjieff to lecture in St. Petersburg over the course of their early association. However, this initial association was neither long-lived, nor uninterrupted.

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<sup>7</sup> Reyner, 5.

<sup>8</sup> See Wellbeloved, "Ray of Creation," *Gurdjieff*, 171-72.

<sup>9</sup> Reyner, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Reyner, 5 and 19-35.

<sup>11</sup> Ouspensky was living in St. Petersburg, while Gurdjieff was living in Moscow, some 370 miles distant.

Living in Russia at that time meant that political events were converging that would force men like Gurdjieff and Ouspensky to leave Russia before their positions and opinions cost them their freedom or their lives. Gurdjieff left for the Caucasus in the spring of 1917 and Ouspensky would follow on October 15<sup>th</sup>, only a week before the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>12</sup> They lost touch at this time, but were eventually reunited in the Caucasus at Essentuki where Gurdjieff was making attempts at forming a new school. Eventually, in the face of further political instability, they were forced to leave, and Ouspensky and Gurdjieff parted ways again, this time as a conscious break on Ouspensky's part; Ouspensky left for Turkey, while Gurdjieff led a small group out of Essentuki under the guise of a scientific expedition. In 1919 Gurdjieff opened a school at Tiflis, called the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, but political conditions again forced him to move, this time to Constantinople.<sup>13</sup> Gurdjieff again crossed paths with Ouspensky here, but it was not the same student-teacher relationship in which they had previously engaged. When political instability threatened again, Ouspensky's connections secured passage to London for him in 1920. Gurdjieff, on the other hand, attempted to establish a school in Germany, and made another abortive attempt in England, before eventually setting up his most famous school in October 1922, which he again called the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, but which is typically known simply as the Prieuré after the property that housed it, at Fontainebleau-Avon in France, about 35 miles south of Paris.<sup>14</sup> The Prieuré attracted a great number of the Paris-bound literary elite, but was also the focus of scandal due to the accusations by John Middleton Murry and others after

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<sup>12</sup> Reyner, 36-42.

<sup>13</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 45-62.

<sup>14</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 62-77.



the death of his wife, Katherine Mansfeld, in January 1923 at the Institute. Mansfeld was referred to the Work by one of Gurdjieff's principal students, A. R. Orage, when she was already terminally ill with tuberculosis. Her husband had attended some of Ouspensky's lectures in London with her before her departure for the Prieuré, but despite her enthusiasm, he was unimpressed. Despite Mansfeld's enthusiastic endorsement of her time at the Prieuré, when Gurdjieff's methods failed to save her physically, Gurdjieff was blamed for her death and vicious rumors about what went on at the Prieuré began to circulate.<sup>15</sup> Here at the Prieuré, Ouspensky did rejoin Gurdjieff briefly, but he still spent a great deal of time in London, and when he eventually left the Prieuré in 1924, it was the final split from Gurdjieff; Ouspensky felt that Gurdjieff was taking the work in a direction he could not follow and Gurdjieff resented Ouspensky for openly defying his authority.<sup>16</sup>

In 1924 Gurdjieff was in a near fatal accident driving back to the Prieuré from Paris and it radically altered the course of events for him. During the initial stages of his recovery he saw and spoke to no one. When he finally did speak again it was to dismiss most of his students. He had had an epiphany and knew that his school would never work, but it was time for him to preserve his teachings in writing. Thus he began writing his behemoth three-volume work, *All and Everything*. Eventually he was forced to close the Prieuré for good and he moved to Paris where he lived through World War II.<sup>17</sup> At the close of the war he was teaching again and he died in 1949. Jeanne de Salzmann acted at Gurdjieff's successor immediately following his death and, from France, remained in

<sup>15</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 77-85.

<sup>16</sup> Reyner, 54-66; P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1949), 373-89.

<sup>17</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 105ff.

charge of the Work as a whole until her death in 1990. Other students went on to head Gurdjieff foundations in other places, such as Lord Pentland in America.<sup>18</sup>

The original Gurdjieff societies set up by Gurdjieff's pupils following his death have survived to the present day; not only have they survived, but they have also branched off into many more societies in several countries worldwide. There were also schools set up by pupils of Gurdjieff that were not sanctioned by him or those he left in charge of the Work, each with varying degrees of success.<sup>19</sup> There also exist today groups that can trace no discernable lineage to Gurdjieff or his successors. In 2001, Sophia Wellbeloved presented a paper on change in the Gurdjieff Work to the CESNUR-INFORM Conference. She identified Gurdjieff groups as falling, roughly, into two categories: those who followed Gurdjieff's teachings to the letter, without additions or alterations, to the best of their abilities, and those who preferred to teach the Work *in the spirit of Gurdjieff*, adapting the Work over time.<sup>20</sup> The more formal Gurdjieff societies tend to fall into the first category, while those groups who did not grow directly out of Gurdjieff's successors are more likely to fall into the second.

One group that falls into the second category who embrace change is a school in Navasota, Texas, who simply call themselves Tribe. Monty and Linda Galloway, the husband and wife team who founded Tribe, first came to the Fourth Way about thirty years ago and established the school in its current incarnation about fifteen years ago when they began taking on students in the Navasota area, where they had relatively

<sup>18</sup> Wellbeloved, "Appendix 2," *Gurdjieff*, 248.

<sup>19</sup> An example of such groups that have survived are those set up by Willem Nyland in the USA. Gurdjieff International Review, <http://www.gurdjieff.org/>, accessed January 5, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Sophia Wellbeloved, "Changes in G.I. Gurdjieff's Teaching 'The Work'", CESNUR-INFORM Conference 2001, <http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/wellbeloved.htm>, accessed February 10, 2009.

recently settled. This school is remarkable for two reasons: 1) they have used popular books on personal development that teach similar ideas in different terms in order to supplement the original teachings and make them more accessible to a contemporary student; and 2) they have incorporated Pagan and Native North American ritual practices into their teaching of the Work, such as pipe ceremonies, celebrations of the Pagan calendar (Yule, Imbolc, Ostara, Beltane, Litha, Lughnassagh, Mabon, Samhain), sweat lodge ceremonies, and more.

I have personally been involved with Tribe since 2007, but have spent comparatively little time with the group as a whole, due to geographic distance. I remain a Child in Tribe, which means that I do not have the experience to speak authoritatively of the group in and of myself. While I will include some of my own observations from time to time, I am relying primarily on the information presented to me during interviews with Elders and Adults of Tribe. Some references will also be made to content posted by Tribe members on the group's website, <http://navatribe.org>.

Because of my personal involvement with Tribe, I must here address the issue of the Insider/Outsider perspective. Being a participant in Tribe raises a particular set of issues, mainly pertaining to personal bias. While my involvement necessarily colours my view of Tribe, it also brings with it many benefits, not the least of which being that if I were not a student of Tribe, I would simply not have access to the group; at the time that I began this research they neither advertised, nor spoke a great deal to outsiders of their practices. While there is no consensus as to how to deal with this issue, Russell T. McCutcheon's anthology, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*,

provides an overview of some of the most common considerations both for and against the insider perspective in scholarly work in religious studies.

One of the first issues raised is that of definition: how does one define an insider or outsider within the context of scholarly work on religion? The terms *etic* and *emic* are frequently used to designate the outsider and insider respectively, but what tends to get lost is the nuance of those words. *Etic* and *emic* were terms originally coined to describe linguistic phenomenon. The *etic* was used to designate tools for external comparison of the languages being studied – eg. the Phonetic Alphabet – while the *emic* was used to indicate the attempt to reproduce the sounds produced by a native speaker of the language. As McCutcheon points out, "An important clarification, however, is that the *emic* perspective is not simply to be equated with the insider's own viewpoint... Even if the linguist is a native speaker of the language, there is a difference between simply using a language, on the one hand, and discussing, systematizing, and comparing those uses, on the other."<sup>21</sup> The *emic*, then, is characterized by the desire to present what the insider does in the manner of an outsider. The desire to study the function, social impact, etc. in a critical manner is what separates the scholar who happens to participate from the participant, and it is this kind of insider perspective that I bring to this study. Since I am still considered a Child in Tribe, and as such, not qualified to teach their methods, I certainly would not feel comfortable presenting my own observations as authoritative. As a student of Tribe, permission was granted for this work *because* I am not trying to describe my personal practice, promote the Fourth Way, write a how-to, or use my

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<sup>21</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, ed. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (New York: Cassell, 1999), 17.

writing as part of my practice, but simply to describe and analyse the material using the conventions of academic study. Having first-hand experience of Tribe is what makes me an insider, but for many reasons, not the least of which being that my relative inexperience makes me ill-qualified to serve as informant, for the purposes of my scholarly work I am approaching the topic as if I were an outsider.

Another major component of the debate of the insider versus outsider perspective is whether one or the other is truly capable of evaluating the subject. Those who privilege the insider perspective, such as Mircea Eliade and Rudolf Otto, argue that since religion is an experienced phenomenon it defies categorization and therefore is to be studied *sui generis*. This means that those who have not had such experiences are not capable of describing them accurately, disqualifying the outsider from being capable of understanding or studying religion.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Rosalind Shaw, who privileges the outsider perspective, does so on the basis of insistence that the insider's bias prevents them from being able to analyse areas such as the social function of their religion in a truly critical way. She argues that allowing religion to exist *sui generis* means that the impact and function of certain features of a religion could be protected as untouchable subjects by insiders, so any serious study of a religion must discard the insider privilege.<sup>23</sup> Raymond Firth, in contrast to both of the above views, acknowledges the unknowable, indescribable, and empirically immeasurable aspect of religion, particularly in regard to the meaning behind religious behaviour. However, he says it is the impossibility of empirical data that makes the qualitative evaluation of religious experience impractical

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<sup>22</sup> McCutcheon, 69-73.

<sup>23</sup> McCutcheon, 71-72.

for scholarly research. Thus, Firth argues more for the study of form and function over ultimate meaning.<sup>24</sup> My own research falls most closely into Firth's view. While I believe that there are certainly aspects of the Fourth Way that belong firmly in the realm of experience and that it would be almost impossible for an outsider to fully understand or appreciate these experiences, I also believe it is not the place of my scholarly research to attempt to focus on these experiences. For example, when I look at the place of ritual in the teaching methods of Tribe, I will be relying on my informants' descriptions of how they use ritual. I know from my own participation in rituals that there is more to be learned from the experience within the context of the Work than the function the participant applies to it, but for the purpose of the type of analysis I am proposing for my study a more complete outline of the experiential aspect is not necessary, since it would not affect the way in which Tribe functions as a school.

There is one final concern to address in my approaching the Work as an insider, though it is one that many opponents of the insider perspective might not necessarily anticipate. While I freely admit that it would be impossible for me to state that my observations are completely unbiased, of greater concern is the particular habit of those within the Fourth Way of making just about everything a growth experience. James Webb tried to describe this particular quirk of his informants in the introduction to *The Harmonious Circle*. He noted that "it eventually became clear that an attempt was being made to ensnare me forcibly in the sort of activities about which I had hoped to write from a detached point of view."<sup>25</sup> "The sort of activities" to which he refers would be "the

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<sup>24</sup> McCutcheon, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Webb, 13.

kind of ambiguous situation which Gurdjieff excelled in creating,"<sup>26</sup> typically for the purposes of affording the individual the opportunity of self-observation. If Webb's informants were prepared to subject an outsider to this kind of situation, I would be all the more likely to encounter it as a known student of the Work, and less likely to see it as the obstruction which Webb felt it became for him, since my interaction with my informants is still primarily in the practice of the Work. Indeed in one of my interviews a comment was passed, only partially in jest, that I would need to self-observe before rephrasing a question for my informant.

After outlining the practices of the Fourth Way as Gurdjieff intended it to be taught I will examine how Tribe fits with the definition of a Fourth Way school. Once the connection between Tribe and Gurdjieff's teachings has been established, the primary focus of this thesis will be how their teaching materials adhere to or depart from how Gurdjieff intended his system to be taught. Included in Tribe's teaching materials are the texts I have been assigned to read as a student of Tribe myself, namely, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* by P.D. Ouspensky, *Taming Your Gremlin* by Rick Carson, and *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz. These works help illustrate in some way concepts that are present in the Fourth Way, but in different terms; for example, Rick Carson's *Gremlin Taming* is used by Tribe essentially as an alternative explanation of the multiplicity of "I's" and self-observation.

I will also be describing some of the rituals Tribe incorporates into their teachings and analysing them within the framework of Victor Turner's theories of liminality and *communitas*. Liminality is the word Turner used to describe the in-between state of

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<sup>26</sup> Webb, 13.

participants in ritual after they have somehow been “removed” from their original state during the ritual until they are either returned to their prior state or take up their new state at the conclusion of the ritual. *Communitas* is the word he used to describe the sense of commonality that often arises between participants in a given ritual, particularly when the ritual allows the participants to transcend usual hierarchical boundaries. During interviews about ritual, members of Tribe tended to indicate that ritual represented for them an opportunity to experience a higher state of consciousness, or more easily practice self-observation, which they then carried with them as an example of what to strive for in their day to day practice of the Work. While Turner wrote most famously about rites of passage, and the majority of rituals performed by Tribe would not typically fall under this category, he also makes mention of calendrical rituals. The way he describes those in the liminal space of ritual as being stripped of their previous state, but not yet having taken on the coming state<sup>27</sup> certainly applies to what the participants describe. To achieve a higher state of evolution in the Fourth Way, one must have stripped away the personality and the “I’s” and become fully identified with their essence. The participants’ description of ritual as a time and place where they experience the higher state they wish to achieve implies that during ritual they have indeed stripped away their current state. But the fact that they do not retain the full effect of this transformation outside of ritual supports the idea that it is transitory, and hence that it belongs to the kind of liminality that Turner describes.

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<sup>27</sup> Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 327-28.



Finally, some of the Native North American practices that Tribe incorporates into the Work will be examined throughout. Some of these practices incidentally resemble Gurdjieff's practices within his schools, such as Tribe's practice of naming. Gurdjieff often made up names for his students that touched on some of the chief characteristics of their personalities, eg. calling Ouspensky "Wraps Up the Thought" in reference to his habit of pontificating at length on every question posed to him.<sup>28</sup> In Tribe, students are given a milk name by their teacher when they first formally declare their intention to start on the growth path, typically something embarrassing that makes them uncomfortable, and once they reach a certain stage of growth they are accepted as Adults and given a new name that more seriously reflects their path. While we can be fairly certain that Gurdjieff would not have taken the practice from Native North American culture, Tribe did, and while they used the Native form to expand the concept beyond Gurdjieff's initial use, the spirit in which it is applied, the purpose it serves within the Work, remains the same.

However, before there can be any meaningful discussion of how Tribe adheres to or departs from the original Fourth Way material, we need to present a brief overview of Gurdjieff's teachings.

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<sup>28</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 31, 68, 201.

## Chapter 2: Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and the basics of the Fourth Way

One of the inherent problems in trying to isolate Gurdjieff's teachings is that he himself did not leave a terribly clear record of them. Although he lectured extensively, answering all kinds of questions, he frequently gave answers that would produce a specific result, rather than impart specific information, which prompted those like Ouspensky, who wrote down his teachings, to try to interpret them rather than simply recording them. Gurdjieff himself did not start writing down his teachings until very late and when he did start writing, the result was his rather confusing and overwritten three volume work, *All and Everything*. It was confusing and overwritten because Gurdjieff, true to his teaching style, deliberately chose to write it as a heavily allegorical work so that those who read it would react in a certain way, rather than intending to simply impart information. The first volume, *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, outlines the teachings of the Fourth Way through the narrative of Beelzebub, an extraterrestrial who was exiled in our solar system and is eventually pardoned as a result of his helping humanity.<sup>29</sup> He uses the medium of a being that lives in the higher orders of creation to outline the Fourth Way in terms such that the cosmology is credibly explained as a given. The second volume is *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, Gurdjieff's mythologized autobiography written "to acquaint the Reader with the material required for a new creation and to prove the soundness and good quality of it."<sup>30</sup> This book introduces the twelve "remarkable men," representing the twelve signs of the zodiac, who Gurdjieff allegedly encountered on his early travels and from whom he was supposed to have learned the

<sup>29</sup> Wellbeloved, "Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson," Gurdjieff, 22-25.

<sup>30</sup> Wellbeloved, "Meetings with Remarkable Men," Gurdjieff, 140.

Fourth Way. It ends with revealing Gurdjieff as a remarkable man himself.<sup>31</sup> This volume is the origin myth of the Fourth Way. The third and final volume is *Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'*. Another allegorical narrative, this volume "traces seven-year periods and triads of events that reflect the Laws of Three and Seven"<sup>32</sup> in an attempt to describe the "real world" beyond our limited capability for consciousness.

Gurdjieff intended his texts to be read according to the Law of Three, which "states that every event or action ... is the result of three interacting forces": the active, the passive and the reconciling.<sup>33</sup> The first reading is the passive, the same way we have been taught to read everything else. The second reading is the active, "'as if' we were reading aloud to another."<sup>34</sup> The third reading is the reconciling, finally trying to understand and interpret the meaning of the text. While Gurdjieff has achieved in *All and Everything* his desired end of a text that can only be understood by a student of the Work, the other result is that the text is intimidatingly unapproachable for the new student; the text is convoluted, the meaning obscured by overly complicated terminology,<sup>35</sup> and the whole work would seem to have many contradictions. As Wellbeloved describes, "Gurdjieff deliberately used humour, paradox, symbolism and deception within his texts and within his oral teaching of pupils in order to deliver shocks that arouse an active and questioning mode of being."<sup>36</sup> Gurdjieff wrote to produce an effect in his students, not to impart an intellectual understanding of the Work. In *Struggle of the Magicians*, William Patrick Patterson observed that when Gurdjieff first started writing down his system it was well-

<sup>31</sup> Wellbeloved, "Meetings with Remarkable Men," Gurdjieff, 140.

<sup>32</sup> Wellbeloved, "Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'," Gurdjieff, 129.

<sup>33</sup> Wellbeloved, "Law of Three," Gurdjieff, 123.

<sup>34</sup> Wellbeloved, "Boelzebub's Tales to His Grandson," Gurdjieff, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Wellbeloved, "All and Everything," Gurdjieff, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Wellbeloved, Gurdjieff, xxx.

received with high praise by those who had worked with him personally, but remained totally unintelligible to those who had never come into contact with him. As a literary work, it was severely criticized and rejected out of hand.<sup>37</sup> Not much has changed in the intervening seventy-odd years; Gurdjieff's writings remain bewilderingly unapproachable to those not already intimately acquainted with the teachings. For this reason, the Gurdjieff Foundations<sup>38</sup> recommend students only listen to them "without analysis, in order for them to reach the subconscious."<sup>39</sup> While these texts may be useful in this and their originally intended manner for the serious student of the Fourth Way, it is generally easier to read Ouspensky's texts for summaries of the main concepts.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, due to his writings on Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way, Ouspensky has been described as "the Plato to Gurdjieff's Socrates."<sup>41</sup> Ouspensky's logical mind lent a clarity and order to the teachings that was distinctly lacking in the lectures and writings delivered by Gurdjieff himself. However, it is important to remember that although Ouspensky wrote some of the most useful records of the Fourth Way, in the process he also left his own mark on the teachings.

During his association with Gurdjieff, Ouspensky had kept detailed records of what Gurdjieff had said about the Fourth Way, which was in direct contrast with the standing order that what was discussed in these groups was not to be recorded or shared with those who were not yet prepared to receive it. These notes he had made as a record

<sup>37</sup> Paterson, *Struggle*, p. 119 forward.

<sup>38</sup> The Gurdjieff Foundations are the formal groups begun by Gurdjieff and his students that carried on the Work after Gurdjieff's death. For more on the Foundations see Wellbeloved, "Appendix 2: Gurdjieff Foundations and Work-derived groups," *Gurdjieff*, 248-54.

<sup>39</sup> Wellbeloved, "*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*," *Gurdjieff*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> See Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, xxx.

<sup>41</sup> Reynier, *Ouspensky*, foreword.

for himself, though, with Gurdjieff's permission, and he had not initially intended to publish them. But sometime after the break with Gurdjieff he began to make it his work to organize these lectures into a record for the future, for the time when neither he, nor Gurdjieff, nor even the pupils they themselves had prepared to take over would be around. It should be noted here that Gurdjieff was aware of Ouspensky's writings, read some of the early drafts, and far from being angry, approved of what Ouspensky was writing. Reyner writes, "when he was shown some of the early chapters he is reported to have said, 'Before I hate Ouspensky. Now I love him. This very exact. He tell what I say.'"<sup>42</sup> His only stipulation was that Ouspensky should not publish this work before his own was published. As it turned out, the writings of both men were published posthumously, at about the same time.<sup>43</sup>

Ouspensky's first book, *In Search of the Miraculous*, was first published in 1949. In this remarkable volume, rather than simply outlining the basis of the teachings of the Fourth Way, Ouspensky has presented lectures and questions-and-answers given by Gurdjieff in the early years within the framework of his own narrative about his search for truth. This brilliant format allowed Ouspensky to present Gurdjieff's teachings in Gurdjieff's own words, while affording him the opportunity to comment and expand on many of the concepts, including commentary on the discrepancies that occasionally appeared in the way Gurdjieff presented his own work. Sophia Wellbeloved writes that this book is "...generally regarded as the most comprehensive outline of Gurdjieff's teaching and often forms the basis from which Gurdjieff and his teaching are understood.

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<sup>42</sup> Reyner, 82.

<sup>43</sup> Reyner, 82.

...yet Ouspensky's approach to the Work is more intellectual and rigid than Gurdjieff's.<sup>44</sup> Overall, Ouspensky presents Gurdjieff's teachings as a precise unified whole that only appears to be contradictory and fragmented due to the process of revelation. This undermines how much Gurdjieff in fact tended to modify what he was saying to suit the situation and use "additional clauses, 'generally speaking', 'in most cases', that serve to subvert the precision of his explanations and definitions."<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, Ouspensky's greatest criticism of Gurdjieff, which ultimately drove the two men apart, was that Gurdjieff insisted on obedience while encouraging his pupils to question everything for themselves and Ouspensky could not see how those two things could coexist. Yet by presenting such a cut and dried version of the Fourth Way, Ouspensky missed the point of such contradictory teachings, namely to force the student to interpret what was being taught, and moreover, he was limiting the teachings within which a student could explore, question and interpret for themselves.<sup>46</sup>

The second of Ouspensky's larger works on the Fourth Way was published in 1957 under the title *The Fourth Way*. Like *In Search of the Miraculous*, the format was largely a reproduction of lectures and questions-and-answers. However, this time the material was derived from Ouspensky's own groups, instead of Gurdjieff's. In this work, Ouspensky is presenting the Fourth Way as he has come to understand and teach it, rather than trying to explain what Gurdjieff taught. The result of this difference is that *The Fourth Way* is more of a logical outline of the principal concepts, rather than the narrative of *In Search of the Miraculous*. In the first few pages of this volume, Ouspensky outlines

<sup>44</sup> Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, xxv.

<sup>45</sup> Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, xxv.

<sup>46</sup> See Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, xxv-xxvi, 77-78; Ouspensky, *Search*, 373-89; Reyner, 63-66.

his view that the Fourth Way can really be divided into two separate studies. The first he calls psychology, the study of ourselves, for we cannot begin to investigate anything outside of ourselves until we begin to understand ourselves. The second is the study of the world or the universe. And both, he says, are governed by two basic laws, both enunciated by Gurdjieff: the law of three, and the law of seven, or octaves.<sup>47</sup> From there, the book sets out in logical order all the basic teachings of the Fourth Way.

Finally, Ouspensky also put together a collection of lectures to introduce the subject of the Fourth Way under the title *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, published for the first time in 1950. These lectures were meant to be a brief introduction to the Work for those who were just being introduced to the system. It was a concise explanation of how the Fourth Way generally taught personal evolution that would allow someone who knew nothing about it to get a general introduction before committing to more in-depth study. From there the inquirer could either decide that this was not for them, or go on to read the longer works and/or begin work with a teacher or group.

While it would be impossible here to outline every concept that Gurdjieff or Ouspensky outlined as part of the Fourth Way, a very general introduction to some of the main principles is required for any meaningful discussion. The first tenet of the Fourth Way which one must accept is that we are all in a sleeping state of consciousness, functioning only as machines, and that as long as we continue in this state we are radically incomplete. Beyond sleeping consciousness humans are capable of attaining three further states of consciousness: waking consciousness, self-consciousness, and

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<sup>47</sup> P.D. Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 1-2.

objective consciousness.<sup>48</sup> Attaining these higher states of consciousness is the immediate aim of the Fourth Way, but ultimately this relates to evolution in terms of the Ray of Creation. The Ray of Creation is the seven worlds in existence starting with the Absolute and descending through All Worlds, All Suns, Our Sun, The Planets, The Earth, and The Moon. From this basic framework, Gurdjieff developed a formidably complex cosmology. All things (energy, matter, natural laws, will) are in their most concentrated form at the level of the Absolute and as they descend, or (in Gurdjieff's terms) involve, through the other worlds they expand; energy slows down, matter becomes more dense, there are more natural laws that influence that world. For example, on the level of the Earth, an Atom is forty-eight times the size of one at the level of the Absolute, energy moves forty-eight times slower, and there are forty-eight times as many natural laws.<sup>49</sup>

When Gurdjieff expanded on the mechanical nature of humans, he described the human machine in terms of centres. Here is a good example of where Ouspensky tried to explain the apparent contradiction of information supplied by Gurdjieff. Ouspensky explained that the number of centres changed over the course of Gurdjieff's lectures because he was in the process of revelation. He started initially with three centres: the moving, emotional and intellectual. He would later add the instinctive, the sexual, the higher emotional and the higher intellectual centres. Reading only the material quoted from Gurdjieff, there is no explanation for this discrepancy over time. In fact, from Gurdjieff's words it would seem as though he was simply making it up as he went along.

<sup>48</sup> For more on consciousness, see Wellbeloved, "Consciousness," Gurdjieff, 39-40; Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters VII and VIII; and Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, Chapters I and V.

<sup>49</sup> For more on the Ray of Creation, see Wellbeloved, "Ray of Creation," Gurdjieff, 171-72; Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters V, VII, and IX; and Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, Chapters I and VIII.



Ouspensky, however, explains that the total number of centres was seven from the beginning, but that Gurdjieff only revealed what his students were capable of understanding at any given time. Thus the apparent change over time was just the natural process of expanding the teachings accordingly as the understanding of the students increased.<sup>50</sup> Regardless of changes in the number of centres, Gurdjieff attributed malfunctioning in the human machine to imbalance within the centres. According to Gurdjieff, most of us are trying to use the wrong centre to process our experiences. A common example would be the habit of many people to try to understand their emotions intellectually; rather than simply experience their emotions as emotions, many people try to figure out the why and the how, or to put it another way, they try to explain their emotions with intellectual logic. The problem is that each of the centres works at different speeds; the emotional centre is 30,000 times faster than the moving centre, which in turn is 30,000 times faster than the intellectual centre.<sup>51</sup> So if your intellectual centre is processing your emotions, you are getting it to process information that is supposed to be processed 900,000,000 times faster than your intellectual centre is capable of. With that kind of discrepancy, it would be impossible for the centres to be functioning efficiently. And like any machine, the longer our machine is misused, the more it malfunctions. By understanding the centres we can eventually get our centres back in balance and get our machine functioning correctly again.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 55-56.

<sup>51</sup> P.D. Ouspensky, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 79.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the centres, see Wellbeloved, "Centres," Gurdjieff, 33-35; Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters III, IV, and VI; and Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, Chapters I and III.

By contrast to Ouspensky's explanation of the centres, his introduction to the idea of the multiplicity of "I's" in *In Search of the Miraculous* was quoted directly from Gurdjieff, with virtually no elaboration.<sup>53</sup> According to this principle, one of the reasons that we continue in our sleeping state is that we believe in the fallacy that we are a single unified self. Far from being a single person, each of us has a multiplicity of personalities, voices, or "I's". We believe that we are a single unified self because we have one name and at any given moment we are fully identifying with the "I" that is acting or perceiving at that particular moment. But from one moment to the next the "I" can change, so that one moment I am the "I" that is an academic and this "I" wants to write this paper, while in the next moment I am the domestic "I" that would much rather be baking chocolate chip cookies or cleaning my house, which the academic "I" most definitely does not want to do. And while both of these "I's" form part of the Elizabeth that functions in the world, part of my personality, neither of them is my essential self. We are taught all our lives to identify with these "I's" that collectively form our personality so we believe that we are this personality, when in reality, our essential self, the part of us that really is who we are, has typically been stunted because we identified with all those "I's" instead.<sup>54</sup> As long as we do not develop our essential self, we cannot develop a will of our own and we can do nothing.<sup>55</sup>

Since we cannot do anything on our own without first developing a will, in order to evolve, Gurdjieff offers two main techniques: self-observation and self-remembering.

<sup>53</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 59-61.

<sup>54</sup> For more on the multiplicity of "I's", see *Wellbeloved*, "I/Identity," *Gurdjieff*, 102-03; Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters III and VIII; and Ouspensky *Fourth Way*, Chapters I and VII.

<sup>55</sup> For more on the development of the will, see Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters II, VIII, and XVII, and Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, Chapters I, IV, and X.

Self-observation is simply looking at ourselves and noticing how we function, the nuances of our own machine, and remembering what we observe without analyzing it. Self-remembering is being conscious of the self, which involves not only the mind but also the body and the emotions. While the two are closely related, there is a subtle difference, and both are required for evolution.<sup>56</sup> Eventually, these techniques will contribute to our beginning to develop our own will. However, both also require the assistance of a school. Schools are generally organized around a main teacher who attracts a body of students. There are many aspects of the Fourth Way that cannot be learned from reading, and this is where the school comes in. Here the teacher can assign the students the exercises that will, for example, help them wake from sleeping consciousness and learn to observe and remember themselves. Students will be expected to contribute to the school in whatever way they can in return for the instruction they will receive. These schools are not permanent, but rather they exist for as long as they are serving their function and close when this function is complete. Over the course of its existence, if a school is truly serving its function of helping the individuals that comprise it to evolve, the school itself will also undergo many changes. These cycles of schools correspond to the Law of Seven.<sup>57</sup>

The Law of Seven joins with the Law of Three to form the basis of the influences that affect all events. Here again we see the dichotomy between Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. These are two of the most basic tenets of the Fourth Way, yet Gurdjieff records them in

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<sup>56</sup> For more on self-observation and self-remembering, see Wellbeloved, "Self-observation" and "Self-remembering," *Gurdjieff*, 186-88; Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters VI and VII; and Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, Chapters I, II, III, and V.

<sup>57</sup> For more on Schools, see Wellbeloved, "Schools," *Gurdjieff*, 183-84; Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters I, XI, XII, and XVII; and Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, Chapters IV, XI, and XV.

*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* under the unnecessarily complicated names of the Law of Triamazikamno and the Law of Heptaparaparshinokh.<sup>58</sup> The Law of Three simply states that in all things the universe is subject to three influences: active, passive, and neutralizing.<sup>59</sup> The Law of Seven is a little more complicated. Based on the pattern of intervals of a major scale in music, the Law of Seven states that there are patterns of vibrations that affect the universe, which double in intensity with each octave. However, these vibrations do not increase evenly. The two places in the scale where the interval between notes is a semi-tone shorter represent a place in this pattern where the vibrations slow down and the direction can be interrupted, unless a shock knocks it back on track to bring it to resolution.<sup>60</sup> These two laws can equally be applied to a study of the world or the universe and to the activity of a human life. Ouspensky chose to set these two laws out in the plainest terminology he could, in a logical straightforward manner, according to his nature, while Gurdjieff set out these two laws in vague, convoluted terminology in an attempt to convey the esoteric shroud of secrecy he so loved to employ in person.

Ouspensky was, however, not the only one of Gurdjieff's pupils to write about the Fourth Way; overall his students were extremely prolific in their writings about Gurdjieff and his work. While Gurdjieff wrote what he considered to be the only necessary text for the Work,<sup>61</sup> its virtual incomprehensibility to those not already familiar with the Work led many of his principal students to try desperately to preserve Gurdjieff's teachings as they remembered them. However, in light of the above overview of Gurdjieff's work,

<sup>58</sup> Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, 122 and 123.

<sup>59</sup> Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, 16. Ouspensky also gives positive, negative, and neutralizing and first force, second force, and third force as alternative ways to name these influences.

<sup>60</sup> Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff*, 121-22; Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> This would be Gurdjieff's three part *All and Everything*.

Ouspensky is unsurprisingly the most prominent of these students, due largely to how clearly and concisely he captured the theoretical basis of the Work. Though he ultimately spent comparatively little time actually working with Gurdjieff, Ouspensky was in many ways Gurdjieff's most promising student until he broke with Gurdjieff on moral grounds.<sup>62</sup> His writings, while of the utmost value as an intellectual introduction to the main concepts of the Work, are also the perfect example of Ouspensky's chief weakness with regards to the Work, namely his tendency to rely too heavily on his intellect to the detriment of the remainder of the elements of this dynamic system, and thus his writings serve as an incomplete picture of the whole. The fact that Gurdjieff himself considered it totally unnecessary to leave a record that would give an intellectual understanding speaks to how incomplete Ouspensky's picture of this system actually is. Gurdjieff knew that it was all too easy for those of an intellectual inclination to read the theory and completely miss the doing part of the Work. For Ouspensky this meant, for example, that while he understood intellectually the importance of the student-teacher relationship, he failed to understand how relevant this was to himself. The best example of this is the event that Patterson identifies as laying the foundation of Ouspensky's break with Gurdjieff, an event that took place in August 1916 in Finland.

Ouspensky had been practicing various exercises to bring his focus out of his intellectual centre and into his emotional and moving centres. This left him vulnerable, since he was receiving outside stimuli through parts of himself that he was totally unused

<sup>62</sup> Ouspensky's break with Gurdjieff is well documented in most sources on Gurdjieff. Ouspensky felt that Gurdjieff had fallen away from the source of the teachings and gone mad or become evil. Patterson attributes this opinion to Ouspensky's all-too-strong identification with his existing moral system, a system with which Gurdjieff's sometimes erratic behaviour was in direct contradiction. According to Patterson, this identification was one of the factors that prevented Ouspensky from fully grasping the Work. See Patterson's *Struggle of the Magicians*, *passim*.

to using. Gurdjieff, recognizing what Ouspensky had accomplished, sought to push Ouspensky to the next level and so delivered one of his famous shocks by revealing some less-than-flattering statements Ouspensky had made about one of the other members of the group in front of a number of people. When writing about the incident later, Ouspensky tries to downplay his response and maintain 'control' over his emotions, but he probably reacted fairly strongly to having such a weakness exposed. Having worked on Ouspensky's emotional centre, Gurdjieff begins demonstrating postures and physical movements, working on the moving centre. Now that all three of Ouspensky's centres are engaged, when Gurdjieff returns to a prior discussion with the rest of the group, Ouspensky hears Gurdjieff speaking to him telepathically in between what he is saying to the rest of the group.<sup>63</sup> This continues for about half an hour, with Ouspensky answering out loud to what Gurdjieff is telling him telepathically. Eventually, "...Gurdjieff tells Uspenskii there are certain conditions he has to accept or he has to leave the Work. Gurdjieff gives him a month's time to answer. Uspenskii refuses the time, so certain is he of his allegiance and ability to do."<sup>64</sup> Of his conclusions upon later reflection when he is alone, Ouspensky writes that, "What I had considered to be firm and reliable in myself in reality did not exist. But I had found something else. I knew that he would not believe me and that he would laugh at me if I showed him this other thing. But for myself it was indubitable and what happened later<sup>65</sup> showed that I was right."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 35-36.

<sup>64</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 36.

<sup>65</sup> I.e., the actual break from Gurdjieff.

<sup>66</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 36-37.

This is an excellent example of how an adept teacher can lead a student to a major breakthrough, setting up a situation that is so out of the ordinary for the student that they cannot help but see how they are reacting. While Ouspensky does not immediately see how he reacts to what was presented to him, in writing that "What I had considered to be firm and reliable in myself in reality did not exist," he has identified the 'I' that would never have dreamed of leaving the Work. But in the following sentences he betrays how ill-prepared he was at that moment for continuing in the Work, "for here is unconsciously revealed what is characteristic of Uspenskii's personality; namely a dividing and a hiding to preserve his 'I'."<sup>67</sup> He is in fact committing two grave errors here. Firstly, he is hiding his observations from his teacher, which destroys the extreme level of openness that is required for the student-teacher relationship to be productive. If the student withholds anything, it becomes fuel for his 'I's to manifest. And secondly, perhaps to justify the first, he presumes himself able to judge his teacher's understanding, which again destroys the trust required for the student-teacher relationship to work.<sup>68</sup> At this moment, Ouspensky's Truth becomes the truth that Gurdjieff cannot understand him. He becomes identified with this idea, and this allows him to create distance between him and his teacher, and eventually allows him to justify leaving Gurdjieff, yet continuing to champion the Work.

For the rest of his life, Ouspensky would continue to identify with his intellectual rationale of what happened with Gurdjieff and use it to justify his break from Gurdjieff.<sup>69</sup> At the end of his life, he did begin to realize the error he had made and at the very end he

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<sup>67</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 37.

<sup>68</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 37.

<sup>69</sup> See Patterson, *Struggle*, *passim*.

secluded himself to finally begin to work on himself in earnest,<sup>70</sup> but by this time he had already written all of the material that would be published as his works on the Fourth Way. It is interesting to note that when Ouspensky was doing his most productive work with Gurdjieff, he found that he was totally incapable of working on his intellectual writings; his published writings were largely written before he met Gurdjieff, or after their split. It was as if his writing were a product of being stuck in the intellectual centre, so when he started working on bringing the other two into balance, he could no longer get stuck in his intellectual centre long enough to write. So long as Ouspensky maintained an open relationship with Gurdjieff, built on trust, and as long as he was a participating member of the group, he was not allowed to get stuck in his intellectual centre. This is precisely why two keystones of the Work are the student-teacher relationship and groups or schools; we need other people around us to help us to be able to see ourselves honestly, otherwise we just cement, or crystallize in Gurdjieffian terminology, our own identifications and 'I's. This is one of the functions that a school serves; in the next chapter, we will examine more closely what defines a Fourth Way school, how Gurdjieff himself operated his groups, and how Tribe adheres to or departs from Gurdjieff's conceptualization of how the Work was to be practiced.

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<sup>70</sup> See Patterson, *Struggle*, 155-85.



### Chapter 3: Categorizing Tribe as a Fourth Way School

*"We are all looking for answers. The answers are easy. The doing is the Work."*

*– Monty Galloway<sup>71</sup>*

On initial introduction to Tribe, it would be unlikely that someone might immediately connect Gurdjieff's Fourth Way to what they observed. When I was first introduced to the group in 2007, I had been invited to a mead tasting at a winery. I was aware that the winery was run by the spiritual teacher of the friend who invited me, and I knew she was Pagan, so I thought I had some idea as to what to expect, but I could not have been fully prepared for what I encountered; she had mentioned things like "growth", but I had no idea what the Fourth Way was and had assumed it would be much the same as other Wiccan or Neo-Pagan circles I had encountered before, and in many regards it was, but in others it was something entirely different. We arrived in the afternoon and there was a languid swirl of activity - one person was charged with refereeing the children, one person dealing with office work for the winery, others off on various other errands; people coming and going with varying frequency throughout the day. And Monty Galloway was at the center of the whole thing, sitting in his chair at the head of the kitchen table, directing the other goings on, yet still playing host to the new guests. When engaged with a person, his attention was purposeful, and despite his attention being drawn in many different directions, there was never anything rushed about the way he received those looking for a moment of his time. That was a quiet afternoon, before all

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<sup>71</sup> Navasota Tribe, <http://www.navatribe.org>, accessed April 12, 2011.

the members of Tribe had descended on Monty and Linda's house for an evening gathering. If one were arriving on the day of a planned ritual, one would likely encounter a slightly different scene: an exuberant group of people, each new arrival going around the room and hugging everyone – nothing terribly out of the ordinary, if one is familiar with typical Pagan gatherings. To the casual observer, it would seem that Tribe is just a typical Pagan group, but the differences, while subtle, are there. The respect that Monty commanded, the absolute obedience to him that appeared to stem from unspoken agreements, the smoothly communal behaviour displayed under the surface chaos, and a myriad of other subtle indicators marked Tribe as something entirely alien to me. I was later to learn, of course, that there is an explanation for my early assessment of Tribe as something other than what they might seem on the surface: Tribe is, first and foremost, a Fourth Way school, and their membership is not entirely Pagan, either. Over time, a different picture begins to emerge: there is a method to the madness, and that method is the Fourth Way.

Before we can discuss what characterizes Tribe as a Fourth Way School, we need to establish what exactly defines a Fourth Way School. "School" is one of two terms employed to describe a regular gathering of people studying the Fourth Way together; the other is "group". Ouspensky appears to differentiate between a school and a group, telling his students in *Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* that they are not a school because they do not have two tiers of students – an inner group who have achieved a higher level and an outer group who are still at a relatively early stage of evolution – but rather that

they are all still working on the lower levels.<sup>72</sup> Whereas Gurdjieff, according to Ouspensky, tells his students that they are not a group because they do not have the appropriate level of trust in him or each other. Instead, he says they are "only...a preparatory group."<sup>73</sup> For Gurdjieff they need some "definite *concerted work*... a definite aim" in order to be a group. Gurdjieff would seem then, at least in the early days in Russia, to have considered a "group" to be on the same level as Ouspensky sees a "school", though Gurdjieff himself never uses the term "school". Sophia Wellbeloved includes two separate entries in *Gurdjieff: the Key Concepts* for "Schools" and "Groups", but for her the difference appears to be that schools are "... never without some *undertaking* around which and in connection with which it can alone exist."<sup>74</sup> Thus, for practical purposes in the context of this study, the differentiation between a school and a group lies in the degree of structure; very generally, a group would be more informal, whereas a school would have more structure and require a higher level of commitment. However, since this study is primarily concerned with whether or not Tribe can be considered Fourth Way, rather than whether it is a school rather than a group, I will, for the most part, not be marking the distinction between the two, using the terms more or less interchangeably; the differentiation of the two terms is noted primarily to illuminate discrepancies in the terminology from the source texts.

As indicated above, in *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, Ouspensky describes schools as centering around a teacher, with an inner group of students who have already achieved a certain degree of growth, and an outer group of students who are still

<sup>72</sup> Ouspensky, *Psychology*, 116-17.

<sup>73</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 231.

<sup>74</sup> Wellbeloved, "Schools," *Gurdjieff*, 183.

in the early stages. These schools evolve over time, as the students evolve, and after serving their purpose, eventually close.<sup>75</sup> Students are drawn to these schools through the development of a magnetic centre, the entire purpose of which is to drive the seeker to a school where they can learn to develop.<sup>76</sup> In Wellbeloved's definition of a school she writes that "A school, which follows esoteric traditions and is created on the principles of the Law of Octaves, is the only place where a man can learn to 'do' through gaining an understanding of the Law of Octaves."<sup>77</sup> Briefly outlined in Chapter 2, the Law of Octaves was Gurdjieff's teaching that evolutionary or ascending energy, such as a pattern of growth, and creative or descending energy, exemplified by the Ray of Creation descending from the Absolute, flows in a pattern that corresponds to the pattern of notes of a major scale in music. For evolutionary energy, the speed increases steadily until the pattern reaches the semi-tones in the scale. Here, what Gurdjieff called the intervals, the semi-tones, being shorter than the full tone, is representative of a slowing of the energy and a shock is required to continue the pattern. In our own lives, an octave might be started when we make a plan to do something, but when we subconsciously shift our attention elsewhere, this is the semi-tone, and anything that serves to bring our attention back to the task, such as a reminder of a deadline, is the shock required for the pattern to continue to progress.<sup>78</sup> Thus, what Wellbeloved is saying, is that a Fourth Way school is both subject to this law and serves to teach people how to create for themselves the

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<sup>75</sup> Ouspensky, *Psychology*, 115-28.

<sup>76</sup> Ouspensky, *Psychology*, 67-69.

<sup>77</sup> Wellbeloved, "Schools," *Gurdjieff*, 183.

<sup>78</sup> Wellbeloved, "Law of Octaves," *Gurdjieff*, 116-19; Wellbeloved, "Law of Seven," *Gurdjieff*, 121-22.

shocks required for the pattern to progress. Essentially, Wellbeloved's entry defines the mechanism of the evolution that the school and its students will undergo.

In *In Search of the Miraculous*, Ouspensky reports what Gurdjieff had imparted to his students on the subject of schools during their association. According to Ouspensky, Gurdjieff also taught that a school must be centered around a teacher, and specified that the teacher alone of the group can see the full scope of the Work and direct it in such a manner as to create the conditions necessary for growth in each of the teacher's students.<sup>79</sup> It is the teacher that determines the aim of the group, mentioned above, and directs the group around this aim, which, in the beginning, the students will probably be unable to grasp. Therefore students must first concentrate on *self-study*, until they have developed sufficiently to grasp the teacher's aim and begin work toward it, at which point "their own work becomes more conscious and consequently can give better results."<sup>80</sup> The self-study of the beginning student is facilitated by the others in the group. Firstly, they serve as mirrors of the student's own faults. While a person cannot see themselves clearly, they can see faults in others more easily, and once the students realize that the faults they find in others are also present in themselves, the other students become a tool for self-study. The secondary purpose of the group for self-study is to share the results of each member's self-study, increasing the overall knowledge of each student.<sup>81</sup>

A teacher is also responsible for setting out rules for their students. There are both general rules that apply to all students because the lessons to be learned from them are universal, such as Gurdjieff's rule of silence, and rules specific to individuals, designed to

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<sup>79</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 222.

<sup>80</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 222.

<sup>81</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 223.

help them see their chief faults. Gurdjieff explains that part of the reason for these rules is, very uncharacteristically of Gurdjieff, essentially to save his students the trouble of learning these things the hard way. For the rule of silence, for example, he explains that they are incapable of correctly explaining what happens in groups, and if they were to try to explain the Work to those outside the group:

They very soon begin to learn *from their own personal experience* how much effort, how much time, how much explaining is necessary in order to grasp what is said in groups. It becomes clear to them that they are unable to give their friends a right idea of what they have learned themselves. At the same time also they begin to understand that by giving their friends *wrong ideas* they shut them off from any possibility of approaching the work at any time or of understanding anything in connection with the work, to say nothing of the fact that in this way they are creating very many difficulties and even very much unpleasantness for themselves in the future.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to silence, Gurdjieff's general rules also included total honesty to the teacher, which means not just refraining from lying, but also not omitting anything; remembering why they came to the Work, i.e. that they are there to learn not as they conceive of it, but as they are told; and a requirement to actually work, meaning they cannot just come and watch, they have to be actively engaged in the process.<sup>83</sup> In contrast to the general rules, the individual rules are intended to force the students to learn particular lessons themselves. These individual rules focus on a particular characteristic, to create friction within the individual to make their faults apparent to them. The example Gurdjieff gives is making a talkative person be quiet, or forcing a quiet person to talk.<sup>84</sup> Whether the rule applies to the whole group or to an individual, these rules "are the alarm clocks which

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<sup>82</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 224.

<sup>83</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 224-25.

<sup>84</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 226.

wake the sleeping man." Thus, "they ought to be difficult, unpleasant, and uncomfortable."<sup>85</sup> In *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts*, Wellbeloved adds to this that in present-day groups students are typically assigned exercises which they can incorporate into their daily lives, or practice with the group. Students can then raise their questions and observations that result from the exercises in group meetings.<sup>86</sup> These exercises are essentially analogous to Gurdjieff's rules for the individuals.

Finally, Gurdjieff taught strict communal accountability in a Fourth Way school. The group can only work for individual students if it works on the whole, and it can only work on the whole if each person is equally doing their part. This includes putting the aims of the group above one's individual aims, and being co-responsible to the other students. Being co-responsible means that each member is responsible for helping every other member, and that includes holding each other accountable for their individual actions. The group can only work on the whole if each and every member is doing their part to obey the rules. One student making an omission in their observations to their teacher may seem like a small thing to that individual, but in breaking the rule of honesty with their omission, they are letting the whole group down.<sup>87</sup> The incident in Finland in 1916 between Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and its eventual outcome, outlined in Chapter 2, is an extreme example of how an omission to the teacher can affect the whole group. Because Ouspensky refused to tell Gurdjieff about his misgivings there was no one who could help him see the source of these feelings, and so the identification eventually grew so strong that it split not just the group, but the entirety of the Work into two camps, a rift

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<sup>85</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 226.

<sup>86</sup> Wellbeloved, "Groups," *Gurdjieff*, 87.

<sup>87</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 231.

that would never be closed.<sup>88</sup> This responsibility to the group is so important that Gurdjieff stipulates that when a student leaves the group the remaining students must cut off all contact with them, to the extent that those with a strong external bond, such as a husband and wife, are considered one person with regards to the group and, if one leaves, they must both leave.<sup>89</sup>

Now that we have examined how Gurdjieff and Ouspensky envisioned Fourth Way schools, we must examine how Tribe adheres to or departs from this ideal. Like any group, Tribe is not a static entity, and the Tribe I was introduced to in 2007 is not Tribe as it exists today, nor was it the same as when the group began. As indicated in Chapter 1, Monty and Linda had been at the center of a group located in the area around Navasota, Texas, for about 15 to 20 years.<sup>90</sup> About fifteen years ago, the group's name was the Circle of the Hill. While Monty and Linda had both already studied and taught the Fourth Way for several years, and always intended to start a school, the Fourth Way was not a large part of the teachings of the group at that time. One of my informants, a senior member of Tribe, describes the Circle of the Hill teaching primarily Wicca and Lakota spiritual practices. He remembers being one of the first members of the group introduced to the Fourth Way, because Monty felt it would work well for him, and over time it became the primary focus of the group.<sup>91</sup> The name "Tribe" developed out of their use of Lakota teachings, which Monty introduced into the Work from his experiences growing

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<sup>88</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>89</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 231.

<sup>90</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Steve Shabeck, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.



up on a Lakota reservation.<sup>92</sup> The most dramatic change in the group during my association with them has been Monty's sudden death in 2009, which left Linda in the role of principal teacher.

While Gurdjieff and Ouspensky both stress the importance of a teacher in the formation of a group, the written records are silent on what characteristics they felt a teacher might possess or how they might behave. However, by extrapolation, Gurdjieff, as the progenitor of the Fourth Way, might serve as an archetype by which to measure a group's principal teacher. While Monty by no means drew the kind of attention to himself that Gurdjieff sought, much of his demeanor with his students supports a comparison. Having never had the opportunity to speak to Monty about this,<sup>93</sup> it is impossible to know how much of this was what he had intentionally adapted to teach the Work, and how much was coincidental, but the similarities between Monty and Gurdjieff are worth noting.

Descriptions of Gurdjieff range from a divinely inspired guru to an erratic, charismatic swindler, but whatever the observers thought of his motives and/or the sincerity of his teachings, much of the description of his behaviour remains constant across several sources. One of the most universal elements in descriptions of Gurdjieff was that everything he did seemed deliberate and purposeful. His movements gave one an impression of someone who was in complete control of every muscle in his body, his seemingly crass or rude behaviour calculated to produce a specific reaction. Even those with whom he spoke as if he had difficulty with their language would, if they remained in

<sup>92</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>93</sup> I had initially obtained Monty's permission to pursue the possibility of an academic study of Tribe; regrettably he died before I had the opportunity to begin collecting data.

his company long enough, find that he actually spoke their language far more fluently than he initially let on. Perhaps the most infamous examples of Gurdjieff's purposeful demeanor derive from his rapid changes in mood: one moment he could be perfectly pleasant and cordial, the next flying into an intense rage at one of his students. Observers almost invariably agree that these rages came on suddenly, and passed equally quickly, and always left the observer, if not the student, with the impression that Gurdjieff was fully in control of himself the whole time, not truly overcome with the anger he had explosively expressed.<sup>94</sup>

Like Gurdjieff, Monty was certainly not a man who evoked a casual response; he had a larger-than-life presence that instilled awe and intense loyalty in every one of his students, and just about everyone who spent any time with him either loved him or hated him, frequently both at the same time, but very rarely did anyone have an indifferent response to him.<sup>95</sup> Monty possessed a similar deliberateness in his interactions with his students. While Monty spent a great deal of his time with Tribe sitting in a chair, every movement was equally as deliberate and purposeful as Gurdjieff is described, not a single movement was careless or wasted. One of Monty's greatest attributes as a teacher was his ability to adjust his personality, his "I's", to what his audience needed him to be. Like Gurdjieff, he had many personas he intentionally adapted as part of his teaching style, what Ouspensky described in Gurdjieff as his "acting/playing". While no informants ever mention Monty speaking any second languages, when he spoke to locals who were outside of Tribe he belied none of the sage or the esoteric leader that he was in Tribe,

<sup>94</sup> See Paterson, *Struggle, passion*, and Ouspensky, *Search, passion*.

<sup>95</sup> Various students of Tribe, interviews by author, Navasota, Texas, June, 2009 and October, 2010.

indeed a casual observer might believe that he was just another local in rural Texas. Conversely, when a newcomer arrived at Tribe he might appear as more of an intellectual, a gracious gentlemanly host, someone to pique the curiosity of that particular individual on a level they could relate to, or during class or rituals he would be more of the spiritual guru. This ability to adjust his personality to suit the situation also included a behaviour similar to Gurdjieff's rages. It could not accurately be described as a rage, but he could switch from the jovial gentle giant to an impressively intimidating authority when necessary, withering an errant student under the intensity of his stare and forcefulness of his words. The change came on like flicking a light switch, and once he was satisfied that the student had finally absorbed what they needed to get out of it, he would return to his prior demeanor as if there had been no change in the first place.<sup>96</sup> Since Monty's death, Linda has also been exhibiting more of this same kind of deliberate and purposeful demeanor. Even though she was already a teacher of a Fourth Way group in her own right when she met Monty and indeed, Monty was known to say that Linda was the more powerful of the two of them,<sup>97</sup> Linda always played more of a supporting role in Tribe. With the death of her husband, her primary persona has changed to the role of teacher quite naturally. The ease of this transition would seem to suggest that she, like Monty, has long been in full control of which "I's" she puts forward.<sup>98</sup>

Despite a long bout of failing health, Monty's death in January 2009 was sudden. The development of the group in the wake of this tragedy exemplifies their growth according to the Law of Octaves. When Monty died, if Tribe had been more static, it may

<sup>96</sup> Various students of Tribe, interviews by author, Navasota, Texas, June, 2009 and October, 2010.

<sup>97</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Personal observation, June 2009 and October 2010.

have faded out, but instead, the shock that followed eventually gave Tribe a new direction and a new sense of purpose; with Monty's death, a new octave began. The last two notes of a major scale are a semi-tone apart; it is the final Interval before a new pattern begins. Monty's death marked a slowing in Tribe's momentum along the path that Monty had begun. The trip that Tribe embarked on to scatter Monty's ashes in Nebraska, and acknowledging on their return that a new direction was required for Tribe formed the shocks that set Tribe up to begin a new octave with Linda as the new teacher.<sup>99</sup> This transition was not quick or terribly easy, since every member of Tribe was going through their own grieving process and there had been no preparation for Monty handing over the leadership of the group, but this transition to a new teacher, enabling the school to outlive its first teacher, is what Gurdjieff had in mind before he gave up on a school and began writing. Gurdjieff had pinned his hopes, first on Ouspensky, and later on others, such as A.R. Orage and J.G. Bennett, that they would become the kind of students that would enable him to take the Work to a higher level, and leave behind a functioning school as a legacy, negating the need to write his teachings down. But he was continually let down and so gave up on the idea and wrote *All and Everything* instead.<sup>100</sup> Certainly Tribe is still finding its balance in this new structure, but it has survived the initial transition and continues to grow,<sup>101</sup> changing in response to the challenges that such a paradigm shift represents. By surviving the loss of its principal teacher, Tribe has succeeded where even Gurdjieff himself seems to have felt he failed.

<sup>99</sup> Personal observation, June, 2009.

<sup>100</sup> See Patterson, *Struggle*, *passim*.

<sup>101</sup> Tribe actually just initiated the first new Adults of Tribe since Monty's passing in March, 2011. <http://navatribe.org>, accessed March 26, 2011.

The hierarchy of Tribe is taken from both Fourth Way and Lakota practices.

Before his death, Monty was the main teacher and Linda occupied a second-in-command type position. The rest of Tribe is composed of Elders, an inner circle of Adults (that includes the Elders), and an outer circle of Children. While the Adults and Children are roughly analogous to Ouspensky's inner and outer circle, they are based on Lakota traditions as well as Ouspensky's separation of Man No. 1, 2, and 3, from Man No. 4, 5, 6, or 7.<sup>102</sup> When a new student comes to Tribe and decides to begin the Work, they are given a milk name that typically reflects one of their chief faults, at which point they become a Child of Tribe. Once a Child has reached a certain level of growth they undergo a rite of passage to Adulthood. To pass from Child to Adult, the student "dies" ritually and the Adult is born with a new name derived from some experience in the ritual.<sup>103</sup> As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, Gurdjieff himself was fond of giving his students names based on their chief faults, the best example of which was calling Ouspensky Wraps Up the Thought, a name that could have been construed as a compliment to Ouspensky's ability to answer any question at length, when in fact it was more likely hinting that Ouspensky was overly analytical.<sup>104</sup> And while it is not a prominent concept in the Fourth Way, Gurdjieff does hint at a similar idea of the death of the student after a certain period

<sup>102</sup> *Psychology*, 116-17. In order to describe the stages of the evolution of man, Ouspensky numbered the seven types that he considered to exist as "man no. 1" through "man no. 7". The first three represented those who predominately functioned through one of each of the three centres, and this is the default state of each person before coming to the Work. Over time, these first three can evolve to man no. 4, though no one can begin at man no. 4 or higher. Through contact with a school, man no. 4 has sufficiently developed as to place evolution above all other interests. The next evolution is man no. 5, who has achieved unity and self-consciousness with one of the higher centres functioning. Man no. 6 has achieved objective consciousness with two higher centres functioning. Finally, man no. 7 has achieved a permanent "I" and free will, the highest stage of evolution, at which point, according to Ouspensky, "he is immortal within the limits of the solar system." *Psychology*, 53-55.

<sup>103</sup> What exactly this "death" entails I do not know, as I have had neither the opportunity to observe nor to experience it.

<sup>104</sup> Patterson, *Struggle*, 31, 68, 201.

of growth. After his students have tried to explain the Work to their friends as one of Gurdjieff's assignments, they are discussing their observations about these attempts with the group and expressing their concerns at their friends' reactions. In his response, Gurdjieff says to them, "You have already begun to *die*. ... It is a long way yet to complete death but still a certain amount of silliness is going out of you. You can no longer deceive yourselves as sincerely as you did before. You have now got the taste of truth."<sup>105</sup> Gurdjieff conceived of reaching a certain point of evolution as the *dying* of a student's former state of mechanical self-deception, yet Tribe takes it a step further to enact that "death" ritually in the passage from Child to Adult.

The question of the aim of Tribe is actually one that arose recently on their website's forums.<sup>106</sup> Reading Gurdjieff's words in *In Search of the Miraculous*, it is obvious that Gurdjieff had some insubstantial secret goal in mind. But from the discussions on the forum, it is clear that Tribe's understanding is closer to Wellbeloved's term of *undertaking*, that is to say some substantial project that is central to the group's activities. Since my introduction to Tribe in 2007 they have closed both the winery that facilitated my initial contact with them and a soap business that were both run under Monty's name and primary direction, but with substantial contributions of service from just about every member of Tribe. These businesses provided a convenient venue for creating the friction necessary for observation among the students by forcing them to work together towards a defined common goal. Secondly, it provided a means of financing Tribe's activities, particularly affording an opportunity to all students to

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<sup>105</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 245.

<sup>106</sup> "Part 2: The FKIP," <http://navatribe.org>, accessed June 7, 2011.

contribute their efforts to supporting Tribe's finances without simply giving money. Ouspensky reports being shocked at the sum of money Gurdjieff demanded of his students to participate in his groups. The substantial fees were implemented partly because he held the belief that his students would not value his teachings if he did not put a value on them in terms they could easily understand, but also because it cost Gurdjieff a great deal of money to support the activities of his groups, especially once he emigrated from Russia and he began to house many of his students. However, it is likely that many of his students never did pay these fees.<sup>107</sup> While Tribe does not worry about ascribing a value to its teachings, there are costs and a great deal of labour involved with maintaining the activities of Tribe, including providing meals to participants, maintenance of Monty and Linda's home, which serves as a central meeting place, and maintenance of the Land, a large tract of land that Monty purchased for the purpose of constructing ritual spaces, and providing some housing for members of Tribe who wished to live close by. Having businesses run by Tribe provided an opportunity for those who had lower incomes to contribute service that would translate directly into revenue for Tribe. This is another area where Monty's death changed the way in which Tribe operated. In this case, settling his material affairs ultimately forced the closure of the winery, due to complicated legalities concerning the transfer of ownership.<sup>108</sup> Linda has since made it clear that she is not interested in starting up another Tribe-run business venture, and so the question was posed as to whether being a school was in itself a sufficient aim around which Tribe could

<sup>107</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 12-13, 165-66, 371.

<sup>108</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

exist. The responses seem to indicate that, by and large, the members of Tribe believe that it is.<sup>109</sup>

Each member of Tribe has their own story of how they came to Tribe, but they all have characteristics of Ouspensky's discussion of the magnetic centre. Ouspensky writes that, unlike the other major centres (intellectual, emotional, etc.), which are part of the essence, "The *magnetic center* [sic] is in personality; it is simply a group of interests which, when they become sufficiently strong, serve ... as a guiding and controlling factor."<sup>110</sup> Its purpose is essentially to drive the individual to look for and eventually recognize a school once the student has found it. I have selected two examples from my informants to illustrate this point. The first is an example of a very strong magnetic centre. This informant described being introduced to Tribe as something that he just knew he had to do, like there was an invisible force drawing him to Tribe in a way he could not have explained at the time.<sup>111</sup> The second example illustrates what Ouspensky meant when he wrote that "If a man [with] ... a small or a weak magnetic center ... meets a school, he does not become interested in it, or he becomes critical at once before he can know anything, or his interest disappears very quickly..."<sup>112</sup> My second informant remembers frequently coming into contact with Tribe in various situations before finally committing to joining the group: going to the café and bookstore that Monty ran with another member of the early Circle; becoming friends with other members; even attending an afterparty for one of their Beltane rituals. In each case she remembers being

<sup>109</sup> "Part 2: The FKTP," <http://navatribe.org>, accessed June 7, 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Ouspensky, *Psychology*, 68.

<sup>111</sup> Lewis Callaway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>112</sup> Ouspensky, *Psychology*, 68.



very interested in what Tribe members had to say about growth, but she always found she had reservations that led her to turn away from the opportunity to participate. She also did not actually connect these people, places and events until looking back on the experience after joining Tribe. Finally, she asked a member of Tribe to become her teacher for growth, again without realizing that her teacher was part of Tribe, and when her teacher brought her to Monty and Linda's house the pieces finally fell into place for her as she realized that she had already met most of the people there in these scattered incidents over the course of a few years. At that point she realized that for her, each of those incidents had slowly been leading up to her becoming part of Tribe.<sup>113</sup> In this example, it took time for her magnetic centre to develop; in her early introductions, her magnetic centre was still weak, became stronger with each incident where she came in contact with Tribe, until finally it was strong enough for her to make the commitment to become a fully participating member of Tribe.

Once a new student comes to Tribe, they will be instructed in a number of different ways. One of the major backbones of Tribe's teaching methods is class. These classes reflect the format of Gurdjieff's talks as Ouspensky recorded them in that students ask questions and the main teacher usually responds, but occasionally gets a senior student to elaborate on a particular topic. In addition to class, students are expected to partake in work days, designed to both help maintain the properties used by Tribe and use the physical exercise as a means of working on their moving centres, opening them up and bringing them into balance with their intellectual and emotional centres through the manual labour. Students are also expected to participate in a number of rituals, including

<sup>113</sup> Becca Matcek, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

the Pagan calendrical rituals (Samhain, Yule, Imbolc, Ostara, Beltane, Litha, Lughnassagh, and Mabon), and Native North American rituals such as pipe ceremonies, sweats, vision quests and so on.<sup>114</sup> Each student's teacher will also give them individual assignments, such as Wellbeloved describes in *Gurdjieff: the Key Concepts*, that range from readings, which are frequently common to all students,<sup>115</sup> to assignments designed to break a particular patterned behaviour of the student. Frequently the latter type of assignments will prompt the student to raise questions about their observations in class, which ties in to Gurdjieff's ideal that the group would serve to increase the overall knowledge of each student through the sharing of their observations.

At this point it should hardly need stating that Tribe places a strong emphasis on communal responsibility. However, unlike in Gurdjieff's groups, there are no stated rules delineating what precisely this communal responsibility entails. Gurdjieff's injunctions to members of his groups against talking to former members, and his insistence that husband and wife be treated as one person, for example, are not formally stated in Tribe. However, from my own observations of the dynamics of the group, I have my doubts that relationships of any kind across the divide of those actively involved and those formerly involved would be easy or comfortable. Essentially, where Gurdjieff made it a formal rule and outlined for his students that it would only lead to quarrelling, Tribe leaves their followers to observe the results for themselves. Likewise, I have never formally received any injunction against divulging details of what happens in Tribe, but my attempts to

<sup>114</sup> Tribe's ritual practices and use of Native North American practices will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

<sup>115</sup> Some of the most universally assigned of these readings, *The Four Agreements*, by Don Miguel Ruiz, *Taming Your Gremlin*, by Rick Carson, and Ouspensky's *Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, are discussed in Chapter 4.

describe even the basic concepts to friends have been met with similar results to those Gurdjieff described<sup>116</sup> of not understanding and even regarding me with suspicion, as though I were subscribing to a brainwashing cult.

There is, however, another explanation of why Tribe may have chosen not to enforce those particular rules in the same fashion as Gurdjieff. This emphasis on communal responsibility is one of the ways in which the Lakota teachings overlap with, and help enhance, Tribe's teaching of the Fourth Way. The Lakota teachers in Tribe teach the students about suffering for others. What this means, is that if you have experience that can help someone else in a similar situation, you have a responsibility to share it. While this certainly applies directly to the context of Tribe, it also applies to a much broader definition of community that may include finding a way to make the lessons you learned applicable to those around you who are wholly unconnected to Tribe, or even trying to help those who have left Tribe, which would contradict the rules Gurdjieff set out.

While Tribe does not fit perfectly with Ouspensky and Gurdjieff's definitions of a Fourth Way school in every respect, the basic elements are certainly present: there is always a central teacher with a specific aim; they exhibit growth according to the Law of Octaves; students are organized into an inner and an outer circle, according to the level of growth they have achieved; they teach growth through self-study and to that end assign general rules to the group, and specific rules or assignments to the individual students to help them see their chief faults; and they promote a strong group accountability. As shown in Chapter 1, Wellbeloved categorized Gurdjieff groups as falling, roughly, into

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<sup>116</sup> Ouspensky, *Search*, 224.

two categories: those who followed Gurdjieff's teachings to the letter, without additions or alterations, to the best of their abilities, and those who preferred to teach the work *in the spirit of* Gurdjieff, adapting the work over time.<sup>117</sup> Tribe's incorporation of alternative materials that teach the same concepts places them in the second category, as it is much more in the spirit of Gurdjieff's teaching style than the unaltered and non-supplemented use of the records of Gurdjieff's teachings. Indeed, this second category is more in line with Ouspensky's definition of a school as an entity that evolves over time according to the evolution of the members. This approach is only logical, as the methods for introducing a student to the concepts of the Fourth Way would not be the same as those required to push a more advanced student beyond their current application of techniques. Gurdjieff's cosmology in the Ray of Creation, outlined in Chapter 2, ensured that no one in this life would ever achieve a level of evolution where they would no longer have a higher level to strive to attain, so at bare minimum, the possibility of extending the teachings into higher levels must always be left open, thereby admitting the possibility of new additions. According to Wellbeloved, "Gurdjieff is quoted as saying that he taught via occultism because it was a subject his pupils had studied, but that there is 'no need to use occultism as the base from which to approach an understanding of the truth'."<sup>118</sup> This is also applicable to the way in which Tribe applies Native North American and Wiccan/Neo-Pagan practices. While the majority of the members of Tribe adhere to Wiccan, Pagan, or Native spiritual beliefs, they are not the only religious affiliations among the students. With this in mind, I asked Linda why Tribe chose those belief

<sup>117</sup> Wellbeloved, "Changes", <http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/wellbeloved.htm>.

<sup>118</sup> Wellbeloved, "Changes", <http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/wellbeloved.htm>.

systems for rituals and she replied that it was because it was simply what worked for the group, and if and when it no longer worked, they'd change it. She went on to explain that Monty had always taught that the Fourth Way could really be applied to any system, which was one of its strengths.<sup>119</sup> While not a conscious consideration of Tribe, their incorporation of Wicca and other Pagan traditions is somehow all the more fitting when considering that the origins of these movements lie in the same occult revival that influenced Gurdjieff's students; they are indeed some of the evolutionary offshoots of the occultism that Gurdjieff initially used to help explain his system.

In *Anarchy Evolution*, Greg Graffin wrote that "Institutions, by and large, strive for permanence, and they almost always see life through a formulaic lens and strongly disfavor individuality and change."<sup>120</sup> When Jeanne de Salzmann took over the Work on Gurdjieff's death, she institutionalized the Work in the Gurdjieff Foundations. While Graffin's statement was made regarding the incongruity of institutionalized religion with evolution in the sense of natural science,<sup>121</sup> it is equally applicable to change and growth within the Work. Gurdjieff and Ouspensky both agreed that schools were not meant to be static entities; they were supposed to change and grow over time, just as the individuals who make up a school were supposed to change and grow, which stood in stark contrast

<sup>119</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>120</sup> Greg Graffin and Steve Olson, *Anarchy Evolution: Faith, Science, and Bad Religion in a World Without God*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 143. While the book is primarily Graffin's autobiography, he spends most of the book outlining the profound influence that studying science, particularly evolution, has had on his views on religion (by which he primarily means Christianity as practiced in the United States). Having written his PhD dissertation on religious sentiment (and lack thereof) among natural scientists, Graffin makes some interesting points on what he perceives as the inherent conflict between evolutionary science and institutionalized religion.

<sup>121</sup> Ouspensky rejected the Darwinian definition of evolution, and therefore also likely would have rejected the definition Graffin outlines that came out of it. However, while they would absolutely have disagreed about the mechanism of change in evolution, many of Graffin's criticisms of institutionalized religion still stand in the context of the Fourth Way despite the differing views of biological evolution.

to the pre-existing institutionalized practices of religion that were overwhelmingly dominant in their time. Throughout *Anarchy Evolution* Graffin argues that social phenomena, such as religion, government, or even music, evolve in a similar manner to the way in which science understands biological evolution to function. In this particular passage he argues that the very nature of institutions, demanding unwavering, unquestioning loyalty or adherence to rules, stifles creativity, which is, in his view, the chief agent of social evolution, in the same way that genetic mutation is the chief agent of biological evolution.<sup>122</sup> While the terms in which he understood it were quite different, Gurdjieff's changing teaching styles would seem to imply that he likewise understood this principle that the institutions must change. Even within his lifetime, Gurdjieff's groups evolved from the secretive groups in Russia, to the communal life and disreputable rumours of the Prieuré, and eventually Gurdjieff even went against his own injunctions and changed his direction completely by beginning to compose a written form of his teachings, as shown in Chapter 2.<sup>123</sup> By institutionalizing the Work, like the official Gurdjieff societies, the change, or even the potential for change, necessary for evolution becomes stifled. While de Salzmann undoubtedly had the preservation of Gurdjieff's teachings in mind when she instituted the principle that the Foundations would only teach from the extant record of Gurdjieff's own teachings, she narrowed the teachings in ways Gurdjieff himself likely never would have. She also introduced a new element of passively receiving the Work, where the student was "being worked upon, rather than

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<sup>122</sup> Graffin, 141-44.

<sup>123</sup> Wellbeloved, "Changes", <http://www.cosmar.org/2001/london2001/wellbeloved.htm>.

actively working on himself,"<sup>124</sup> which goes against one of the most fundamental of principles of the Work, that the individual must be the active agent in their own growth. Thus, in her attempt to ensure the permanence of Gurdjieff's teachings, de Salzmann created a very narrow spectrum for the student to work within and therefore created an institution like those Graffin describes that "disfavor individuality and change"; she fostered the sort of environment in which Gurdjieff's dynamic methods are restricted, and that is to pass on an incomplete version of his Work. If we remember Wellbeloved's definition of the school as evolving according to the Law of Octaves, then the Foundations have been set up in such a way as to make them resistant to the shocks that would allow them to continue to evolve, and thus they can never truly be a school. To use Gurdjieff's terminology, the Foundations might be considered preparatory groups, rather than groups or schools proper.

Conversely, it is Tribe's adaptability that makes them more truly a school. Tribe is intended to help its members achieve an end result: growth – or in Gurdjieffian terms, evolution. The "how" is flexible, as long as it produces the result. Gurdjieff was famous for using whatever opportunities presented themselves for teaching tools; any erratic behaviour, strange rule, or uncomfortable situation that he could possibly present to his students to create the opportunity for them to observe something about themselves. Arguably, this makes Tribe more truly a Fourth Way school than the Gurdjieff foundations, as it is more in line with how Gurdjieff himself taught. Next we will

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<sup>124</sup> Wellbeloved, "Changes", <http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/wellbeloved.htm>. Wellbeloved notes that the possibility that Gurdjieff may have introduced this element to the teaching cannot be entirely discounted, but that it seems extremely unlikely given its absence from any firsthand accounts of Gurdjieff.

examine some of the extra materials that Tribe incorporates into their teachings to see how they compare to Gurdjieff's original teachings.



## **Chapter 4: *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution, Taming Your Gremlin, and The Four Agreements***

When I first came to Tribe as a new student, I was assigned three texts:

Ouspensky's *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution, Taming Your Gremlin* by Rick Carson, and *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz. The first is the only Fourth Way text of the three, but what they all ultimately have in common is that they serve Tribe as a means of establishing a common terminology. One of Ouspensky's expressed aims in *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* was to provide a definition of common terminology for the newcomer to the Fourth Way, while the other two books serve to provide newcomers to Tribe with a terminology that might be more approachable than the more complex works of Ouspensky or Gurdjieff.

As explained in Chapter 2, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, the easiest of Ouspensky's works for the reader, was a short collection of lectures providing a concise introductory explanation of the Fourth Way, intended for the reader who has no prior knowledge of the system. While the concepts Ouspensky introduces here are explained more fully in *The Fourth Way* and *In Search of the Miraculous*, these lectures were not intended as in-depth explanations, only as a short introduction to the Work before a prospective student decides whether or not to commit to further study. In contrast to his longer works, Ouspensky does not deal here with the study of the world or the universe, but limits his lectures to the study of the self, in keeping with the view he expresses in *The Fourth Way* that one cannot study the world or the universe until one

first studies oneself.<sup>125</sup> This is also in line with the way that Tribe teaches the Fourth Way. In the introduction to their website, Tribe expressly states that it uses the Fourth Way specifically because it is not rooted in any given religious ideology and that it was, for Tribe, one of the most universally applicable systems, because its members have such diverse religious backgrounds.<sup>126</sup> For the most part, discussion of Gurdjieff's cosmology is reserved for advanced students who choose to pursue it; new students are not introduced to Gurdjieff's cosmology until after they have begun work on themselves in earnest, and even then only if the student expresses interest.

Ouspensky begins his first lecture by defining the term "psychology" as it applies to the Work. First he differentiates his use of the term from the common understanding of "psychology" as the discipline or science of studying the mental processes that typically comes immediately to mind. Instead, Ouspensky uses the term "psychology" to mean the study of the self, which, he says, has been developed for millennia, though not previously known under that term. He goes on to outline the kind of thinking to which he applies the term through the line of philosophy, religion and even art. Indeed, "psychology", as he uses the term, would still fall under the category of philosophy in common conception. His final definition of psychology is "the study of the principles, laws, and facts of man's possible evolution."<sup>127</sup> This "evolution" should not be understood as the Darwinian evolution of the physical form, the veracity of which Ouspensky denies, but rather the

<sup>125</sup> Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, 1-2.

<sup>126</sup> "An Inadequate Illumination of the Introductory Induction into Tribe," *Navasota Tribe*, <http://www.navatribes.org>, (accessed January 24, 2011).

<sup>127</sup> Ouspensky, *Evolution*, 6.

improvement of the inner qualities.<sup>128</sup> But the improvement of the inner qualities is the means by which a person becomes a different being. Although Ouspensky does not make explicit precisely what this means in this volume, limiting it to achieving a higher level of consciousness, this different being hints at the creation of an astral body, that is, a body that exists on one of the higher levels of the universe.<sup>129</sup> To summarize his introduction then, another way of defining "the psychology of man's possible evolution" might be "the study of the principles, laws, and facts of man's possible improvement of his inner qualities to become a different being."

After defining what he is exploring in this volume, Ouspensky begins to describe how this evolution can be brought about. According to him, the first step is to recognize that we do not even possess the qualities we believe that we already possess; namely "capacity to do, individuality, or unity, permanent Ego, and in addition Consciousness and Will."<sup>130</sup> The remainder of the first lecture is devoted to the introduction of self-observation, the multiplicity of "I's", the mechanical nature of human beings, and the seven centres of function.<sup>131</sup>

The second lecture begins with a further explanation of the four levels of consciousness: sleep, waking consciousness, self-consciousness, and objective consciousness.<sup>132</sup> In the discussion of consciousness he briefly introduces the subject of schools as they relate to the process of waking from sleep. Again, in keeping with the

<sup>128</sup> Ouspensky, *Evolution*, 7-9.

<sup>129</sup> For Ouspensky's treatment of the astral body see Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters II, V and IX, and Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, Chapters XIV and XVI.

<sup>130</sup> Ouspensky, *Evolution*, 16.

<sup>131</sup> For more on these topics see Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapters III, VI, and VII, and Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, Chapters I and III.

<sup>132</sup> For more on the four levels of consciousness see Ouspensky, *Search*, VIII, and Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, Chapter I.

limitation of these lectures strictly to the sphere of the self, he omits the place of consciousness in the greater cosmological ordering taught by the Fourth Way. Next he discusses the separation of the personality and the essence. He introduces the problems of lying, imagination, and negative emotions, which are not actually part of the essence and must be recognized as such so that we can avoid identification with them.<sup>133</sup> Finally, he expands on the role of the centres in the Work by identifying the seven different types of man and their relation to the centres.<sup>134</sup>

The third lecture again picks up the topic of the centres, beginning with the wrong work of the centres. From there he outlines the conditions necessary for development. Many of these are external, relating mostly to living in the right place at the right time and the availability of a school. The internal conditions depend on the influences on the individual. In order for a person to be prepared for development, one set of influences, those of a more philosophical or religious character concerned with one's place in the universe (as opposed to the mundane concerns of day-to-day existence), must become sufficiently strong to create a magnetic centre. The magnetic centre is a centre in the personality (in contrast to the other seven centres, which exist in the essence), which will ultimately draw an individual to a school and help them absorb the teachings of the school. The remainder of the lecture outlines the nature and necessity of schools, which was expanded in Chapter 3 of this work.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> See Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapter VI, and Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, Chapter I.

<sup>134</sup> For more on the seven types of man see Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapter IV and Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, Chapter I.

<sup>135</sup> For more on the necessity of schools see Ouspensky, *Search*, Chapter XVII and Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*, Chapter IV.

The fourth lecture continues to expand on the function of the centres. Here Ouspensky details the speed and polarity of the centres, including a long section on negative emotions and the necessity of "sacrific[ing one's] suffering."<sup>136</sup> He touches briefly on negative emotions in the second lecture, but here he explains them in more detail, including their various undesirable effects. According to Ouspensky, they can only be overcome with the help of a school. He ends the fourth lecture with a reminder that consciousness can only come with self-remembering, fighting the imagination for true self-observation.

The fifth lecture begins with a discussion of the relationship between knowledge, being, and understanding. Ouspensky writes that up to this point he has discussed knowledge only, but that in order for true development, an increase in knowledge must come with a development of being. But knowledge is empty unless it has understanding to make use of it. According to Ouspensky, subjective understanding, or understanding as we typically think of it, is just an understanding in part, which is why in colloquial language one can understand, but disagree. Objective understanding, or understanding within the system, means understanding the whole correctly and from this point of view there can only be one understanding. In this second meaning of understanding, most misunderstanding comes from not speaking the same language. In order to understand, we must speak the right language. Each of these lectures has been concerned with teaching the language of the Work. If you do not accept the terms of the Work, you can study the knowledge of the work, but you cannot understand it, and thus you cannot put it into practice. In order to put the Work into practice, you must first not only be able to learn the

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<sup>136</sup> Ouspensky, *Evolution*, 87. See also *Search*, Chapter XIII.

definitions, but to see how they all work together, then seek out a school to help you put this into practice. Ouspensky ends this lecture with a further division of the centres adding the moving, emotional, and intellectual division of the centres to the positive and negative, for a total of six divisions in each centre.

This 1981 edition of *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* contains a final section, "Lecture Held Thursday, 23 September 1937." This is the verbatim account of one of Ouspensky's lectures. The topic of the lecture is schools and the rules which govern them, followed by his answers to the questions of those present at the lecture.

While a school is necessary to begin the Work in Ouspensky's estimation, this volume outlines roughly what will be expected of a prospective student should they choose to seek out a school for further study. The material covered is an introduction to some of the topics that Ouspensky covers in the first chapters of *The Fourth Way* and throughout *In Search of the Miraculous*. Though *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* is much shorter and far less detailed than these other two works, what really sets this volume apart is its focus solely on the study of the self. Since these lectures are intended only as a very general introduction, Ouspensky does not contextualize this work in terms of the cosmology. There is no mention, for example, of the ray of creation, or the Fourth Way views on matter, or the Law of Three, or the Law of Seven. What Ouspensky has quite inadvertently proven with this volume is that, contrary to his lecture on understanding, it is entirely possible to begin to grasp the basic principles of the Work, of personal evolution, without understanding the whole of the Fourth Way system. It is this concise volume, easily overlooked by a more purist student of the Fourth Way for its brevity and omissions, which Tribe chose as their introduction to the established Fourth

Way philosophy. Indeed, it is precisely for its brevity and omissions that they chose this work over Ouspensky's more comprehensive writings, particularly as this group tends not to teach the canonical cosmology when introducing a student to the Fourth Way, focusing almost exclusively on the Work, the methods of personal evolution. Tribe is not a group that could be described as academic, so its choice of introductory texts reflects a simpler, less intellectualized approach, representative of its approach to the Fourth Way as a whole.<sup>137</sup> While a strict adherent to Gurdjieff or Ouspensky might argue that any Work pursued on this basis would be incomplete and would not produce correct results, the fact that even one group would assign this volume over the other two before a student starts the Work would seem to indicate that such an approach can and does still produce results.<sup>138</sup>

The other two books assigned by Tribe – *Taming Your Gremlin* by Rick Carson and *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz – are both aimed at a contemporary popular audience, and offer more approachable texts for those who may not immediately be comfortable with the more allegorical or more intellectual approaches presented by Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Though neither text is strictly speaking a Fourth Way text, both

<sup>137</sup> This is not to say that no one in Tribe is familiar with the rest of the writings of the Fourth Way, rather that they are not required reading for every member. As students progress in the work, they are assigned other texts to read and each individual is certainly encouraged to read other writings by Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and other Fourth Way authors, and particularly to discuss them with their teacher. However, reading is only one of the tools Tribe employs, and not even the principal tool at that.

<sup>138</sup> Correct results are those that clearly demonstrate that growth is occurring in the manner that Gurdjieff initially envisioned. Ouspensky's break with Gurdjieff, outlined in Chapter 2, is a prime example of incorrect results – while Ouspensky certainly thought he was progressing within the Work by separating from Gurdjieff, he actually solidified the traits that he stumbled over in that incident, making it harder to progress beyond that point. The fact that within Tribe the Work is being conducted in a group makes it a little harder for the results not to be correct, as the biggest danger to correct results is, in fact, undertaking the Work alone. Ultimately whether the results are "correct" or not remains largely subjective, dependent on how one interprets what Gurdjieff envisioned. But, by and large, if students consistently continued to repeat old patterns it would become obvious to the group that something is not working the way it is supposed to and Tribe would be forced to change their teaching materials.

present ideas that were similar enough to be incorporated into the teaching methods of Tribe. Just as Ouspensky himself taught that a common language or terminology was vital for understanding in the sense outlined above, these two additional texts serve to define a more approachable terminology employed by Tribe so that meaningful discussion could be initiated with the group as a whole without the necessity of every member starting with the heavier – sometimes far heavier – writings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Together, these three texts provide the starting point from which Tribe begins the Work with its students.

Rick Carson's *Taming Your Gremlin: A Surprisingly Simple Method for Getting Out of Your Own Way* outlines the author's method of personal development. This method, which he calls the Gremlin-Taming Method, bears striking similarities to the multiplicity of "I's", the separation of personality and essence, and self-observation from the Fourth Way. However, in contrast to the Fourth Way, Carson's ultimate aim is not defined in terms of evolution on the cosmological scale, but rather to allow you to simply enjoy your life as it is by learning how to stop giving in to your gremlin. The difference is subtle, but important. Gremlin-Taming is focused on the idea that your attitude towards your circumstances is what you need to change so that you can be happy, a change in your perception for an improvement that goes no deeper than your life in the here and now. Gremlin-Taming is, like *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, entirely lacking in attention to cosmology, though in this case the cosmology is not part of the system, while Ouspensky has omitted the existing cosmology.

What, then, is your gremlin? According to Carson, it is not part of who you are, but the voice inside you that uses your negative thoughts, your "less-than-positive past



experiences" and your fears to make you believe that he has your best interests at heart, all with the aim of "making you miserable" with his interpretations of your life.<sup>139</sup> Gremlins do not have one single way of appearing to you; they can change their gender, voice, appearance (once you can visualize your gremlin) and methods. Carson writes, "Your gremlin can appear as your best friend and adviser, or as your grossest and most ill-intentioned enemy."<sup>140</sup> However your gremlin may appear, though, his ultimate aim is to "lead you into periods of intense anxiety, sadness, anger, and eventually emptiness."<sup>141</sup> To draw the comparison back to the Fourth Way, your gremlin is the embodiment of your negative emotions and all the "I's" that associate with those negative emotions.

Just as the Fourth Way teaches that we are not our "I's", our personality, Carson teaches that we are not our gremlins. Similar to the idea of the essence in the Fourth Way, Carson outlines that we are not our bodies, our beliefs, our thoughts or our personalities. Carson calls the "real you" the Observer – in reference to observing your gremlin – but he defines what the real you actually is in terms of an unnamable substance:

It has had hundreds of names applied to it. *Soul, spirit, prana, re, chi, ki, God*, the *primordial vibration*, to name a few. It doesn't matter what we call it, because no name can circle it. It existed before the word. I often refer to it as *true love*. But for our purposes, here and now, let's call it *life*.<sup>142</sup>

In contrast to this definition, the Fourth Way does not define the essence as having any closer relation to the Absolute than any other part of the human machine. It is only another

<sup>139</sup> Rick Carson, *Taming Your Gremlin: A Surprisingly Simple Method for Getting Out of Your Own Way*, (New York: Quill, 2003), 3-5.

<sup>140</sup> Carson, 11.

<sup>141</sup> Carson, 11.

<sup>142</sup> Carson, 2.

part of the human machine that will die either when the body dies or, in some cases, well before.

The main method of taming your gremlin is "simply noticing". By being able to look at what your gremlin is doing without reacting to him, your gremlin will eventually lose his hold on you. Carson says this method is a version of the Zen theory of change, which he paraphrases as, "I free myself not by trying to be free, but by *simply noticing* how I am imprisoning myself in the very moment I am imprisoning myself."<sup>143</sup> This is essentially the same method as self-observation. Before you can effect change, you must first learn to observe. In the Fourth Way it is the way you behave mechanically, your "I's" and their reactions, that you must begin observing, while in Gremlin-Taming it is your gremlin and his tactics for making you miserable.

Unlike many of the writings of the Fourth Way, Carson devotes his book not only to the theory, but also the practice of simply noticing. He warns that simply noticing takes effort, but differentiates between effort and strain. He emphasizes that results require effort, while being too focused on results can lead to strain, which is counter-productive.<sup>144</sup> This goes against the teachings of the Fourth Way regarding effort. Gurdjieff taught that not only effort, but super-effort is required of a student before they can achieve change. A school can push the individual to extend the boundaries of their limits through this super-effort.<sup>145</sup> Throughout the book Carson makes liberal use of a keen sense of humour to help the reader attain the proper approach to their gremlin. He is leading by example. This light attitude towards your gremlin is the effort of noticing him

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<sup>143</sup> Carson, 10.

<sup>144</sup> Carson, 8-9.

<sup>145</sup> Wellbeloved, "Super-effort," *Gurdjieff*, 200.

without the strain of taking him too seriously and worrying about him. Another differentiation Carson makes is between simply noticing and thinking about. Like the differentiation in the Fourth Way between analysis and self-observation, thinking about is trying to determine *why* you are the way you are, while simply noticing just registers *how* you are the way you are. According to Carson, the “why” will probably become apparent during the process, but it is not the aim.<sup>146</sup> Simply noticing means focusing your awareness, and to help you learn how to do this, Carson recommends concentrating on the sensory perception of your skin and on your breathing.<sup>147</sup> Like many of Gurdjieff’s exercises, the aim is to bring your awareness completely into the here and now. He suggests that every day, preferably in the morning, you take time to centre yourself, find a moment of being totally in the here and now. If you do this, you can use that moment as your home base, so to speak, the place you return to during the day when you “get knocked off centre.”<sup>148</sup>

Simply noticing is a tool to be applied to every aspect of your experience of your life: your emotions, your behavioural habits, your preconceptions, and your acts. For each of these, Carson uses examples to illustrate his point and emphasizes that simply noticing each of these is not intended to judge whether they are good or bad, but simply to identify what and how yours are in the here and now. Unlike the Fourth Way, which teaches that identifying with negative emotions can hinder personal evolution, Carson teaches that emotions are never inherently negative. For that matter, neither are habits or acts. What is negative is a negative value judgment of your emotions, or a sense that you must always

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<sup>146</sup> Carson, 26.

<sup>147</sup> Carson, 27-35.

<sup>148</sup> Carson, 38.

react in the same way to similar situations. He reinforces with each topic that you have the option to change any of these things if you want to, but that it is by no means mandatory. The main thing to remember is that many of our habits and acts are formed at one particular time, but we have the choice to decide how to respond to anything each and every time we are faced with a decision. How you deal with every situation can be different every time you are faced with it, just as surely as you can decide to handle it the same way every time. But it must be you who makes the decision every time, rather than relying unquestioningly on the tried and true.<sup>149</sup> This consciousness of the boundary between you and your gremlin is the self-remembrance of the Fourth Way.

These habits and preconceptions that Carson warns against as a byproduct of our gremlins are part of what the Fourth Way addresses as the mechanical nature of humans, and in order to be able to break free of our mechanical state we need to wake up from the sleeping state of consciousness. According to the Fourth Way, only a few people will ever be able to achieve this and, in fact, it would be counterproductive to the evolution of the universe if everyone were to wake from sleep at the same time. In contrast, Carson teaches that anyone and everyone can break free from their gremlin. Even if you never choose to change how you handle any given situation, all you require to break free is recognition that each time you are presented with a situation you have the choice of how to react. This is the second part of the Gremlin-Taming Method: Choosing and Playing with Options. The emphasis is on choosing and playing. Change is not something to be undertaken as a necessary step to your happiness, yet, a playful attitude to change as a conscious choice can help you enjoy your life more. The caution is to keep your attitude

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<sup>149</sup> Carson, 46-87.

to change light. If it becomes something that you should or must do, your gremlin is taking over and will ensnare you with a barrage of negativity surrounding the success or failure of that change.<sup>150</sup> Again, this idea of real change only being possible when you are the one in control and not your gremlin is comparable to self-remembering, being totally aware of your whole machine in that moment rather than sliding back into sleeping consciousness.

Carson goes on to offer practical approaches to change. Once you choose to change something, one method he recommends is visualization *in conjunction with* a practical plan to achieve the desired end result. He cautions that visualization alone is not enough, but as long as you use common sense to come up with a plan to help follow through on what you visualize, it is a powerful tool.<sup>151</sup> In the Fourth Way there is no practical instruction on how to effect specific changes in your life, since change is the inevitable outcome of self-observation and self-remembering in order to move from a state of sleep to consciousness. What should be apparent by the time you have read to this point in Carson's Gremlin-Taming Method is that he takes a similar view. While he remains insistent that any change must be a conscious choice and is by no means mandatory, it is highly unlikely that you will not find things you want to change while simply noticing your gremlin and the rest of your life. The key difference in simply noticing and self-observation/self-remembering, then, is not whether it will lead to change, but how.

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<sup>150</sup> Carson, 108-18.

<sup>151</sup> Carson, 119-23.

*Taming Your Gremlin* is perhaps on the surface a very different approach to personal development than the Fourth Way. Carson uses an engaging and approachable writing style, keeping the language simple and colloquial and interspersing it with plenty of practical examples and exercises. This is a sharp contrast to the highly allegorical or highly intellectualized approaches of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, which speak of esoteric teachings and philosophies that have their own specific terminology. Yet, ultimately Carson teaches very similar methods, despite his seemingly different approach. But on closer inspection, even his approach is not so very different. As outlined in Chapter 3, Gurdjieff is said to have indicated that he taught via occultism because it was what his students understood, therefore, much of the way his teachings were presented was dictated by the audience for which it was intended; it was the way they could best approach the ideas. Likewise, Carson's engaging colloquial style is employed because it is the best way to reach his target audience: the average, present-day American.

The final introductory book assigned by Tribe is Don Miguel Ruiz's *The Four Agreements*. Like the Fourth Way, Ruiz claims the lineage of his teachings in esoteric knowledge, specifically the knowledge of the Toltec. Similar to the Fourth Way, this work claims universal esoteric knowledge, and, though not a religion, touches on the nature of the universe in relation to God: "Toltec knowledge arises from the same essential unity of truth as all the sacred esoteric traditions found around the world. Though it is not a religion, it honours all the spiritual masters who have taught on the earth. While it does embrace spirit, it is most accurately described as a way of life..."<sup>152</sup> From this wisdom he teaches a method of personal development that follows, as the title

<sup>152</sup> Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*, (San Rafael, California: Amber-Allen Publishing, 1997), xiv.

suggests, four "rules" or agreements: be impeccable with your word; don't take anything personally; don't make assumptions; always do your best.

*The Four Agreements* teaches a relationship between humanity and the Absolute that is somewhere between the teachings of the Fourth Way and *Taming Your Gremlin*. Like Carson, Ruiz teaches that humans are made from the same substance as God or the Absolute, but rather than sharing this substance only in their essence, it is their whole being, and indeed all of creation, that is made of the same substance: light. Similar to the Fourth Way, the substance that makes up all of creation emanates from the Absolute, but contrarily it remains the same substance throughout all of creation, instead of undergoing the involution of various orders of matter from the Absolute down to humans and lower. This light, though, is obscured by the Dream, the illusion of reality.<sup>153</sup> So instead of the illusion relating to an individual's personality in relation to their essence, it is all of their perceived reality. The Dream is both the sleeping state of consciousness from the Fourth Way and the mechanical nature of the human being. But Ruiz takes this sleeping state even further to add that the reality we perceive is a bigger dream, created from the collective dreams of all people.<sup>154</sup>

Like Carson, Ruiz is concerned with how our attention is focused. But instead of a gremlin trying to divert our attention, for Ruiz it is every outside influence that tries to hook our attention in order to teach us the dream.<sup>155</sup> One of the main tools for this is language. Like Ouspensky, Ruiz recognizes the power of language in the understanding of the system, but he initially defines language as the language of the dream, rather than

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<sup>153</sup> Ruiz, xv-xix.

<sup>154</sup> Ruiz, 1-2.

<sup>155</sup> Ruiz, 2-4.

the system that will free us from the dream. "Language," says Ruiz, "is the code for understanding and communication between humans. Every letter, every word in each language is an agreement. We call this a page in a book; the word *page* is an agreement that we understand."<sup>156</sup> Through language we are taught all the rules and behaviours of the dream. We accept what we are taught and we *agree* with it through our acceptance.<sup>157</sup> As we learn what is considered acceptable, our parents, teachers, ministers, etc. reinforce this behaviour with praise or rejection. We eventually fear rejection so much that we become something we are not; we put on an act, in order to fit the expectations of the dream and receive the reward for fitting in with the dream. Eventually we become so accustomed to the act that we reward and punish ourselves according to the agreements we have formed with the dream. The agreements become the Book of the Law and we develop our own Judge to administer it.<sup>158</sup> As a counterpart to our Judge, we also develop the Victim. When the Judge condemns us for violating the agreements of the Book of Law, "The Victim carries the blame, the guilt, and the shame."<sup>159</sup> The Victim is comparable to the gremlin in that the Victim makes you miserable, but rather than this being the Victim's aim, the Victim is punishing you out of a skewed sense of justice. "True justice is paying only once for each mistake ... How many times do we pay for one mistake? The answer is thousands of times."<sup>160</sup> When we make a mistake our Judge condemns and our Victim punishes to an extent that is completely out of proportion with

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<sup>156</sup> Ruiz, 4.

<sup>157</sup> Ruiz, 5.

<sup>158</sup> Ruiz 6-10.

<sup>159</sup> Ruiz, 10.

<sup>160</sup> Ruiz, 12.



actual justice.<sup>161</sup> The collective result of this process is that the whole world is living a terrible dream, a nightmare, based on fear. This nightmare is the sleeping state of consciousness in the Fourth Way, and we see in the Judge and the Victim the "I's". Just as our "I's" are the parts of our personality that developed from our machine being programmed to keep us in a sleeping consciousness, the roles of Judge and Victim are a byproduct of our training to remain part of the Dream. Ruiz teaches that fear produces negative emotions (anger, jealousy, envy, hate), and that makes this nightmare based on false beliefs the reality of the hell that many religions preach.<sup>162</sup> While his analogy of hell goes further than Gurdjieff or Ouspensky ever would have, the message is still that our identification, or, in this case, our agreement, with our negative emotions limits our potential for growth. According to Ruiz, even in your individual dream you are resistant to truth, justice, and beauty because you have incorporated all of these false beliefs into your mind fog, what the Toltecs called your *mitote*, "the personality's notion of 'I am.'"<sup>163</sup> Because of these false beliefs, we convince ourselves that we must be perfect, so we create an act, a mask of perfection that we try to live up to, and then punish ourselves when we fail to live up to it.<sup>164</sup> To rephrase that idea using Fourth Way terminology, in our sleeping state of consciousness, our personality has produced "I's" that make us resistant to the correct functioning of our centres because we believe that our current mixed up use of our centres is actually what is best for us. The solution that Ruiz suggests is to establish new agreements – the Four Agreements – to break the old agreements that

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<sup>161</sup> Ruiz, 9-12.

<sup>162</sup> Ruiz, 10-14.

<sup>163</sup> Ruiz, 16.

<sup>164</sup> Ruiz, 17-20.

hold us captive to these false beliefs. These four new interrelated agreements will return our personal power, which will allow us to break the old agreements and return even more of our personal power. Eventually, these new agreements will allow us to finally break out of the nightmare of the world and create a new dream, our very own heaven.<sup>165</sup>

The first of the Four Agreements is "be impeccable with your word." Returning to the idea he already introduced of the power of the word, Ruiz says this is the most powerful of the Four Agreements – so powerful that alone it can in fact lead to this heaven on earth. Because language is the strongest tool for creating agreements, the human mind is fertile for the seeds that a person's word can plant. Most of the seeds we cultivate are going to add to this hell dream that we have created because we are conditioned to receive the seeds that are based on fear. So if someone tells you, for example, that you are stupid, you will form an agreement from their word and begin to believe that you are stupid. If you hear it several times, it only reinforces that agreement. But if someone tells you that you are actually quite smart, it can break the old agreement.<sup>166</sup> Ruiz defines impeccable as being without sin, from the Latin root of the word, *peccatus* (sic)<sup>167</sup>. Sin he defines as "anything that you do which goes against yourself ... You go against yourself when you judge or blame yourself for anything."<sup>168</sup> Since being impeccable is being without sin, "Being impeccable is not going against yourself. When you are impeccable, you take responsibility for your actions, but you do

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<sup>165</sup> Ruiz, 21-23.

<sup>166</sup> Ruiz, 25-30.

<sup>167</sup> The correct Latin word is *peccatum*, but this is how it appears in *The Four Agreements*.

<sup>168</sup> Ruiz, 31.

not judge or blame yourself.”<sup>169</sup> Because of the power that our word can have, it is a form of magic and when we use our word to form an agreement, we are using it to cast a spell. Because we are taught to use the word for things like gossip and lies we are making black magic. If we decide to stop lying, to use our word only to pass on truth, we can clean away the emotional poison left by black magic. If we start with ourselves, if we learn to love ourselves and express that self-love to ourselves, it will naturally start to spill over into our interactions with others. And if you treat others with love, they will treat you with love in return, since this is the agreement that you are forming. Eventually, you will be able to overcome the fear and begin creating your new dream.<sup>170</sup> Looking at this in terms of the Fourth Way, Ruiz is starting with the end result and working backwards. Not going against yourself, not blaming yourself, is part of Gurdjieff’s self-observation, since true self-observation is being able to see yourself, your actions, emotions, and reactions without judgment. Self-observation may lead to being impeccable with your word, as it might be comparable to a higher stage of evolution, but the Fourth Way teaches you to start with a focus on self-study, and worry about where it will lead once you can achieve the first steps. Ruiz, however, outlines the end goal first, then outlines the other agreements almost as supplementary information to help achieve the first agreement.

The second agreement is “don’t take anything personally.” This is linked to the first because it teaches us to remember that just as we are under the spell of the dream, so too is everyone else. So when someone says something hurtful that comes from fear, you should recognize it as such and not take it as a true reflection of yourself. “Personal

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<sup>169</sup> Ruiz, 31.

<sup>170</sup> Ruiz, 33-46.

importance, or taking things personally, is the maximum expression of selfishness because we make the assumption that everything is about 'me'.<sup>171</sup> While you cannot change whether or not someone is still trapped in the dream, you can choose how you react to the way they use their word with you. If you choose not to let their word control you, you will ultimately be happier.<sup>172</sup> Taking things personally can be compared to attachments in the Fourth Way. Attachments are formed in the personality and through self-observation (not blaming ourselves, not taking things personally) we can break those attachments.

The third agreement is "don't make assumptions." According to Ruiz, in almost every interaction, we make assumptions. We make assumptions when we take things personally because we are assuming that the other person is intentionally hurting us; we assume that the people we are closest to should know us so well that we don't have to tell them what we want, they should just know; when we are too afraid to ask for clarification of something (which is most of the time) we make assumptions to fill in what we are missing. More often than not, these assumptions are wrong and lead us into conflict. When you take the time to ask questions and to clarify your own positions, you will be supporting the impeccability of your word and you will eliminate much of the conflict in your interpersonal relationships.<sup>173</sup> Here again we see the need for self-observation. Underlying this agreement is the understanding that before you can stop making assumptions, you need to look closely at your behavioural patterns to determine where

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<sup>171</sup> Ruiz, 48.

<sup>172</sup> Ruiz, 47-61.

<sup>173</sup> Ruiz, 63-73.

you are making the assumptions in the first place. Thus, again, it is not the agreement itself, but the implied prerequisite that corresponds to self-observation.

The fourth agreement is "always do your best." Always doing your best is not meant to imply that you must always perform to the very highest of your potential, but that you should always do exactly what you are capable of doing from moment to moment. "Your best" is not a static characteristic; it changes based on your current abilities. For example, "When you wake up refreshed and energized in the morning, your best will be better than when you are tired at night."<sup>174</sup> The key is to recognize your strengths and limitations from one moment to the next and to operate within them, no more and no less. Trying to do more than your best results in wasted energy; it is the difference between effort and strain outlined in *Gremlin-Taming*. If you do less than your best, you leave yourself open to the Judge.<sup>175</sup> While this is in direct contrast to super-efforts of the Fourth Way, Ruiz's goal is to teach you how to enjoy your life, while the goal of the Fourth Way is evolution in its cosmological framework. For simply enjoying your life, doing your best, nothing more and nothing less, will allow you to be happy. Even when you do not always keep the other three agreements, as long as you are doing your best, you can honestly say there was nothing more that you could do and you will eliminate your regrets and be happy with what you have accomplished.<sup>176</sup>

Finally, Ruiz warns that as simple as these agreements sound, it is not an easy path to follow. The danger here is that while we may be putting the Four Agreements into practice, the rest of the world is still wrapped up in the dream of the planet. In the Fourth

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<sup>174</sup> Ruiz, 76.

<sup>175</sup> Ruiz, 75-78.

<sup>176</sup> Ruiz, 78-87.

Way the danger is not that other people are not conscious, but that it is difficult for us to remain conscious once awakened, regardless of the state of consciousness of those around us. As we saw in Chapter 2, Gurdjieff, due to his awareness of this difficulty, used exercises that shocked his students in order to ensure that they did not return to the sleeping state of consciousness. Ruiz does not go so far as to say that we are in danger of forgetting the dream and being reabsorbed by it, but he does caution that it will be a fight to maintain the four agreements in the face of so many others who are still caught up in the dream and acting accordingly.<sup>177</sup>

Most of the similarities between *The Four Agreements* and the Fourth Way concern the existing condition of the individual from which growth is necessary, yet, even these are not identical. Ruiz's methods for personal growth are entirely active, in contrast to the techniques of self-observation and simply noticing in Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and Carson, which require effort – or, indeed, supereffort in the case of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky – as opposed to action, and which are intended to recognize the initial state of the individual before change can be effected. Ruiz, however, in his *Four Agreements* is not concerned with how each individual may come to recognize their initial state. On the contrary, he outlines a general initial state that is common to all individuals, and his method therefore begins with active change and omits the stage of observation, which figures so prominently in the other two systems. In theory, this should put *The Four Agreements* at odds with the Fourth Way, since the Fourth Way teaches that we cannot do anything until we develop a will. However, despite the fact that Ruiz takes for granted that each person can see just how their own Judge and Victim works without further

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<sup>177</sup> Ruiz, 87-91.

instruction on how to recognize them, it is a useful tool for outlining what happens when we allow our "I's" to form attachments. When used in tandem with the other two works, self-observation or gremlin-taming can help us see our "I's", and the Four Agreements can help us to let go of the attachments that surround them.

The appeal of these three texts for use by Tribe lies primarily in their simplicity, but their omission or generalization of the Fourth Way cosmology is also a noteworthy characteristic. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one of the characteristics of Tribe that drives its use of the Fourth Way is its religious diversity. By separating the Work from the cosmology of the Fourth Way, the ultimate goal remains limited to an individual's immediate experience, as it is the cosmology that supplies the deeper purpose behind the growth effected by the Work. *Taming Your Gremlins* and *The Four Agreements* are aimed at strictly practical results, while the Fourth Way will lead to practical results in the pursuit of a higher ideal. While *The Four Agreements* devotes the most attention to cosmology in the use of the underlying principle that we are all made of the light of God, it is primarily used as an explanation within the system; the ultimate aim remains focused on the immediate concern of improving one's life, and the link to God remains much more simplistic than the highly developed cosmology of the Fourth Way canon. Though the Fourth Way makes no claims to being a religion, and allows adherents to simultaneously adhere to any faith they should choose, the cosmology is certainly complex enough to allow the system to fill the role of a religion, and academically it is classified as a New Religious Movement.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Wellbeloved, "Religion/s; New Religions," *Gurdjieff*, 175-77.

As a further religious consideration, Tribe not only attracts those who already have their own diverse religious beliefs, but also teaches Native North American practices and incorporates various religious rituals into their practice, primarily, but not limited to, Native North American and Neo-Pagan calendrical rituals.<sup>179</sup> Thus students may choose to incorporate the cosmology of their own existing beliefs into the way they practice the Work, or adapt any number of other belief systems, rather than being directly instructed to strictly adhere to the Fourth Way cosmology. In light of the religious considerations, the choice of texts like *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, *Taming Your Gremlin*, and *The Four Agreements* is more appropriate for Tribe, certainly at the introductory level, than Gurdjieff's works or Ouspensky's longer works, while a school whose only consideration is a study of the Fourth Way would be better served by adhering strictly to the Fourth Way canon. Or, to look at it from a different angle, the inclusion of diversified religious beliefs in their teachings in lieu of strict Fourth Way cosmology predisposes them to be one of the schools that seek to imitate Gurdjieff by incorporating modern methods, rather than preserving his teachings exactly as they were initially recorded.

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<sup>179</sup> See Chapter 5 for a more complete treatment of Tribe's rituals.



## Chapter 5: Rituals and Ceremonies

As briefly described in Chapter 3, Tribe has a rich ritual practice based primarily on Native North American practices and Wiccan calendrical rituals. However, they do not insist that members of Tribe must adhere to any particular belief system. So if Tribe do not teach particular religious beliefs, why include religious rituals?

Let us begin this enquiry with a fuller description of what these ritual practices look like. Describing Tribe's rituals can be somewhat problematic, at least to some extent, in that ritual forms in Tribe, like the rest of their teaching materials, are fairly fluid. As discussed in Chapter 3, since the aim of Tribe is growth, this means that they tend to avoid institutionalised practices that are inherently resistant to change. Thus, the exact form and content of their rituals can and does change from one ritual to the next. However, many of the rituals do tend to follow a general pattern, which is what I shall outline here.

The most formal rituals in Tribe are the calendrical rituals. They follow the Wiccan/Pagan<sup>180</sup> calendar that starts the year at Samhain on October 31, followed by Yule at the Winter Solstice in December, Imbolc on February 2, Ostara at the Spring Equinox in March, Beltane on May 1, Litha at the Summer Solstice in June, Lughnassagh on August 1, and finally Mabon at the Fall Equinox in September. These major festivals are known in Wicca as the Sabbats.<sup>181</sup> After each ritual, the priestess for the following

<sup>180</sup> While the form of Paganism that most closely fits with what Tribe does is Wicca, what they do is not strictly Wiccan. For this reason I have used both terms.

<sup>181</sup> Janet and Stewart Farrar, *Eight Sabbats for Witches* (Custer, Washington: Phoenix Publishing Inc., 1981), 61-150. While the authors chose to present the Sabbats in a different order than I have presented them here, this is for ease of describing the transitions of the seasons; they still acknowledge Samhain as the New Year of the Wiccan calendar.

ritual is chosen, and she will be responsible for choosing who will perform each role in the next Sabbat. The main exception to this is when there is a man who is serving as the priest for the whole year in order to allow the continuity of there being a single person who will go through the whole cycle of death and rebirth that the God plays out over the course of the year in many Wiccan traditions. The priestess is also responsible for planning the content of the ritual. These rituals divide the year based on the seasons, and the workings of any given ritual will typically reflect the spirit or energy of that season. Usually the priestess who is creating the ritual does so with the current short term and long term goals of Tribe in mind, and the workings of the ritual will set the tone for the direction of the activities of the group for the period of time until the following ritual.

The calendrical rituals follow a general structure that is common across most Wiccan and many other Pagan traditions.<sup>182</sup> First a circle is cast, or magically drawn, delineating the sacred space, then each of the cardinal directions and their corresponding elements are invited into the circle, known as calling the quarters, and then the priestess and priest invite the Goddess and God into the circle respectively. Once all the metaphysical players have been invited into the circle, the specific workings are carried out and ceremonial cakes and wine are served by the priestess and priest to all those in attendance in the circle. Finally, the Goddess and God, the quarters, and the circle are dismissed. The manner in which the quarters are called and the specific goddess or god called varies depending on the specific season or the specific working that is planned. Since Tribe does not adhere to any particular belief system, the priestess is free to draw from any mythos, so long as the specific figure is appropriate to the intent. For example,

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<sup>182</sup> See Farrar and Farrar, *passim*.

at Samhain, which is generally dedicated to ancestors, the dead, magic, and the intersection of the worlds,<sup>183</sup> the Greek Hecate as goddess of the crossroads and magic would be just as appropriate as the Egyptian Osiris as god of the underworld, but a goddess like the Celtic Brigid, as a goddess of fire and light, would be more appropriate for Imbolc, which celebrates the return of the light after the winter.<sup>184</sup>

To illustrate all of these points in context, let us take the example of the Litha ritual I attended in June 2009. Spring energy, being tied to the planting season and the return of life after winter, is for new beginnings,<sup>185</sup> but Summer energy is about the fullness of growing things and is used for shaping those beginnings as they grow to direct them into what will be reaped in the Fall.<sup>186</sup> Most of the members of Tribe had just returned from a trip to Nebraska to scatter Monty's ashes, and the ritual proper was essentially the focal point of a weekend long event to determine the course of Tribe in the future. Following Monty's death in the Winter, Tribe had already planted the idea that they would redefine themselves in his absence and continue forward as a group, so this ritual was about defining what that would look like. The ritual focused on the cleansing aspect of the energy of fire, the element associated with Summer, in burning away what was no longer wanted or needed, as well as using the warmth and passion of the creative energy of fire. The Goddess called upon in this ritual was Hestia, Greek goddess of the hearth, the centre of the home. As goddess of the hearth, Hestia is associated with fire, which is appropriate to the Summer ritual, but her ties to the heart of the home

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<sup>183</sup> Farrar and Farrar, 121-31.

<sup>184</sup> Farrar and Farrar, 61-66.

<sup>185</sup> Farrar and Farrar, 72-77, and 80-87.

<sup>186</sup> Farrar and Farrar, 93-97.

specifically were also appropriate to Tribe working on rebuilding the centre of its own spiritual home in the wake of Monty's absence. As part of the working, everyone wrote down something they wanted to leave behind and burned it in a communal flame on the altar, then they wrote down something they wanted to shape and bring into their own lives, which they kept. The discussion after the ritual built upon this theme as every member of Tribe contributed what they wanted to see happen to Tribe, what they were personally willing to commit to Tribe, and how to proceed forward from that point.

These major calendrical rituals, however, are far from being the only rituals that Tribe holds. In between the Sabbats, Tribe also conducts several other kinds of rituals, many based on Native North American practices. Some of these rituals are pre-planned, though not often with the same degree of planning as the Sabbats, but many are spontaneous. Sometimes individuals will come forward with a specific idea for a Pagan ritual other than the Sabbats, such as the Thurseblot that was held in January 2011. The member of Tribe who proposed this ritual described it on the forum posting on the website, saying that "According to Norse traditions, a Thurseblot is Thor's Feast: Full Moon of January. It is a minor feasting ceremony to honor Thor as he battles the Frost Giants to bring about the Spring."<sup>187</sup> The Thurseblot would be what is referred to as an esbat, a term used in Wicca to denote either a ritual at the time of the full moon, or any minor ritual outside of the major calendrical rituals.<sup>188</sup> Tribe do not hold an esbat at every full moon, rather this was a particular celebration that the individual member had been made aware of and took on the responsibility for planning.

<sup>187</sup> "Thurseblot," Navasota Tribe, <http://navatribe.org>, accessed July 15, 2011.

<sup>188</sup> I cannot describe what exactly took place at this ritual, as I was not actually present. I became aware of the ritual through the website forums.

Other rituals that are held often, but not on a set schedule, include the rituals taken from Lakota practices,<sup>189</sup> such as sweats, pipe ceremonies, walking the medicine wheel, and vision quests. Unfortunately I have never observed a vision quest and cannot therefore discuss them in any great detail, but they, like walking the medicine wheel, are more individualized, usually taking place with a student's teacher, and possibly a limited number of others, but not typically in a large open group like the other rituals. Walking the medicine wheel is exactly what it sounds like: a ritual that is conducted by walking around a form called a medicine wheel. On the Land there is a circular clearing where stones have been placed at each of the cardinal directions, with a lightly worn path from each of those stones to the centre, like four spokes of a wheel. This is the physical representation of the medicine wheel of Native North American spiritual practices. A student begins at the east stone, since the East represents beginnings, and is guided by their teacher through walking to the centre of the circle, where they pause to observe, then returning to the stone, and walking clockwise to the stone in the south. This process is repeated through each of the four directions until the student is back at the stone in the east. During this process the student will have received messages, in the form, for example, of animals that might appear, the significance of which the student will discuss and figure out with the aid of their teacher. These tend to be very personal rituals and will differ significantly for each person.

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<sup>189</sup> As the use of Native North American practices outside of Native communities can be a sensitive subject, it is worth mentioning that these practices may not be identical to the way Natives themselves practice these rituals. However, as I am only describing here how Tribe uses their rituals within their own group, I am not qualified to comment on their authenticity or how they compare to the Native usage, and will therefore limit my descriptions to that which I actually observed in Tribe.

Sweats take place in the sweat lodge that Tribe built on the Land. There is both a general sweat and a women's sweat. These are simple dome structures, not quite tall enough at the edges for someone of average height to stand up straight. There are benches lining the wall with a pit in the centre where the hot stones used to create the steam are placed, and a single entrance covered by a flap. At each sweat there are generally only two people who have specific roles; the firekeeper, who heats the stones in the fire and places them in the sweat, and generally assists those entering or leaving the sweat lodge; and the sweat leader, who is the first person in and the last person out, controlling the humidity and intensity of the sweat as the person who pours the water over the stones, and determining the length of time the round of the sweat will last. Sweats are usually held after dark, and Tribe generally begin the sweat with a pipe ceremony<sup>190</sup> in the open air before they enter the sweat lodge. They enter the sweat in the order of their hierarchy, which is, roughly, the sweat leader, then each of the Adults according to whether or not they have students and/or how long they have been with Tribe, followed by the Children (if they are included), again, according to how long they have been with Tribe.<sup>191</sup> Inside the sweat lodge there is the option of sitting on the benches provided or directly on the dirt floor. Once everyone is inside and settled, the sweat leader tells the firekeeper to bring in the hot stones and once the stones are in place he or she begins pouring water over the stones to create steam. Usually after a few moments of silence, someone will begin making some kind of noise. This can be anything from a kind of grunting to whooping to wordless singing, or any other number of vocalizations. Sometimes those

<sup>190</sup> Pipe ceremonies are discussed more fully below.

<sup>191</sup> Adults and Children here does not refer to the age of the person, but rather their stage of initiation. See Chapter 3.

who have come to the site but not entered the sweat will have noisemakers and will join in the noise from outside. People join in the noises as they feel inclined throughout the sweat, the sounds swelling and dissipating at random, but generally falling into a fairly unified pattern, until finally the sweat leader says "all my relatives" to indicate the end of the round and everyone files out in reverse order. The sweat leader will then determine if there is to be another round, and if so, the process will repeat. Once the sweat is done, everyone will return to Linda's house to discuss the experience. There are some particular restrictions on who may enter any given sweat. For example, generally the only man who participates in any way in a women's sweat is the firekeeper, menstruating women do not generally participate in a general sweat, and some sweats may be adult only. Metal is also not generally permitted, though this is at least partly a practical consideration. And while many members of Tribe choose to participate in the sweat naked, it is not mandatory, though it is strongly recommended that any clothing that is worn be kept light and minimally covering, again, primarily as a practical consideration, as the sweat gets very hot.

Pipe ceremonies are perhaps one of the most common rituals performed in Tribe as they are used "for the purpose of opening a space in which to commune both with our own personal spiritual natures, and with spirits which may wish to commune with us."<sup>192</sup> Accordingly, this can be either the ceremony for its own sake, or it may be performed in conjunction with another ritual, such as the sweats, or before any gathering of the community, as a gateway to opening a specific state of being. The pipe ceremony is led by a Pipe Carrier, who typically stands in the West of the circle formed by the group for

<sup>192</sup> David Daniel, July 25, 2011, personal email message, (accessed July 26, 2011).

the ceremony. The Pipe Carrier begins the ritual by packing the pipe, one pinch of tobacco at a time; they offer one pinch each to each of the cardinal directions, the Earth below, and the Sky above, asking the spirits of each to "have pity on us". Every individual Pipe Carrier brings their own personal nuance to how they perform the ceremony and one example of this is how they each call those spirits. For example, one uses only the female, calling them all "Grandmother", another genders them separately "calling them Grandmothers in the East and West and Grandfathers in the North and South, and a Great Grandmother Earth, and Great Grandfather Sky"<sup>193</sup>, while still another calls in Old Norse. Once the pipe is packed, the Pipe Carrier lights the pipe and offers blessings silently with the puffs of smoke, then passes the pipe to the left so it travels the circle clockwise. As each participant takes the pipe they are encouraged to keep the stem pointing to the West, towards the Pipe Carrier, as much as possible, and they have the option to smoke the pipe, or, if for any reason they choose not to smoke from the pipe, they can touch the pipe stem to each of their shoulders and their forehead as an alternate means of receiving blessings, honouring the pipe, and, if desired, offering personal prayers. While the pipe is being passed, the Pipe Carrier leads drumming/chanting. Similar to the sweat, this is typically "non-structured and organic, though it may often fall into patterns after a time."<sup>194</sup> Frequently, all participants are encouraged to bring instruments like drums and rattles, but the Pipe Carrier may also request that only certain designated drummers use the instruments. Once the pipe has gone around the full circle, the Pipe Carrier takes a final smoke. This serves to complete the circle, but it also affords

<sup>193</sup> David Daniel, July 25, 2011, personal email message, (accessed August 4, 2011).

<sup>194</sup> David Daniel, July 25, 2011, personal email message, (accessed August 4, 2011).



the Pipe Carrier the opportunity for any last requests, such as asking the spirits to remember the prayers of those who could not be present in the circle, for example. Then the drumming and singing end and the Pipe Carrier separates the stem from the bowl of the pipe to complete the ceremony.

So how do all these rituals relate to Tribe's practice of the Fourth Way? When I asked my informants about this relationship in interviews, they each indicated in some way that ritual somehow removes them from the mundane, though the function of that removal differs slightly for each person. Victor Turner, possibly the most influential voice in ritual studies, has a term for this phenomenon of removal from the mundane in ritual: he calls it liminality. Turner borrows and expands this term from Arnold van Gennep's *Les Rites de Passage*. Turner writes that,

Van Gennep has shown that all rites of passage or "transition" are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying "threshold" in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase ... [signifies] the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both. During the intervening "liminal" period, the characteristics of the ritual subject ... are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated.<sup>155</sup>

His definition here is specifically in relation to rites of passage, but he also mentions liminality in calendrical rituals in his article "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual."<sup>156</sup> Here he argues that rites of passage tend to strip the participant of status before elevating them to a new status, whereas in calendrical rites the participant is elevated

<sup>155</sup> Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 327.

<sup>156</sup> Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolism," in *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, by Victor Turner (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 20-60.

during the liminal phase, and returned to their original status. In the latter, the difference in the participant from before and after the ritual, then, is that they have now been ritually prepared for the season to come, and the activities associated with this season.<sup>197</sup> Tribe has rituals that might fall under each of these categories. The easiest to categorize are the calendrical rituals as they are exactly the type of ritual Turner was talking about. Pipe Ceremonies would also, more often than not, fall into the same category as calendrical rituals, given that they are intended to invoke a general elevated state, rather than demarcating a permanent transition. Based on the way my informants described their experience of rituals, they seem to have had rituals in mind that more closely followed what Turner described of calendrical rituals than rites of passage.

For one informant, the liminality he experiences is that of experiencing the higher forms of man. This is in reference to Ouspensky's Man Number 1, 2, 3, etc., referenced in Chapter 4. He describes the transcendent experience in ritual as offering him a glimpse into what a more evolved person might look like all the time. While this experience only lasts for the duration of the ritual, it still gives him the example of something to aim for in between rituals.<sup>198</sup> For another informant, the way he experiences liminality is as an opportunity for self-observation. He describes ritual as creating a moment outside of time, simultaneously eternal and singularly present. In his opinion, this eternal moment, this eternal now, creates ideal conditions to practice self-remembering and self-observation.<sup>199</sup> Likewise, while Linda does not describe the same sense of removal, she also identifies the

<sup>197</sup> Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid," 24-25.

<sup>198</sup> Lewis Callaway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>199</sup> Steve Shabek, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

primary purpose of rituals in Tribe as an opportunity for self-observation.<sup>200</sup> The pipe ceremony might serve as an example of a ritual that might open up new avenues to aid in observation. To draw a comparison with Gurdjieff, the movements he used as one of his tools for self-study included positions that were to be held for long periods of time, precisely because it stills the person holding the position and produces sensations – albeit physically in this case – that are outside the normal range of a person's experience.<sup>201</sup> Participation in a pipe ceremony requires, and will naturally produce, a more peaceful and contemplative frame of mind in the participant than the average person experiences in the run of an average day. When the mind is still, it facilitates self-observation.

But none of these states are meant to be permanent. While the state of liminality may persist beyond the formal ritual, by hours or even up to days, depending on the context of the ritual and the individual, it does pass. In some cases, particularly the rite of passage from Child to Adult,<sup>202</sup> the ritual itself may have evoked a change, but for the most part, rituals serve more in the function that Turner identified with calendrical rituals, as a means of establishing a norm. When a student is having trouble with self-study, they at least have their experience of ritual to draw upon so that they may find it easier to recreate what they experienced as a means of aiding in self-observation and self-remembering. Or, as Lewis described, it may be a means for the student to conceptualize what their ultimate goal looks like. Alternately, the ritual may have established goals for

<sup>200</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>201</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>202</sup> I cannot comment on the specifics of this rite of passage as I have never witnessed it. I am somewhat aware of two examples; one occurred during a sweat, and the other occurred during a vision quest. This is the extent of my knowledge of that particular rite.

all of the participants that are meant to inform their actions post-ritual, as is typical of the Sabbats.

On the most basic levels all these ceremonies and rituals serve to unite and focus the group around their goals. This is what Turner referred to as *communitas*. In "Liminality and Communitas" he outlines *communitas* as the underlying sense of community created during the liminal phase of ritual. For Turner, during the ritual, regardless of the hierarchy outside of ritual, the participants enter a relatively homogenous state as a "communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders."<sup>203</sup> This state of *communitas*, "[gives] recognition to an essential and generic human bond."<sup>204</sup> In *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, he elaborates on this, indicating that this state of *communitas* can allow ritual to function as a means of implementing social norms in a group. But he does not believe that just any ritual can harness *communitas* in this way. "Communitas in ritual," he writes, "can only be evoked easily when there are many occasions outside the ritual on which *communitas* has been achieved."<sup>205</sup> With the emphasis of the importance of group practice in the Fourth Way and the emphasis of community taken from the incorporation of Lakota practices, Tribe certainly strives to achieve what Turner calls *communitas* in all aspects of their time together. The result is that they quite easily achieve this state of *communitas* in ritual, which serves both to perpetuate *communitas* in non-ritual activities, and to facilitate the aspect of ritual as establishing certain behaviours or aims within the group. Referring back to the calendrical rituals described above, the sense of *communitas* is what

<sup>203</sup> Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," 328.

<sup>204</sup> Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," 328.

<sup>205</sup> Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 56.

gives the ritual the ability to function as a means of establishing what the group as a whole wishes to accomplish in the coming months. Likewise it is the sense of *communitas* that allows a simple ritual like the Pipe Ceremony to invoke the state of liminality required for whatever activity follows the ceremony.

Looking at the rituals through the lens of Turner's theories of liminality and *communitas* helps us to understand how these rituals might function as tools for the practice of the Fourth Way. But that still leaves the question of why use rituals that reflect Wiccan/Pagan or Lakota spiritual practices in particular? Why not any other religion?

When asking Linda to clarify the relationship of the ritual practices of Tribe and the spiritual beliefs they taught, she made a clear distinction between religion and spirituality. Essentially, she equates religion with the dogma, the inflexible aspect of institutionalized religion, and viewing God as something immovable with which the practitioner has no direct or reciprocal communication. Whereas spirituality for her is the experiential relationship, the direct contact of the practitioner to the spirit world, the divine, or whatever other term one chooses to apply.<sup>206</sup> The example she uses to illustrate this differentiation is that "[Jesus said] 'seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened,' and most people sit in front of the door asking 'O God, what's wrong? Make my life better.'"<sup>207</sup> The point she is illustrating is that even Christianity, as one of the religions that is largely regarded as having accumulated some of the most dogma, can still be used as a basis for growth when stripped of the years of tradition that have led to this attitude of "God, fix it for me" that she describes. But you cannot expect to just have

<sup>206</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>207</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

things handed to you without work; you have to take that step from sitting in front of the door whining to becoming an active agent. As discussed in Chapter 3, when asked how they decided what rituals to use for Tribe, Linda indicated that it was simply what worked for the group, and if and when it no longer worked, they'd change it. She went on to explain that she and Monty had come to the conclusion that the Fourth Way could really be practiced alongside any belief system, as "[the Fourth Way] would only enhance you in that belief system,"<sup>208</sup> which was one of its strengths. The unspoken caveat in her consistent application of the term "spiritual" or "spirituality", rather than "religious" and "religion", is that whatever system the practitioner subscribes to, it must be with the understanding that the practitioner must take the active role in their beliefs. This is not so far from what Gurdjieff himself had to say about using occultism to teach his ideas. "Gurdjieff ... taught via occultism because it was a subject his pupils had studied," but he also said that it was not necessary to approach an understanding of the truth through occultism.<sup>209</sup> Students of the Fourth Way are encouraged to question their teachers, to discover the truth for themselves, rather than simply accepting everything they are told at face value. With that in mind, to insist on the adherence to a particular set of religious beliefs would be counter-intuitive within the context of the Work, so long as the beliefs the student adheres to do not somehow inhibit their participation. Thus, what is important is for the student to simply understand the faith perspective that these rituals come from so that they might participate, rather than requiring that the student adhere to those beliefs. Just as Ouspensky argues in *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* that to

<sup>208</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

<sup>209</sup> Wellbeloved, "Changes", <http://www.cesur.org/2001/london2001/wellbeloved.htm>.

begin the Work a student must accept the definitions of the terminology as he has set them out,<sup>210</sup> so too a student in Tribe must understand the beliefs that underlie the rituals. Just as the terminology is a teaching tool that can be changed to include Gremlins and Agreements, so too is ritual a teaching tool, and so too must there be a common understanding in order for the tool to be effective, regardless of which words are used to describe it. Wicca and Lakota beliefs and practices provide the framework for Tribe's rituals largely because those are the spiritual backgrounds that provide the most common ground for those involved. Furthermore, Linda and Monty felt that certain practices lent themselves to growth more than others, such as the vision quests and sojourns of the Lakota, which, they felt, facilitate self-observation.<sup>211</sup> But just as accepting Ouspensky's definition of psychology within the Work, for example, does not mean that one must abandon all other definitions of the word, now considering them false, so too participation in these rituals does not have to mean that the student must have no other religious beliefs. So long as they can still make use of the ritual as a tool for growth, what they consider to be their own religious or spiritual truth remains their own choice.

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<sup>210</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>211</sup> Linda Galloway, interview by author, Navasota, Texas, June 26, 2009.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

When Gurdjieff first started teaching his particular brand of personal growth in the early twentieth century, he had always intended it to be a living tradition, based far more on the experience of the teacher-student relationship than any written text. After years of failed attempts at making his system self-perpetuating, he finally began committing to paper a written version of his teachings and allowed other students to make their own attempts at doing the same, for fear that his teachings might otherwise be lost or irretrievably altered in their transmission. But has he succeeded in transmitting his life's work as he intended it?

The short answer is, we cannot know for certain. Because of the allegorical nature of his own writings it is difficult at best to interpret them, and thus we cannot be certain that any interpretation of his writing is what he had in mind. Certainly his legacy has survived since there are so many different Fourth Way schools in operation today. But each school is very different from every other school, and each has its own particular strengths to recommend it as the truest example of what Gurdjieff intended for the Work, just as each has areas that are vulnerable to criticism from others who believe they have the Truth of Gurdjieff's system. The Gurdjieff Foundations maintain their unbroken lineage, but are as institutions resistant to change, which, as we discussed in Chapter 3, is in opposition to the aim of facilitating change and growth. On the other hand, Tribe is a fine example of a group which in many ways seem to have more accurately understood the principles of implementing the Work. If we take the spirit of Gurdjieff's teaching style, as exemplified by his own actions, as a more accurate model of how he intended the



Work to be transmitted, Tribe's incorporation of rituals to facilitate self-observation and supplementary texts to introduce more approachable terminology are certainly more in line with how Gurdjieff himself taught. Despite the complexity of the subtleties of Gurdjieff's system, he did not want the concepts to be entirely alien to the students he was attracting, and thus chose to echo the occultism that was so popular at the time to facilitate their understanding. Likewise, Tribe incorporated materials that are more familiar and easily understandable for its students. However, since Tribe does not attribute its claim to the Fourth Way to a direct lineage from any of Gurdjieff's own students, the validity of calling its practice Fourth Way may be open to criticism.

We cannot know whether any of the Fourth Way groups currently in operation have taken the Work in the direction that Gurdjieff intended. But it is obvious that a viable, living tradition has survived him, and will survive for some time, whether none or all of them have found a methodology of which Gurdjieff himself would have approved. In their very existence, at least, we can be sure that they have fulfilled one of Gurdjieff's hopes for the future of his life's work.

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