

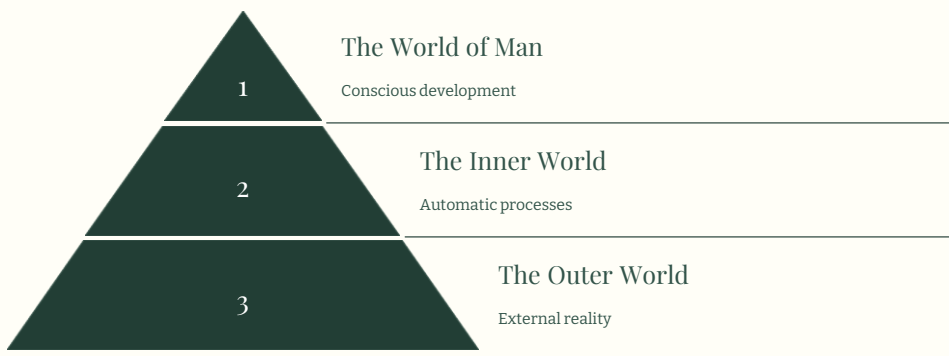
G.I. Gurdjieff's Inner World of Man

A Comprehensive Guide

This document explores G.I. Gurdjieff's profound teachings on human consciousness and self-development as presented in his work "Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'." Gurdjieff's philosophy centers on the concept that humans exist in three distinct worlds: the outer world of physical reality, the inner world of automatic processes, and the "world of man" that emerges through conscious effort. Through detailed examination of his key concepts, practical exercises, and personal insights, this guide illuminates Gurdjieff's path to awakening and the development of a true "I" - the state where, as he asserts, life becomes real.



The Three Worlds of Human Existence



At the foundation of Gurdjieff's teaching lies his conception of human existence as comprising three distinct worlds. The outer world represents the physical reality we all perceive—our environment, social interactions, and the material universe. This is the most obvious dimension of our experience, yet Gurdjieff cautions against being solely defined by it.

The inner world constitutes our subjective experience—our thoughts, emotions, and automatic reactions. Crucially, Gurdjieff characterizes this inner world as largely mechanical and unconscious. For the ordinary person, this inner world operates without genuine awareness, driven by external stimuli and conditioned responses rather than conscious choice.

The third dimension, which Gurdjieff calls the "world of man," emerges only through deliberate effort and self-development. Unlike the automatic inner world, this realm represents true consciousness and intentionality. As Gurdjieff states, "if he has worked on himself, and has become a so to say 'candidate for another life,' he has even three worlds." This third world allows for genuine agency and self-direction, transcending the limitations of mechanical existence.



The Development of a True "I"



1 Self-Remembering

The practice of maintaining conscious awareness in every moment, breaking free from habitual patterns of thought and behavior.

2

Conscious Labor

Deliberate effort undertaken with awareness and intention, aimed at self-transformation and overcoming automatic behavior.

3

Intentional Suffering

Willingly facing difficulties as catalysts for growth, confronting weaknesses to build inner strength.

4

Integration of Being

Achieving a unified consciousness where thought, feeling, and action align under the direction of a developed "I."

Central to Gurdjieff's teaching is the imperative to develop a true "I"—an authentic center of consciousness that can direct one's life with intention rather than mechanical reactivity. The ordinary person, according to Gurdjieff, lacks this unified "I" and instead functions as "a blind tool of everything taken together." Without this development, humans remain essentially asleep, living in illusion rather than reality.

Gurdjieff emphasizes that this development requires persistent effort: "But in me is not yet atrophied the possibility of actualizing conscious labor and intentional suffering! . . . According to all past events I must still be. I wish! . . . and will be!!" This passionate declaration reveals both the difficulty and the possibility of transformation through determined work on oneself.

The path to developing this "I" involves cultivating three fundamental impulses: "I am," "I can," and "I wish." As Gurdjieff explains, "If 'I am,' only then 'I can'; if 'I can,' only then do I deserve and have the objective right to wish." These impulses, when properly integrated, form the foundation of authentic being and action.



Self-Remembering

The Key to Awakening

The Sleep of Ordinary Life

Gurdjieff contends that most people live in a state of "sleep," operating on automatic pilot without genuine awareness. This mechanical existence prevents us from experiencing life fully and realizing our potential. As he observes throughout his work, this sleep-like state is the normal condition of humanity, not a deviation from it.

The practice of self-remembering serves as an antidote to this unconscious living. It involves maintaining awareness of oneself while simultaneously engaging with the world—a divided attention that keeps one present rather than lost in thoughts, emotions, or external stimuli.

The practice of self-remembering stands as perhaps the most essential element in Gurdjieff's system. Through this discipline, one begins to observe the mechanical nature of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions without identification, creating space for genuine choice and conscious direction. This vigilant self-observation serves as the foundation for all other aspects of inner work.

The Practice of Presence

Self-remembering constitutes what Gurdjieff calls a "never-sleeping-regulating-factor," a continuous effort to remain conscious of oneself in the midst of life's activities. This practice helps break the chain of automatic reactions that typically govern human behavior.

Gurdjieff describes moments of awakening through self-remembering as revelatory: "But what is this!!! Can it be really so?!! A new thought!!! Why hitherto could there not have come to my head such a simple thought?" These breakthroughs represent glimpses of a more conscious way of being that can gradually become more stable through persistent practice.

Practical Exercises for Inner Development

Exercise 1: Cultivating "I Am"

Gurdjieff provides detailed instructions for an exercise focused on developing the sensation of "I am." The practitioner should "concentrate the greater part of your attention on the words themselves, 'I am,' and the lesser part concentrate on the solar plexus." Through repetition and focused attention, this practice aims to create a tangible sensation of presence centered in the body.

Exercise 2: Conscious Breathing

Another exercise involves observing the breath with full awareness. Gurdjieff instructs practitioners to consciously follow the sensation of air entering the body and spreading throughout, maintaining attention on this process without distraction. This practice strengthens the connection between physical sensation and conscious awareness.

Exercise 3: Constructive Self-Deception

Perhaps most surprisingly, Gurdjieff advocates for a form of intentional "self-deception" as a tool for development. Unlike ordinary self-deception, which happens unconsciously, this practice involves deliberately using this tendency as a means of self-observation and transformation, turning a typically negative trait into a catalyst for growth.

Gurdjieff emphasizes that these exercises are merely starting points, designed to give practitioners a taste of the possibilities of inner work. Their effectiveness depends on consistent application and sincere effort. He cautions against mechanical repetition without understanding, stressing that the exercises must be approached with full presence and intention.

The ultimate aim of these practices is to cultivate a permanent state of self-awareness that transforms one's entire being. As Gurdjieff notes, this work requires patience and persistence: "The more sincere you are with one another, the more useful you will be to one another." Group work under proper guidance provides essential support for maintaining these practices through inevitable challenges and setbacks.

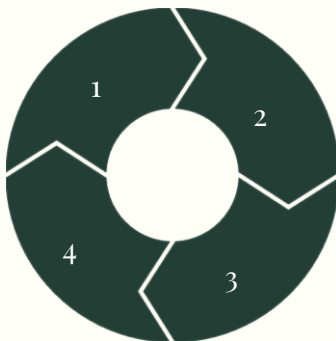
The Role of Suffering and Conscious Labor

Recognition of Necessity

Acknowledging the essential role of difficulty in transformation

Transformation of Energy

Converting the force of suffering into fuel for growth



Intentional Confrontation

Willingly facing challenges rather than avoiding them

Conscious Endurance

Remaining aware through discomfort without mechanical reaction

Gurdjieff places significant emphasis on the transformative power of what he terms "conscious labor and intentional suffering." Unlike ordinary suffering, which happens to us involuntarily and often leads to resentment or despair, intentional suffering involves willingly facing difficulties as opportunities for growth. This approach transforms suffering from something merely endured into a catalyst for inner development.

As Gurdjieff writes during his own period of illness and struggle: "But in me is not yet atrophied the possibility of actualizing conscious labor and intentional suffering!" This declaration reflects his conviction that even in the most challenging circumstances, these practices remain available as tools for transformation. The key distinction lies in one's relationship to difficulty—approaching it with awareness and purpose rather than mechanical resistance.

Conscious labor complements intentional suffering as the active dimension of inner work. It involves making deliberate efforts against the grain of mechanical habits and comfortable patterns. Together, these practices generate the energy necessary for genuine transformation, allowing one to transcend the limitations of ordinary consciousness and develop a true "I."

Vibrations, Radiations, and the Human Psyche



Universal Vibrations

Gurdjieff describes a universe permeated by vibrations emanating from all concentrations of matter. "First of all, you must know that throughout the entire Universe every concentration, to whatever species it belongs, has the property of giving off radiations." These cosmic vibrations influence all aspects of existence, including human psychology.



Psychic Centers

The human psyche, according to Gurdjieff, consists of distinct centers that emit their own specific vibrations. He differentiates between "sensing" associated with "motor nerve nodes" and "feeling" connected to "sympathetic nerve nodes," particularly the solar plexus. Each center contributes different qualities to our experience.



Harmonization

Inner development involves bringing these various centers and their vibrations into harmony. Through conscious work, one can refine the quality and intensity of one's inner radiations, creating a more integrated and powerful presence that resonates differently with the surrounding world.

Gurdjieff's understanding of human psychology extends beyond conventional approaches to incorporate a cosmological dimension. He views humans as transmitters and receivers of subtle energies that connect us to the broader universe. The quality of these energies depends on our level of being—the more conscious and integrated we become, the finer and more powerful our radiations.

This perspective helps explain why Gurdjieff places such emphasis on inner transformation. By developing a true "I" and harmonizing our various functions, we not only change our subjective experience but also alter our objective relationship with the cosmos. We become capable of perceiving and interacting with subtler dimensions of reality that remain inaccessible to ordinary consciousness.



The Path Forward

Integration and Application

1 Sincere Self-Observation

Begin with honest assessment of your current state, observing without judgment the mechanical patterns that govern your thoughts, feelings, and actions. This foundation of self-knowledge provides the necessary starting point for all further work.

2 Regular Practice

Implement Gurdjieff's exercises consistently, particularly self-remembering and the cultivation of "I am." These practices gradually strengthen your capacity for presence and weaken the grip of automatic reactions.

3 Community Support

Seek others engaged in similar work, as Gurdjieff emphasized the importance of group efforts: "No one of you separately is capable of doing anything real at all; therefore, even for the sake of only an egoistic aim, help one another." The mirror of others provides essential feedback for genuine development.

4 Integration into Daily Life

Apply these principles to ordinary activities, transforming daily challenges into opportunities for conscious labor and intentional suffering. The true test of this work lies not in special conditions but in the midst of everyday existence.

Gurdjieff's teachings offer a comprehensive approach to human transformation that remains as relevant today as when he first articulated them. In a world increasingly dominated by distraction and mechanical reactions, his emphasis on consciousness and presence provides a powerful antidote to the sleep of ordinary existence.

The journey he describes is not easy—it demands persistent effort and the willingness to face uncomfortable truths about ourselves. Yet the potential rewards are profound: the development of a genuine "I" that can direct one's life with intention rather than reactivity, and the experience of a more vivid and authentic existence where, as the title of his work suggests, "life is real."

As Gurdjieff advises his readers: diligently strive to understand these teachings, for in them lies the potential to achieve inner peace and mitigate futile worries and suffering. The path he outlines is not merely philosophical but practical—a way of living that transforms theory into lived experience through conscious engagement with every aspect of life.