

Preface

I have been developing occult knowledge and realization, sometimes employing austere means to do so, since at least the second month of 1972. I have had my ups and downs in that time-frame, of course. Previous to that, I became interested in esoteric thought in January of 1971, although I was starting to become more and more connected to it—without consciously knowing that I was doing so—since the late Sixties. As such, it is a bit surprising to me that I only first heard of Ouspensky sometime in the very late Nineties. I have pondered this delay.

After I purchased a worn paperback copy of his chief treatise, The Fourth Way, in a San Antonio used bookstore, I practically studied it every day for a period of many months; this was just after the turn of the century. I was greatly attracted to its teachings, but some of the statements contradicted what I had not only been taught but had come to practically apply during the previous three decades.

Of all the Western teachers who wrote or spoke on the topic of occultism, I have concluded that Mr. Ouspensky and Carl Jung were the cream of the crop. However, I still must give pride of place to Ouspensky. Both emphasized psychology in their teachings, but Ouspensky took it a stage further in my estimation. I especially admired his teaching—and its practical application—concerning magnetic center and the Law of Octaves. There is so much that is praiseworthy in The Fourth Way.

Now, I have also considered the basic biography and teachings of Ouspensky's original master, G. I. Gurdjieff. I have viewed a three-part documentary presented by one of his chief post-modern disciples, William Patrick Patterson (it was not complimentary toward Ouspensky). I have watched a movie, made in the Seventies, about Gurdjieff's early life. I am sent an online newsletter from a fourth way school each month that honors both men. As such, I have not allowed myself a limited perspective about fourth way teachings from Ouspensky alone.

Ouspensky spoke about the importance of putting everything together, but my task here is even a bit more difficult than that. What I took upon myself to accomplish—and this book is a testament to my effort in this connection—is to make a running commentary on what I considered to be the chief teachings of P. D. Ouspensky in The Fourth

Way. My training, discipline, and initiation is in a Vedic line, not a fourth way school. As such, my commentary is from that perspective.

There is no way to make a comprehensive study of Ouspensky, especially in the form of a commentary and comparative analysis, without quoting many of his statements from The Fourth Way. As you will see, I have done this. At the end of the book, I have listed just where each quotation can be located in his book. With very few exceptions, the quotations used in my chapters correspond to his same chapter numbers in The Fourth Way. Of course, since I added a Seventeenth Chapter, there is no similar correspondence there, as The Fourth Way ends in sixteen chapters. In my concluding **Notes on Sources** section, I have repeated the particulars from the hardcopy edition of The Fourth Way that I used in order to create the book you are now reading; I paid a high price for that copy.

At the fag end of his life, Mr. Ouspensky told his chief disciple, Rodney Collin, that he should formulate his own system. Mr. Patterson, in the third part of his Gurdjieff documentary, had himself (Patterson) filmed consulting Ouspensky's notes kept at Yale from the last years of his life. There, in one of those notes, Mr. Ouspensky had written that he was having a hard time (I am paraphrasing the actual note empathetically here) following the disciplines of his own system. I am not criticizing Ouspensky in revealing any of this, only pointing out that this is another indication that, in the end, he may have concluded his system to be imperfect.

Mr. Ouspensky did not favor lunatics. If you are able to understand my treatise, then I am pleased to help you make advancement in occult realization. If you want to follow Mr. Ouspensky in every single particular, and if your school stresses the importance of doing just that, then you will, at best, only get a limited benefit from my treatise. It should be clear to most readers that I am fond of Ouspensky, but that I also do not consider him absolute. Had I come into contact with a powerful manifestation of one of his branches (school) in the early Seventies, the course of my life would have turned. However, I did not, and it did not. Instead, I came into contact with a school which, *at that time*, represented the cream of Vedic knowledge and discipline. This book is the result.

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J. K. GOODWIN, April 13, 2009