

George Gurdjieff

General

"**George Ivanovich Gurdjieff**^[3] (/ˈɡɜːrdʒijɛf/, **Russian**: Георгий Ива́нович Гурджиев, **Greek**: Γεώργιος Γεωργιάδης, **Armenian**: Գեորգի Գյուրջիւլև; 31 March 1866/14 January 1872/28 November 1877 – 29 October 1949^[4]) was a **mystic, philosopher, spiritual teacher**, and **composer** of **Armenian** and **Greek** descent, born in **Alexandrapol** (now **Gyumri**), **Armenia**.^[5] Gurdjieff taught that most humans do not possess a unified consciousness and thus live their lives in a state of hypnotic "waking sleep", but that it is possible to awaken to a higher state of consciousness and achieve full human potential. Gurdjieff described a method attempting to do so, calling the discipline "The Work"^[6] (connoting "work on oneself") or "the System".^[7] According to his principles and instructions,^[8] Gurdjieff's method for awakening one's consciousness unites the methods of the **fakir**, **monk** and **yogi**, and thus he referred to it as the "**Fourth Way**".^[9]" (Source [Wikipedia](#))

Methods

"The Work" is in essence a training in the development of consciousness. Gurdjieff used a number of methods and materials, including meetings, music, movements (sacred dance), writings, lectures, and innovative forms of group and individual work. Part of the function of these various methods was to undermine and undo the ingrained habit patterns of the mind and bring about moments of insight. Since each individual has different requirements, Gurdjieff did not have a one-size-fits-all approach, and he adapted and innovated as circumstance required.^[60] In Russia he was described as keeping his teaching confined to a small circle.^[61] whereas in Paris and North America he gave numerous public demonstrations.^[62]

Gurdjieff felt that the traditional methods of self-knowledge—those of the **fakir**, **monk**, and **yogi** (acquired, respectively, through pain, devotion, and study)—were inadequate on their own and often led to various forms of stagnation and one-sidedness. His methods were designed to augment the traditional paths with the purpose of hastening the developmental process. He sometimes called these methods The Way of the Sly Man^[63] because they constituted a sort of short-cut through a process of development that might otherwise carry on for years without substantive results. The teacher, possessing consciousness, sees the individual requirements of the disciple and sets tasks that he knows will result in a transformation of consciousness in that individual. Instructive historical parallels can be found in the annals of **Zen** Buddhism, where teachers employed a variety of methods (sometimes highly unorthodox) to bring about the arising of **insight** in the student." (Source [Wikipedia](#))

Controversy

"Almost from the beginning of Gurdjieff's teaching mission in the West, he was surrounded by controversy, rumour and speculation.

Critics, outside observers and even some of his own students questioned his intentions, credentials as a spiritual teacher, methods, traditional attitudes and beliefs, use of alcohol, sexual behavior and validity of the ideas he presented.

Was he a genuine spiritual teacher or a charlatan, an 'Emissary from Above' or a 'black magician'?" (Source [G. Fourth Way](#))

See also Responses on [Wikipedia](#).

References

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- "Gurdjieff's teachings were transmitted through special conditions and through special forms leading to consciousness: Group Work, physical labor, crafts, ideas exchanges, arts, music, movement, dance, adventures in nature ... enabled the unrealized individual to transcend the mechanical, acted-upon self and ascend from mere personality to self-actualizing essence."[[][Seekerbooks.comArchived](#) 2008-06-20 at the [Wayback Machine](#), Book review of Gary Lachman. *In Search of the Miraculous: Genius in the Shadow of Gurdjieff*.
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- G.I. Gurdjieff (1963) *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, Chapter 11
- See *In Search of the Miraculous*

See also

- [Gurdjieff's Cosmology](#)
- [Gurdjieff's teachings in practise](#)