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The Four Paths to Immortality

Introduction to Gnostic Studies





Why are we here?
What is the goal of our spiritual work?





The Spiritual Paths

“It is necessary clearly to understand the idea that the ways are the only possible methods for the development of man's hidden possibilities. This in turn shows how difficult and rare such development is. The development of these possibilities is not a law. The law for man is existence in the circle of mechanical influences, the state of 'man-machine.' The way of the development of hidden possibilities is a way against nature...”

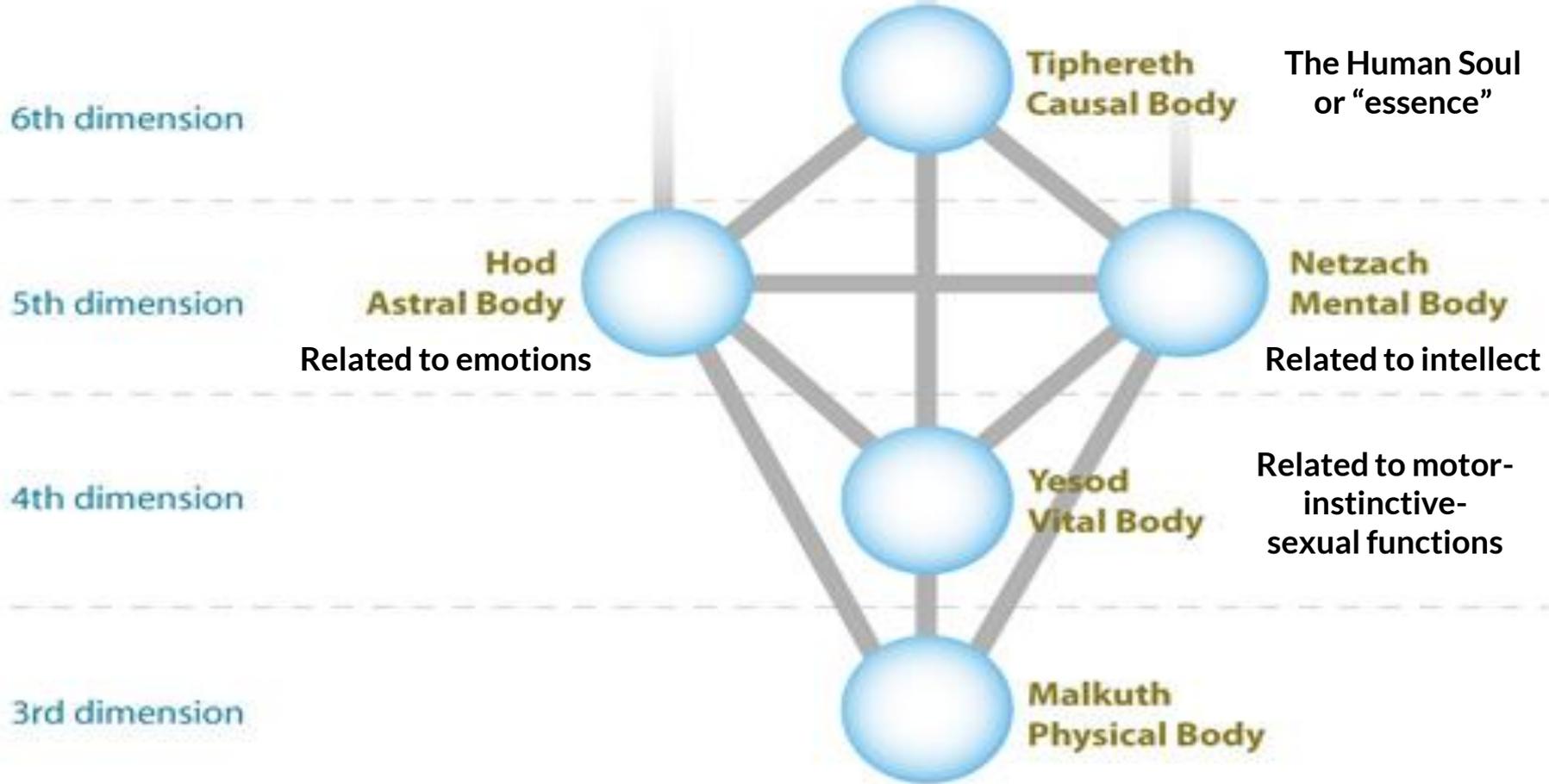
—G. I. Gurdjieff, as quoted in Ouspensky's
In Search of the Miraculous



Immortality

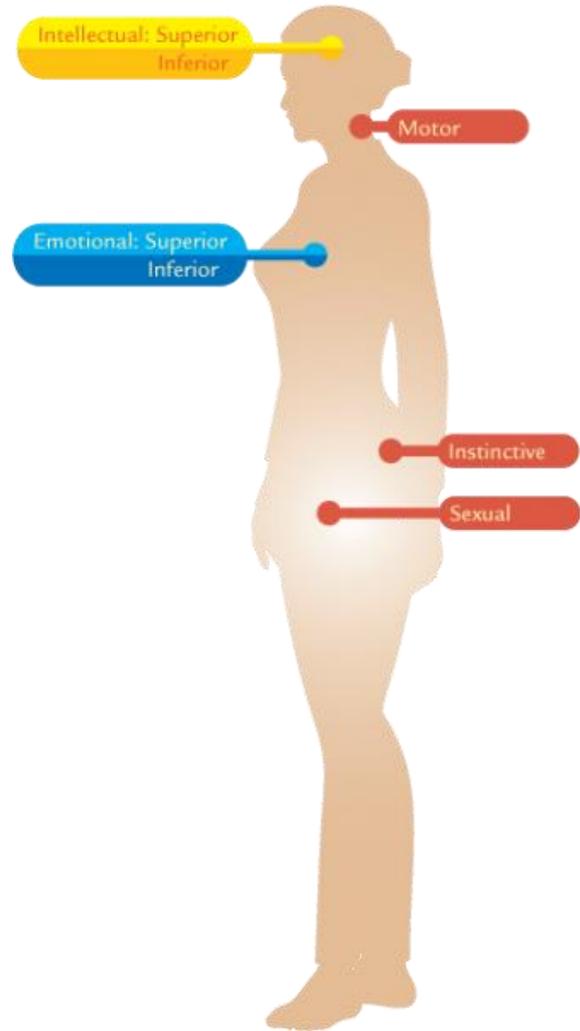
“Immortality is one of the qualities we ascribe to people without having a sufficient understanding of their meaning [...] Only the man who possesses four fully developed bodies can be called a 'man' in the full sense of the word. This man possesses many properties which ordinary man does not possess. One of these properties is immortality. All religions and all ancient teachings contain the idea that, by acquiring the fourth body [soul], man acquires immortality; and they all contain indications of the ways to acquire the fourth body, that is, immortality.”

—G. I. Gurdjieff, as quoted in Ouspensky's
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The Three “Brains”

1. Motor-instinctive-sexual center
2. Emotional center
3. Intellectual center



The Path of the Fakir (Willpower)

Those who seek union with God through willpower and physicality; this includes those who practice Hatha Yoga , physical austerities (tapas), etc.



“The way of the fakir is the way of struggle with the physical body [...] This is a long, difficult, and uncertain way. The fakir strives to develop physical will, power over the body. This is attained by means of terrible sufferings, by torturing the body. The whole way of the fakir consists of various incredibly difficult physical exercises. [...] But his other functions – emotional, intellectual, and so forth – remain undeveloped. He has acquired will but he has nothing to which he can apply it, he cannot make use of it for gaining knowledge or for self-perfection.”

–G. I. Gurdjieff, as quoted in Ouspensky’s
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The Path of the Monk (Devotion)

Those who seek union with God through emotion, the heart;
this includes those who practice Bhakti Yoga, whose religion is prayer, or music or devotional practices

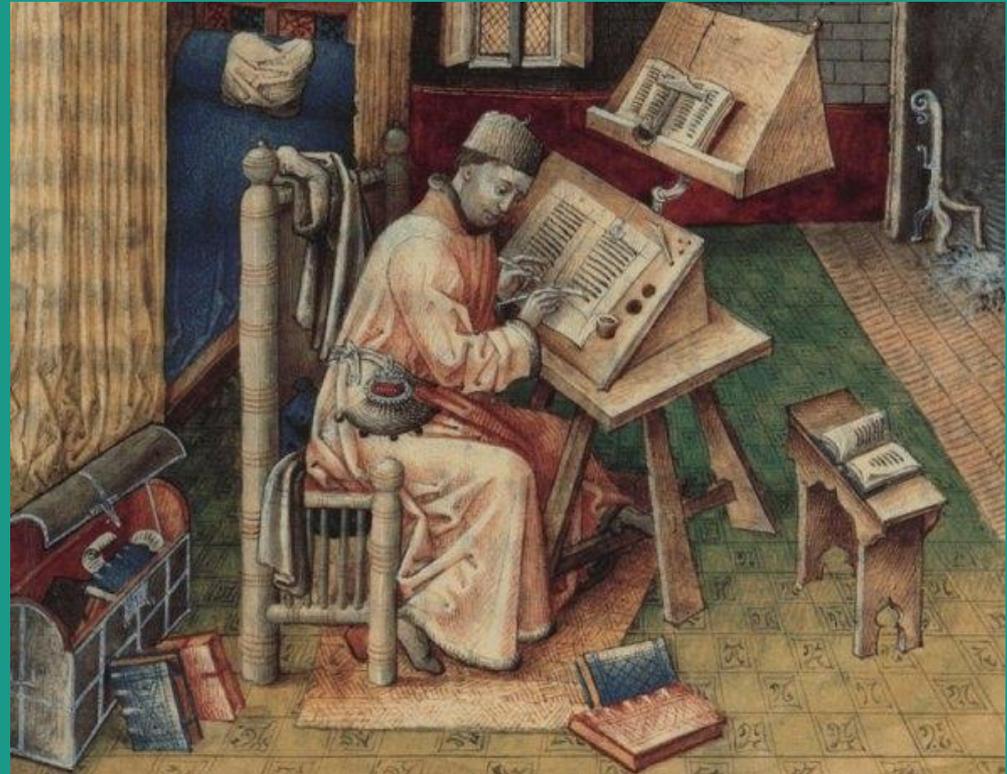


“The way of the monk is the way of faith, the way of religious feeling, religious sacrifice. Only a man with very strong religious emotions and a very strong religious imagination can become a 'monk' in the true sense of the word. The way of the monk also is long and hard. [...] Subjecting all his other emotions to one emotion, that is, to faith, he develops unity in himself, will over the emotions [...] But his physical body and his thinking capacities may remain undeveloped. In order to be able to make use of what he has attained, he must develop his body and his capacity to think. This can only be achieved by means of fresh sacrifices, fresh hardships, fresh renunciations. A monk has to become a yogi and a fakir.”

—G. I. Gurdjieff, as quoted in Ouspensky's
In Search of the Miraculous

The Path of the Yogi (Knowledge)

Those who seek union with God through the intellect, the brain; this includes those who practice Jnana Yoga, who study and memorize theories and doctrines, or through various forms of Meditation



“The path of the yogi is the way of knowledge, the way of mind. [...] The yogi reaches the fourth room by developing his mind, but his body and emotions remain undeveloped and, like the fakir and the monk, he is unable to make use of the results of his attainment. He knows everything but can do nothing. In order to begin to do he must gain the mastery over his body and emotions [...] To do this he must again set to work and again obtain results by means of prolonged efforts. In this case however he has the advantage of understanding his position, of knowing what he lacks, what he must do, and in what direction he must go.”

—G. I. Gurdjieff, as quoted in Ouspensky's
In Search of the Miraculous



Which path do we tend to follow?





The Fourth Way: The Path of Equilibrium



“Q. Does the Fourth Way embrace the three other ways?

A. No, this is a wrong description, because the Fourth Way does not have many of the things which enter into the first three ways, and it has many other things that do not enter into the three ways. The idea of the Fourth Way is that it discards from the three ways all that is unnecessary in them, because besides the necessary things the three ways have other things which have remained there purely through tradition, imitation, and so on. In the Fourth Way all the sides can develop, develop at the same time, and this makes it different from other ways where you first develop one side and then go back and develop another, then again go back and develop a third side. In the Fourth Way all the four centres must be more or less alive, on the surface, open to receive impressions, otherwise long preliminary work to open them is necessary before one can begin.”

—P. D. Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*

“The fourth way requires no retirement into the desert, does not require a man to give up and renounce everything by which he formerly lived. The fourth way begins much further on than the way of the yogi. This means that a man must be prepared for the fourth way and this preparation must be acquired in ordinary life and be a very serious one, embracing many different sides. Furthermore a man must be living in conditions favorable for work on the fourth way, or, in any case, in conditions which do not render it impossible. [...] Furthermore, the fourth way has no definite forms like the ways of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi. And, first of all, it has to be *found*. This is the first test.”

—G. I. Gurdjieff, as quoted in
Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*



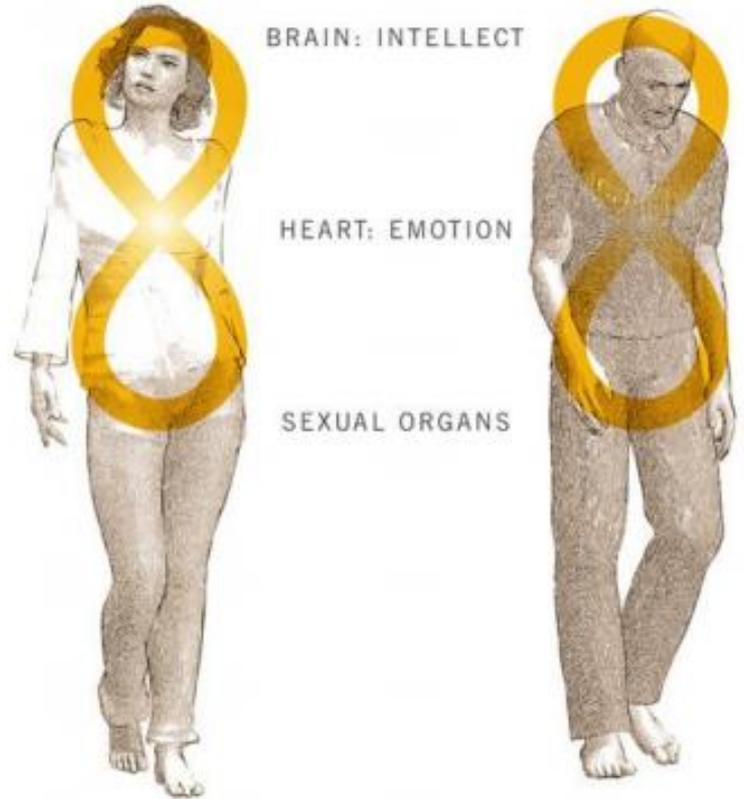
The Path of Awakening Consciousness



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“Certainly, and in the name of truth, we shall say with great frankness that only by awakening Consciousness can we see the narrow, straight, and difficult path that leads unto light. How could those who sleep see the path?”

—Samael Aun Weor



“No matter how much we might increase our strictly mechanical energy, we will never awaken consciousness. No matter how much we might increase the vital forces within our own organism, we will never awaken consciousness. Many psychological processes take place within us without any intervention from the consciousness. However great the disciplines of the mind might be, mental energy can never achieve the awakening of the diverse functions of the consciousness. Even if our willpower is multiplied infinitely, it can never bring about the awakening of the consciousness. All these types of energy are graded into different levels and dimensions, which have nothing to do with the consciousness. Consciousness can only be awakened through conscious work and upright efforts.”

—Samael Aun Weor, *The Great Rebellion*



Practice: Conscious Self-Observation

“The fourth way differs from the other ways in that the principal demand made upon a man is the demand for understanding. A man must do nothing that he does not understand [...] The more a man understands what he is doing, the greater will be the results of his efforts. This is a fundamental principle of the fourth way. The results of work are in proportion to the consciousness of the work. No 'faith' is required on the fourth way; on the contrary, faith of any kind is opposed to the fourth way. On the fourth way a man must satisfy himself of the truth of what he is told.”

—G. I. Gurdjieff

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a red sweater and a blue headband, is kneeling in a snowy field. She has her hands clasped in prayer and her eyes are closed. The background is a bright, sunlit winter scene with snow-covered trees and a soft glow. Snowflakes are falling around her.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2)



Discussion: Observing Our Psychological Imbalances

