

A LIBERAL EDUCATION

You do not realize that one has to *learn* to speak the truth.

G. I. Gurdjieff

Back in the day, learning to speak the Truth was termed a “liberal education.” The term suggests *liberation* from what is false. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”(John 8:32). Conversely, not knowing the truth, one is relegated to the state of a slave. Gurdjieff said, “Freedom, liberation, this must be the aim of man. To become free, to be liberated from slavery: this is what a man ought to strive for when he becomes even a little conscious of his position.” Gurdjieff was espousing a liberal education.

If truth be told, a liberal education today is treated by the majority as a pointless waste of time. What is needed instead is a practical education which inputs specific information into the brain in order to enable the development of practical life skills. Today, the long shadow of doubt shrouds the pursuit of truth. Who, save for fools and charlatans, is inclined to pursue an inquiry into what is deemed, by any sane thinking man, a subject impossible to pin down? As Pontius Pilate said to Jesus right before the crucifixion: What is Truth? The aim of today’s “educators” is not to instill what is idealistic, but rather what is practical.

In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates, speaking derogatorily of just such educators, said that “education is not what the professions of certain men assert it to be. They presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn’t in it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes.”

What Socrates well-knew, and what people today have forgotten (or never knew), is that a liberal education is not intended for just anybody. In fact, education was intended only for the upper classes. Education was deemed unnecessary, was considered a distraction, and even detrimental to those working in the lower echelons of society. These included the artisans and merchants who were paid for their goods and services; and the unpaid servants whose place was at the bottom of the social ladder.¹ The two upper classes included the nobles, warriors, and governors who answered to the State; and at the very topmost rung, the priests, scholars, and teachers, who answered only to the Most High.

In the current Hindu system, the four social castes continue to be set out as follows:

- Brahmins – priests, teachers, royals
- Kshatriyas – governors, diplomats, soldiers
- Vaishyas – businessmen, artisans, merchants
- Sudras – laborers and service providers

ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

¹ An even lower level existed: the “untouchables,” the outer circle, without class, beyond “caste,” outside the system (i.e., outside the Work), where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Anticipating that questions and objections would inevitably arise, and that answering them would pose no easy challenge, Socrates then proceeds to offer the famous Allegory of the Cave, in order to better acquaint his pupil, Glaucon (whose name suggests *glaucoma*, a leading cause of blindness) with the arrangement.



The majority, Socrates (Plato's mouthpiece) explains, lives like cave-dwellers confined to a dark underground world, unaware even that other worlds exist. These cave-dwellers recognize nothing but the shadows of statues projected on the wall of the cave. Because the shadows are all they ever see, the cave dwellers think they are real. These *stiff-necked* cave-men are *unable to turn their heads*, and can only face the wall, watching the shadow play that keeps them endlessly entertained and fascinated and enslaved. The cave-dwellers, indentured servants all, don't know that they don't know. In Platonic terms, they exist in a state termed "eikasia," that is, the unenlightened state of sensible appearances, sensing the fake shadow images to be reality. This servant class, excluded from the truth, asleep to reality, represents the way of the **FAKIR**.

In the dark cave, the moving shadows are caused by a clever use of a brightly burning fire and some statues, both which are manipulated by a group of people *sitting high and behind*.² Socrates says that a certain prisoner is *chosen* to be loosed and made to turn around. What this cave-dweller sees causes him to feel strongly that there is a greater reality, that is, the "real" statues. He now begins to "believe," to "have faith," to proselytize about this higher real world. The prisoner has no real understanding of what is going on. All he knows is that he doesn't know. Nevertheless, following the impulses of his feelings, he begins to organize what little he has perceived of this higher reality into a belief system, or religion. (Here one remembers the tale about the imp who is worried that men have discovered truth. The crafty Devil tells the imp, "Don't worry. When men awake to truth, they immediately begin organizing it"). Yes, indeed. The artisans and craftsmen, organizing into their various cooperatives and guilds, exert great effort to design beautiful artworks that reflect these beliefs. The contemplative art may reflect great skill of workmanship; the finely-crafted models may accurately portray the statues perceived. But there is no truth in it, for the *formal* knowledge is lacking. Without the knowledge of form, the understanding of the Craft Guild is limited. This stage, "pistis"—meaning awakening to belief or faith, without understanding the reason behind such belief or faith—is the way of the **MONK**.

Next, the chosen prisoner is dragged out of the dark cave and into the bright colorful world where, at first, he is blinded by the glare. Once his eyes have adjusted, he begins to focus on objects—people, houses, trees, and so on—and, experiencing a relative taste of freedom, begins to comprehend that the statues inside the cave are merely reflective images, or copies, of the real things that exist outside the cave. Once blind, now he can see. Having discovered partial truth, he may go off like Don Quixote,

² I thought of Michel de Salzman, sitting high and behind us, directing the sittings at Beauprieau.

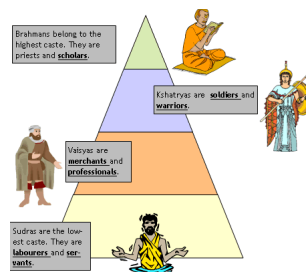
flailing about, believing he can save the state of the world. Striving up the ladder of opportunity, he fancies himself a “guru,” having attained to the “reason of knowing.” He may become a “very important person,” a ranking soldier or diplomat or even a commander-in-chief. He has reached the stage of “dianoia,” the bridge that spans from subjective opinions and beliefs to objective knowledge. However, his education, no matter the letters appearing after his name, remains incomplete. He may have the “reason of knowing,” but is still not “knowing the reason.” In spite of years of training, even exceptional super efforts, he is still hardly more than a robotic machine. Although he knows the calculations he knows not what he knows (i.e., what they mean). His practical training, carefully controlled, has led him to the level of “guardian.” The function of guardians is to make sure orders from above are carried out. Serving as the leaders in *the Charge of the Light Brigade* “Theirs not to make reply; theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do and die. Into the valley of death rode the six hundred.”³ The guardians, marching off to war, willing to die for a “heavenly cause,” are the “soldiers of the cross.” They represent the way of the **YOGI**.

As Socrates states, the higher liberal education is reserved only for the “philosopher-kings,” the real rulers. Those chosen to receive the higher training answer only to the Most High. When the former prisoner lifts his eyes up toward the heavens, he finally realizes that it is the sun which is the cause of all and everything, both within and without. The sun affords the capacity for seeing, and even for the light itself. The sun, Sol, is the Soul, the Sole object of Good. The prisoner has attained the fourth stage termed “noesis,” which means the intuitive understanding of truth. He knows that he knows. This intuitive knowing is termed the “reason of understanding.” This priesthood class, the “upper class” of the social order, the “reborn,” represents Wisdom, the **FOURTH WAY**.

Thus the four castes may be recognized by their *knowledge*. What they know or don’t know naturally divides them into two parts, positive and negative. Knowing is positive (+). Not knowing is negative (-). The castes, or classes, divided into “lower” and “upper,” may be arranged in four parts, thus:

Lower: I don’t know that I don’t know	minus/minus (--)	servants/fakirs
I know that I don’t know	plus/minus (+-)	artisans/monks
Upper: I don’t know that I know	minus/plus (-+)	warriors/yogis
I know that I know	plus/plus (++)	priests/kings

Inverting the order, these four social castes can be represented by a pyramid structure.

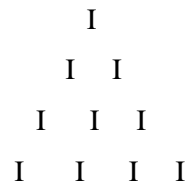


³ Quote from the poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, second stanza

The vast majority exist at the bottom, at the foot of the edifice, in the dark, the “sole” part. At the next level are the merchants and skilled workmen who keep the flame burning according to plan, ensuring the reflecting and perpetuating the values of the culture; in esoteric terms, they are the “prime movers,” which is just another way of describing the “soul.” In the hermetic teachings, the soul is what comes in between and actually has two parts, nous (fine, upper) and logos (coarse, lower). The artisans, the lower part, preserve and reflect the coarser status-quo (logos); the more refined noblemen and soldiers and aristocrats, separated out from the rank-and-file, operate as the higher part of the soul (nous), not only protecting the old, but also actively introducing new ideas to the culture (here one thinks of the Templars). And finally, the scholars and priests at the culmination of the hierarchical organization compose the oligarchy that act in accordance with the true sol, or sun. Having become illumined, knowing the truths of the real world, reborn as the servants of the Most High, they shed their light and heat and life upon the whole structure. Thus there are the three words: sole, soul, and sol. Gurdjieff drew these English homonyms to our attention and hinted of their importance in *Beelzebub’s Tales* (p. 23).

The pyramid structure reminded me of a “teepee,” the dwelling of the plains Indians whose tribal organization also exhibited a similar four-tiered hierarchical social order. The two lower signified the “way of women,” those who bear the young, keep the flame, work at crafts; while the two upper levels described the “way of men,” the path of the braves and warriors and chieftans, the protectors and defenders of the territory, including its tribal rites and rituals.

In ancient Greece, the four-tiers of the societal order were set out in the form of a cosmic mountain. The four-leveled array was known as the sacred *tetractys*.



The word tetractys in Pythagorean metaphysics signified a coordinated system based upon the first four ordinal numbers—1, 2, 3, 4—whose sum is the perfect number 10. According to legend, it was transmitted to us from the time of the ancient Hellenic culture when it was brought to Greece from Babylon by Pythagoras. That this figure had a tremendously deep significance for the ancients is historical fact. Aristides reveals that it is the *tetractys* upon which the Pythagoreans took their most solemn oath: “By him that gave to us the tetractys, which contains the fount and root of ever-flowing nature.” By ‘him that gave’ was meant Pythagoras himself; and his offering the tetractys, when split into two parts, described the two portions of the soul, one which led to virtue (odd numbers) and one which led to vice (even numbers).⁴

⁴ De Musica, Bk. 3, Chapter 17, Aristides Quintilianus

It is this same structure that delineates the four Hindu castes: Brahmins, 1; Warriors, 2 and 3; Merchants and Artisans, 4 5 6; and Sudras, 7, 8, 9, 10. In Indian writings, the four castes are traditionally shown as representing the parts of the body of the Hindu god, Lord Shiva. The castes naturally divide at the midpoint, the waist, forming the two castes: two above and two below. The sacerdotal priest caste are his mouth, the royal warriors and chieftains his arms, the artisans and merchants his legs, and the indentured servants his feet.



The pyramid with its four levels describes the four states of consciousness: sleep, waking, self-consciousness, and objective consciousness. In *Fragments* (p. 141) we read that all four states are possible for *man* (Gurdjieff emphasized the word), but man number one, number two, and number three live in the two lowest states only. “The two higher states of consciousness are inaccessible to him, and although he may have flashes of these states, he is unable to understand them and he judges them from the point of view of those states in which it is usual for him to be.”

Of the two lower states of consciousness the first is sleep (the passive state in which man spends a third or more of his life, when he gets in “his eight hours”); and the second state is ordinary consciousness, the other *sixteen hours* of the day when he does everything else: for instance, works at a job, spends time with family and friends, engages in recreational activities, takes part in politics, goes to church, and so on. He refers to this state as “being awake.” The two higher levels are hidden from him by the wall of imagination and dreams. Such a man believes he can, by his own actions, alter the surrounding conditions: for instance, he can stop wars, or can prevent global warming. In truth, the man is not really a man, but only a machine doing what it is programmed to do. The computer thinks it can change its own program—how ludicrous! The man-machine cannot do or change anything. The program is written by an outside force, and cannot be changed, except by the one who wrote the code. The man-machine, man number one, two, and three, operates exactly as it is programmed to operate. It runs according to the laws of mechanics, functions involuntarily, operates by the principles set down in Newton’s three “Laws of Motion.” The man-machine is virtually powerless. It runs unconsciously.

The third state of consciousness, self-consciousness, is on a higher level, that of the “programmer.” This man is educated: that is, he has been taught and understands computer language. He remembers the code and can make the machine “go right” or “go left.” The programmer is the “driver” who holds the reins of the machine.

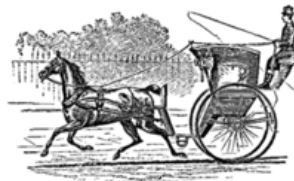
Relatively speaking, in the whole of mankind, the percentage of men educated to be programmers is small. However, just because he has been given the training does not make such a man admirable or

good. In fact, the terms “good” and “bad” are relative and can only be used in a particular context. For instance, take a programmer who works for an insurance company. If the programmer devises a program that favors the company, he is “good” in the eyes of the company, but perhaps not so “good” for the one holding the insurance policy. If the programmer codes a machine, designs it to hate and kill Japs or Germans, for example, the programmer would probably not be considered “good” by a Japanese or a German. What, then, may be considered “good” or “bad”? In relative terms, “good” and “evil” do not exist, except in the eye of the beholder, so to speak. One might say that the illiberal education of the programmer has afforded the means by which to work according to *the law of general relativity*. For a programmer, everything is relative; the Einsteinian law of relativity is the app that applies.

The real question, then, is: can there be “absolute good” or “absolute evil”? When asked that question, Gurdjieff answered in the affirmative. Yes, he said, they do exist, but only for a man with a permanent center of gravity, with a permanent aim, with a permanent and indivisible “I.” He connects permanence with “conscience.” For a man with conscience, there are no contradictions, no relativities. Conscience is the fourth state of consciousness, “objective consciousness.” The one with objective consciousness is the Master.

CART, HORSE, DRIVER, PASSENGER

The four states, or four castes, are represented, as well, in the analogy of the “Cart, Horse, Driver, and Passenger.”



The cart itself is a passive case in the service of carrying goods and supplies. The horse pulling the cart serves as its legs, animating the trunk so that it can move from place to place. Anatomically, the horse-and-cart operate “below stairs” (below the waist) in the physical plant.

The part “above stairs” consists of the driver and the passenger. The driver holding the reins represents the “arms,” directing the movement. A good driver knows “horse language,” knows when to pull the reins right or left. However, the driver is merely an employee and waits to be told where to go and what to do by the master inside the conveyance. Having some modicum of education allows the driver to communicate with the master, to follow his instructions and carry out his orders. However, the driver is not privy to the *reason* for the orders; rather, he merely serves the passenger, who is the owner of the carriage. The whole contraption really has no point without the aim of the Master who uses it to get somewhere.

In Platonic terms, both cart and horse are *uneducated*. Only the driver and passenger have an education. However, and as Socrates makes clear, there are actually two types of education: illiberal and liberal. The more compulsory (illiberal) elementary education is for the “guardians,” those overseers driving the moving functions, functioning as the militia and politicians; while the higher liberal education is reserved only for the “philosopher-kings,” the real rulers, the Master race.

The idea brings us back full circle to the original statement: that back in the day, getting to know the Truth was termed a “liberal education.” Unless one has a liberal education, one is not really a free man. Remember, Gurdjieff said that “Freedom, liberation, this must be the aim of man.” To be liberated means to acquire a liberal education. Only then can man be told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

It is not so much that the higher truth is hidden, kept secret. It is more the fact that the majority don’t really want to hear it—which brings us back again to the statement that, for the majority, a higher liberal education is treated as a pointless waste of time. There is even the pervasive tendency on the part of soldiers and so-called aristocrats to think they have already graduated from the need to be educated further, that “ideas” are sterile, and that what matters is practice. These “guardians” really have no idea as to what it is that they are guarding. Nevertheless, they become expert in the “practical work,” and have the pretention to assume that they understand the reason for their practices. Like Don Quixote, they take up *arms* and, flailing away, ride off into battle. All too often the exploits of these heedless “headless horsemen” result in disastrous loss of life and limb.

In the dialogue, Socrates acknowledges that the type of training given to the guardians is, at best, incomplete. The education is not the same as the education for philosopher-kings. Guardians are, in fact, *guarded from the Truth*. Instead, they are treated like children, and taught by means of allegories and myths and fairy tales. Their elementary education encourages bodily skills that make the guardians spirited, swift and strong. Those who can best withstand hardship (extremes in temperature, lack of sleep, grinding toil) are held up as heroic models of stamina and endurance. Youth, Socrates says, is the time for extraordinary *work*. As Socrates reports, “The trial of who is first in gymnastic exercise is one of the most important tests to which our youth are subjected.” That is the only kind of knowledge which takes lasting root.

Socrates makes it clear that the guardians’ training must begin from early childhood. The education relies on carefully-crafted stories whose rhymes and rhythms mold and shape the moral nature, and only a young and pliant child can be shaped completely to correspond to the values of the state. Any child who rebels against the ideology will, one way or another, be rejected. These children (the noble puppies) are watched and tested, to see which of them, if any, might exhibit a just and proper demeanor. Very few, however, stand out above the crowd.

The preparatory training of the noble puppies relies on *music and gymnastics*, the two compulsory subjects. While music is the most important component, the balance between gymnastics and music must be maintained, for overemphasis on music produces one that is too soft; too much emphasis on

gymnastics, however, produces a noble savage who is too hard. “The man who makes the finest mixture of gymnastic with music and brings them to his soul in the most proper measure is the one of whom we would most correctly say that he is the most perfectly musical and well harmonized.”

The only allowable music in the preparatory school is melodic (modal). It is relatively austere, lacking in the “relishes” and “luxuriousness” (presumably lush tonal harmonies) that Glaucon so admires.⁵ Even so, only certain modes are permitted; others are forbidden.⁶ The melody and rhythm must follow the speech; not the other way around.⁷ Only simple instruments are allowed: strings and pipes.⁸ While the specific requirements are deemed important, the actual reasons for music’s controlling effects (its *ethos*) remain a closely guarded secret, and are not included in the curriculum of the guardians, who must simply accept things on faith.

In fact, hardly any in the preparatory school ever realizes there are theoretical questions that might be asked concerned music and its intended effects. At the same time, Socrates tells Glaucon, a pupil who wishes to go on to a higher level must be diligent, must toil at [music] learning as well as the more popular gymnastics. To be satisfied with “popular exposition” (that is, remain forever content with sensory effects rather than seeking intelligent causes), and to believe there is no need to search further; yes (he says), there cannot be any worse fault in a guardian.

As stated, the aim of the preparatory educational system is that certain human beings will become what Plato terms “noble puppies.” *Not every puppy will succeed and matriculate.* Not every puppy will become what might be termed a Big Dog (*canis Major*) or even a Little Dog (*canis Minor*). Some candidates are found to be “lame” and, although they may be allowed to remain and serve, do not go on from puppy to dog school. Lameness is of two types. One is “lame” who loves gymnastics and all bodily exercises, but is a hater of learning or listening or enquiring.

Conversely, one who loves the labor of learning but hates gymnastics is also “lame.” Those attending lower school are carefully considered and must demonstrate soundness in both body and mind, and must, above all, be *lovers of work*. However, as regards the *work* of these noble puppies there is mental work and work of the body, and “the mind more often faints from the *severity of study* than from the severity of gymnastics.”

Of those “noble puppies” selected from the rank-and-file, many puppies are called but few are chosen. The rest stay on, working in the den and paying dues, and are mostly unaware that there is another level beyond the level of education to which they aspire. These apprentices learn by imitation, and skills come from repetition.

Oh, yes, make no mistake that these guard dogs smugly consider themselves a cut above those mutts who voice their uneducated *opinions* about unrealities. Their training has allowed them to sniff out the

⁵ The music of Gurdjieff is primarily modal, and perhaps may be placed in the category of being “austere.”

⁶ Plato, in another of his dialogue, favors the two Hellenic modes, Dorian and Phrygian.

⁷ That is, emphasis should be on plainchant; the use of troping and hocketing, one presumes, is not permitted.

⁸ A chapter could be written about these two “simple” instruments, the aulos and lyre, and their effects upon society.

fact that there is more to the so-called real world than the insubstantial shadows indicate. They may have even been put in charge of movements, or may have orchestrated the background music for the moving scenes. A few may have even been dragged outside and have been allowed to see the “real world.” Now what? Can these seeing-eye dogs really be called “free men,” when the entire training is about learning to obey authority? Can it be said that these dogs really “see,” since they have no idea why or how things are as they are?

At a certain age, Socrates tells us, gymnastics are over and “sleep and exercise are unpropitious to learning.” After that time, “those who are selected from the *class of twenty years olds* will be promoted to higher honor, and the *sciences* which they learned without any order in their early education will now be brought together, and they will be able to see the natural relationship of them to one another and to true being.” Socrates suggests to his pupil Glaucon that now *the study of philosophy takes the place of gymnastics* and continues “diligently and earnestly and exclusively for twice the number of years which were passed in bodily exercise.” (Recall the Gurdjieff named his dog “Philos”).

After *five years*, the select trainees will be sent back into the world, where they will acquire life experience, and where they will be tested to see whether or not they succumb to temptation. Here they remain, if they survive, until the age of fifty, when they are obliged to toil for the public good (their “being-duty”). If, during that time, they manage to train other candidates who can take their place, only then can they depart the drudgery and go to the Isle of the Blessed, there to rest in peace.

BEING-PARTKDOLG-DUTY



The noble puppies are under obligation. The French phrase for it is “noblesse oblige,” meaning “obligation of the Nobility.” Gurdjieff terms it “being-partkdolg-duty.” The idea is that being a noble extends beyond mere entitlements, and requires that the nobleman fulfills the social responsibility designated for his class or caste. A nobleman acts in a fashion that conforms to his position. Nobility is conferred on the one who earns it. At least that’s the theory. *Noblesse oblige* imposes a duty to behave in a noble manner. The problem is that the majority of puppies are not true aristocrats. They are awarded their position neither by inheritance (bloodline), nor by merit. They get where they are by nefarious means—for instance, by taking advantage of the underprivileged, by bribery or flattery, and/or by undermining the powers of the higher authorities.

In terms of the allegorical cart-horse-driver-passenger, *noblesse oblige* means the driver, who is usually type-caste as the warrior. Composed of the wealthy landed gentry of Lords and Ladies, Counts and Countesses, and so on, the aristocrats of this (en)titled class may proudly trace their lineage back generations, thus demonstrating proof that their bloodline relates them as kinsmen of the royals. But the members of this class may also be elected to their positions, and their heritage may be that of a

commoner. The commonly-elected positions, to list some examples, include ranking politicians, diplomats, government officials, and military officers. By whichever means these “soldiers” are awarded their class status, they generally take their position to be a justification for their privilege: nobility infers duties, and the duties carried out validate the rights conferred. Too often the “obligation” rests upon the lower classes, who are obliged to “bow and scrape” to the whims of the “upper classes.”

Unfortunately, as Gurdjieff implies, practically the whole lot of aristocrats has become the disreputable example of what a real driver should be. As he expresses the situation, the sleepy semiliterate cabbie “considers himself competent even in questions of religion, politics, and sociology; with his equals he likes to argue; those whom he regards as his inferiors, he likes to teach; his superiors he flatters, with them he is servile; before them, as is said, ‘he stands cap in hand.’”⁹ Gurdjieff says of these sleepy types that they are fully satisfied with this type of *seeing*, and “afterwards in conversation they can freely say with a ‘clear conscience’ that they were here, there, and everywhere, and all the other Americans will think that the speaker is not just the tail of a donkey, but that he also has been in Europe and has visited everything there and seen every ‘sight’ that every contemporary ‘educated’ person must see.”¹⁰

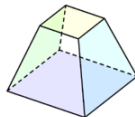
There is the ludicrous caricature in *Beelzebub’s Tales* of the “tatterdemalion, half-sleepy, half-drunken coachman whose time designated by Mother Nature for self-perfection passes while he waits on a corner, fantastically daydreaming, for any old chance passenger.”¹¹ This coachman was dressed in a shabby cloak retrieved from the rubbish heap, on his head reposed a brand-new *top hat*, an exact replica of Rockefeller’s; and in his buttonhole there was displayed a giant *chrysanthemum*.¹²

The words “top hat” caught my attention.

TOP HAT



Despite its name, a “top hat” would not mean the highest strata; rather, it would be missing the top layer, the pyramidal “capstone,” as it were. The Brahmin caste has been cut off! The top hat suggests . . . a truncated pyramid, or what geometers call a *frustrum* (< Lat., “bit,” “fragment”), the part of a conical solid that remains after cutting off the top plane, parallel to the base.



⁹ BT, p. 1194

¹⁰ BT, p. 682

¹¹ BT, p. 1193

¹² BT, p. 1198

I wondered: Was Gurdjieff hinting of the frustrum in “The Arousing of Thought,” where, on page 22, he uses the word “cut” or “cutting” three times? On this same page, he writes derogatorily about “data formed in contemporary man, thanks evidently to his frequenting of the cinema and thanks also to his never missing an opportunity of looking into the *left eye* of the opposite sex.” Much later in the book, on page 1060, he again derogatorily links the *left eye* with “power-possessing beings of the Earth” who, after gorging and satisfying themselves, seat themselves on divans and, receiving shocks from the reflexes of their stomachs and sex organs, let the mind passively form associations—and in this particular case, associate about taking revenge on a man who “looked at a woman he liked, *not with his right eye but with his left.*”

The name “Rockefeller” also caught my eye (although as to which eye, I couldn’t exactly ascertain). It is common knowledge that the Rockefellers are among the elite group of Americans, an oligarchy of power-possessing beings on Earth who rule by wealth and stealth. No matter who is seen as “fronting” the organization, no matter who is called “President” or “CEO,” the real movers and shakers who rule the country are the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, the Rothchilds, and others of their ilk, who literally own the wealth of America. Anyone with greedy ambitions to rule, in the desire to emulate those “misters”—“Mister Rockefeller” or “Mister Vanderbilt”—would don a top hat (and tails!), and stick a chrysanthemum in his buttonhole.

The main business of the Rockefellers has to do with energy. The Standard Oil Trust was formed in 1863 by John D. Rockefeller who built it into the largest oil refinery in the world. What originally was Standard Oil Company (incorporated in 1877) is now Exxon, a multinational corporation whose locations are in more than 100 countries around the world. Today Exxon is involved in exploration and production of coal, oil, and natural gas; it is a major manufacturer and marketer of petrochemicals and petroleum products; it is the key player in the transportation and sale of crude oil; and it engages in the mining and sale of precious ores such as gold, silver, and so on. The energy company is a “dollar-making machine.”

Energy may be defined as “the power that makes things move.” Without energy, no change is possible. Notice the word “change” (as in “pocket change”), and how the sound changes into “ching” (as in the “ching” of cash registers) simply by removing the two vowels “a” and “e” and replacing them with the single “i.” Surely it cannot be denied that the change from the true gold standard to the false “paper dollar” introduced a new age, one whose values and standards, at least for some, are “faux,” and not terribly appealing.

NEW ORDER OF THE AGES

The top hat, as I said, suggests a truncated pyramid. How extraordinarily curious that the symbol found on the left-hand portion of our *legal tender*, the “greenback”—the slang term for the American one-dollar bill—depicts a truncated pyramid! The capstone is clearly separated from the rest of the structure.



On this symbol (here shown in magnification) we see the words “*Novus ordo seclorum*,” meaning “New order of the ages.”



The phrase is taken from the Roman poet Virgil (first century B.C.), his fourth Eclogue (lines 5 – 8), that reads

Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur	“The great order of the ages is born again”
Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna	“Now returns justice (Virgo), the return of Saturn’s reign”
Iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto	“Now a new lineage sent down from high heaven”

The second and third lines begin with singular “Iam” (“Now”). Simply adding a space in between the “I” and “a” transforms it into the two words, “I Am.” The translation then becomes “I Am the new [genetic] lineage demitted from high heaven.”

I admit to having experienced a distinctive uneasiness about this dual “I Am”—so much so, in fact, that (as Gurdjieff, in “The Arousing of Thought,” had put into the mouth of that character, Karapet of Tiflis) “even my appetite for ‘Makhokh’ disappeared.”¹³ Karapet, significantly, was the one who rang the *steam whistle* to awaken the residents of the town.

The man that made a vast fortune in *steam engines*, before moving on to railroads, was our Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt. His funding of the revolutionary steam engine quite literally introduced a “new world order” that changed society and how it works. Given that Vanderbilt’s railway operated on “legal tender” (defined as “the medium for payment of debts, for example, currency and coins”) I found it a curiosity that the word “tender” can also refer to the coal car hauled by a steam engine containing its fuel. The *tender* is necessary to keep the locomotive running a long time over long distances. (Mathematicians use the formula $d = rt$ which means that the distance traveled equals the rate of speed multiplied by the time). The all-important steam engine and railroads really were the “legs” of

¹³ Beelzebub’s Tales, p. 47

society. Our top-hat-wearing Mr. Vanderbilt, in clear conscience, could say that his cars (Kars, carts) transported goods here and there and everywhere.

The new secular order, whose driving force is “*de-mon-ey*,” demands the division of church and state. The most advantageous way to accomplish the said division is to “cut off the head,” the reasoning part. What remains is the truncated body now removed from its higher power source. Unplugged, without power, frustrated, the trunk (frustrum) is unable to move around, and finds itself at the mercy of the demonic Despot. The despoiler (let’s call him “the Suit”) holds the trump card, the Ace, and now can make his diabolical boast: “I have won (or is it 1?) The evil mastermind, by means of his cadre of trained revolutionaries, gains control over the populace. By squelching any opposition, the energy *cartel* now owns all existing fossil fuels—coal, oil, gas—the only power sources commonly available to humanity. The black Magician and his minions (or is it millions, \$), by practicing “dirty trading” in the “black-market” (that is, by manipulating the buying/selling of the carboniferous black coal, black oil, and natural gas, the substances formed during the Paleozoic Era), manages to choke the world in a vice-like grip. How curious that one definition of “grip” is “a suitcase.” We may want to keep an eye on the “Suit’s” case, not let it out of our sight—not for a minute, or even a second.

A suitcase carries the goods. It carts. Words beginning with the sound “cart” include the “cartoon,” a sketch satirizing public opinion; and “cartridge,” an explosive charge for a piece of artillery, for instance, cannon. Additional words starting with “cart” bring to mind more associations. For example, the “cartel,” which is an international enterprise aiming at *monopolistic* control. “Carte blanche” is a plastic credit card, and infers full discretionary power. “Carte” can also mean a flimsy sheet of paper. The word “carte” means “map,” and the art and science of drawing maps is termed “cartography.” Maps are important items when one is traveling “on the road,” so to say.

I thought of the “oil king” mentioned in *Fragments* (p. 326). Here, Gurdjieff in disguise was traveling on the train from Petersburg to Moscow. His fellow traveler, a well-known journalist who happened to be riding with him the same *railway car*, had later written in the article “On the Road,” about this “strange Oriental” (Gurdjieff) whose presence exuded extraordinary dignity; who looked down on the bustling, gesticulating crowd with utmost contempt. When asked by the reporter if he did not also want to make a profit, the “Oriental” passenger responded “particularly quietly and said with gravity: ‘We always make a profit. It does not refer to us. War or no war, it is all the same to us. We always make a profit.’” Ouspensky notes parenthetically that what Gurdjieff meant by “profit” was not “oil,” per se, but rather the collecting of knowledge and people for esoteric work. The reporter, of course, would neither know about nor have any suspicion of esoteric knowledge. For someone turned toward hermetic ideas, however, the significance of the “train station” is unmistakable. Trains are *carts* on wheels, and oil (or fat) is what is needed to *grease the wheels*: otherwise, the “cart won’t go.”

Ouspensky mentions, in the next short paragraph, the word “yellow.”

Yellow is one of the three primary colors, the other two being red and blue. The colors correspond to temperature: the coolest color is red, then medium yellow, then blue, the hottest. Our sun, for

example, is a relatively small yellow star, medium hot, and it emits most of its radiation in the middle part of the light spectrum, the yellow/green part. Scientists say we don't see a green sun (green light) because our eyes (specifically the cones that provide the color, and which are concentrated in the macula, the 0.3 mm diameter rod-free area) combine the colors red, yellow, blue, which result in our seeing white light. To envision "the little green world" constitutes "awakening."¹⁴

The color green returns us to the "greenback."

Also appearing in the Great Seal on the one-dollar bill, there are the two words, "Annuit Coeptus," attributed to Virgil: "Da facilem cursum, atque audacibus *annue coeptis*." A loose translation of this phrase (for which I take sole responsibility) might be: "The way is easy; the Presence approves our audacious conception." The word "audacious" may be defined as "defiance of ordinary restraint, as of law or decorum; shameless, insolent, presumptuous." And while some might disagree with the translation of "seclorum," I hold that the new order, *Novus ordo seclorum*, pertains to the *secular* order. In other words, it is not a religious order founded solely upon divine heavenly ideals, but instead is based upon divisive rules and governmental regulations, the endless complexities of which serve to benefit the so-called State of the Union. The ruler of the new worldly order is not the One true God, but Unholy Satan (or rather Saturn, which is Satan after replacing the "ur" with "a").

I remember how the Roman god Saturn was represented in myth as an old man brandishing a scythe, reaping grain, usually corn. In the Greek pantheon of gods the corn god was called Cronos, the god of time—the "grim reaper." Staring, entranced, at the pyramid on the one dollar bill, I began reaping the questionable reward of seeing the "all-seeing eye" as less than benign. In fact, when I *turned the bill upside down* (applying "inversion"), the thing took on the appearance of a one-eyed Cyclops, a beast with tongue hanging out, presumably looking for prey to devour. Suddenly I recalled the horrid picture painted by Goya, "Saturn Devouring his Son," which was the Spanish painter's wrenching depiction, during his so-called "black period," of how merciless Time ruthlessly devours all the children of Earth.



Saturn Devouring His Son, Goya (c. 1819)

Of course it was all in my imagination. Even so, I could appreciate why there are people who conceive a conspiracy behind the design on the American dollar!

Hermetically speaking, one of the notable characteristics of a satanic organization is that it employs the principle of "inversion." Things are purposely reversed (retrograded) or turned tops-turvy (inverted), or

¹⁴ The sentence is my attempt to play on the words "The Little Green Book on Awakening," which is the title of the book written by James George, published in 2009.

both. As I continued to stare at the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States, two figures seemed to emerge at the opposite ends of the half circle (the one at the bottom which contains the words “Novus ordo seclorum”). At first I wondered if they were animals with ears, donkeys perhaps. But then something shifted and, voila!, the two figures turned upside-down, toes-in-air, as if accomplishing a yoga pose. *Oi!* At that moment I thought of the strange poem which Gurdjieff sang while dancing on his grandmother’s grave (“The Arousing of Thought,” p. 29), where the two letters, O and I, are used three times in succession, “oi, oi, oi.”

Let her with the saints repose,
Now that she’s turned up her toes,
Oi, oi, oi¹⁵

It was probably the word “Oi,” coupled with the idea of oil, conspiracies, and railway cars, which caused my overactive imagination to have even odder associations. There was just something about the letters, O and I—or more accurately, there were three things. For one thing, they could as easily masquerade as the numbers, 0 and 1, in disguise. For another thing, they caused me to think of squares and square roots: the square and square root of 1 is 1, and the square and square root of 0 is 0, but the square root of -1 is *i*. Which is what caused me to think of the third thing: that is, the I and 0 are real numbers, but *i* is an imaginary number. Putting the three together, they spell the word “Oil.”

Everyone knows that oil is the slippery neutral substance which accounts for about one third of humanity’s primary energy supply. It is a non-renewable fossil fuel which was formed more than 300 million years ago, and has been used for more than 5000 years (the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians used crude oil) for various purposes. Much of today’s wealth is held by a few power-possessing oil tycoons who richly profit by its use in contemporary civilization.

The novel, *Oil*, was written by author Upton *Sinclair* (Sinclair being a name holding some prominence in the Work).¹⁶ The work is a political satire concerning the Teapot Dome Scandal during Harding’s administration. It began in 1921 (how very curious that Gurdjieff had mentioned this date in the opening sentence of the “Introduction” to *Beelzebub’s Tales*; and Ouspensky had also mentioned this particular date at the close of *Fragments*, his last “word,” so to say) when then-President Harding transferred naval oil reserve lands to the Department of the Interior. The secretary of the interior, a man aptly named Fall, who ostensibly was acting to preserve the supply of oil in the event of war set aside a large oil deposit at Teapot Dome in Wyoming (so named because of the rock formation that looked like a teapot and which stood above the oil reserves).

¹⁵ This poem, on page 29 of the original version, is deleted from the revised version of *Beelzebub’s Tales*.

¹⁶ The first president of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York was Henry John Sinclair, Lord Pentland, author of *Exchanges Within*. The third president was Frank R. Sinclair (reportedly no relation), currently president-emeritus, and author of *Without Benefit of Clergy* and *Of the Life Aligned*. His wife, Beatrice Sinclair, a pupil of Gurdjieff, was one of my group leaders and served as a long-time Movements teacher in Philadelphia.

Fall (whose sole concern during these war years, it turns out, was making money) secretly leased the exclusive rights to the Teapot Dome reserves to an oilman named Harry *Sinclair* (again that name!), and whose company was Mammoth Oil. In return for “greasing the palm,” Fall profited by substantial cash gifts and no-interest government loans. War or no war, scandal ensued, and Fall took the fall. “Teapot Dome” became a synonym for political bribery, profiteering, and corruption.

I found it darkly humorous that Harry Sinclair’s company was named *Mammoth Oil*. Gurdjieff, remember, had mentioned woolly mammoths (*Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 837-9), as well as the falls of snow that had preserving these mammoths in the “what-is-called ‘soil’” (a word also suspiciously similar to “oil”). Oil is a fossil fuel formed from formerly living things, including mammoths. As the remains accumulate, as snows *fall* and sediment piles up, the pressure and heat cause the rather miraculous *transformation* into oil. Thus it is, that from the deaths of the mammoths and other organisms millions of years ago, we enjoy the “fruits” of present-day civilization. Humanity profits by having oil for various purposes that make life more tolerable. In the United States, oil is used primarily for transportation and home heating, but a percentage goes as fuel for electrical generating plants. As for monetary gain, much of today’s wealth is accumulated and preserved by the few power-possessing beings, oil kings and oil tycoons, who richly profit by the mammoth oil reserves.

Ouspensky, in the story of the oil king, had mentioned “yellow” not once, but twice, as if for emphasis. Yellow, of course, is the *color* of the egg yolk, the fat (oil) part. The yolk is the *food* for the evolving chick—a *living coherent system* whose interests are of a different (solar) order entirely. How curious that the article by the journalist had concluded by saying “It would be curious to talk and become more closely acquainted with the psychology of a man whose capital depends entirely upon order in the *solar system*, which is hardly likely to be upset and whose interests for that reason prove to be *higher* than war and peace.”

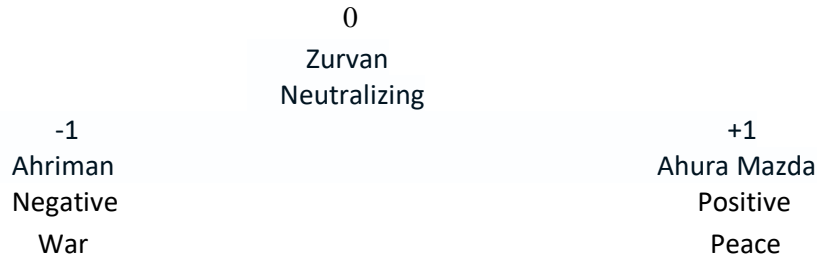
Certainly the *transfiguration* of egg into chick is something out the ordinary. Not every egg is fertile; not every egg becomes a living breathing being of a different order entirely. In any case, the oily yolk is needed for its transformation, an exceptional occurrence that might be called “miraculous.”

The ensuing discussion in *In Search of the Miraculous* (or, as it is ordinarily called, *Fragments*) regarding Gurdjieff’s departure from the Nikolaevsky Station indicates that something extraordinary occurred here, a *transfiguration*, for going into the train (as Ouspensky reports), Gurdjieff was one man; but coming to the window in his compartment, he was another. It was “as though he had suddenly become a ruling prince or a statesman of some unknown kingdom to which he was traveling and to which we were seeing him off.”¹⁷ In the news article written by the reporter a few days later, it was the opinion of the journalist that this “oil king” (Gurdjieff) exuded a “kind of fatalistic and ruthless boasting which veered on cynicism.”

¹⁷ *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 325

Probably it was the ease of transformation between letters and numbers, O and I, or perhaps it was merely my cynicism that made me cogitate on the idea of “profit” and “loss.”

At any rate, I was experiencing glimpses of truth regarding the Trinity of universal powers of the Magian tradition: the good (positive) Ahura Mazda, the evil (negative) Ahriman, and the greater neutral force, Zurvan, coming in between, whose greater impersonal interests are higher than war and peace.



As regards both traveling in a train compartment and personal gain and loss, public records show that secretary Fall (whose capital apparently was in some jeopardy; he had insufficient funds to pay his debts) had sent his business associate to see Sinclair in his private railway car, where a great deal of money in the form of bonds and cash was exchanged. This “greasing of palms” did give Fall the breathing room he desperately needed, allowing him to pay the back taxes he had owed on his various properties for a decade, and thus to live tolerably. Was Gurdjieff hinting of such flagrant bribery and graft when he quotes Mullah Nassr Eddin as saying “Without greasing the palm not only is it impossible to live anywhere tolerably but even to breathe?”

Following the statement made by Mullah Nassr Edin in *Beelzebub’s Tales* (p. 43) about “greasing the palm,” Gurdjieff mentions that terrestrial sage (“who has become such, thanks to the crass stupidity of people”) named Till Eulenspiegel, who expresses the same idea as “If you don’t grease the wheels the cart won’t go.”

Oil, of course, is that greasy fatty buttery slippery substance used for purposes of lubrication.

How curious that the first syllable of the name Eulenspiegel is pronounced as “oil.” Did oil have something to do with Till’s “merry pranks,” his “Tom-foolery?” Is this why Gurdjieff, on the same page, brings up the name of that “famous Catholic monk, Brother Foolon”? Were we all being fooled? Was the race of humans deceived into believing that oil production for purposes of generating energy was merely for its own benefit, when, in fact, oil, by keeping the motor of civilization running, ensures that the higher powers are “fed” what they need?

The synonyms for the word “oily” include “fawning, flattering, oleaginous, ingratiating.” Immediately preceding the statements uttered by the two terrestrial sages, Mulla and Till, there is the paragraph concerning the vanity of Mr. Beelzebub, and how therefore it is “extremely inconvenient not to help one who is going to advertise His name.” Was it the oil barons who, in the collective life of people,

effectively but unknowingly “greased the palm precisely of Mr. Beelzebub, who, as everyone understands, has possibilities and knowledge enough and to spare for everything.” Was it Mr. Beelzebub whose capital depended entirely upon order in the greater *solar system*, and whose impartial reason proves to be *higher* than war and peace?

As for the last syllable of Till’s sir name, the German word “spiegel” means “looking-glass, reflector, mirror, speculum.” Reflecting on the situation, we might speculate that without speculative oil ventures, the wheels of civilization would grind to a halt and the energy expended into the atmosphere would be greatly reduced, which in turn would harm the cosmic fuel supply. Evidently the whole *mass* of civilization serves as part of the mass/energy equation: $e = mc^2$.

The Work teaches that the collective life of humanity exists for a “higher purpose” which it can and must serve. It can serve slavishly, like the lower animals, without either knowledge or consent; or it can serve consciously, knowing the reason. However it serves, the purpose of organic life on Earth, and specifically human life, is to serve as “food” (energy) for a higher solar entity. Man, as Gurdjieff point-blank says, is here to “feed the Moon.” The purpose of humans is to serve as the yolk, which is to say that fatty, oily, cholesterol-laden part of the egg intended to feed the higher order of “chick.” We are, quite literally, “chicken feed.” How curious that the term “chicken feed” is also a colloquialism meaning “a small amount of money” and also “insufficient funds.”

Chicken feed is mostly grain. Typically about a fourth of commercial feed, known as “the bulk,” is indigestible, and includes “grit,” which is composed of tiny rocks or pebbles or grains of sand whose sole purpose is to aid the digestion by grinding the food as it passes through the gizzard. Shuddering, I thought of the truism “Time grinds every grain.”

A pebble is a hybrid, or, in scientific terms, a “conglomerate.” The pebble was among the earliest tools used by humans, dating back to Paleolithic times. In that regard, I found it curious that when NASA’s rover (aptly named “Curiosity”) discovered pebbles on Mars, scientists immediately interpreted their presence as the proof of water (pebbles form in seas, lakes, ponds, rivers, and estuaries). The Martian pebbles, which ranged from very small gravel the size of sand up to cobblestones the size of golf balls, are believed to have been deposited by a stream of water of a depth between ankle and hip deep, and which flowed at a walking pace.

How curious that pebbles (powers of 2) have affiliations with what computer programmers call “RAM” (random access memory), the hardware device used for information storage and data retrieval. RAM is associated with DRAM, the memory module. The prefixes (kilo, mega, giga, tera, and peta) presuppose an order that is increasing in size. The expansion has to do with memory, with an ever-greater disk drive capacity. At the risk of being accused of having rocks in my head, I propose that the granular “pebbles” have to do with what scientists are calling “sand in the brain.”

The tool for sharpening is the whetstone. Brain sand and sharpening tools are reserved for another essay.