

## INNER AND OUTER WORLDS

*'Let the inner take precedence over the outer, the soul  
over the world – wherever this may lead you.'*  
Dag Hammarskjöld

### Traditional Worldview

Many traditional schools of philosophy subscribed to the notion of a dual existence underlying the human earthly experience. Gary Lachman, author of *The Caretakers of the Cosmos*, writes: "Man is a creature of the natural world, of the body and the senses, and as such is subject to all the laws and limitations that come with living in the natural world. But he is also an inhabitant of another world, that of mind, spirit, the soul, consciousness, which, in essence, is free from the limitations of his other nature."

The Hermetic philosophy sees it as such. When Asclepius asks Hermes Trismegistus why man has a dual nature – one of matter and one of spirit – Hermes explains that it is so he can 'raise his sight to heaven while he takes care of the earth,' and so he can 'love those things that are below him' while he is 'beloved by the things above.' Asclepius himself, when asked about man's need for a body, explains that it is necessary so that we can take care of creation. Asclepius tells his listeners that Nous gave man a 'corporeal dwelling place' and 'mixed and blended our two natures into one,' doing justice to our twofold origin, so that we can 'wonder at and adore the celestial, while caring for and managing the things on earth.' For the Hermeticists, man finds himself on earth not as the result of some cosmic catastrophe or a 'fall from grace,' but because he has a particular mission to accomplish here . . . This was not in order to escape from creation, but in order to take our rightful place within it: to embrace the obligations and responsibilities that came with being 'caretakers' of the cosmos. (1)

Empirical research and holistic theories from many different academic disciplines confirm the essential unity of the apparent inner and outer worlds which define the modern view of the nature of reality. This new perspective supports more traditional views of the natural world: "At an earlier stage in our evolution, human consciousness was much more 'embedded' in nature, and we did not experience then, as we do now, separate outer and inner worlds, but a free-flowing movement between the two."

From a variety of different perspectives – quantum physics, neuroscience, phenomenology, the philosophy of language – it is becoming more and more clear that the universe we live in is a 'participatory' one, in which mind and matter, the inner world and the outer one, are not, as our commonsense view suggests, radically different and opposed realities, closed off from each

other, but are different aspects of a single shared reality. It seems increasingly clear that the barriers between these two worlds are not as impermeable as we have believed. Our inner worlds, it seems, are not isolated islands of consciousness, floating on the surface of a dead, material world that is oblivious of them, and on which they have no effect. In some strange, still inexplicable way, our inner worlds *participate* in the world outside us, something less modern, more 'primitive' people still experience. (2)

Our knowledge of the outer world is usually based on external observation and empirical data such as spatial extension, weight, colour, chemical composition, and so forth. But measuring inner life experience is much more difficult, especially when it involves life forms other than human. For instance, although we believe that we have at least some idea of the psychological life of people close to us, we know very little about that of strangers, still less of animals or other 'lower' forms of life.

The concept of *quantity* belongs to the outer world of physical existence, while *quality* is the domain of inner experience. For instance, there is a marked difference between the measurement of the wavelength of red light and the actual experience of the colour red. In *Metahuman*, Deepak Chopra expands on this important distinction: "Data derived from the measurement of how the eye, ear, or tongue works say nothing about our actual experience: how a sunset looks, how music sounds, and how chocolate tastes. Essentially, science is about measuring life in all its *quantities*, large and small. Experience is about life in all its *qualities*, which cannot be counted. The question 'How many units of beauty did you experience today?' is nonsensical. Beauty is experienced subjectively, which no one disputes. And every perception is also experienced subjectively."

In many traditional spiritual teachings human beings are envisioned as a self-evolving species with a dual nature. Our "earthly" nature is concerned with physical survival and reproduction, while our "spiritual" nature represents a higher level of embryonic transcendental possibilities of conscious evolution:

There are two natures in us. One of them is personal or individual, is relatively accessible to our usual means of perception. The other, much less easy to perceive, is experienced as our participation in something far greater than the individual. Thus, we call it spiritual, even universal. The attention paid to it varies a great deal from person to person and at different moments of life . . . These two natures show that man belongs to two great currents of equal importance, which flow through the existing universe and ensure its equilibrium. One is the current of creation which, originating from the highest level, flows into diverse forms of manifestation. The other is the current that may be called "spiritualizing" and is thus an evolutionary current. By virtue of his dual nature and the two facets of his life, man belongs to both currents (he has "his feet on earth and his head in the heavens"), and he is one of the bridges, one of the levels at which exchange takes place, a "mediator" between the two. (3)

In certain metaphysical teachings the two natures are metaphorically termed “the animal” and “the angel.” French philosopher Blaise Pascal: “Man is neither angel nor beast.” Human beings are subject to these two polar opposite tendencies. This existential tension is often expressed in religious terms: “God created the animals and gave them lusts. He created the angels and gave them reason. To man He gave both. The man whose lusts conquer his reason is lower than the animals, but the man whose reason conquers his lusts is higher than the angels. The animals and angels don’t have a choice. Man has.”

At a certain moment we come to see two aspects, two natures, in ourselves – a higher nature related to one world and a lower nature related to another, a different world. What are we? We are neither one nor the other – neither God nor animal. We participate in life with both a divine nature and an animal nature. Man is double; he is not one. And as such, he is only a promise of man until he can live with both natures present in himself and not withdraw into one or the other. If he withdraws into the higher part, he is distant from his manifestations and can no longer evaluate them; he no longer knows or experiences his animal nature. If he slides into the other nature, he forgets everything that is not animal, and there is nothing to resist it; he is animal . . . and not man. The animal always refuses the angel. The angel runs away from the animal. A conscious man is one who is always vigilant, always watchful, who remembers himself in both directions and has his two natures always confronted.

(4)

In his Fourth Way teachings, Gurdjieff frequently spoke of the presence of both an ‘animal’ nature and an ‘angelic’ nature in each human being. “Each of the inner functions of man (the ‘animal’) operates through various qualities and tempos of vibration, and only a specific vibration emanating from another source in man can serve as ‘master’ of the functions. This quality of consciousness (the true inner master) is entirely different from what we ordinarily imagine to be the highest power in ourselves, i.e., ordinary thought or reason.”

If, within ourselves, “earth” is our body, with all its animal functions, we can say that our finer, higher perceptions and impulses do not penetrate downward in a way that naturally influences our behavior. Instead, our inner condition is one in which the ordinary mind automatically imposes itself on the body. Superficially, the body obeys, but its deeper, organic functions remain subconscious and, in the long run, all-powerful. Our own “animals” do not respect the intellectual mind – they fear it and hide from it. We see here, from a Gurdjieffian point of view, the origins of the mind-body split that has challenged philosophical understanding since the problem was first articulated by the Greeks and restated by Descartes. The higher (“God,” “spirit,” “mind”) exists within us, but it cannot penetrate into our actions until there is present within us the objective ‘I’ (“Adam”) who bridges the levels within the human organism. In the ordinary state, a state which Gurdjieff calls *sleep*, there is no person within us to bridge the higher and lower within us. (5)

The two natures must learn to live together in a relationship of mutual support. Only when our physical, material and social needs and desires are fulfilled can there be an openness and receptivity to the forces and energies of the higher spiritual sphere. Professor of philosophy Jacob Needleman:

Name any human value you wish – service, charity, peace, health – and you will find that in order to pursue these values past a certain point we have to be free from the tyranny of the unmastered lower nature. The pursuit of such values presupposes a level of inner freedom that we do not as yet have, an inner freedom that allows us to see the real difference between the two natures within us. To love as we would wish to love, we have to discriminate between selfless action and disguised egoism. To serve the planet as we would wish to serve it, we have to discriminate between an understanding of the earth in the cosmic universe, and our perceptions of the impact of the environment on our merely physical and social needs. To pursue health as we would wish to, we have to know our whole human nature, not only the body with its mind and personal emotions. All the values we recognize presuppose our ability to discriminate the two natures within us in such a way that, under the force of our awareness, these two opposed natures, these radically different levels of life, actually move into relationship with each other. Therefore, our only realistic aim can be the attainment of the power of discrimination, that unique quality of knowledge and inner freedom. (6)

## Duality in Human Experience

Human perception is based on the principle of duality: subject–objective; observer–observed. When they harmonize and cooperate, a third possibility is created. The duality of “I see a tree” becomes pure “seeing” rather than something observed (tree) by an observer (‘I’).

The dual realms of inner and outer experience have often been associated with pairs of complementary opposites (yin-yang in Taoism) which represent poles or aspects of a Higher Reality:

- Energy–Matter
- Unity–Diversity
- Noumena–Phenomena
- Infinite-Finite
- Emptiness–Form
- Quality–Quantity
- Eternity–Time

Polar opposites can be harmonized and integrated to create a balanced state of equilibrium. In every human being there is a need for a dynamic balance between participation in outer world activities and responsibilities, and the inner world quest for meaning and transcendental understanding. We need to recognize, discriminate and respect both forces within ourselves. Tibetan Buddhist Lama Govinda: "The inner and outer worlds are the warp and woof of the same fabric in which the threads of all forces and of all events, of all forms of consciousness and of their objects, are woven into an inseparable net of endless, mutually conditioned relations."

Although we share outer world experiences with everyone else, our inner world is private and subjective in nature. Psychiatrist Maurice Nicoll: "We stand between two worlds – an external visible world that enters our senses and is shared by everyone, and an internal world that none of our senses meet, which is shared by no one else. This internal world is the second reality, and is invisible to others." Our outer world lies in space and time, while our inner world is personal and hidden. Our physical bodies are in space but not our inner realm – our thoughts, feelings, moods, fears and anxieties dwell in our inner psychology:

Reality is not confined to the small range of our senses and does not only lie outside us, in the show of life. There is the reality of our inner thoughts and feelings and desires and sufferings – that is, there is a reality even more real than any external reality transmitted by the senses and which can only be penetrated by each one themselves. Outer reality is common to all. But inner reality is individually approached. This other inner reality, to which each person has their own access, lies invisibly within us. It is this invisible inner reality in which we dwell psychologically that the Work applies. Science, turned outwards, *via* the senses, seeks how to conquer nature. This Work is about conquering oneself, about self-mastery. So it begins with observing, not external nature, but *oneself*. Let us remember that self-knowledge from most ancient times was regarded as the highest knowledge. (7)

One of the most evident similarities between outer and inner events is their constant change and "flow" from moment to moment. Kenneth Walker, a direct student of Gurdjieff, offers his observations of his own inner world and its incessant movement and change:

As a result of my self-observation, I realized that what was undoubtedly true of the world outside myself was equally true of the world within me. Everything 'flowed' within me as it flowed without me; one inner state quickly followed another, a feeling of pleasure being quickly replaced by one of displeasure, so that, when I looked within, it seemed to me that my various emotions were constantly changing. A study of these two flowings – the inner and the outer – soon convinced me that the inner was of far greater importance to me than the outer, so far as the business of living was concerned. Yet it was the instability of the outer world that I always blamed whenever anything went wrong with my life, and never the instability within me. It was the same with other people. They were always struggling to alter things out-

side themselves without ever realizing the much more urgent need to change the world within. (8)

The two sides of human nature reflect different qualities and expressions of time. In the external world of phenomena, time is based on predictable astronomical cycles – day, lunar month, solar year, and so forth. We adapt our behaviour in response to these natural cycles and rhythms. But in our inner world time is no longer linear and sequential, and the emergence of a timeless reality, eternity, is possible in higher states of consciousness. The human self, as Kierkegaard expressed it, “is created to hold together the infinite and the finite, the temporal and the eternal.”

We are obsessed and paralyzed by time because we live in only one world, the world of visible matter and mechanical causality punctuated by accident. The world of visible matter is a world of ever accelerating causality and the proliferation of things and events. That world, according to the ancient teaching, is such that time must turn ever faster and faster until death. There is another world, another reality, where what we call time does not hold sway. It is not that time as such no longer exists, but it does not obey the same laws as the one world we live in now. From the perspective of the world we know, the process of time in this other world has the aspect of eternity. But when these two worlds meet, or come closer to each other, that is the unique world of man, the world in which the eternal touches the temporal, where the changeless touches that which is ever changing in the direction of death. When the eternal and the temporal meet, the result is what has been known in all traditional cultures as the *cycle of time*. (9)

In certain traditional spiritual teachings, the analogy of a ladder is employed to illustrate the various levels of human development and attainment, ranging from the lower nature of material existence and preoccupation to the highest levels of spiritual awakening. The key to bridging the interval or gap between the lower and higher natures is the development of a conscious attention and open awareness. Michel Conge, a French student of Gurdjieff, writes: “There are moments when we are able to position ourselves squarely between external events and the inner life. Our position is not ‘outside,’ where we are moved by external events, nor is it ‘inside,’ where we are taken by emotion and tyrannized by our functions. It is a precise balance, an equidistant position that allows us to appreciate and understand that we are both these lives.” He later expands on this important idea:

The constitution of human beings is not flat, but consists of levels, floors. Man does not correspond to just one level of the universe, but to many. It is sometimes said in this teaching that a complete, developed, real human being has his head at the level of the stars and his feet on the earth, and this suggests not only a symbol but an actual ladder, indicating a steep, direct path. We need to understand that the two natures of man are inscribed upon the ladder: in the upper part of the ladder, the higher nature; in the lower part, the ordinary

nature where we live all the time and where the centre of gravity of our whole existence is to be found . . . Consciousness and will, which are pre-existing realities, belong to the higher nature. All the illusory manifestations – lying, imagination, automatism – correspond to the lower nature, which receives only dim rays of consciousness . . . Our problem is how to unite the two natures which constitute our being. We need to have access to ‘true knowledge’ that does not belong to the level of ordinary life. This knowledge tells us that the higher nature seeks to unite with the lower nature. But as we are now, this higher nature cannot be further incarnated in us, owing to the unbridgeable interval. The lower nature also tries to unite with the higher nature, but in the end it gets lost in attempts that blindly turn in circles. Neither nature is able to unite with the other, because a connecting element (conscious attention) is missing between them. (10)

A comprehensive approach to life includes all aspects of reality – both the sacred and the profane. Jacob Needleman speaks to this idea in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*: “There is a natural and basic distinction or contrast in human life between functioning effectively and coherently with regard to the external world and, on the other hand, submitting oneself to a more conscious and transcendent reality that is connected to the self. The possibility of the development within the human person of a presence that contains and reconciles both these movements is a central defining characteristic of esoteric teachings.”

By understanding and regulating our outer and inner needs we can fulfil our full human potential as conscious beings. The needs of our outer life or ‘social ego’ must be recognized, respected and satisfied so that our inner life of spiritual awakening can be actualized. Human life is only meaningful when we fully experience our inner and outer worlds simultaneously, so that these two levels of reality are equal participants in our life. In *Necessary Wisdom*, Jacob Needleman writes:

We are two-natured beings. A part of ourselves is meant to function out in the world and interact with material things, and a part of ourselves is meant to search for ultimate truth for its own sake, trying to open inwardly to something higher within ourselves, something beyond everyday experience in the material world. Those two parts of ourselves are definitely dissonant, and we are here to find the balance between them, to develop the capacity to embrace both parts and let each play its proper role in a whole human life. (11)

## Inner Work and Transformation

Each individual’s life experience is a combination of outer elements (events) and inner qualities (states). Different events emerge with their own unique nature from larger or smaller scales of reality and create various inner states. It is quite possible to have favourable external circumstances, yet an inner sense of unhappiness or disappointment. The reverse can also

occur – outer life difficulties resulting in acceptance and inner peace. We cannot control the flow of outer events, but we can control our inner reaction and response to them. This is the essence of inner work and transformation.

The flow of events is typically met with resistance and conditioned responses reflective of our 'lower' self. The challenge is to create a conscious relationship between outer and inner worlds so that our reaction to events is intelligent and skillful, reflecting an awake and holistic awareness. We need to be aware of both parts of ourselves by developing a reconciling force which mediates between them. Jeanne de Salzmann: "A feeling of presence or 'I' must appear, turned toward a greater reality in which I participate and, at the same time, be drawn by the world in which I live. The call of these two worlds requires me to be present, understanding that they cannot exist without each other, and that one should be spiritualized by the other. A conscious relationship must appear."

Gurdjieff provided sage advice to his students struggling to meet the demands of everyday life while maintaining some sense of inner equilibrium: "For the outer world – do not identify. For the inner world – intensify attention." And, "Thorns in one's outer world are good, because then there are roses in the inner world. Which one would you rather have? Roses in the inner world or in the outer world?"

Only the development of consciousness can harmonize the two impulses or natures in ourselves. This requires an inner struggle to remove the 'veils' that cover the real self. Jacob Needleman: "It is this all-important aspect of the ancient wisdom that speaks of our inner world that modern thought has been blind to. The question about the meaning of life is inextricably linked to the need for contact with the real self beneath the surface of our everyday thoughts, emotions, and sensations."

Since the beginnings of recorded history, man has been haunted by the intimation that he lives in a world of mere appearances. In every teaching and spiritual philosophy of the past we find the idea that whatever happens to us, for good or ill, is brought about by deeper forces behind the world that seems so real to us. We are further told that this real world is not accessible to the senses nor understandable by the ordinary mind. But we live in a world of inner appearances as well. We are not what we perceive ourselves to be. There is another identity, our real self, hidden behind the self that we believe ourselves to be. It is only through awakening to this deeper self within that we can penetrate behind the veil of appearances and make contact with a truer world outside of ourselves. It is because we live on the surface of ourselves that we live on the surface of the greater world, never participating – except in rare moments which do not last and which are not understood – in the wholeness of reality. Without this contact, the external world of appearances assumes for us the proportions of an overwhelmingly compelling force. We cannot see the real world because we are not in contact with the deeper powers of thought and sensing within ourselves that could perceive it. (12)

The idea of a reciprocal relationship between outer and inner worlds is sometimes expressed as two forces or currents – one descending from above and one ascending from below. For any event in life there is a double movement of involution and evolution: “We have a double nature: the descending force of manifestation and an ascending force returning to the source. With conscious presence we can experience both at the same time.” The great challenge in life is the acceptance and integration of both currents which define our life experience. In our present state we are not aware of the two forces simultaneously, and are identified with and immersed in one movement while ignoring or opposing the other:

I must learn to see the lower nature and at the same time remember the higher. The struggle is in living the two together. I need to have a conscious impression of these two aspects of myself, at first independently of each other, then simultaneously. One nature must serve the other. I must see that if I am not present, I serve only my ordinary self and go toward the destruction of what I truly am. Until now the descending current alone has been the master of my Presence, without being confronted. The ascending current has its source in the will *to be*. Without the vision of the two currents, the wish to be present at a given place and a given time has no sense. I need constant vision of them in order to see the point of application of the attention and of the will not to lose myself. (13)

Inner work is essentially an encounter or struggle between the two great cosmic currents in order to attain a harmonious balance of energies and a more constructive, fulfilling life. Both are necessary to the process of inner growth. Every experience teaches us something about the one and the other. “When we strive to awaken to the reality of our existence, we can discern two essential currents in ourselves. One of them draws us, even drives us toward the outer world. It encompasses everything pleasant and unpleasant that happens to us. The other current calls us in a wholly different direction. It seems to come from an immense unknown world, a more luminous world that curiously attracts us.” In *This Fundamental Quest*, Henriette Lannes presents the great challenge of the work of inner transformation:

The Work asks us to stay in front of these two currents. The more we truly wish to know ourselves, the more we encounter these two opposing parts . . . The presence of *yes* and *no* acquires very concrete meaning. *Voluntary attention* and *resistance* are the two poles of work on oneself. It invites us to an inner struggle, a confrontation between these two forces, which opens us to a more real life. The affirmation of our *yes* and the resistance of our *no* can confront each other within ourselves. In the encounter between these forces of opposite nature, a struggle or friction occurs in us. At the heart of this experience, our inner world opens to a new feeling: *a genuine feeling of oneself*. For a long time this disappears very quickly, even if something in us has been touched. With every new, sincere experience, this feeling is freed for a moment from the omnipotence of our ego. Little by little, it permits us to apprehend a more sensitive life and the reality of this life within a new order. (14)

The first stage in work on oneself is the observation of inner states. Self-observation is a means of self-knowledge and self-change. As our inner world changes, our relationship with the outer world undergoes a transformation. Without self-knowledge, we assimilate the impressions and events of the outer world mechanically, *reacting* to external stimuli. Inner transformation begins with objective, honest self-observation and the processing of events *consciously* with attention and awareness:

This work begins with self-observation and noticing negative states in oneself and working against them. In this way the inner life becomes purified and since our inner life attracts our outer life, by changing our inner states we also alter our relation to *events* coming from outside. Only in this way can we change the nature of events that happen to us. We cannot change them directly, but only through changing *states*. It is not the events of the day that matter, but how we react to them. If our inner states are right nothing in the nature of external events can overcome us. Try therefore to distinguish, as an exercise in living more consciously, between inner states and outer events, and try to meet any outer event, after noticing its nature, with the right inner attitude. (15)

Ideally, the role of attention is to act as a bridge to mediate between our outer and inner worlds. But generally our attention is weak, unable to hold more than one thing at a time in our field of vision. Our attention is constantly shifting between external perceptions and impressions, and the inner flow of thoughts, emotions and mental interpretations. But when the attention broadens to encompass both worlds simultaneously, it opens the mind to its vast background and the profound mysteries which surround us. Professor of physics Shimon Malin: "There is an attention that can be present to both sides, the objective and the subjective; it can be present even during the transition from one domain to the other. The feeling is one of expansion in both directions. Through this experience the subjective domain is revealed as the foundation of the objective. When I am grounded in it, I can be present to the world of objects while in a relaxed, relatively still state."

The key to creating a harmonious relationship between the outer and inner worlds is the development of a free attention leading to the state of *self-remembering*. Then, instead of being an unconscious slave to the attractions and vicissitudes of worldly life, we can become a conscious servant to the timeless source of life and being.

With active attention and conscious self-remembering, the true nature of reality can be clearly perceived from moment to moment: "This state of correspondence between the outer and the inner worlds of individual human life is the goal of self-remembering, which leads to the 'collected state,' thereby passing from the appearance of things into the Reality that stands behind them. By relating one's inner and outer worlds in complete harmonic correspondence, one becomes the active center through which the purposes of creation can be fulfilled." This Inner process is described by Jeanne de Salzmann in *The Reality of Being*:

Two kinds of movement share my Presence: a movement towards the source and a movement towards life. I need to see and remember that I belong to two levels. I can become conscious only when I feel a reality that is higher than myself, when I recognize that without it, I have no force to resist being taken by identification. Then I can open to this reality and consciously receive its action, be nourished by it . . . The initial effort is to free my attention from identification. I need to find the effort that will allow the formation of a central core, a more stable center of gravity of my attention. In order for me to remain related to the two levels, my attention must be entirely mobilized and maintained in two directions at the same time. The power of divided energy is my power of attention. (16)

Although we can be open to the inner and outer worlds simultaneously through self-remembering and present-moment awareness, this state of receptivity cannot be wilfully grasped or attained by forceful effort. Rather, we need to be open to an energy that is already there:

Something comes alive in you which makes the difference between sleep and being awake: it acts as the point which opens onto both worlds. It is related to your whole organism, which has to act and react in the world, but which is also related at the same time to the other world we live in – which is there all the time, but when we are asleep, we are blind to it. This means that when this something comes alive in me then I need to be aware that I am not only related to my activities and, through my activities, to the sense-based world; but I am related at the same time to something higher. This sense-based world is only the face, the surface, the outside of something that is living. This is a matter of direct experience. This spectrum of experience that we call by the name of self-remembering is a very wide spectrum, and one needs to be wary of the trap of thinking one has plumbed its depth. The moment one feels like that, one blocks one's further progress. But behind the face of this sense-based world in which we live and move, there is a living mystery that comes alive when we come to ourselves. (17)

### 'In the World, But Not of the World'

The outer and inner worlds are not distinctly separate realms, but form a unity which can be realized through the development of a higher consciousness which perceives the reciprocal inter-relationship underlying the apparent duality:

The outer and inner worlds are reciprocals of each other. From the point of view of the outer world, I, like any individual person, am nothing, a tiny speck on a tiny planet in a remote solar system, one of billions in a galaxy, which

itself is one of billions. But from the point of view of the inner world, I am everything: everything I am aware of, perceive, know or remember – others, the immediate environment, the planet, solar system, galaxy, and universe – are in me, contained in my inner life.

*The brain is wider than the sky  
For – put them side by side  
The one the other will contain  
With ease – and You – beside.*  
Emily Dickinson

The reciprocal of the abundant profligacy of the creation of the outer world is the gathering back of all into a universal consciousness. Similarly, man's role in the universe is to unite the outer and inner worlds to form 'the third world of man' (Gurdjieff), which is the world of unity in multiplicity. This involves a growth of the emotional part, which must evolve from self-concern to true consciousness and conscience, from isolation to participation, ultimately, according to Gurdjieff, resulting in the development of a soul that can participate in maintaining the consciousness of the universe. (18)

Gurdjieff's Fourth Way path of spiritual development embraces the reality of our planetary existence by fulfilling the legitimate demands of everyday life. Gurdjieff: "One can transcend our state only by fulfilling two lives at once – the earthly and the celestial. This teaching makes sense of the undeniably hypnotically powerful force in the world, which leads us to live our lives for pleasure, and the equally undeniable but more subtle impulse which says that the meaning of life is not for something like pleasure, but must be for life, life of a higher measure."

Our ultimate possibilities as human beings require that we serve a higher cosmic purpose on earth connected to the spiritual evolution of the universe. By recognizing both our finite life on earth and our "immortal presence within," it is possible to achieve simultaneously inner freedom and full outer engagement in our role in the social order. Jacob Needleman: "In traditional spiritual teachings, a fully developed human being is viewed as someone whose individual mind is meant to reflect and manifest the same all-universal and all-beneficent consciousness that creates and maintains the cosmos. At the same time, we are made to live for a finite time in a mortal body and are obliged by the true power of reason (which includes cosmic love) to care for our neighbor and to answer the moral requirement of family, society and culture – all of which are also part of the universal scheme."

Within ourselves there exists the possibility and even the necessity of experiencing and serving something unimaginably great and inconceivably real. The structure of human nature is without sense or meaning unless the idea of this inner possibility is understood. Somewhere within every human being there exists an intimation of this possibility and often even a wordless, obscure longing for contact with this something. It is a longing, a wish, a call,

that throws into question every other aim and purpose of our lives. We do not hear that call very often or very distinctly, but when we do hear it, we see that it comes from a part of ourselves that is disturbingly unrelated to the rest of us . . . One part of us is meant to live and function in the world we see around us – to eat, sleep, and produce our children, to answer the challenges of the natural and social world. This is human life “under the sun,” the world that we see and know and call *real*. But that “something” is *above the sun*, above all that our eyes can see and our mind can name, and there is a higher part of ourselves that senses this and calls to us. We are two-natured beings. Such is the ancient teaching. (19)

In order to understand the relationship between the outer and inner worlds of human experience it is necessary to recognize the significance and existential meaning of our presence on earth and our place in the cosmic order: “Gurdjieff identifies numerous features of man’s inner structure, as well as various modes of outer manifestation, all of which are necessary in order for mankind to fulfil its role in the scheme of creation. It is impossible for us to understand our role on earth without considering all these aspects.”

For Gurdjieff, the proper sphere of human action is much greater than what is generally regarded as terrestrial nature. Human action is meant to modify planetary nature in direct relation to the place of the earth in the cosmic scheme. These larger contexts of humanity’s sphere of action are characterized as embodying higher levels – that is to say, the difference between the solar system and the earth is not only quantitative but qualitative, comparable to the difference, say, between a cell and the organ of which it is a part. We cannot modify terrestrial nature without serving aims in which the earth itself is embedded. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to understand the purpose of terrestrial nature. The contemporary call for right action *vis-à-vis* nature either implicitly assumes that terrestrial nature is an end in itself or simply does not acknowledge the question of the cosmic context of terrestrial nature. Limited action to retrieve or preserve the integrity of the environment cannot of themselves represent the kind of action necessary for a harmonious relationship between humanity, as such, and our immediate terrestrial environment. (20)

Buddhism, Taoism and other spiritual traditions stress the importance of a ‘middle path’ in order to achieve balance and harmony between apparent opposites. This allows the two elements to be in accord and reconciled in a comprehensive unity. The natural tension between the outer world and inner world must be integrated in order that human beings can attain their full potential: “The two streams of universal energy that flow uniquely through man are meant to be inwardly harmonized in the embrace of the human intentional struggle to become a fully human Self. The result is the synthesis of two opposing universal forces – the inner world and the outer world, eternity and time, freedom and mechanicalness, Heaven and Earth.” Jeanne de Salzmann describes this process in *The Reality of Being*:

I begin to see that I live torn between two realities. On the one hand, there is the reality of my experience on the earth, which limits me in time and space. On the other hand, there is a reality of being that is beyond this existence, a reality for which I have a nostalgia. It calls to our consciousness, across all the disappointments and misfortunes, to lead us to serve Being, to serve the "divine" in ourselves. If my life is lived only to subsist, the essential being is veiled, obscured. I do not see the true sense of my life – I have no direction. I am entirely drawn toward outer existence and thus prevented from becoming conscious of my authentic being. On the other hand, if I feel another reality, under the force of this impression I forget my life and withdraw into isolation. Thus the world claims me without caring about inner life and my being calls me without caring about the demands of worldly existence. These are two poles of one larger Self, one same Being. I need to find a state in which I am more and more open and obedient to an essential force in me, and at the same time able to express this force and let it do its work in the world. (21)

The wisdom traditions of the world remind us that there is something in both the human being and the universe that is higher than the 'consensual reality' that defines our nature and place in the cosmos. Humanity is trapped in what Plato called "the world of appearances" and the Buddha termed "the wheel of life and death." These timeless teachings emphasize the importance of being open to influences of a higher order that support inner growth. Jacob Needleman: "Wisdom teaches that what we erroneously seek from the 'world' is to be found only through the process that opens us to another order of life within ourselves. There is something beyond the influences of ordinary life. It is here that wisdom teaches humankind to search within." According to the perennial teachings of inner development, the meaning of life on earth is not found in life itself but beyond life, in a higher dimension of reality:

The idea is that life, ordinary human life as we know it, proceeds at the mercy of influences which have nothing to do with the inner development of individual beings and which, looked at in a certain way, may even be opposed to our development. At the same time, there exist other forces and influences in the world that favor and support our inner growth. These favoring influences, we are told, come to us through men and women who embrace an exceptional purity of intelligence and love and an exceptional capacity to help others search for their own Self. Out of this second kind of influence great spiritual traditions and schools of wisdom have arisen throughout history, and these traditions and schools have in turn attempted to transmit to humankind the knowledge of what is called the Way. These two kinds of influences exist side by side in the life of humankind. Although they exist side by side, however, they are nevertheless quite different and distinct and are *felt* as such by many people. An individual is drawn to certain kinds of ideas, or music or art, or concerned with certain kinds of questions about human purpose and destiny.

(22)

Many traditional teachings, throughout the ages, have spoken of the relationship between the greater cosmos ('macrocosm') and humanity ('microcosm') in mythic language or revealed religious teachings. This seminal idea appears in ancient Egyptian mythology, the dialogues of Plato, Taoism, and the Hindu tradition of Samkhya. This concept is also a major principle of Gurdjieff's teaching. They all describe a living, conscious universe in which a higher level of Intelligence and Being penetrates and influences a lower level – organic life on earth and, especially, humanity. For this process to occur properly, there must be a receptive receiving instrument in the form of the conscious presence or awareness of a developed human being. "Humanity may establish a point of contact between a certain quality of cosmic vibration and the forms and perceptions that make up the social self, or personality, of an individual human being. Metaphysically, this can be taken as the contact between the immensity of a great cosmos and the interior, individual cosmos of a man or woman on earth."

The penetration of the higher into the lower in individual human life, although it is part of the process of "world-creation and world-maintenance," cannot take place automatically without a certain quality of individual effort or choice. All terrestrial nature exists thanks to the descent on the macrocosmic scale of the higher into the lower. But at the uniquely human level, this penetration and influence can take place only through a conscious intent on the part of man. The contact between levels, for which the individual must be the active agent, is necessary both for the evolution of his own inner nature and for his outer behavior and "emanation" *vis-à-vis* terrestrial nature. In Gurdjieff's teaching, therefore, the grasping of the universal in the particular is not a mere mental process, but a voluntary act of opening to a fine energy of consciousness of a more universal order, permitting this conscious energy to enter into the lower and more localized (particular) level of terrestrial nature. The earth needs human understanding, not only in relation to humanity's proper actions, but also as a cosmic event in its own right, comparable to the reception by the earth of the light of the sun. (23)

Inner freedom from the hypnotic pull of outer events allows for the emergence of a richer life open to new dimensions of experience. Krishnamurti: "When we talk about a total human being, we mean not only a human being with inward understanding, with a capacity to explore, to examine his or her inward being and the capacity of going beyond it, but also someone who is good in what he or she does outwardly. The two must go together."

The awakened human being is able to achieve a balance between the subjective inner world and the objective outer world of phenomena. In *A Voice at the Borders of Silence*, William Segal gives voice to this possibility: "It is possible to encompass all the richness of the impressions that are offered by nature and at the same time remain in contact with one's objective 'I.'" The complete person has access to a world of subtle and nourishing impressions. Such an individual goes with their everyday occupations, but remains in contact with the inner world." The quality of our attention and presence determines our effectiveness in both our inner life and outer responsibilities:

The whole secret in life, whether it's inner or outer work, is to give total attention to what one is doing now. If people would concentrate and really look and see how they're working and give their total interest and attention to the moment or to the task at hand, it would make people more effective in living. It would feed them instead of depleting them. Generally, we come back over and over again to the necessity of being here as totally as possible, no matter what you are doing. But we do need, also, engagement of the outer world. We need engagement of ourselves with others and with confrontations. Life is a question of challenge and response. (24)

## The Perspective of Nonduality

Although it appears obvious to most people that there are two essentially independent worlds, one outside ourselves and another within ourselves, some schools of thought challenge this conception. They argue that the so-called "consensus" of a fundamental duality in nature and experience is a purely human cognitive assumption and ultimately an illusion. This revolutionary proposition, of course, contradicts both the scientific worldview and the premises of most religious and many metaphysical traditions.

From the non-dual perspective, the distinction between inner and outer worlds or levels in reality is conceptual in nature, and not congruent with our actual experience of the world. In *The Wonder of Being*, contemporary spiritual teacher Jeff Foster articulates this position:

*Q: Is there really an inside and an outside? Or is that just another thought, another concept that comes and goes?*

A: Notice: sounds in the room come and go. Bodily feelings come and go. Thoughts come and go. None of these are 'inside' or 'outside.' They are just happenings. 'Inside' and 'outside' are just more labels that appear, just another story that comes and goes in this awareness.

*Q: Prior to the story of 'inside and outside' can anything really be inside or outside?*

A: That bird singing. Is it happening inside of you, or outside of you? Is there really any division there, or is that just another creation of thought? Come back to the bird singing. Is there really an inside and outside, or is there just the bird singing? Going on present evidence, what is more true? That you (a separate person) hear a bird? Or is that a birdsong just appears *here*? Is there even a 'bird' that's outside of you, or is there just the singing? Without the concept 'bird,' how would you know that it was a bird singing? Without the concepts (assumptions), you hear that ineffable birdsong for the very first time, and you recognize that it is not separate from what you are. (25)

The conception of two independent worlds – inner and outer – has been challenged by other spiritual travellers based on their own personal experience of awakening. One such individual is Douglas Harding, author of the acclaimed book *On Having No Head*: “There neither is nor can be any evidence for two parallel worlds (an outer or physical world ‘there’, plus an inner or mental world ‘here’ which mysteriously duplicates it), but only for this one world which is always before me, and in which I can find no division into mind and matter, inside or outside.”

Jiddu Krishnamurti also makes no distinction between the perceived outside and the inside, between the observer and the observed – they are one complete process. He notes that it is almost impossible to separate the inside from the outside – “the outside is the inside and the inside is the outside.” The human mind, he asserts, is conditioned to divide the whole of existence into a world outside and a world inside, rather than one unitary movement. In *The Flame of Attention* he writes: “There is no division between the world which human beings have created outwardly, and the movement which is taking place inwardly – it is like a tide, going out and coming in, it is the same movement, one continuous movement.”

Vimala Thakar was an Indian student of Eastern and Western spirituality who was greatly influenced by Krishnamurti. She argued that Reality is a totality or unity which includes everything that exists in one seamless whole. But this Oneness falsely appears to the human senses and mind as separate, independent “within and without” realities: “Life has neither inside or outside. Inside the skin and outside the skin are categories created by the human mind because of the limitations of our sense-organs. Life is one indivisible whole. It cannot be fragmented.” In *Life as Yoga*, she presents the nondual approach to understanding reality:

Within and without are words coined by man. In fact, there is nothing like within and without. You cannot see the structure of the body under the skin and you call it ‘within,’ and that which is visible to you is ‘without.’ In fact, there is no within and without in life. Life is all pervasive. This division into within and without is born of the limitations of our senses. There are seers for whom there are no differences of ‘within’ and ‘without,’ time and space, myself and the other . . . This language of ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ is an invention of man; otherwise we are as closely connected with the universe as a whole as our hand is connected with our body. This talk of indivisibility, unity, non-duality is not just poetic fantasy. It is the barest truth, the concrete reality. Only you must have the vision to see this unity. (26)

Perhaps the strongest proponent of a non-dualistic approach to the concept of outer and inner worlds is the Advaita Vedanta school of Indian spirituality. The immanence of an all-embracing unity and wholeness underlying material reality is a deeply embedded principle of the Advaita approach to understanding the nature of existence. According to Advaita doctrine, the ever-present eternal Self is the source and origin both of the outer world of phenomena and the inner world of consciousness. The apparent duality between matter and psyche in our ordinary experience of the universe dissolves in the realization of the inter-dependence of a conscious observer and the content of experience:

The duality between self and matter is resolved by showing how both poles of being – the conscious experiencer and the objects experienced – arise from a single source. The universe as we know it has thus the same origin as have we who experience it. We and the universe are interdependent elements of psychic process in consciousness. Looking outward we fill the universe with values taken from within ourselves. Looking inward we find that the patterns of the psyche correspond to the patterns of the outer world. Through the understanding of these symbolic correspondences we are able to reach a deeper understanding both of ourselves and the universe, of the relationship between the two, and of our common source. (27)

The scientific worldview posits a world external to human consciousness with its own independent existence. But the nondual perspective challenges this primary assumption of science. Western Advaita teacher Jean Klein questions the underlying premises of an outside world detached from the inner perception of a human observer: “The human form is a microcosm of the universe. All that supposedly exists outside us in reality exists in us. The world is in you and can become known in you, as you. What then is this ‘you’? Generally, however, we spend our whole lives involved in what is apparently outside us without ever looking at what is closest. In *Who Am I?*, Klein explains the mistaken logic of the scientific perspective:

Q: Why is it that men like Immanuel Kant or Einstein could not come to fully understand the nature of existence?

A: Kant recognized that the world was known through the body-mind but he still identified with the body-mind and projected a thing-in-itself ‘outside.’ Einstein did not come to know the true nature of existence because he identified with it. When identification with the body ceases there is no outside or inside, and the world, including the body and all its senses, is reabsorbed in globality which is sometimes called the ultimate perceiver. What is unknowable in terms of perception is then living knowing. The apparent independence of the world is based only on the false idea that identifies consciousness with the body. When the body is also seen as an object of consciousness, how can there be an autonomous world outside it? Infinity is not simply a geometrical representation. The infinity of being is all-encompassing. (28)

The false belief, at least from the nondual perspective, in the reality of an independent, outside world, distinct from consciousness or awareness, is a corollary of the concept of separation, distinction and division. The bifurcation of experience into subject-object or inner-outer is a conceptual artifact and contradicts our actual experience of reality. Rupert Spira, a teacher in the lineage of Jean Klein, points to this fact: “There is always only seamless intimate experiencing. The division between the seer and the seen, between the experiencer and the experienced, never actually happens. Separation is an illusion; it is never actually experienced.”

Thought alone creates the apparent distinction between self and other, between the inner world and the outer world. But in our direct immediate experience there is no dividing line between self and non-self; rather, there is only pure awareness which contains both apparent worlds. There are no separate 'parts' to experience. The 'me' and the 'not-me' are expressions of an indivisible totality and have no independent reality of their own: "In the seeing of a tree, for instance, there is no seer and there is no seen. There is no inside 'I' that sees and no outside 'tree' that is seen. The 'I' and the 'tree' are concepts superimposed by thinking onto the reality of the experience, which in this case could simply be called 'seeing.'" Rupert Spira advocates an experiential, open-minded enquiry in *The Intimacy of All Experience*:

Is there actually an experience of a border between what is considered to be the inside of our self and what is considered to be outside? The skin, which *seems* to house our self, Awareness, is in fact simply another sensation or perception that itself appears in Awareness along with all other sensations and perceptions. It is not the body that contains Awareness and separates it from the world, but rather our true body, Awareness, that contains the body, mind and world . . . The border between the 'me' and the 'not me' is imagined with the thought that thinks it. Without this concept there is no 'me,' no not-me,' no inside and no outside. The limited physical body is simply one more appearance within Awareness . . . The sound of the wind, the sensation of the breath, the sight of the moon and the apparent location in which they are supposedly taking place do not in fact take place in any place. The sound, the sensation, the perception and the apparent location, all take place in placeless Awareness. (29)

In order to truly understand reality, we need to approach it without any assumptions or preconceptions. When we examine our actual experience without reference to concepts such as "inside" and "outside," there is only pure *being*, which is ultimately indescribable and ineffable:

If we really want to explore life, it has to be a consideration of something more basic than thinking. The actual happening of this moment is not a thought. This happening that we usually call seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, or thinking is not a thought. Even if we don't give it any name or description, it still makes itself obvious. It's just the immediate feeling of being, of existing. We normally think about this occurrence as two happenings, the outside of us and the inside of us, but it's not two things. If we don't focus on a thought that says it's two happenings, it simply feels like one happening. The outside of me is happening at the same time as the inside of me. If we consider what we actually experience, it's simply the feeling that something is happening right now. So here it is, this most basic feeling of existing. (30)

## References

- (1) Gary Lachman *The Caretakers of the Cosmos* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2013), p. 16.
- (2) Gary Lachman *The Caretakers of the Cosmos* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2013), p. 26.
- (3) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 8-9.
- (4) Jeanne de Salzmänn *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 21.
- (5) Jacob Needleman "Gurdjieff, or the Metaphysics of Energy" in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teachings* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 74-75.
- (6) Jacob Needleman *Money and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 71-72.
- (7) Maurice Nicoll *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff & Ouspensky Vol. 1* (London: Robinson & Watkins, 1973), pp. 306-307.
- (8) Kenneth Walker *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 33.
- (9) Jacob Needleman *Time and the Soul* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003), pp. 60-61.
- (10) Ricardo Guillon *Record of a Search: Working with Michel Conge in France* (Toronto: Traditional Studies Press, 2004), pp. 108-111.
- (11) Jacob Needleman *Necessary Wisdom* (Napa, California: Fearless Books, 2013), p. 42.
- (12) Jacob Needleman *Money and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 153-154.
- (13) Jeanne de Salzmänn *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 45.
- (14) Henriette Lannes *This Fundamental Quest* (San Francisco: Far West Institute, 2003), pp. 43-45.
- (15) Maurice Nicoll *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff & Ouspensky Vol. 1* (London: Robinson & Watkins, 1973), pp. 18-19.
- (16) Jeanne de Salzmänn *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 94.
- (17) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), pp. 118-119.
- (18) Christian Wertenbaker *The Enneagram of G.I. Gurdjieff* (New Paltz, New York: Codhill Press, 2017), pp. 93-94.
- (19) Jacob Needleman *Money and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. 6.
- (20) Jacob Needleman "Gurdjieff, or the Metaphysics of Energy" in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teachings* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 73-74.
- (21) Jeanne de Salzmänn *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 135-136.
- (22) Jacob Needleman *The Wisdom of Love* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2005), pp. 57-58.
- (23) Jacob Needleman "Gurdjieff, or the Metaphysics of Energy" in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teachings* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 78.
- (24) William Segal *A Voice at the Borders of Silence* ((New York: The Overlook Press, 2003), pp. 246-247.
- (25) Jeff Foster *The Wonder of Being* (Oakland, California: Non-Duality Press, 2010), p.33.

- (26) Vimala Thakar *Life as Yoga* (New Delhi: Indological Publishers, 1982), p. 57.
- (27) Krishna Prem and Madhava Ashish *Man, The Measure Of All Things* (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1969), p. 19.
- (28) Jean Klein *Who Am I?* (Shaftesbury, England: Element Books, 1988), p.83.
- (29) Rupert Spira *The Intimacy of All Experience* (Oxford, England: Sahaja Publications, 2016), p. 24.
- (30) Darryl Bailey *"What the . . .": A Conversation About Living* (United Kingdom: New Sarum Press, 2019), p. 67.