

Esoteric Christianity vs. Secular Humanism in Esoteric Clothing: A Rebuttal to “Role of Abstract Ideals in the Creation of the Kesdjan”

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Summary

According to Gurdjieff, man is not born with an immortal soul. The man perishes with the death of the physical body. ¹ Gurdjieff also taught that through certain efforts man has the possibility of acquiring an immortal soul that can survive the death of the physical body. ² This paper examines Gurdjieff’s ideas on death and immortality and serves as a rebuttal to “Role of Abstract Ideals in the Creation of the Kesdjan” (Jarvis 2020), specifically the claim Jarvis makes that only abstract ideals and their qualities survive one’s physical death. ³

The First Sacred Rascoarno

The man perishes with the death of the physical body, or as it is called in *Beelzebub’s Tales* (Gurdjieff 1950), the first sacred Rascoarno. The finality of physical death should be obvious, but for some, it is not obvious.

“...[D]uring a long period of time—many of their centuries—they gradually acquired from this automatic crystallizing, data for a more or less correct instinctive sensing of certain cosmic truths, as for instance, concerning the indubitable truth, that if the process of the sacred Rascoarno occurs to any being, or as they say ‘if someone dies’ and is moreover buried, then this being will never exist again, nor furthermore will he ever speak or teach again.” ⁴

The context of the quoted passage is the destruction of the true teaching of salvation of Jesus Christ. Earlier in the text, it is written that the destruction of this teaching was caused by the criminal wisecracking of some who, due to an inherent need in them to mislead others, inserted into the stories and notes of eyewitnesses their own inventions, and in particular, inserted the story of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. ⁵

¹ *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 31-32, 40-44, 91-94, 97, 101; *Views from the Real World*, p. 222-226; *Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 406, 736, 1227.

² *Beelzebub’s Tales* p. 60-61, 246, 569, 764-5, 1227; *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, p. 43, 243; *Life is Real Only Then, When “I AM”*, p. 160.

³ Jarvis 2020, p. 3c, 5d, 7c, 8a, 9d, 10c, 11b.

⁴ *Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 736.

⁵ *Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 735-6.

This criminal wiseacring had two results: for those who still more or less instinctively sensed this cosmic truth of the finality of physical death, due to the introduced logical contradiction of physical resurrection, the result was doubt and disbelief in the true teachings of salvation; and for others, the result was loss of the true teachings of Jesus Christ due to blind belief in all kinds of extraneous fantastic notions, including physical resurrection—in other words, credulity—and a loss of the sense that physical death was final.⁶

Against this tendency of credulity, Gurdjieff taught students to use the principle of verification.

“I ask you to believe nothing that you cannot verify for yourself.”⁷

It is important to note that this principle of verification does not say “to immediately disbelieve everything you cannot verify for yourself” since disbelief would be belief in a negative. So, if something is not presently verified, it is neither to be believed nor disbelieved, but rather it is to remain classified as unverified until it is verified.

This delayed gratification of belief or disbelief is important, because engaging in verification is a process. This process includes fact gathering, logical confrontation, peer and superior consultation, experimentation, repeatability, integration with previously constated knowledge, and explanation according to laws. This is similar to the way one works with a hypothesis in science.

Whether one suspects that the hypothesis is true or not, one must work within the framework of the hypothesis in order to test it. Agreement on the framework of the hypothesis is necessary, that is, agreement upon precisely what is to be verified—in this case, Gurdjieff’s ideas about death and immortality as conveyed in what he wrote and what was transcribed from what he said. This is where principles of exegesis are useful.

In order to avoid eisegesis, proof texting, or other methods that lead to misinterpretations, and for the purpose of agreement on the framework of the hypothesis, one provisionally accepts that Gurdjieff wrote intentionally and consciously, each detail in his writings having meaning in relation to the whole.

Further, one must allow Gurdjieff to explain himself as the source and authority of his own ideas before resorting to outside sources for explanations. One must keep a critical mind, turning criticism towards one’s own understanding of what the author means, rather than criticizing the author for not understanding what he himself meant.

⁶ *Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 736-7.

⁷ *Views from the Real World*, p. 78

Accepting that Gurdjieff wrote intentionally, particular attention must be paid to apparent contradictions. One must learn how to distinguish between what was meant literally and what was meant metaphorically, and not fall into the trap of taking what was said or written as entirely literal or entirely metaphorical if it was not intended that way. However, contradiction as a marker for literal or metaphorical meaning is not always the reason for apparent contradictions.⁸

One must also have epistemological modesty. For example, when asked about events written in the Acts of the Apostles, Gurdjieff replied, "I don't know, I wasn't there."⁹ Principles of verification function not only against credulity but also the tendency to 'wiseacre', that is to make up stories and pass them off as true. Similarly, one must also avoid 'lying', that is, speaking or writing about things as if one knows about them when one does not actually know.

As an example of verification and returning to the initial statements, take the question of the finality of physical death. Observation of this phenomenon is trivially acquired: morgues, mortuaries, and graveyards are filled with the physical bodies of those who have died and have remained dead. As far as direct observation of this phenomenon, this is left as an eventual exercise for the reader and this author.

In the case of near-death experiences and what evidence they might provide, it should be noted that in all cases these are *near* death experiences and not *actual* death experiences where the deceased has been decomposing for several days.

In the case of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, one can make no direct observation. One can interview no living witnesses. The hardships and martyrdom of purported eyewitnesses of a physical resurrection as evidence could be weighed as insufficient, as there are many ready to suffer hardships and martyr themselves for entirely contradictory beliefs even today. And such a miracle could be reasonably considered an unlawful act in relation to the laws of the universe: "Everyone knows that even the Lord himself cannot beat the ace of trumps with the ordinary deuce."¹⁰

So, to all evidence, it can be reasonably constated that the death of the physical body marks the end of a process that is inevitable, irreversible, and as will be explained later, necessary.

⁸ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 461-2.

⁹ *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 96.

¹⁰ *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 95.

Physical Death as Loss of Self

It is difficult to imagine one's own death. For a moment, one may feel it when someone close dies or one has a brush with death, but the full sense of it is soon forgotten. Still, in trying to imagine one's own death, one may cognize its finality, that there would be a total cessation of sensing, feeling, and thinking, of engaging in any further activities, of having any further experiences, of spending time with still living friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and in totality, of the awareness that "I am here" as a subject in the world—in a word, oblivion—a total loss of one's sense of self.

Yet even this sense of self in man is inconstant, flagging, often fabricated, and controlled entirely by external circumstances—this self really amounts to no self at all. One already lives in states of more or less oblivion. Such a man was said by Gurdjieff to be a *man in quotation marks*, a nullity, a nonentity. This can be verified with observation¹¹ and observing this in oneself is one of the first thresholds to be crossed in the Work.¹²

Since a man in quotation marks has nothing in him that is his own, that is permanent, unchanging, or real, in relation to the subject of physical death, therefore, as was initially stated, the man perishes with the death of the physical body.

*"...[T]he man in quotation marks ... disappears forever."*¹³

One ought to be terrified at this picture, but due to a hereditary predisposition in man, one usually is not.¹⁴

But when one does feel one's own impending physical death, it can also arouse a felt need, an urgency, an impulse to survive. Gurdjieff wrote that this drive to survive is an impulse that arises sometimes in humans from worthy manifestations, albeit it is an impulse that can and has been mostly destroyed.

*"I must sadly remark that the mentioned depraved inherency already completely fixed in their common presences is for them, particularly for your contemporary favorites, already an 'automatically acting' means of destroying to their very root even those impulses which sometimes arise in them from manifestations worthy of three-brained beings and which evoke in them the what is called 'thirst-for-Being.'"*¹⁵

¹¹ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 1212-1219.

¹² First Initiation, A Talk given by Mr. Gurdjieff to a Paris Group, September 16, 1941.

¹³ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 1227.

¹⁴ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 1219-1227.

¹⁵ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 794.

This 'thirst-for-Being' is what drives humans to survive, to thrive, to consciously produce and raise offspring as their physical replacements (or merely unconsciously for the continuation of the species), to strive for self-perfection, and to seek immortality.¹⁶

*"[T]he real man who has already acquired his own "I"... acquires the possibility, simultaneously with serving the all-universal Actualizing, of applying a part of his manifestations according to the providence of Great Nature for the purpose of acquiring for himself "Imperishable Being"..."*¹⁷

In the context of the earlier passage, the "mentioned depraved inherency" is the misuse of sex for entertainment introduced by the Romans, rather than as a sacred sacrament, and in turn, the abnormal attitude to minimize one's suffering and maximizing one's pleasure: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." This pernicious attitude destroys the instinctive need for self-perfection in the sense of being.

This drive can also, due to the previously mentioned factor of credulity, be short-circuited by various erroneous ideas about the soul, either that all men are born with immortal souls, thus negating the necessity to strive to acquire one, or that no men have immortal souls and that nobody can ever have one, similarly negating the necessity to strive but this time due to the claim of the unreality of having an immortal soul.¹⁸

The worldview presented in the Jarvis paper falls into the latter category, denying the existence of immortal souls and deriding this impulse to survive after death:

*"Survival of the human entity after death is not... a legitimate possibility or aim of inner work... To think that 'me survival' is the Aim of the Work is delusion, perhaps desperation..."*¹⁹

Jarvis does acknowledge this drive to survive, but it is survival without any individual component:

*"It is rooted in our human drive to create something that survives us and leave a contribution to the great whole."*²⁰

And Jarvis denigrates those seeking to develop themselves from nobody into somebody by mis-categorizing 'thirst-for-Being' as ambition:

¹⁶ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 791-4.

¹⁷ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 1227.

¹⁸ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 330-331.

¹⁹ Jarvis 2020, p. 1a.

²⁰ Jarvis 2020, p. 1c.

*"It occurred to me recently, that we do not want to be nothing, we don't seek our own nothingness, despite speaking about such in hushed tones. No, everybody wants to be somebody, to have their 'own Kesdjan body' or impressive 'being' or great knowledge of the intricacies of the Tales—they do not seek to be no one and nothing—which is the case in truth. I have come to believe that this way of working, the outcome of which has been put forth by Gurdjieff over and over, is unavailable to ambition of any sort."*²¹

While it is true that becoming aware of one's nothingness is a crisis all who come to the Work must go through, Gurdjieff's exhortation is to not remain there. The awareness of one's own nothingness ought to produce in oneself a process of remorse that leads towards the real sense and aim of one's existence.

*"There is man – real man – and man in quotation marks. A man in quotation marks is always under influences. Only a real man has inner freedom. In the meantime, you are a man in quotation marks. You must do everything in order to become a real man, without quotation marks. There is no other means."*²²

Jarvis almost rises to this level of understanding this when she mentions 'particle-hood', but she quickly falls back on her worldview that excludes any individual survival after the death of the physical body:

*"Particle-hood! Individual but part of the whole. So we are down to the smallest of the small, yet it comes down from the Ideal, the 'god', the 'teacher', the Ray of Creation, all the way down to the smallest. We can practice attaining the ideal in its particularity, while accepting the concreteness of our future demise. Gurdjieff assures us that something lives on, of which we are a particle."*²³

Restating the related passage from *Beelzebub's Tales* quoted by Jarvis:

*"I decided to carry out the said task at all costs and to be worthy, if only by this explicit aid to our UNIQUE-BURDEN-BEARING-ENDLESSNESS, of becoming a particle, though an independent one, of everything existing in the Great Universe."*²⁴

To carry out a task at all costs to be worthy, in helping God, to become *something* is categorically not the same as ambition which is for worldly wealth, fame, or power.

And to become a particle is a change from nothing into something—albeit a very small something in relation to everything existing, but a something nonetheless, and an independent one at that.

²¹ Jarvis 2020, p. 9b.

²² *Paris Meetings 1943*, p. 341.

²³ Jarvis 2020, p. 10b-c.

²⁴ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 183.

So, the first problem to be resolved is the problem of one's nullity—the inconstant, flagging, and fabricated sense of self. Gurdjieff taught that through certain efforts, a man can acquire his own individuality; he can have his own real, permanent, and unchanging “I”; as such, he would no longer be a nonentity or a nullity; he would be a man without quotation marks.

The Kesdjan Body in Theory

When acquired, the “I” exists in the physical body as long as the physical body endures. Then, at the death of the physical body, what becomes of this “I”?

Gurdjieff taught that through conscious labor and intentional suffering, a man can coat and perfect two additional bodies of finer yet more durable materials: the kesdjan body and the higher being-body, both which can survive the death of the physical body, and eventually, after a long period of purification and perfection, uniting with the mind of God ²⁵, and becoming for all purposes immortal. The “I” in a man is what survives within the kesdjan and higher being-bodies after the death of the physical body. The kesdjan body is the nearest ‘stage’ of development towards an immortal soul.

Contrary to the premise of Jarvis’ paper, the necessity of having an ideal is not specifically for the coating of the kesdjan body. Take for example, the account of the brigand, or the monk ²⁶, or even hasnamusses ²⁷, whom Gurdjieff said can all form kesdjan bodies with apparently no worthy ideals required. That is not to say that ideals do not serve an essential purpose in the Work, as the mentioned candidates for kesdjan bodies have undesirable outcomes, but the purpose of ideals is not specifically for the coating of the kesdjan body.

In *Beelzebub’s Tales*, Gurdjieff wrote that while the kesdjan body is more durable than the physical body, it too will also perish and decompose, or as it is written, it will undergo the second Sacred Rascoarno. ²⁸ In this case, the “I” continues to survive in the higher-being body if formed, until united with the mind of God.

As mentioned previously about verification and exegetical principles, one must distinguish whether Gurdjieff means something as literal or as metaphor.

“Never believe anything you hear me say. Learn to discriminate between what must be taken literally and what metaphorically.” ²⁹

²⁵ *Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 777-778; see also p. 1222.

²⁶ *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 32-33.

²⁷ *Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 407-9.

²⁸ *Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 406-7.

²⁹ *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p. 75.

Jarvis' claim is that there is no concrete reality to what Gurdjieff taught about the kesdjan body, to the point where she mocks the idea:

*"We die, that's it and why do it? ... There is no 'Kesdjan' Buzz Lightyear space suit that we as individuals acquire to keep the personal 'me' alive past physical death."*³⁰

The problem is this: How does one verify Gurdjieff's exposition on the kesdjan body as having a concrete reality? Or conversely how does one verify Gurdjieff's exposition on the kesdjan body as an analog for something abstract and having no individual concrete reality?

The Kesdjan Body in Practice

So how does one verify whether the kesdjan body has an individual concrete reality or not?

One can find in written transcripts of meetings that Gurdjieff gave students specific exercises for the testing of the results of the coating of the kesdjan body. There are many examples of these kinds of exercises found in meeting transcripts.³¹

In the following, a student is struggling to separate from his physical body:

LL: I can't manage to do the separation exercise either. I let myself be concentrated in the head and also see my body. Then I sense my body as lighter, and as if illuminated, but I have the impression that seeing myself this way goes beyond my head, beyond my body.

GURDJIEFF: But that is exactly what separation is.

LL: And yet I cannot sense myself as double.

*GURDJIEFF: But you cannot sense yourself: your double is without a body; you cannot sense it. It is something that does not yet have a body. When it can be coated with a body, you will sense it.*³²

³⁰ Jarvis 2020, p. 7a.

³¹ *Paris Meetings 1943*, p. 80-85, 92-96, 101-102, 115-117, 130-131, 169-170, 191-193, 210, 218-226, 238-244, 299; *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931*, p. 315-318, 328, 422-423.

³² *Paris Meetings 1943*, p. 220.

So, the existence of the kesdjan body for an individual as a fact can be verified if one puts in the necessary effort to first acquire one and then knows how to test it, according to the same process of verification mentioned earlier.

That man cannot survive the physical death of his body and yet can have a kesdjan body that does survive is not the paradox suggested by Jarvis ³³, when it is understood that physical death is final only for life in the physical body for a man without a kesdjan body.

Nor is the kesdjan body explained away as merely abstract transpersonal 'bodies of work' or as collective manifestations of ideals and their qualities in a 'higher world'. ³⁴ Again, there are many cases where Gurdjieff gave students specific exercises related to the testing of the results of the coating of the kesdjan body, that these exercises are still taught to students, and that these students verify for themselves the existence of their kesdjan bodies.

Interestingly, this transpersonal world suggested in the Jarvis paper is found not in a 'higher world' devoid of individuals but in creating more normal conditions here on planet Earth. A major theme of *Beelzebub's Tales* is the abnormal conditions of ordinary being-existence that they themselves established ³⁵, and is an important topic of further study unto itself, but beyond the scope of this paper.

Kesdjan Body and True Religion

Returning to the initial passage from *Beelzebub's Tales* on the instinctive sensing of the finality of physical death and the loss of the true religious teachings of Jesus Christ, it is worth noting that the context of this passage is about a sacrament that would allow communication with Jesus Christ after the death of his physical body:

"The point is, that when this Sacred Individual Jesus Christ was actualized in the planetary body of a terrestrial three-brained being, and when afterwards he had to be separated from his exterior planetary coating, then just this same sacred process 'Almznoshinoo' was also produced on his body Kesdjan by certain terrestrial three-brained beings in order to have the possibility—in view of the violent interruption of his planetary existence—of continuing to communicate with his Divine Reason and of obtaining in this way the information about certain cosmic Truths and certain instructions for the future which he did not finish giving them." ³⁶

³³ Jarvis 2020, p. 1b

³⁴ Jarvis 2020, p. 5d, 7c, 8a

³⁵ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 105, 131-3, 147, 224, 238, 274-5, 292-3, 301, 305, 333-4, 456, 512, 526, 564-5, 603, 621-2, 637, 642, 643-4, 877-8, 1195, 1200.

³⁶ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 735.

Here it is said that this communication between Jesus Christ and his disciples would occur after the death of their teacher's physical body. In light of considering keshjan bodies existing as a concrete reality, this communication after death does not contradict the finality of physical death. However, this context is not raised in the Jarvis paper.

It is notable that Jarvis draws the reader's attention to the destruction of the true teachings of Jesus Christ in *Beelzebub's Tales*³⁷, yet ignores a similar passage in *Beelzebub's Tales* referring to the destruction of Buddhism, while saying this:

*"Buddhism has recognized, unlike the degraded Abrahamic religions, that life is impermanent and that everything passes away. The Eightfold Path addresses how to avoid suffering and how one should conduct one's life. The aim of Buddhism is to create an ethical life, right life, right livelihood, right conduct towards others. In this, the individual is responsible, rather than an interfering deity, to whom one is subservient."*³⁸ [emphasis mine]

Beelzebub's Tales has this to say about Buddhism:

"But to the grief of every Individual with Pure Reason of any gradation whatsoever and to the misfortune of the three-brained beings of all succeeding generations who arise on that planet, the first succeeding generation of the contemporaries of this genuine Messenger from Above, Saint Buddha, also began, owing once again to that same particularity of their psyche, namely, of wiseacring—which until now is one of the chief results of the conditions of the ordinary being-existence abnormally established there—to wiseacre with all His indications and counsels, and this time to 'superwiseacre' so thoroughly that there reached the beings of the third and fourth generations nothing else but what our Honorable Mullah Nassr Eddin defines by the words: 'Only-information-about-its-specific-smell.'" ³⁹

So then, why does Jarvis ascribe special surviving status to Buddhism while describing Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as "degraded Abrahamic religions... [with] an interfering deity to whom one is subservient"?

There are several qualities to the Buddhism that Jarvis describes that are agreeable with the worldview presented in her paper: relatively atheistic ("[no] interfering deity to whom one is subservient"), and no immortal soul or afterlife ("life is impermanent, and everything passes away"). The qualities described in the Jarvis paper on contemporary Buddhism also place the Jarvis paper at odds with the stated purpose of true religious teachings according to Gurdjieff.⁴⁰

³⁷ Jarvis 2020, p. 4c.

³⁸ Jarvis 2020, p. 5a.

³⁹ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 239-240.

⁴⁰ Jarvis 2020, p. 5a.

In *Beelzebub's Tales*, unlike certain elements of his teaching relating to cosmology, typology, and psychology, Gurdjieff does not obscure the true religious teaching of salvation. He is explicit about it. The purpose of true religious teachings is always the destruction of the heritable harmful tendencies present in man that lead to reciprocal destruction in revolutions and wars, or as they are called in *Beelzebub's Tales*, the “crystallized consequences of the properties of the maleficent organ Kundabuffer.”⁴¹

Methods have varied from messenger to messenger. The method of Ashiata Shiemash differs from past messengers due to the degeneration of the impulses of faith, hope, and love in man.⁴² Through conscious labor and intentional suffering, working with the five strivings to produce friction to decrystallize the crystallized consequences and bringing objective conscience from our subconscious to participate in our ordinary waking state⁴³, re-normalizing the abnormal being-conditions, and growing an immortal soul.

The Kesdjan Body and Cosmology

“Whilst they were talking in this vein, someone asked Gurdjieff if he would disclose his own ‘whim,’ and he said it was to live and teach so that there should be a new conception of God in the world, a change in the very meaning of the word.”⁴⁴

The chapter on The Holy Planet “Purgatory” in *Beelzebub's Tales* is Gurdjieff's remarkable exposition of cosmology. In it, the reader is presented with a new conception of God, the creation and maintenance of the Megalocosmos, and the sense and aim of man's existence, under the pretext of the book's protagonist Beelzebub explaining to his grandson why HIS ENDLESSNESS so often visits the titular planet.

To believe that nothing more intelligent, more conscious, more capable than oneself or human beings in general exists in the entire universe is egoism. But it is necessary to work with what one has until something else can be formulated and constated.

So, if one does not believe in God, paraphrasing Gurdjieff, take one's mother or father or teacher as one's ideal. Then one may understand by holding them above oneself as an ideal that there must be someone higher than oneself, and if someone

⁴¹ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 233.

⁴² *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 355.

⁴³ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 385-8.

⁴⁴ *A.R. Orage: A Memoir*, p. 105.

higher than oneself exists, then someone higher can exist than the previous higher someone, and so on, and that ultimately a highest exists.

On the other side of egoism, there is the belief that a relative nonentity can have a direct relationship with God as they are.

“Millions and millions of nonentities wish to have relations with Mr. God direct. This is impossible... Meanwhile, take an ideal, whoever is nearest and then you can pray to God, because this person has an ideal, this ideal has an ideal, and so on, on to God.”⁴⁵

This understanding of relationship according to hierarchy and intermediary is expressed in the Gospels with the story of the faith of the centurion.

“After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of having you do this for him, for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.” And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.”⁴⁶

Jarvis writes on this topic of having an ideal, but oddly in her paper she never rises above regarding God as merely ‘god’, flattened to small ‘g’ or in quotation marks or both, while at the same holding in high regard unnecessarily multiplied entities such as ‘Hyparxis’ and transpersonal worlds uninhabited by individuals.⁴⁷ Jarvis touches upon the ideas of hierarchy and intermediary, but never extrapolates to the reasonable conclusion to which Gurdjieff is pointing.

Jarvis confuses Plato’s concept of the “Ideal”⁴⁸ with Gurdjieff’s concept of an “ideal”. Gurdjieff advised his students to take an existing real person as an ideal, not an abstract notion of a person; thus, the ideal is an actual exemplary person who is

⁴⁵ *Wartime Meetings*, p. 112-114.

⁴⁶ Luke 7:1-10, *New American Standard Bible*.

⁴⁷ Jarvis 2020, 7b, 8b, 9c.

⁴⁸ Jarvis 2020, p. 2a.

above oneself and serves as an intermediary to the higher and eventually, the Highest. Jarvis also conflates her concept of “ideal” with what is presented in the “Four Ideals” exercise. In the worldview presented in the Jarvis paper, these “Ideals” also have no real ongoing individual existence; they are also merely abstract.

It is worth noting that in the 1931 manuscript of *Beelzebub's Tales* (Bloor 2014), its index has fifty-eight references to different descriptors given to God by Gurdjieff: ALL COMMON FATHER MAINTAINER, ALL-GRACIOUS ENDLESS CREATOR, HIS ENDLESSNESS, and so on.⁴⁹ Gurdjieff displayed his worshipfulness towards God in all these descriptors. In *Beelzebub's Tales*, Gurdjieff mercilessly destroys for the reader's benefit the idea of God as a caricature of man and imparts to the reader a new concept of God as Megalocosmos and man in HIS image, corresponding to man's three centers.⁵⁰

According to *Beelzebub's Tales*, man's place in the Megalocosmos is that of an apparatus for the receiving, transforming, and returning of substances to Great Nature. Man is born, eats, breathes, takes in impressions, lives to reproduce for the continuation of the species, dies, and decomposes, releasing whatever substances were transformed and accumulated back to Great Nature. Great Nature often compensates for man's unbecoming behavior to ensure a regular supply of the necessary transformed substances.⁵¹

But also, according to *Beelzebub's Tales*, man has been given the possibility through certain efforts to supply these transformed substances while retaining the surplus for himself in order to create something finer and more durable than the physical body.⁵²

To what end is man given the possibility to survive physical death? Gurdjieff repeats this purpose several times in *Beelzebub's Tales*:

*“And thereupon, when our COMMON FATHER ENDLESSNESS ascertained this automatic moving of theirs [three-brained beings], there then arose for the first time in HIM the Divine Idea of making use of it as a help for HIMSELF in the administration of the enlarging world.”*⁵³

*“... I have already said, our UNI-BEING COMMON FATHER ENDLESSNESS condescended at the creation of the now existing World, to decide to use for the future those coatings who obtain independent Individuality in the Tetartocosmoses [three-brained beings], as an aid for HIMSELF in the administration of the enlarging world.”*⁵⁴

⁴⁹ 1931 Manuscript, p. 1019-20.

⁵⁰ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 774-777.

⁵¹ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 106, 131, 146, 275-6, 305, 327-8, 388, 437-8, 505, 564, 570-1.

⁵² *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 792, 1227.

⁵³ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 762.

⁵⁴ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 778.

"... [T]hat is owing to just those factors which our COMMON FATHER CREATOR ENDLESSNESS consented to foreordain to be the means by which certain of the Tetartocosmoses—as a final result of their serving the purposes of the common-cosmic Iraniranumange—might become helpers in the ruling of the enlarging World and which factors also until now serve as the sole possible means for the assimilation of the cosmic substances required for the coating and perfecting of the higher being-bodies and which we at the present time call 'conscious labors' and 'intentional suffering.'" ⁵⁵

This difference in scale between Megalocosmos and man is vast beyond comprehension, but as vast as it is, and as small as man is in relation to it, Gurdjieff created a picture of the ultimate place for man:

"At any rate, my little Hasein, each of your favorites, separately, is, in his whole presence, exactly similar in every respect to our Megalocosmos.

"I once told you that there is localized in the head of each one of them as well as in us a concentration of corresponding cosmic substances, all the functioning of which exactly corresponds to all those functions and purposes which our Most Most Holy Protocosmos has, and fulfills, for the whole of the Megalocosmos.

"This localization, which is concentrated in their head, they call the 'head-brain.' The separate, what are called 'Okaniaki' or 'protoplasts' of this localization in their head, or, as the terrestrial learned call them, the 'cells-of-the-head-brain,' actualize for the whole presence of each of them exactly such a purpose as is fulfilled at the present time by the 'higher-perfected-bodies' of three-brained beings from the whole of our Great Universe, who have already united themselves with the Most Most Holy Sun Absolute or Protocosmos.

"When these higher parts of three-brained beings, who are perfected to the corresponding gradation of objective Reason, get there, they fulfill precisely that function of the Okaniaki or 'cells-of-the-head-brain,' for which function, as I have already said, our UNI-BEING COMMON FATHER ENDLESSNESS condescended at the creation of the now existing World, to decide to use for the future those coatings who obtain independent Individuality in the Tetartocosmoses, as an aid for Himself in the administration of the enlarging world." ⁵⁶

Gurdjieff presented the idea of a life after this one—an afterlife. This afterlife presented is not an idyllic state of rest or dissolution into oceanic oneness, or a place of punishment (with minor exceptions), but a continuation of ongoing work for self-perfection and service, in harmony with other independent individuals.

⁵⁵ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 792.

⁵⁶ *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 777-778; see also p. 1222.

This is, of course, an idea that remains personally difficult to verify until death. But until then—unlike Jarvis who cannot restrain belief to deny individual afterlife—one can take the idea simply as unverified, neither affirmed nor denied.

The exhortation to not die like a dog acquires a different meaning if one takes Gurdjieff's cosmology seriously; more than not merely dying an ignoble death, it speaks to dying with full awareness and readiness that something comes next.

Gurdjieff presented a much higher calling than only service to others on planet Earth alone, though the work begins here—the pinnacle is uniting with HIS ENDLESSNESS to serve him yet retaining independent individuality. This sets the aim of the Work much higher than the level of life on planet Earth.

Conclusion

"A soul—this is the aim of all religions, of all schools." ⁵⁷

The two worldviews in relation to the death of the physical body and development of the kesdjan body can be summarized thus:

For Jarvis, man dies with the physical body, with no possibility of developing an individual immortal soul to survive death. Only the results of certain efforts can 'outlive' him as an abstract and transpersonal kesdjan 'body'. Therefore, there is no greater good than serving man in his life on Earth. This is secular humanism in esoteric clothing.

For Gurdjieff, through conscious labor and intentional suffering, a man can develop an individual immortal soul for service to others and to God, on Earth and after his physical death. This is esoteric Christianity.

Gurdjieff taught the idea of the kesdjan body as a concrete reality, not as an abstract or a metaphor. Claims to the contrary as Jarvis makes ⁵⁸ are against Gurdjieff's ideas as presented in his writings on the topic directly and indirectly in his cosmology, the practical exercises he gave to students, and the experimental evidence of contemporary students of his ideas.

And so, while his physical body did die, according to Gurdjieff's own teaching and practice, one can be reasonably assured that he spoke the truth: "I am Gurdjieff: I not will die."

⁵⁷ *Views from the Real World*, p. 222.

⁵⁸ Jarvis 2020, 3c, 5d, 7c, 8a, 9d, 10c, 11b.

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