

# Gurdjieff Oskiano

24-August-2023

**Presentation by Stephen Aronson:**

**I Have a Body, But I Am Not My Body**

Attendees: Robin, Paula, Sandra W, James, Robert P, Stephen F, Sasa J, Bobbie P, Stephen A, Kelly Connor, Marnie Haluska, Michelle F, Daniel // Mark Cleven, John Amaral.

SF: My first reading of this increased a realisation – even though I read ISOM over 50 years ago, not realised what separation means. Subtle ways I am identified with my body – even when I think I am not.

SA: Understanding is culmination of information and experience. I hear a word and assume I understand – do with ideas all the time. Until we have had the experience, we do not understand – we know about it ...

SW: I read this about a week and a half ago and I am aware how different it sounds – the memory of my own voice going over the words – different from your voice, to me is familiar and brings emotions and esteem that I attach to your voice. Questions you raise – how I identify with my body – more than when I read it. Not being comfortable with the answers I am giving myself intellectually.

SF: Can try to ignore your intellectual suggestions ... you know ...

MF: I remember ... locked in my body in childhood, chained and mind tried to get out – experience – could see staff going around the corridor and locked in a room and on a bed. Experience of not being able to use that body.

SA: Mind not in space-time – can go to past, future, imaginary world. What is that?

SF: The experiment with raising the hand is mysterious to me. Something non-verbal has to happen – volition for my hand to rise. Something has to happen to deliver a motor impulse – decision for me to raise my hand. That is how my brain puts together. Reality in volition – I cannot do – something outside – personal agency allowed me to raise my hand. Could say just reacting to situation that Stephen Aronson set up. Thing called ‘volition’ ...

SA: How do we think about the unthinkable – ineffable – if we just spent more time in our body. G’s man cannot do, just happens – and yet there is ‘will’ or volition and sometimes I seem to be directing it. Hierarchy of worlds – consciousness, energies of hydrogens. Direct experience of this mystery. I don’t see the synapse between the intent and action. My body engages in all sorts of actions in which my mind was not the initiator.

SW: Is watching intellect part of watching what is going on internally? Is that part of experience?

SA: Were you able to experience the mystery of the experiment we just did? You are already there. It is interesting to try to delve into “what part of what center did that come from”? But it is an experience ...

RB: I have had an experience several times and the first time was a long time ago – lying asleep on a rug in front of the fire and woke up but couldn’t move my body. Dramatic experience. Didn’t know what to do. I was trying to command the body to move but it didn’t move. This isn’t a new mystery to me – has haunted me for a long time. I can just move my hand and yet I know I have been in a state where I couldn’t – so more of a mystery.

SA: Familiar with sleep paralysis – partially awake, but still paralysed. There is another quality – I wake in the morning and lying in bed and sensing my body – how long will it take for some part of me to initiate it. Interesting experiment ... now walking towards the bathroom ... didn't initiate.

SW: The feeling that came out most strongly was laughing at myself – wanted to seize onto 'I am my awareness' – laughed at myself.

SA: Something in our intellect that needs to clarify, classify and label things. It doesn't like ambiguity ... gets anxious. Thinks it is supposed to know all this stuff.

If you are thinking about your feelings – don't. Try to sense your body and see what is going on.

RB: I have developed a habit when certain emotions arise, I do what has been described to me as the cleansing breath and the emotion changes – habitual, it will work. Also, I know there is a particular position in the big seven movement where you point and stride forward and I know I can go into that posture and it will change things. Can make the emotions different.

SA: Difference between sensations in the body and higher emotions that don't have that physiological underpinning – awe, respect, reverence – to do with valuation. Certain sensations that we call feelings will reflect body posture – if we learn how to relax, breathe differently, clear our heads of different thoughts – can calm down. How to willingly create a state of awe or reverence – can bring myself to a state ... Not controlling my autonomic nervous system responses, learn how to influence them. Happening faster than my attention is able to know. Do not recognise the trigger that has influenced my body. Work is about training attention and being faster than the responses. Being able to relax my body, change my thoughts – learning to work with my feelings?

MH: Over the course of last several months become aware of a bodily habit – my body knows an emotional state before I do. Will be fidgeting and it cues me in that I am anxious. Being driven by an emotion that I hadn't consciously recognised yet. Body very wise and begins these mechanical repetitive habits.

SA: Good example of sub-conscious that G refers to. Material in our architecture not in our awareness – doesn't exist for us in the moment. ... not aware until my muscles start tensing – what is my body reacting to? A lot of my manifestations happen like that – must not have been in my right mind – what is my right mind?

SF: Why is it that when in a state of greater presence – watchman more active for a while. Why does it go away when it is clearly a better way to live. It is more interesting to watch and wonder who is pulling the puppet's strings and yet surrender and become the puppet again. Do not choose to do it and happens before I realise. What lets me let go of the witness so quickly?

MH: I caught several times that I was wanting to go from presence to intellectual grasping. State of witnessing and being aware collapsed. Intellectual grasping. That is how the falling back asleep happened for me.

SJ: Witness or something which is not my thinking or emotion or body get caught immediately when knowledge or experience ... centers try to build on or use ... to be free from knowledge or experience or outside of my function. As soon as I have a question, witness cannot have question. Step we need to make which is very strange.

SA: The voice is not the witness – may be representative. Voice has mechanical nature – may represent something higher or lower in me. For me – confusion about having to do this – stay awake. G says about levels of energy. Have experience of running low on mental energy and

rises and falls. My emotions become energised and depressed ... energy is always emotion – energetic and comes in waves. Psychic energy associated with self-observation is of a high quality ... waves go up and down. Assume I can control wave – have to learn to surf. Madame de Salzmann: have to be aware of our inattention – can study rise of attention and form of attention. Need to suffer the fact that not in control of this cosmic energy. Rise and fall with it. Depends on my preparation ... for whatever time I am on the crest, work with it. When I realised I was asleep and think ‘damn I fell asleep’, I just gave that awareness away.

Don't know where these energies are – sentience. Know that depending on the type of brain and architecture – sensitive to different wavelengths and things that lay outside of that don't exist for us. Depending on maturity and crystallization can pick up other frequencies. Frequencies will vibrate in their own pattern – exercise in intentional suffering – have to experience the rise and fall and stay in front of the fact that I am not in charge of it. Can learn to be more open, but not in charge of the energy flow. This something I want is not something I am in control of.

The work is part of me and I am in a relationship with it. It comes and visits and I learn from it.

SJ: By witnessing that I am not in control I suffer? Is it just watching the part of me that wishes for control? How is it possible to have suffering without resistance? There is something that resists.

SA: That is where non-identification becomes essential. I am aware of the pain, but don't have to become the pain or react to the pain. Difference between I am angry and I notice anger in me. That is possible. If I practice how not to identify with it even though I feel it. Getting used to recognition that I am not in control ... die to myself. Not helpless. Capacity to move towards non-identification and the witnessing state – where we can learn. Mostly just sleep walking and in a dream world. See that, feel sadness and horror, but not identify. A lot of people mistakenly believe not going to have a feeling – not like that at all. That is one aspect of intentional suffering. Connected to the fifth stage of grieving – not that I want it, accept it. Not wasting energy resisting reality – a lot of me doesn't like this, but so what? Can I deal with it without wasting energy?

SW: Extremely valuable additional approach. I didn't take a single note! Now get past anxiety that I won't remember enough about it.

SA: In an earlier part of my life, when I used to take notes, realised it made it impossible to remember because I wasn't listening. If I could find an affirming experience, I didn't have to remember, it would come back when it was needed. What is it that goes looking for a memory?

SF: Big learning is I realise the extent to which I am identified with the idea that I have the power to summon the watchman – and I don't. My approach is to think about the concept of the watchman, which does nothing. What I want to work with – if I do ask myself: who is watching the thoughts – if not body, thoughts, feelings. Useful tool.

SA: How would you describe the taste of the watchman state?

SF: Freedom, greater interest in these processes that are taking place I couldn't see before.

SA: Awareness of body or breath change?

When the watchman is present, is your body also present? For me there is a distinct taste to the state – watchman/witness.

I know that I can invite the state: relax my body, breath, wish, wait. Am I in same state as

before? – no. Learned enough to move myself to that quality of state and see what happens. In Purgatory chapter, G tells us that these beings are in a certain high state but have picked up contamination and have to work on themselves ... exist in a beautiful place – spend most of their time inside trying to work on the impurities. So much else has become free and from time to time endlessness makes an appearance. Can be interpreted as he is such a tease ... I see as encouragement. I'll be back. Purgatory is intentional suffering. I know too much, I can't do ... I am going to die. Who designed this system? ... I work when I can and presence turns up. What to do in the few seconds I am awake?

James: Touched deeply by things you have said. Realisations I have never had before – tremendous experience. Being able to think of something after 2 minutes – made a wish/aim. A huge flock of starlings flew over my house into the sun earlier today – I was thinking of that after the 2 minutes. Kept pink elephant out of the imagination.

BP: I first sense reactions. My feelings are all reactionary – to something else. Might be able to put something more positive to initiate a feeling. 2 minutes clear mind – only lasted a second. Put in sensation, but wasn't enough. Had to have a regulator to hold it in place. Watchman is fulfilling, breath is fulfilling.

James: Is the watchman the conscience?

SA: Conscience is consciousness in the feeling part. Have to define consciousness. Working with the awareness of awareness. There are different levels of consciousness. When my awareness of being aware goes into my feeling part aware of what is moving around in there. See range and complexity. In the case of remorse, when a buffer falls and I see two parts that are discordant, is a real shock. Going forward – G describes in The Tales ... if that happens with identification different without identification when I just suffer it. For myself no trouble in distinguishing between that and guilt and shame. Need to do that inside myself ... review the movie in a state of presence and develop a different reaction to it because I no longer identify myself as 'it'.

KC: I saw the dreams come in. They were images – felt delicious and tempting to go there. It is what is going to happen – go up and down – makes me feel peaceful.

SA: Daydreams don't have to go away, but don't always have to be captured by them. Where did I go? What happens? As long as we are on the upside of the identification.

RB: Impressed with how you have managed to create an atmosphere over zoom – has had a positive impact. You asked us to invoke the watcher ... meetings we have where we sit in a circle, and nobody speaks until we can tell the truth – speaking from state. Beguiling state – struggle going on – things trying to attract you in the inner world, lunges of imagination trying to capture this thing sitting there in silence. Not going to say anything if any hint you are lying. Sense of being absolutely sincere – staying silent until something worth saying. Brought me close to that and grateful.

SA: I know this as speaking from the moment. Wonderful exercise to give people. Good practice of sincerity – free association – not used to watching without not doing something or reacting. What is happening in me at the moment without having to do anything. ... just reading to you from what is going on inside – that is where all the data is and way to see less subjectively is to move towards objective witness state.

RP: Difficult for me – something deep inside that is more or less fixed – watch myself too much. Can stand for 45 mins and just watch myself (Qigong).

I see weakness, sensations of being hot, warm in my body, slouching and falling apart. Inside identification with a state that is constantly there – not mine, but I feel it.

SA: Those are feeling sensations – biochemical processes. This other feeling?

RP: A sorrow all the time.

SA: Difficult not to identify. What part is grieving and pulling the rest along. Psychotherapist ... wonderful way to speed up discover of small 'I's and agendas. Find out where the sorrow comes from and learning roots can help.

SW: Robert - I call you out because I like you so much.

SA: Another practical example of what G is talking about – different I's – sad parts of me and can end up living in fragments. Need to develop awareness of most of fragments simultaneously.

I may be the only one in the Gurdjieff Work who thinks highly of the Enneagram Personality system ... helps me understand why I react to some people in particular way.

Don't need to suffer – most suffering comes from identification and believing our stories and being stuck in conditioned responses.

Trying to stay awake but always distractions ... thoughts and reactions are carnivores – they want to eat our attention and we become their food source. Can challenge them – why do I believe that? If I learn to identify them ... a thought will appear associated with one of them, or emotional reaction – know which one that is. Helped me to be more patient and compassionate with others – what hope is there for people who don't have this knowledge?

Not responsible for being a mess, but I am responsible for working on it.

MC: Much of this session was exploration of pondering. Once I was trying to get pictures of rafters in white water and slipped and fell and was instinctive sensing of danger and body straightened out in space, rotated and fell flat on the back on a very narrow path and only at that point did the mind become aware of what happened. Experiment with raising of hand – came back. Statement – we are not our body and also not not our body either. A lot of experiencing and came up with deeper questions more than answers.

SA: That experience of the body knowing what to do when 'I' don't know what is happening.

RB: A couple of things I have noticed in terms of how I behave. One is the intervention of the moving center unasked – remember being in a pub when I was about 17 – woke me up – someone knocked the table and the pint of beer fell and I caught it in mid-air. Hadn't even noticed it and I remember saying "I can't do that". Another phenomenon – no idea what is really going on – I can be looking at the computer and I see a fly move in an area that I am not aware of – how am I doing that?

SA: It just happens and sometimes I notice it.

Not the mechanical functions of my body, but my ordinary psyche is intimately caught up with the functioning of my body. The part of me that identifies with the body – capacity above that in the witness state.

SW: The term 'the witness state'

SA: Taste – direct experience of that quality that we want to find.

SW: Giving a name to it lets me know what state I am in sometimes.

SA: Whatever helps – just not to confuse the name with the taste.

The thing that lies behind that is the most mysterious, is 'I'.