
BOOK REVIEW

van Dullemen, Wim. 2014. *Gurdjieff's Movements: The Pattern of All and Everything*. Germany: Private publication. 246pp. Hbk. US\$150. No ISBN.

Reviewed by: Carole M. Cusack, University of Sydney.
carole.cusack@sydney.edu.au

Keywords: G. I. Gurdjieff; the Work; Movements.

Wim van Dullemen (b. 1942), a talented musician, became involved with the Gurdjieff tradition in his early twenties in Amsterdam, and it fascinated him. After fifteen years in the Foundation, as accompanist to a personal pupil of Gurdjieff, he struck out independently and is now one of the foremost authorities on the Movements, which he teaches around the globe with his partner Christiane Mackentanz. He originated and maintains the website *Gurdjieff Movements: Courses in Objective Movements Based on Mr Gurdjieff's Teaching* (<http://gurdjieff-movements.net>). *Gurdjieff's Movements: The Pattern of All and Everything* is the most important book to date on the Movements. Van Dullemen challenges the reader over the question of objectivity and impartiality, effectively denying these qualities in any pure sense to insiders and outsiders, and arguing that the Movements must be understood through a context-sensitive assessment, in which practice and scholarship unite.

Part 1, "Background," introduces Gurdjieff as a teacher, examining memoirs and drawing upon personal acquaintance with his pupils (van Dullemen was greatly impressed by Henriette Lannes and John G. Bennett). Van Dullemen proposes that Gurdjieff's cultural achievements should be understood as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), something that has perhaps been hinted at, but has not been pursued in Gurdjieffian circles or among scholarly commentators. This would bring Gurdjieff's legacy into closer contact with that of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), who is often spoken of (with Helena Blavatsky and Gurdjieff) as one of the three pivotal teachers of esoteric spirituality in the modern era. The aesthetic legacy of Anthroposophy, founded by Steiner in 1912, is better-known than Gurdjieff's piano music, books and Movements. Steiner's movement art, Eurythmy, and his Waldorf education system, have become almost mainstream in the Western school system. Van Dullemen reviews Gurdjieff's teaching methods, discussing the relationship with P. D. Ouspensky in some detail, and the cultural products he realized, including *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (posthumously published in 1950), the never-performed ballet *The Struggle of the Magicians*, and reflects on the official Foundation succession.

He concludes that groups are a mixed bag; that there are advantages and disadvantages to belonging to them, and that terrible things are done in such settings (rape, suicide, bullying, psychological damage). These conclusions necessitate focus on the methods, the music, Movements, and books. There are brief chapters on all of these topics, and one on the Gurdjieffian notions of objective and subjective art. It is concluded that the Movements directly

assist in the soul-building activity that Gurdjieff held up as the aim of all humans struggling to awaken. Part 2, “Gurdjieff’s Movements,” recalls van Dullemen’s own introduction to Movements as a young man, his admiration for Solange Claustres, and the physical complexity of actually doing Movements, in which separate body parts move independently of each other; the study requires “patience, perseverance and dedication” (p. 153). Van Dullemen worked as a musician, joined the Dutch branch of the Foundation, and in his fifties after a mid-life crisis he began to teach on Gurdjieff’s music in Amsterdam. Van Dullemen’s life was transformed after he went to England with members of the School voor Filosofie (School for Philosophy, the Dutch branch of the School of Economic Science) to meet with aged members of the Study Society (founded by Francis Roles, a pupil of Ouspensky) and see them do Movements, particularly the long and complex “The Great Prayer,” in a way he had not experienced before.

Wim van Dullemen then realized that he had to trace the various Movements lineages and try to access the most accurate version by comparing them: “to acquire a comprehensive and historically reliable picture of the Movements, it is necessary to place the stories, which were passed on separately by a single pupil, side by side” (p. 164). After this realization, the book reviews the periods of composition of Movements and accompanying music by Gurdjieff and de Hartmann, and discusses the titles of various Movements and how a Movements class generally proceeds. The complicated mathematical Enneagram Movements and Multiplications are accorded a detailed treatment, as are the “Morse Code” ones. Chapter 19, “The Music for Movements,” discusses the elements of the music (melody, chords and rhythm) and reviews the contribution of three great Movements pianists, Thomas de Hartmann, Helen Adie and Edward Michael. Chapter 20 considers films of the Movements, and historically significant performances (such as London in 1939 and 1950). The next chapter looks at the context of the Movements, covering Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, the fact that Gurdjieff said that he had as a youth “practised mostly Yoga and the gymnastics of the ‘Swede Mueller’” (p. 215), of whom van Dullemen notes there are two possible candidates, one German and one Danish.

The schisms between the different Gurdjieff pupils are interrogated to assist in the identification of the Movements lineages, with a crucial role being played by John G. Bennett, who established a teaching lineage independent of Madame de Salzmann, Gurdjieff’s nominated successor, in 1953. It is noted that “Bennett’s view of the esoteric was different from many of Gurdjieff’s other pupils and he shared everything he knew with his pupils” (p. 218). Thus the open Bennett lineage wrote choreographies for Movements that he knew, as had Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, another teacher outside the Foundation, and Francis Roles in the Study Society. Van Dullemen has collected these scripts and compared them, and has an unparalleled knowledge of their historical development and transmission. This book reads like a thriller; he condemns the secrecy in the Foundation which meant that sincere and dedicated pupils like himself were taught only fragments of Movements, and he connects this with the incomplete publication of the sheet music. The book is accompanied by a wonderful DVD with a documentary film, *Gurdjieff’s Movements: A Body Towards an Aim* (2010), made by Amir Kaufman and featuring van Dullemen and Mackentanz and their students. All who are interested in Gurdjieff and the Gurdjieff legacy should own a copy of this book. I cannot recommend it too highly.