

Personality and Power

Shaw Desmond

Desmond's *Personality and Power* published in London, 1950, examines powerful personalities in relation to the author's idiosyncratic theories. He describes Churchill, Caesar, Garbo, Christ, Rockefeller, Chaplin, Gandhi, Krishnamurti, and Gurdjieff; rulers, saints, sinners, artists, performers, intellectuals and others throughout history and in the early 20th century. Gurdjieff was among the many people Desmond interviewed.

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Desmond defines the basic terms used in his examination:

"Personality is power. It is the goal of evolution. It is the Flower of the Ages. It is the Pride of Life. . 1. . Power is divinely neutral. It inspires tyrant and messiah. The Man of Force and the Man of Peace. The Lord of Life and Lord of Love. This divine-demonic driving force of our world must have its way whether that way be through good or evil, saint or sinner, but it has only one cutting edge. That is the thing we call *Personality*." Personality is the mask of Power. . . Power and personality are one and the same thing. . . . Seen psychologically, Personality is primarily concerned with the 'Inner Man' even though its first presentment is through the 'Outer'." P. 3

"First it is essential to grasp the psychological and spiritual basis of the person or self, as is evidenced in the personality. It is at the outset essential to distinguish between "Individuality" and "Personality" in this deeper approach. . . . It is now being advanced in various forms that the human being and his identity and person are probably linked up with some prior identity and person which may be another side or larger aspect of

himself. . . we ourselves in our present or 'current' form are descended from a long line of selves in some other state of existence, here on earth or elsewhere." P. 318.

" . . . each human being has within him or her two chief 'persons'. The one, the 'Individuality'. The other, the 'Personality' . . . The '*Individuality*' of a human being is not the temporary person we see on this earth . . . It is the infinitely greater *permanent* person or soul each one of us is presumed to build up from life to life—a 'Greater Person' or 'Greater Self', who from the beginning of time, holds in its hands the reins coming from all the lives of the particular person who is part of this Great Person . . . The '*Personality*' is only the 'individuality' of *this* current life. It is but a single contribution to the building up of the Greater Individuality." P. 321

" . . . I say, in sober earnest, that in the days now opening and with the advances being made in *four-dimensional* science, we shall, at will, be able to call up our subsidiary personalities out of the vast deep of the subjective. We are rapidly approaching a moment in time when *to imagine will be to be*. Nor have I any doubt whatever . . . [in] the new four-dimensional approach of such minds as those of Ouspensky and of his great work *Tertium Organum*. . ." P. 327

In describing what he terms the "Celluloid" or "Robot" personalities created by mass media, Desmond writes,

"If, as the trawler men say, we 'take a dive' into the lower deeps realm of *Homo Sapiens*, we are astonished by two things. One, the tremendous hitherto unrevealed possibilities and personalities of geniuses in their many forms and types.

The other, as the great Ouspensky and other psychologists have now discovered, that there are not only personalities of the great but that large numbers of human beings *owe their personalities* to others . . . Large numbers of people live their lives, if they are *their* lives, upon the lives of others. Millions each day, take their thoughts and their ambitions out of three things—the three feeders of the little ordinary—the newspaper; the cinema; and the radio."

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Desmond examines "The Great Propagandists" in chapter 24. He focuses on the evangelism of John Wesley, Mary Baker Eddy and Annie Besant.

“I will conclude my studies of the Greater Propagandists of our world by a study of the strangest propagandist of all – a giant intellectual with an overpowering passion to convert, not a country or a continent, but a whole world – this earth.

This is the phenomenal Georges Gurdjieff, whose philosophy and ‘thought’ culled through a lifetime of seventy-seven years with his “scouts” from every existent Eastern source, and being presumably the quintessence of “The Ancient Wisdom”, is the most extraordinary “system” ever given to mankind. It would take a library of books to set out the Gurdjieff “System” which was later espoused by Ouspensky, the author of *Tertium Organum*, who himself was perhaps the first genius of our time, who with Gurdjieff, freed the mind of man for new flights outside Time and Space, set new marks for science, and, generally, reversed much that hitherto had been received as beyond question.

The heart of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system is “working on oneself;” contempt for tradition *qua* tradition; and, in a sense, speaking as an Occidental, “going into reverse” on many of the unchallenged foundations of religion and even of science.

I shall never forget the evening I spent in New York in 1931 with Gurdjieff. He sat there, opposite me, with his high, domed head, completely shaved, his enigmatic eyes, heavy, sullen, but of an intellectual power unfathomable, as they looked out from above the tremendous Tartar moustache. He rarely spoke, as he slowly drew at his long-stemmed cigarette-holder, but when he did speak, it was as though an Oracle had given tongue.

The personality of this giant among men was so impressive, that some could scarcely bear to be in the same room with him. Others, again, believed that when he spoke, everything was settled for all time. They worshipped him as a God, this Russian-Greek, who had such control of his own body that he passed through a series of motor-car accidents and wounds by bullet, and otherwise, which would have killed a dozen men. His physical strength was prodigious.

As he controlled his Thibetan Dancers, whose exercises had for their object the complete control of the human mind and personalities. It was awe-inspiring to watch him and them. To see old ladies of seventy or more doing incredible dances, more suited to a Moscow ballerina, was to see the impossible made flesh.

Gurdjieff was one of those *maestros* who influence by silence rather than speech. He was pure telepathic power. Believe it or not, this could be projected to any distance, as some of the greatest intellectuals and artists of

our world have testified, especially those who took part in his Fontainebleau Experiment.

His propaganda was secret, but perhaps, because of this, went through the purely intellectual world centres. For the first time, it is now being unveiled to the general public, and stranger things have happened than that the other Russian Giant, Stalin, may one day find himself challenged not by physical weapons, but by a "System" of Mind which may influence the future course of our world. P.207-209.

