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Interview with Colin Wilson - Wilson, Colin

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Colin Wilson is an English writer, whose first book, [The Outsider](#), published in 1956 became an international best seller. It is also the first introduction to Wilson's philosophy, which has been called the 'new existentialism'. The Outsider is a presentation of his experience among others of such great thinkers and writers as Sartre, Hesse, Dostoyevsky and, not to forget, Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. All Colin Wilson's books are in one way or another connected with his life-long study of the different aspects of human consciousness. These studies have resulted in subjects as different as criminality, occultism and music. To day after more than 100 books at the age of 72 Colin is putting the finishing touches to his autobiography *Dreaming to Some Purpose*. In a recent series on the Discovery Channel he was telling of his discoveries related to Atlantis.

Reijo: I'm excited to have a chance to do an interview with you! After all your "Sivullisen Ongelma", the Finnish version of The Outsider, was my first introduction to Gurdjieff, and, to cut a long story short, it is also the initial reason that I am now interviewing you. At that time I was told that not many people come to join the Gurdjieff work through reading books. That was the situation then, but surely it has changed. Have you had many people contacting you to find out how they can find the work?

Colin: No. None, in fact.

Reijo: I find it surprising! I just spoke to a couple of my friends in trying to arrange a visit to the U.K. and they both know of you and your works. I found out that only last week one of them was talking with someone and your writings came up as something that had inspired them both to get into the Gurdjieff work.

You came across Ouspensky's 'In Search' in 1951 soon after it was published. In The Outsider you wrote of Gurdjieff as one of the few men, who had a solution to the basic problem of the outsider, 'the sickness of man in the twentieth century'. How would you define an outsider to-day and do you still see Gurdjieff having the solution for the outsiders of the twentyfirst century?

Colin: I would define an Outsider as an in-betweenner, someone too clever and perceptive to fit into the work-routines of ordinary society, but not quite clever enough to make his own terms and live the kind of life he wants to live. The Gurdjieff work would certainly help any Outsider to develop his own sense of purpose and direction. I discovered this at the age of 16, long before I

discovered Gurdjieff, by practising the disciplines of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Reijo: At the end of *The War Against Sleep*, which came out in 1979 as an introduction to Gurdjieff's ideas, you relate the teaching to your own experience and your own findings. This leads you to some essential questions about how we function in crises situations, which is a subject you have studied a lot. You use the concepts left brain (personality), right brain (essence) and relate it to 'the two different kinds of consciousness' that Gurdjieff also talks about. This idea has also been called the 'Laurel & Hardy' theory of consciousness. I see Laurel & Hardy as a caricature of an outsider!

Colin: Essence is not the right brain, although it has much to do with it. Essence is a certain 'weight' that the inner being acquires through effort and 'suffering' (in G's sense). It is a kind of strength, an ability to call upon unconscious wells of energy.

Here is a passage that might interest you from my autobiography *Dreaming to Some Purpose*, due to be published next spring:

In this book I have not said half as much as I intended to about Gurdjieff. Let me say here that I regard him as by far the greatest teacher of the 20th century. And, as bizarre as this sounds, I suspect that Gurdjieff himself may be aware of this.

Sometime in the late 1950s, when I was living in Old Walls, I received a letter from a medium who explained she was passing on to me a message from someone called Gurdjieff. She had no idea who this might be. And the message, in Gurdjieff's fractured English, certainly sounded exactly like the Master.

After more than fifty years I can no longer recall exactly what it said, but it was more-or-less an exhortation to keep on going in the same direction.

I am ashamed to say that the message - in the medium's handwriting - was lost long ago, (as later was my correspondence with writers like Aldous Huxley, Karl Popper, Henry Miller and Robert Ardrey), since in those days I had no filing system.

Reijo: He has apparently been in touch with quite a few people. My only 'direct' personal contact with Gurdjieff was soon after I had read your book. He turned up with Ouspensky in a very realistic dream, had some leather and said: "Now you make the other shoe!"

You kept going in Gurdjieff's direction and one of the results of it was the philosophy called the new existentialism. I would like to hear how you define it!

Reijo: At this point there was no answer from Colin Wilson; he must have been otherwise busy in 2003.

Now in 2008 I decided to publish the interview, which in the beginning was quite promising - I was prepared to go to visit him at his home, but the lack of answers from him stopped me.

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