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(e.g., the forest, bush, wilderness in which “wild” animals and wilder “spirits” are in control). Indeed, “wilderness” is constructed (not found) very differently in urban modernity than elsewhere, especially as a romantic location for awesome and/or holistic rather than demonic and purifying experiences.

The otherworld is part of the “ecology of souls” – if this phrase can be used as Terence McKenna intends (i.e., without evoking a duality in which body is denigrated in favor of disembodiment). Instead it should suggest the interdependent coexistence of all manner of living persons (e.g., trees, birds, animals, humans, “the little people,” and sometimes rocks and clouds). Irving Hallowell’s dialogue with Ojibwe led him to refer to the relationships of human and other-than-human persons. As the alterity of the ordinary, of everyday nature, or of the taken-for-granted world, otherworlds define the world as a richer place than the realm of daily life. They enchant, and require responses that maintain and even reinforce the boundaries between “here” and “there.” They also enable understandings of events as intentional acts rather than allegedly impersonal, mechanical or accidental processes. Thus the enchantment of otherworlds permits and generates “magic” and “fate.” That is, for example, seeming accidents may be considered to result from insults to otherworld persons.

Some otherworlds are post-mortem destinations for humanity. These include not only the various heavens or hells (or transcendent realms) but also those neighboring spaces, contiguous to this world, which might also be home to deities and others. The “land of youth” and the “land of women” are locations for particular after-lives, but can be visited by the living (heroes or fools at least). More generally, however, otherworlds are the specific homes of other-than-human persons such as elves, faeries, dwarves, giants, and so on. They too might visit this-world, sometimes for less than neighborly purposes. Even the rich and diverse ecologies of “middle Earth” do not exhaust the nations of living beings.

Academic discussion of otherworlds and their inhabitants often assumes the unreality of otherworlds and proceeds to wonder why humans invent such places and inhabitants, such fantasies and fears. Sometimes they interpret alleged encounters with otherworld visitors as references to psychological process. More recently, however, scholars such as Edith Turner have been willing to accept the reality of encounters with “spirits” in healing rituals at face value, and then struggled to find appropriate ways to tell academic colleagues that “native” or insiderly cosmologies and discourses have validity.

So what are faeries, dwarves and so on? Some people will insist that they are exactly what they are said to be. A popular contemporary understanding is that such beings were once more widely encountered, but retreated into wildernesses in the face of either Christian demonization

or of more recent industrialization. In many cultures worldwide, reference is made (in narrative, ritual, iconography or conversation) to “little people.” Eschewing the Victorian notion that such beings evidence memories of earlier “races,” and their literalist diminishment into childhood fantasies, it is clear that such beings are generally spoken of circumspectly. “Little people” avoids naming persons who might otherwise visit, and who might be far from cute and diminutive. Thus we are thinking of feared persons, or at least those who are less than welcome everyday. If nothing else, this indicates that the world is not always encountered as a nurturing place. We are confronted by much that challenges our own needs and desires. Otherworlds are areas of life that resist human control, even in imagination. Meanwhile, that offerings are made to them suggests that respect is necessary and rewarded, indicating that otherworlds are enticing and seductive, and that life can be more than it seems.

Graham Harvey

Further Reading

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- See also: Faerie Faith in Scotland; Lost Worlds; Magic; Middle Earth; Polytheism.

Ouspensky, Pyotr Demianovich (1878–1947)

P.D. Ouspensky is known today chiefly as the author of *In Search of the Miraculous*, his definitive account of fellow Russian mystic and esotericist G.I. Gurdjieff’s teaching which has subsequently become a classic of late twentieth-century mystical literature. In it Ouspensky documents his first meeting with Gurdjieff in Moscow 1915, their relationship through the years of war and revolution which marked the period, to his break from Gurdjieff in 1918, which began a process of separation as both fled from Russia, becoming refugees in Turkey until Ouspensky

came to London in 1921, where he stayed until the outbreak of World War II, when he settled in the United States.

Although best known for this work, Ouspensky was in his own right a leading Theosophist who was at the center of the philosophical and occult subcultures that flourished in pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg. His pre-Gurdjieffian publications, especially *Tertium Organum*, synthesized and popularized late nineteenth-century Russian mystical and literary traditions in early twentieth-century Russia. Written in 1911 and published in New York in 1922 it quickly became a bestseller and gave him a worldwide reputation. Outside Russian artistic circles, it also influenced many American writers, including Jean Toomer, Waldo Frank, Gorham Munson, and Kenneth Burke, and through them modern literature. Most significantly, his notion of “the living world is an *entire* organism” shaped Aldo Leopold’s important ethical argument for conservation (Ouspensky 1949: 299).

In *Tertium Organum* Ouspensky outlined a supra-rational logic that was meant to surpass the *Organon* of Aristotle and the *Novum Organum* of Francis Bacon, and help lead to mystical insights. The key to this effort was his contention that “in mysticism there is a new method” (Ouspensky 1949: 230) and his identification of mysticism with “knowledge received under conditions of expanded receptivity” (Ouspensky 1949: 251).

Indeed, Ouspensky later wrote that he believed he had gained access to mystical states through experiments in yoga, prayer, fasting, and breathing nitrous oxide and ether (Ouspensky 1930: 315). It was during the period of these experiments that *Tertium Organum* was written (Ouspensky 1930: 323–4). Central to his perception was his experience of a “world in which everything is connected, in which nothing exists separately” (Ouspensky 1930: 315–16), and where all things “were dependent on one another, all things lived one another” (Ouspensky 1930: 323).

As a consequence, he believed, “in this world, there is nothing dead, nothing inanimate, nothing that did not think, nothing that did not feel, nothing unconscious. Everything was living, everything was conscious of itself” (Ouspensky 1930: 323). Ouspensky concluded, “our world is merely our incorrect perception of the world: the world seen by us through a narrow slit” (Ouspensky 1949: 242).

Grounded on this perception, Ouspensky urged his contemporaries to “regard the different forms of consciousness in different divisions and strata of living nature as belonging to one organism and performing different, but related functions, than as separate, and evolving from one another” (Ouspensky 1949: 299). This led to an understanding similar to that found in the more holistic ecological positions of today. Such ecological descriptions of natural systems (for example, a forest – “in which there are trees of different kinds, grass flowers, ants, beetles, birds, beasts – this is a living thing too, living by the life of

everything composing it, thinking and feeling for all of which it consists” (Ouspensky 1949: 186)) – is one of many found throughout *Tertium Organum*. While his understanding has become common coin in later environmental movements through the agency of Leopold, for Ouspensky it was only a small part of a more complex relationship between two interdependent entities, Man and Nature.

He encapsulated his mystical perception in one of the most lyrical passages of *Tertium Organum*, a passage which exemplified Ouspensky’s dictum that “in all conditions of encompassing nature . . . lies . . . the sensation of a complete oneness with nature” (Ouspensky 1949: 275):

. . . in the procession of the year; in the iridescent leaves of the autumn, with their memory-laden smell; in the first snow, frosting the fields and communicating a strange freshness and sensitiveness to the air; in the spring freshets, in the warming sun, in the awakening but still naked branches through which gleams the turquoise sky; in the white nights of stars – in all these are the thoughts, the emotions, the forms, peculiar to itself alone, of some great consciousness: or better, all this is the expression of the emotions, thoughts, and forms of consciousness of a mysterious being – Nature (Ouspensky 1949: 179).

However, Ouspensky argued that only in “‘man’ this unity is apparent” (Ouspensky 1949: 298). In later publications, he introduced a less-influential image of nature which built upon and clarified this earlier vision, that of the “Great Laboratory which controls the whole of life” (Ouspensky 1930: 44). Ouspensky argued that “*all* the work of the Great Laboratory had in view one aim – the creation of *Man*” (Ouspensky 1930: 51), and that out of the preliminary experiments and the refuse of the production there were formed the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

What was meant in this instance was something other than a justification of anthropocentrism, for what Ouspensky meant by this was that the “task of the Laboratory was to create a ‘form’ evolving by itself” (Ouspensky 1930: 50). Indeed, Nature “made attempts at creating self-evolving beings before man” (Ouspensky 1930: 59); Ouspensky thought that “both ants and bees came from the Great Laboratory and were sent to Earth with the privilege and the possibility of evolving” (Ouspensky 1930: 60) but failed when they having “begun to alter their being, their life and their form . . . severed their connection with the laws of Nature” (Ouspensky 1930: 62).

All this implied that our species too may fail and be disposed of by nature unless the directive of evolution was pursued. “All forms of consciousness in him can exist simultaneously” (Ouspensky 1949: 298) – to transform this from a possibility to an actuality is what in a broad sense Ouspensky meant by “evolution.” Yet it was

precisely because with us was “everything from a mineral to a God” (Ouspensky 1930: 118) that such self-evolving beings have failed, for in uniting in potential the single organism of living nature, self-evolving beings had to contend with the eternal cycle of recurrence and the continuation of being through which nature perpetuates itself.

Paradoxically, nature’s aim of the creation of self-evolving beings is underpinned by impeding that evolutionary effort, so that movement from potentiality to actuality must be in a sense “anti-nature.” Here, as in other publications after *Tertium Organum*, it is difficult to distinguish where Gurdjieff ends and Ouspensky begins, and it could be argued that Ouspensky’s greatest influence lies in his popularization of Gurdjieff’s teaching as he received it. Nevertheless, when Ouspensky wrote, “the desire of God in man . . . is based on his separating himself from the world, on his opposing to the world his own ‘I’ and on his recognizing as reality all apparent forms and divisions” (Ouspensky 1930: 18), he outlined not only his own vision of the interdependent relationship between nature and man and their respective roles, but also sought to bring together his sometime contradictory imagery of nature.

David Pecotic

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- See also: Alchemy; Gurdjieff, Georges Ivanovitch; Leopold, Aldo; Russian Mystical Philosophy; Western Esotericism.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Greek and Roman poets and philosophers shared a concern for the permeable boundaries that divide nature, humankind, and god. This theme can be found in Homer, where gods become human and humans are transformed into animals, and in Plato, where the human task is to resolve the conflict between animal and divine potentialities within the self. The interplay between nature, humankind, and god is seen most vividly in Ovid’s

masterpiece, *The Metamorphoses* (published in the year 8). In these stories the Roman poet Ovid (43 B.C.E.–17 C.E.) wove together a large number of Greco-Roman myths around the theme of change: “All things are mutations – Heaven and Earth and all that grows within it, and we among the changes in creation” (Ovid, Book XV: 427–8). The *Metamorphoses* is a cosmological poem aiming to “tell the shifting story of the world from its beginning to the present hour” (Ovid, Book I: 31). Stories from Ovid’s encyclopedia of transformation have become standard parts of Western culture, showing up in the visual artists, in poetry, in psychology, and even in the natural sciences.

The transformative power of nature was recognized by Epicurean natural philosophy through observation of developmental processes in nature. However, Ovid expanded the idea of transformation far beyond the boundaries of Epicurean empiricism. The stories he presented include transformations across the differences separating god, humankind, and nature. Often these tales explain natural phenomena by providing mythological stories about the origin of things.

In Ovid, metamorphoses often happen as punishments or rewards that fit the deeds of the one transformed. For example, Semele, the lover of Jupiter, was burned to ashes by the power of Jove’s love; self-loving Narcissus was turned into a plant; and the arrogant Niobe was turned into a stone. In addition to punishment or reward, the transformative power of desire provides the motive force for Ovid’s stories of meddling gods and immodest humans.

Like Euripides and the Athenian tragedians, Ovid was fascinated by the destructive power of Dionysus. But Dionysus (or Bacchus), associated by Ovid with Liber, the god of wine, is only one of the gods who had the power to transform. Ovid also focused on the power of Jupiter (Jove), Juno, and Apollo. But Ovid was perhaps most interested in the transformative power of Venus, goddess of love. Venus is of further importance because she was the mother of Aeneas, founder of Rome, whose story was most famously told by Ovid’s predecessor, Virgil.

Selected Myths Synopses:

Deucalion and the Flood

Jove’s anger against the tyrant Lycaon led him to become angry with the whole human race. Jove and Neptune covered the Earth with water, killing all humans except Deucalion and his bride, Pyrrha. Deucalion and Pyrrha then created the new race of humans by transforming stones into flesh.

Daphne and Apollo

Apollo, the archer, insulted Cupid, whose arrows were the cause of love. In retaliation, Cupid shot Apollo with an