

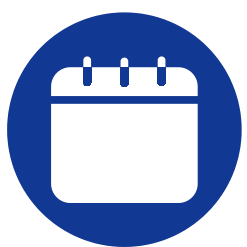
PROF. CAROLE CUSACK

BODILY SENSATION AND ESOTERIC TRANSFORMATION: PRAXIS IN THE GURDJIEFF WORK

G. I. Gurdjieff's (c. 1877–1949) teaching, known as the Work or the Fourth Way, posits three centres in humans: the intellectual (associated with Gurdjieff's writings as a teaching technique), the emotional or feeling (associated with the Gurdjieff–de Hartmann music as a teaching tool), and the sensory or bodily centre (associated with the Movements as a teaching method). The contemplative exercises that Gurdjieff taught later in life explicitly addressed esoteric transformation—namely, the development of the astral or keshdjan body—and reflect his Orthodox Christian background, in which the concept of theosis (humans participating in God's divine nature and becoming like God) is prominent. This presentation addresses the centrality of the body and physical activity in the Work, arguing that bodily sensation—as experienced in the Movements and contemplative exercises (and in other self-transformative activities, including hard labour)—is the key site of spiritual development. It also emphasizes that self-observation and self-remembering—the mental, mindfulness-like state of awareness cultivated by Gurdjieff's pupils—combine with the body in the Work to foster the growth of a soul.



Carole M. Cusack is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney, trained as a medievalist. Her PhD became *Conversion Among the Germanic Peoples* (1998). She researches contemporary religious trends and Western esotericism. Her books include *Anime, Religion and Spirituality* (2015), *Invented Religions* (2010), and *The Sacred Tree* (2011). She co-edited *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements* (2021) and *The Sacred in Fantastic Fandom* (2019). Cusack is editor of *Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia*, *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review*, and *Literature & Aesthetics*.



Date:
Tuesday - 20 January 2026



Time:
6.15 - 7.45 PM

Location: Big Seminar room,
Hartmannstr. 14, Building D1, Erlangen

Link for virtual attendance: <https://fau.zoom-x.de/j/62556506187>



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