The Fourth Way is a spiritual path first taught by Gurdjieff and continued in the gnostic teachings of Samael Aun Weor. In the fourth way the obligations of life are the path to internal transformation. The fourth way is a path of the “householder”, where the aspirant does not take vows of celibacy or poverty, but engages in spiritual discipline and practices while performing the duties of working a job, having a family, and living among normal people. The fourth way is also called the path of the balanced human, or the harmonious development of the human.

Three Paths

Historically there were three main paths to enlightenment or internal spiritual transformation: the way of the monk, the yogi, and the fakir. All of these ways are characterized by a retreat from life and typically renouncing marriage, family, wealth, and worldly attachments. Each focuses on the development of either of the three brains: the emotions, the intellect, or the physical willpower. Each can gain certain powers, disciplines, spiritual experiences, and spiritual values, but but also have drawbacks because of a lack of balance.

The Way of the Monk

This is the way of devotion and love and develops the emotional center. Through prayer, single-pointed devotion to God, and self-sacrifice, the monk is able to experience superior emotional states and a level of communion with the divine. This way neglects the intellect and physical development so the monk may not be able to teach this path to another who does not innately feel devotional love, and there may not be a physical discipline for the health of the body. This is a path that is difficult to teach or transmit unless the disciple also feels that particular devotion strongly.

The Way of the Yogi

The path of the Yogi develops spiritual powers, called siddhis, such as telepathy and clairvoyance. Yet without humility, love, devotion, and discipline this path can become unbalanced and never incarnate the true divine values. The yogi may be well-versed in spiritual scriptures and rituals, and have some psychic powers. This way neglects the sense of spiritual surrender and emphasizes psychic powers which may or may not be used for good. It can also rely too much on intellectual knowledge and not on raising the level of being.

The Way of the Fakir

Fakir is a term for ascetics often seen in India and the Middle East who develop their will to overcome the needs of the physical body. This is the way of generating strength of will. The fakir fasts from food, abstains from sex, goes naked, lays on a bed of nails, raises their arm above their head for years. This develops willpower over the body and a certain amount of willpower in general. This way neglects any kind of intellectual framework for understanding why they are doing this, and also any devotional practice. The fakir usually proceeds in these acts from imitating other fakirs and is not able to transmit any understanding to others of what they have gained.

They may obtain a degree of willpower but cannot teach this path to others and there is often complete neglect of the development of the emotions, of devotion, humility and other psychological development.

The Balance

The fourth way balances the development of the intellect, psychic powers, superior emotions, and physical discipline. This way requires a person who is not just a householder, but a good
householder, someone who can meet the requirements of a healthy normal life. This generally means being part of a community, a family, and able to work at their vocation.

Being a good householder requires a certain amount of humility, consistency, basic values of upright conduct, while responding to the constant set of challenges that life brings. When these challenges are transformed through application of the three factors and the awakening of consciousness then we are able to develop spiritually in a way that is natural and in accordance to our own inner needs.

The Fourth Way uses life as a school to awaken the consciousness, to develop, harmonize, and balance ourselves. The foundation of the spiritual path is a psychological maturity and responsibility to ourselves and others. This path teaches the techniques of meditation and transmutation to develop the basic physical willpower; devotion and prayer to access higher emotional states and have an intimate relationship with the Divine; and the development of the intellect with a coherent doctrine, spiritual discipline, and practices to awaken the latent faculties of the soul.