

Hidden Meanings and Picture-form Language in the Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff (Excavations of the Buried Dog)

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John Henderson

Foreword

For well over half a century great Beelzebub has wandered the wilderness of our minds, meeting thousands upon thousands of sincere students who try very hard to understand his message; but in spite of all our efforts, after years and even decades of study, we remain perplexed and mystified by the awesome weight and depth of it all, with no apparent solution in sight.

Still, we are convinced that something of great value is bound up within Gurdjieff's books; but what is it, and how can we get to it? The answer remains elusive. All in all, and after all this time, it appears we could use some help.

Fortunately for us, Gurdjieff's carefully laid plan does include a little something to aid us in our attempt to fathom his message, and that help is concerned with what is called *language*.

In the year 1916 Gurdjieff said that some things such as 'types' and the 48 laws:

...cannot be defined in ordinary language, and the language in which they could be defined you do not as yet know and will not know for a long time. (*Fragments*, p.246)

Now, if ordinary language is inadequate to describe such things as we seek, then what kind of language is needed?

According to several of Gurdjieff's long-standing and personally prepared "old pupils," we simply need to learn his picture-form language, the language in which he often spoke and wrote. And although Gurdjieff may have said that we will not know that language for a long time, given that he made that remark almost a century ago, perhaps the required "long time" has been satisfied.

And indeed, it has. So let us see what some of Gurdjieff's specially prepared "old pupils" have to say on the matter; then we can begin, with their help but by our own labors, to disinter Gurdjieff's long and deeply buried dog, and finally decipher the true *Teachings of Gurdjieff*.

Just as Gurdjieff advised, “No one interested in my writings should ever attempt to read them in any other than the indicated order,” so one should apply that same advice to the chapters of this book, and read them, *first*, only in sequent order.

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Chapter I

Introduction

I never yet met that idiot who, accustomed to shuffle in a pair of old shoes, would feel comfortable in smart new ones. (Our Dear Mullah Nassr Eddin)

“Baby” needs new “Shoes”

Before we get started, I wish to say to all who have purchased this book with their own hard earned, or even inherited, money, “Thank you,” and, just in case it is later useful, “You are ‘welcome’,” which latter remark relates to both the Mullah’s above aphorism and the saying, familiar to all, “Baby needs new shoes.” But, one might wonder, how does that relate to the above and what does it mean?

Does it mean that I, like you, have bills to pay? Well, that *could* be its meaning, but I think it more lively if by “Baby” I mean my new “mistress,” the one with those famous “Breasts of a Virgin” of Akhaldan fame; and by “shoes,” perhaps I mean that she, my still relatively new “mistress,” fancies a new accessory, perhaps a Buddha-necklace or some other such “bauble.” Yes, a mistress is much more pleasant a thought.

On the other hand, I might mean *your* “baby,” your “little brother” or “little sister,” needs new shoes. But again, what is that – a real, live, human baby, or do I refer to your what is called Essence – that sometimes intuitively sensed ‘person’ within you, who, despite your obvious conscious growth, is still young and full of *wish* and hope, and who, through no fault of your own, has been neglected and left behind in your general developmental progress due to factors visited upon you by the ignorant and seemingly aimless society in which we dwell; or, is it possible that I mean both – that your essence is the “baby” to whom I refer, and he or she is, in fact, a real, live, but almost unnoticed, person; one, moreover, who is not only opposite, but even independent of your normal self?

And now to make the matter as “clear” as a glass of Jack Daniel’s and muddy water, there is yet another very real possibility, which is that I mean Gurdjieff’s “Baby.”

Within the pages of *The Herald of Coming Good* Gurdjieff several times refers to that book in a rather paternalistic fashion, calling it “my first born,” “this first ‘child’ of mine,” and “my ‘First-born-on-Earth’,” in view of which it is entirely possible that, by “Baby needs new shoes,” I intend to take it upon myself, together with yourself, to give *Herald* those proverbial “new shoes.” Perhaps they will be a pair of fine running shoes so that *Herald* will not simply “totter” out of retirement like some creaky old man who can barely move, but instead will *leap* out of that mausoleum of neglect, his long *burial place*, and throwing off his ‘shroud’ will begin to run so fast that we will all be sorely tasked to keep up!

So, which of those pairs of ‘babies’ and ‘shoes’ do I mean? Or, do I intend that you take all of my different meanings individually, and collectively, simultaneously?

Whatever the possibilities, for now I will leave it at saying “Baby,” whatever that means, needs new “Shoes,” whatever that means too. As to how comfortably those “new shoes” will fit, you may resort either to your own experience with such new things, or to the above opening remark by the Mullah Nassr Eddin.

A Friendly Word of Advice

Now, the previously mentioned possibilities for the meaning of the phrase “Baby needs new shoes” was for all readers of this book, but what follows is for the few special *idiots* among the general population of three-brained-beings possessing the rare ability to recognize, and follow, some very good advice:

If you are serious about gaining a personal understanding of Gurdjieff’s use of hidden meaning, then before you go much further in this book be sure to have first familiarized yourself with his writings – all of them, even *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, which is one of the most difficult to comprehend books ever written. In fact, without a working knowledge of Gurdjieff’s picture-form language it is quite *impossible* to comprehend certain aspects of that book. However, that is not your fault – Gurdjieff designed it that way; and besides, that is not the point.

It is the transfer of certain material “ingredients” (see below) into your (what is called) subconscious mind that is initially most important, and which with all certainty must be accomplished before you will have any possibility of substantial benefit.

So, if you have not yet read that book from cover to cover, do so now. Even if it puts you to sleep, fight that sleep and read it. Read it aloud (highly recommended) – or, as Gurdjieff put it, “as if reading to someone else” (when *seemingly* alone), which means, of course, that you should read aloud – to your other ‘self.’ Read standing up or pacing back and forth, read with a pot of coffee at the ready; use a cold wet cloth or pinch yourself or stomp your feet or do whatever it takes, but do read that book. This one will wait.

This book on hidden meanings and picture-form language has been well trained specifically for that purpose, and will patiently wait until you’ve done the required preparatory work. Also read *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, and *Life is real only then, when ‘I am’*. Then you will be at least somewhat prepared for Gurdjieff’s use of picture-form language and *Illustrative Inculcation*, and the personal instruction as given by one true initiate to another, as will be found within his images.

Otherwise, if you read this book without first having read all of Gurdjieff’s, what you find within these pages will be perhaps informative, or entertaining; or, if you are so inclined as to enjoy brain-teasers, puzzles, and such, you may even find it somewhat intellectually stimulating. But it will also and without any doubt whatsoever be just so much “head stuff,” which will do you little good, “Cookie,” and, in terms of future benefit from your Gurdjieff studies, perhaps more than a bit of harm.

I hope you don’t think me too fresh in calling you “Cookie,” seeing as how we have just met, but it is like that, really. We are like...

Cookies in the Kitchen

We are all “cookies” in the same ‘Great Kitchen,’ but in various stages of what is called ‘being done.’ Now, some cookies never make it past the stage of being formed of raw dough, and so, not being cooked or otherwise much used, at the “End of the Day” are simply and abruptly folded back into the bowl of amorphous cookie dough and put into the fridge to be used a wee bit here or there, again, perhaps tomorrow, or the next day, and the next, and even

the day after that – and so on. Others, by chance, have wandered into some leaky old low-temperature oven where they begin to take on solidity of sorts, but only of sorts, and it is an excruciatingly slow process.

But you, you “lucky cookie,” have wandered into the “fourth corner” of the kitchen, Gurdjieff’s corner, where, with the skills of a Master Chef, he will ‘Cook’ you – first adding certain special secret ingredients which will not only make you much more tasty *food for the gods*, but, if you do everything just right on your part, you will find that as a result of certain spices included in his recipe you will come out of his really hot oven no longer just an ordinary cookie, but one in possession of both a subjectivised being and objective consciousness. Conscious cookies, as you might well imagine, are rare and much too valuable to be wasted as mere snack food. No, such cookies are not eaten, but are immediately put to work as part of the kitchen staff.

Now, I don’t know what you may think of that more realistic *after-oven* description; one must admit it isn’t nearly as much fun as the more popular “Santa Claus” style fantasies, but I do think it preferable to being eaten, or to meandering through this cosmos-sized kitchen a lost and wandering soul trying every leaky old oven encountered, hoping to finally find a way to get ‘done.’

And keep in mind that, as a member of the kitchen staff, there is always the possibility of career advancement. That is, as a Kitchen-boy possessing objective consciousness, your future will be bright.

So if I were you, just to be on the safe side, I would be sure to familiarize myself with Gurdjieff’s writings – read and study them all, by which process you will be gathering some of the essential ingredients, and then come back here where this book will be patiently awaiting your return. Then, with the help provided by several of Gurdjieff’s specially prepared “old pupils,” we will begin to open the oven door.

Incidentally, and after saying all that, I will add this: there is no harm in your reading the first three chapters of this book, but do leave it there and go no further than the chapter entitled “Beelzebub’s Hidden Thought,” until you’ve read and pondered *all* of Gurdjieff’s books – in requisite sequence.

As for those who have already made the necessary preparations, we begin. And if you already have some good idea of Gurdjieff's teaching, then may I suggest that you "Take off those (old) 'shoes' from your feet," and leave them at the door. Give yourself a chance; you cannot possibly wear two pair of shoes at the same time, and if you don't like the "smart new ones" you gain from your study of Gurdjieff's picture-form language, or if they hurt your feet too much, you can always pick up your old ones on the way out.

So leave your shoes at the door; and, as they say in the less "citified" places of the world, "Come on in now, and make yourself at home" – men to the right, and ladies, of course, to the left.

Chapter II

Whether Hidden Meaning?

That man will become a friend of the cloven-hoofed
who perfects himself to such Reason and such being
that he can make an elephant out of a fly.

(The Mullah Nassr Eddin)

Just as Gurdjieff applied the 'method' of Legominism to the creation of his writings, so we will have to be methodical in our approach to its opening.

Among the many issues which naturally arise in our minds in this matter there are three major questions which will help us maintain the focus and sense of direction needed for its eventual solution, and these three questions are: 'Whether' there are hidden meanings within Gurdjieff's writings; and, if so, 'Why' would he resort to such devilish 'tricks' as to hide his true thoughts; and finally, 'How' did he hide them? – (Whether, Why, and How).

The importance of the first question, 'Whether?' seems so obvious that even my third grade teacher, Mrs. Moore, would have been able to grasp its significance. She had a favorite saying, one she used on almost all of the little girls in her class – "Pretty is, as pretty does," meaning, of course, that the function of a thing is more important than its appearance, and we can apply that piece of wisdom to our first question because it serves the excellent function of directing each of us, individually, to the correct path – regardless of the answer.

That is, if in this first chapter we can firmly establish that such hidden meanings do exist, then we will already know enough to invest such further time and effort as required to find them; or, on the other hand, if we cannot confirm their existence, then we, or at least you, will know enough to stop wasting your time on such "frivolities," and so be off to the local pub or community center where you may simply eat, drink, and be merry; or, on the other

hand, you might find one of the many similar local “Cathedrals of Social Life,” where you will be welcomed with open arms and can join the throngs of “loving” humanity as you lose yourselves in this or that communal brand of feel-good “hocus pocus.”

In short, almost anything you might choose to do would be better than sitting around with your nose stuck in this book and Gurdjieff’s books looking for hidden meanings that do not exist – unless, of course, they do.

So, the function of our first question, “Whether?” makes it what Mrs. Moore would call a very pretty question indeed. In fact, it is a beauty.

The second question, “Why?” reminds me of my second grade teacher, Mrs. Byrd, because I used to ask her *why* this, *why* that, and *why* the other, incessantly, to which she would usually reply (just like my parents) with either, “Because I say so,” or, “You’ll understand better when you grow up, if you ever do.” How I hated that answer. But now, and though it causes me no end of chagrin even after all these years, I finally have to admit that the old Byrd was right. There are some things that simply must wait until we have grown up – *both of us*.

Gurdjieff says (*In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 147):

A man must realize that he indeed consists of two men.

And while the one person grows and develops normally, the other stops at age six or seven, or perhaps ten or eleven, but stops there, never to finish. And while our so-called education caters to the learning and development of the one, it neglects the other, resulting in an unavoidable lopsidedness within our person, leaving us in a regrettable position somewhat like a buggy with large wheels on the right and small wheels on the left. Such unfortunates can, as is said, “go nowhere fast,” being condemned, through no fault of their own, to go only in endless circles.

In any event, the second question, “Why?,” flows naturally from the first, relates specifically to those two persons within each of us, and lays the groundwork for understanding in what form such hidden meaning can be usefully expressed, and, conversely, and just as important, what form must be avoided, which information will be essential to us in the final analysis.

So, thank you Mrs. Byrd, wherever you are, for although it may have taken longer than expected for this one to overcome that unnatural but inevitable imbalance and finally grow up, I now see that you too were right.

And obviously the third question, "How?" is important, because if we cannot learn how Gurdjieff concealed his meaning, then how can we ever hope to uncover it? That question, by the way, reminds me of my first grade teacher, undoubtedly the greatest of them all, a sweet, silver-haired little lady by the name of Mrs. Bell.

Now, I haven't always thought of Mrs. Bell as a great teacher; in fact, when I was six years old, I thought her quite cruel. That's true – cruel. But as it turns out it was just she who taught the most important lesson ever – or even two of them.

When it came to reading time seven or eight of us children would arrange some of the small chairs kept along the wall into a circle at the front of the class; then we would sit in our reading circle and take turns, each child reading aloud perhaps one or two short pages from our first grade primer. As is usually the case we would occasionally stumble over a word, sometimes even coming to a complete stop! – as we tried to figure out what the word meant, or how to say it, as, for instance, the word "fly" in the sentence, "The dog had a fly on its nose."

Well, when the unfortunate child whose turn it was to read came to that sentence and began, "The dog had a ...," and then stopped, the wise and smiling old Mrs. Bell would "helpfully" *suggest*, "elephant," – and it did not matter whether the word was *fly*, or *lion*, or *dog* or *cat*, or any other word at all, Mrs. Bell's most "helpful suggestion" would always be exactly the same, "elephant," "elephant," "elephant." Then the innocent and unsuspecting child would begin to read again, but this time with a tone of greater confidence, for all to hear, "The dog had a *elephant* on its nose;" upon which the other children would burst into shrieks of delightful laughter and high-pitched giggles which filled the room with an incredible lightness, but it also caused a fair amount of embarrassment to the one reading. Now you see why I thought Mrs. Bell to be cruel.

But, you know what? It wasn't long before we caught on, and as perhaps occurred in few places on the face of this planet at that

time, we mere six year-old first graders were taught quickly and easily a lesson which has evaded the most learned of our esteemed doctors, philosophers, and religious leaders, and has otherwise slipped past some of the greatest minds in the world; and we were taught that lesson in the matter of a few short weeks, by, of all persons, our first grade teacher!

That lesson is one of Gurdjieff's main topics, one he visits again and again in a variety of different forms; it is in fact the focus of a large portion of his writings. But if a person was not fortunate enough to sit in Mrs. Bell's first grade classroom and learn that lesson at age six, then, unfortunately, it will probably take more than just a few weeks, it will perhaps require even a great deal of personal experience for that lesson to penetrate the decades of accretions which have covered our minds in the intervening years. As to what that lesson might be, I think it best to leave that between you and your teacher, Mr. Gurdjieff. But I will say this: one should 'be aware' of the warning regarding the Asian mind, beginning with the last sentence on page 217 of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. We should not, due to inattention, allow ourselves to be misdirected.

And the second lesson Mrs. Bell taught us was, of course, the rare and almost magical ability to "make an elephant out of a fly," which, according to the highly esteemed Mullah Nassr Eddin, is an essential skill. It is so essential in fact that we will be working on developing that ability a little here and a little there, chapter by chapter, until we eventually develop such consummate skill with that ability as to evoke envy from even the cloven-hoofed!

So, thank you Mrs. Bell, you were indeed a marvelous teacher, and we should all have been so blessed. As the Mullah says:

One can never know who might help you get out of galoshes.

Now, since the last question depends upon the second for its solution, and the second question doesn't even exist without a proper conclusion of the first, then, by all logic, whether linear or holistic (or even objective), that is where we must begin, with the first question, 'Whether,' and proceed logically (more or less), and circuitously-step-wise to the last.

Whether?

In this chapter we will look at several specific examples which address the basic issue of whether there are hidden meanings within Gurdjieff's writings; but these examples are not at all what we might at first expect. Although it may initially seem that the best way to confirm the existence of hidden meanings is to simply find and identify one or two of them, that method will not work in this case because those meanings are hidden from the very part of our consciousness which conducts the search! Otherwise, we should have all found that which we seek, and long ago, of course.

So we will have to resort to other means, at least initially. Once we have answered that question (and we shall) we will explore the way such hidden meanings may fit into a rather remarkable layered structure. Knowing the structure we will have a better chance of finding something of real value. Then we will finish by covering a few pesky items which always seem to "grace" us with their "lovely" presence at the beginning of any consideration of this scope.

We start by reviewing some of what Gurdjieff had to say on the matter of hidden meanings, and then we will see whether any of his specially prepared "old pupils" can help.

What Lies "Hidden Behind the Words?"

In a conversation with a prospective pupil which is found in the essay called *Glimpses of Truth*, and which is included as the first chapter of the book, *Views from the Real World*, on page 18, Gurdjieff advises:

Try to fix your interest and attention ... on what lies hidden behind the words, on the inner content.

That we should be on the lookout for something "hidden behind the words," containing the "inner content," is his clear message in this case.

But, some may say, and it could be so, since that remark comes from one single talk with one single person it is not wise to extrapolate to Gurdjieff's talks and writings in general. Also, although *Views* is said to be a gathering of notes taken by some of his pupils, still, since the authorship of the various chapters is not

mentioned, and the writers, as well as the editorial influence, are not clearly identified, that book, while useful, is not as reliable as something by known authors or by Gurdjieff himself.

However, while that may be true in general, this case is somewhat an exception because the essay, *Glimpses of the Truth*, was used by Gurdjieff as study material with some of his pupils, thus giving it Gurdjieff's personal stamp of approval – that is, if it is accurately represented. As for the other chapters of the book, although some of them unquestionably contain useful information, recalling Gurdjieff's oft stated admonition of keeping a critical mind, we should be mindful that they were written by unknown authors with inevitably varying degrees of clarity of memory and understanding, and therefore with differing degrees of accuracy.

Since many are more comfortable with that which comes from known as opposed to anonymous authors, and rightly so, then that is what we will use for the remainder of this chapter. There are many other examples of similar and even stronger statements which are not so limited as to time, person, or circumstance, or nearly so questionable in terms of authorship.

But before we leave the above remark there is one curious subtlety which might be noticed in order to help avoid a common error. Although Gurdjieff said to look for the meaning hidden *behind* the words, many take his remark to mean we should look for the meaning hidden *within* the words, as if Gurdjieff refers to some deeper meaning of the words themselves.

But that is not so. "Behind" and "within" are not the same, and, as you will learn, Gurdjieff was quite precise with his word choices. It is not *within* the words, but *behind* the words, in the pictures and images he "paints" with words that his most important teachings are found.

Now, following our plan, rather than present this piecemeal, it will go better in terms of organization to look at related remarks according to source. First, we will see what Gurdjieff has to say about hidden meaning in his own words and in his own writings, for there is no more reliable source than that. We will take his books in the order he suggested, and then, after we are set on good footing by the master, we will look to see whether any of his "old pupils" can help.

From Gurdjieff's Writings

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson

Early in *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff drops a subtle hint that his meanings will be somewhat difficult to see – that they will be “veiled.” I refer to the third paragraph, and the footnote, on page 10 concerning the Cheshma of Sheherazade.

One might initially think that to be a rather light hint; however, in view of the fact that within the entire book of one thousand two hundred and thirty eight pages there are only three such footnotes, and realizing that giving them the form of footnotes insures that they will be noticed, their importance begins to take on a greater significance; and, as we will see in a later chapter, the footnote dealing with the gas “Zilnotrago” plays an essential part in one of Gurdjieff's most clever provisions.

But for now we will turn to a more concrete form of evidence for the existence of hidden meaning, something as is said, “Straight from the horse's mouth.” Skipping to the last chapter, entitled “From the Author,” on page 1189 Gurdjieff refers to:

...the hidden thought introduced by Mr. Beelzebub himself into his, so to say, “concluding chord”...

This mention of a “hidden thought” somewhere within Beelzebub's concluding chord comes to us, *apparently*, only after we have already passed (and missed) that hidden thought, and Gurdjieff seems to be challenging us to go back and find it. And I did just that; I tried, as I hope you did – I went back and read the last section dealing with Beelzebub, and I reread it even several times looking for that hidden thought; but for all my effort I found nothing conclusive. In fact, I found nothing at all – or so, for some long time, I thought.

Well, that is because, as I later learned, the information required to finally grasp that hidden thought is found in two places – in *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, and in yet another of Gurdjieff's books, the book which is *his*, “so to say, concluding chord.” From that you may begin to appreciate that the trip we make towards a personal understanding of Gurdjieff's writings will be “entertaining” in the extreme, so you may as well bring along

your sense of humor and enjoy Gurdjieff's little jokes and tricks along the way.

If you are a long-time student of Gurdjieff's writings you may have already noticed his frequent use of the past tense for key information, such as "was introduced," "as previously mentioned," and so on; and if you are relatively new to his writings then you may as well get used to the fact that although Gurdjieff almost always alerts us to such hidden material, most often he alerts us in subtle, easily overlooked ways, and sometimes even after the fact, that is, after we have already passed the point in his text where we really need and can apply the information. And sometimes, as in this case, the clues needed to resolve the mystery are presented much later, not just in later chapters, but even in later books!

Getting back to our present task – if the information needed for the solution to that hidden thought has not yet been presented, then, what is Gurdjieff's purpose in mentioning it here, and in such plain (almost) English? That is not typical of him; he seldom tips his hand so blatantly. But here it serves several purposes. For one thing, it serves to put the alert student on guard for the possibility of other hidden meanings within his writings. And, once we are alert to that possibility, our struggle, while not half-over, or even one quarter done, is at least begun, and we can begin to get more from our efforts. More importantly it serves as a "throwing down of the glove," so to speak – he is *challenging* us to solve the mystery – what is Beelzebub's "hidden thought?" The answer to that is of such great importance in terms of another matter that it deserves a special focus all its own, and so we will return to the challenge of Beelzebub's hidden thought along with its solution in a soon to follow chapter devoted almost exclusively to that enigma.

But the main point for our present chapter is that his remark in the last chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* confirms the presence of *at least one* hidden thought within his writings and, as you will soon see, that is just the setting of the stage.

Meetings

In *Meetings with Remarkable men*, on page six, Gurdjieff writes:

I considered it impossible to deprive the reader either of what had been said on this subject or of all the other thoughts, so to say, artfully imbedded in this passage,

thoughts which, for anyone able to decipher them, can be exceedingly valuable material for a correct understanding of what I intend to elucidate in the last two series in a form accessible to any man seeking the truth.

Here, near the beginning of *Meetings*, we get an early warning of “artfully imbedded” thoughts which are soon to follow, and, it is important to note, such thoughts will be available *only* to those who are “able to decipher them.” How such thoughts may be embedded, the methods and techniques of such concealment, and how we are supposed to be able to decipher them, again he does not say — at least not yet, and certainly not in that passage.

Many readers, however, giving that passage a passive reading, underestimate what is being said, thinking it means that what Gurdjieff wrote is or should be considered to be “accessible to any man” who so wishes, or to any *dandy* who fancies himself a seeker of the truth. But that is not the case. Upon a careful and more active reading of this passage we find implicit (and even explicit) in his message the requirement that we must discover and recognize those artfully embedded thoughts, and obviously we must be or become “able to decipher them.” Then, and only then, will Gurdjieff’s “artfully embedded” thoughts become accessible to any man seeking the truth.

On the very next page we are again notified of concealment, but this time he makes clear that this practice applies not just to one or two pages, or an isolated section or even a particular chapter or book, but has become a well developed trait which applies across the board to his writings in general. And here he gives us the first slight hint of his ‘method’ (*Meetings with Remarkable Men*, p. 7):

But since, little by little, I had become more adroit in the art of concealing serious thoughts in an enticing, easily grasped outer form...

In that remark he warns us that while the outer form may appear to be easy, his more “serious thoughts” are “concealed” within that outer form. He also implies that there are more than just a few hidden meanings, that concealing his more serious thought has become his general rule and practice.

Incidentally, you may wish to remember the word, “enticing,” as we will eventually see that it plays a major role in one of Gurdjieff’s more ‘pointed’ jokes.

Related to his method of concealment, later in *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, on page 231, he begins to prepare us to consider a “new” (ancient) language by telling us of a school of writing, a style which he learned in his youth, and which he calls by a rather puzzling name:

I therefore wish to describe this part of our journey to that country, then inaccessible to Europeans, in as much detail as possible and to describe it more or less in the style of a literary school which I happened to study in my youth and which arose and flourished, so it seems, just here on the shores of this great river—a style called the ‘creation of images without words.’

What does he mean by “the creation of images without words”? Well, as might be now be expected, he will not *tell* us, rather he will *show* what it means by way of multitudinous demonstration and example, some of which we will cover as we move through this book getting closer to the language of form. But for now let us stick to our search for his further indications, in his own words, of the existence of hidden meaning within his writings.

Life is real

In *Life is real only then, when ‘I am’*, Gurdjieff’s last book, on page 69 he again serves notice that his writing is not to be taken as straight-forward:

... I want, right from the beginning of this series, to speak also of such external facts, the description of which for a naïve reader might appear at first sight almost a meaningless, mere succession of words; whereas for a man who has the habit of thinking and of searching for the sense contained in so-called “allegorical expositions,” on condition of a little strengthened mentation, they would be full of inner significance, and, if he makes the slightest effort “not to be a puppet of his automatic reflection,” he will grasp and learn very much.

Here he says plainly that his writing is not plain. We are alerted to the fact that what might at first appear to be “a meaningless, mere succession of words” may in fact be quite significant; but that is only on the condition of a “strengthened mentation,” gained by our previous struggle with his meanings in *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* and *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, and also on the condition that we make effort to overcome our “automatic reflection.” This excerpt is from early in the book where he further prepares the alert student for that new language we seek to learn.

For, in this passage, if we are attentive to detail, we see something anomalous – something appears to be amiss: why does he use the term “so-called” as a modifier of “allegorical expositions”? This remark about “so-called allegorical expositions” is quite puzzling because it is clear to any serious student of Gurdjieff’s writings that he makes frequent use of allegory, and he says as much many times. Why then, in this instance, does he indicate that it might be only “so-called” allegory? Actually, we will find that he uses both allegory and something similar but which goes well beyond allegory, hence the use of “so-called” in that remark. As we will later cover, his “so-called allegorical expositions” are nothing less than an ancient form of teaching which he calls “Illustrative Inculcation,” a method of acting out a lesson, and by which method Gurdjieff, using the moving version of his picture-form language, delivers a great deal of his more significant instruction.

Later, in that same book, he will lightly introduce us to this method; but his initial introduction will only serve to leave us puzzled enough to wonder, “What was that I just read?” – which thought should be more than a little familiar to any serious student of his literature. And we will eventually discover and perhaps even come to understand that method; but since “Illustrative Inculcation” is as the next door neighbor to the language of form, and since we don’t want to get the cart before the horse, we will save that for a more appropriate time and place. At this point we are still primarily concerned with indication of hidden meanings within his writings.

So far then, from *Glimpses of the Truth* we have reference to “what lies hidden behind the words” and “the inner content.” Then, in *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson* we have “the hidden thought introduced by Mr. Beelzebub;” in *Meetings with Remarkable Men*

we are told of “valuable material” which is “artfully imbedded,” and we are informed of Gurdjieff’s increasing ability at “concealing serious thoughts in an enticing, easily grasped outer form.” Lastly, from *Life is Real*, we have “so-called allegorical expositions” and “inner significance.”

And these are only a few of the examples found in Gurdjieff’s writings in which he confirms the existence of hidden meaning and strongly implies that we should find and learn to decipher them.

In addition we find that he affirmed the presence of hidden thought not only in his writings but even in his *common* (as if such a thing could be said of Gurdjieff) speech, in casual remarks and conversation with his pupils.

From Gurdjieff’s Assistants: Nott, Orage, Bennett, and Pinder

C. S. “Patriarch” Nott

Charles Stanley Nott was a longstanding pupil of Gurdjieff’s, earlier through his good friend A. R. Orage, and then with Gurdjieff directly at the Prieure (The Institute), as well as long afterwards. After enduring and overcoming incredible physical and emotional difficulties, and accomplishing an almost impossible task, as recognition for his achievement Nott was given three bottles of armagnac by Gurdjieff, who also arranged a picnic to be held in his honor (*Teachings of Gurdjieff*, p. 222) Gurdjieff said:

Now, tomorrow, I give you three bottles of armagnac.
Doctor (Stjoernval) shall make you special Prieure salad,
and you take all the men and have party at your spring.

And in further recognition of Nott’s achievement in work on himself, upon this special “old pupil” Gurdjieff bestowed the title, “Patriarch.”

You have done good task in Prieure. Now you shall no longer be just Nott, but Patriarch Nott, and you shall have a new name in Prieure which shall be yours evermore.

Patriarch Nott wrote two books, *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (containing Orage’s booklet, *Commentary on Beelzebub*) and *Journey through*

This World. For the serious student of Gurdjieff's ideas, Nott's two books are essential.

Among Patriarch Nott's many contributions, some are obviously startling and of great importance, such as Gurdjieff's teaching of our having only "one place" for conscious experience, to which we shall turn in a later chapter. Other ideas, however, though just as important, are put to us by Patriarch Nott in a far more subtle manner. For instance, he relates, almost as if "in passing," that to one young pupil at the Priore Gurdjieff made the following rather strange remark:

"Never believe anything you hear me say. Learn to discriminate between what must be taken literally and what metaphorically." (*Teachings*, p. 75)

We are not to believe Gurdjieff? What a thought! On the other hand, perhaps what he is really saying is that we are not to believe what we initially *think* he is telling us, or what he *seems*, at first glance, to be saying. Rather strongly implied in his above and many similar remarks is the advice that we are not to take his words at face value – that often his speech is metaphorical. Gurdjieff was no simple man, and neither he nor the meaning of his writings should be taken for granted. The esoteric secrets of the ages will not be so blatantly stated as we might wish. One must learn, as he advised, to "decipher" (see below) his meaning.

From what we have seen so far we know there are several ways in which any given remark may be intended. Some may be intended as literal, but Gurdjieff has said that others are to be understood as allegory or metaphor (For a brief and simplified description of allegory and metaphor see the next to last section of this chapter).

Now, before we go any further there is the overall issue of a growing complexity which I wish to address briefly. This business of Gurdjieff's hidden meaning may sound a bit complicated; and given some of the items we will address later in this chapter, and later in this book, matters will for some time grow even more complex.

But before you despair of that, let me assure you of this – all the seeming complexity is nothing but frontage, as Gurdjieff intended it to be. The key to Gurdjieff's hidden meanings is really quite simple – or, it will eventually *become* simple. On page 77 of his

second book, *Journey Through this World*, Patriarch Nott relates that Gurdjieff once said to him:

Many who never will meet me, simple people, will understand my book.

How could Gurdjieff realistically expect that “simple people” will understand his writing unless, in essence, his writing is also simple? Gurdjieff’s teaching is both simple and powerful. It is just that we are generally too lop-sided, too literal of mind, and naïve, and we do not yet understand that special language by which he conveys his more important instruction.

However, once that language is understood, things will begin to go much better.

But for now, we need to look at a few more items relating to our present task of confirming the presence of hidden meaning within the writings of Gurdjieff, and we will now also begin to look for some semblance of structure in this mystery.

A. R. Orage

A. R. Orage was another of Gurdjieff’s “old pupils,” and chosen by Gurdjieff to be the chief translator for rendering *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* and *Meetings with Remarkable Men* into the English language. His booklet, *Commentary on Beelzebub*, contains information useful and necessary in our search for hidden meaning, and, as previously mentioned, it is included in, and, one might note, for some long time was available *only* by way of, Patriarch Nott’s book, *Teachings of Gurdjieff*. Mr. Orage wrote:

The book (*Beelzebub’s Tales*) is the only exemplification of a coded work accessible to us... (*Teachings*, p. 194)

First, that single remark, coming as it does from Gurdjieff’s chief translator, also one of Gurdjieff’s closest “old pupils” whom he specifically identified as “one of my most important assistants” (*Life is real*, p. 155), is enough to confirm the coded nature of Gurdjieff’s Legominism.

But “coded” makes it sound much more complicated than it really is. For although it *is* coded, it is not as something from Bletchley Park of British code-breaking fame; rather, it is a very simple code. After all, Gurdjieff went to great lengths in the writing of his

Legominism (books), and since he received little to no profit from those books (they were not even properly published during his life) we may reasonably surmise that they were written primarily with us, the future generations, in mind. But what is the good of that if we never comprehend his hidden meanings?

Of course he intended that we should eventually break his code. And regarding that code, and the key to that code, in his *Commentary (Teachings*, p. 194) Mr. Orage relates:

Beelzebub's Tales is a sort of Bible; the anomalies that seem to us incongruous and absurd may be a text within a text, which, when rooted out, may comprise an alphabet of the doctrine.

According to Gurdjieff, the key to the Legominism and the key of the inexactitudes are both in our hands, the latter to be discovered by intuition.

To combine and summarize Orage's above remarks, *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* is a coded work, and the key to its hidden meaning is our *intuitive* recognition of the anomalies and incongruities found therein. In his writings Gurdjieff frequently calls such things by the rather technical sounding term, "lawful inexactitudes;" but "anomalies," and things "incongruous and absurd," will do nicely as well, and Gurdjieff himself used such descriptions. After all, a huge nose on a tiny little face (lawfully inexact in proportion), or a pair of ears on a man's buttocks (inexact in position), will certainly strike us as anomalous, incongruous, and *humorously* absurd.

Orage even goes so far as to say that *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* is "a sort of Bible." Well, perhaps that is overstating the matter, but, then again, perhaps not. It would be wise to withhold judgment on that for now. Nevertheless, eventually, the objective and thoughtful student will wish to consider both that remark and its converse. In any event the phrase, "a sort of a Bible," relates nicely to this from Gurdjieff:

There are two streams of knowledge in the Bible—one for those with understanding, the other for those who take things literally... (*Journey*, p. 84)

If you will review and ponder that remark you will realize it is a very strong statement. And coming from Gurdjieff who refers to his writings as containing hidden meaning, allegory, and metaphor, and our need to be “able to decipher” his meaning, one thing is or by now should be abundantly clear – those who take Gurdjieff literally have no understanding of his teaching.

He has warned us; he has cautioned us; he has given us alternatives; and he has described those who are literally minded as without understanding. That alone should be enough to convince us to look for his hidden meanings. For those who have ears that hear, it *is* enough.

But Gurdjieff’s writings are not as simple as the Bible. Where the Bible has only two streams of knowledge, we find that Gurdjieff’s writings have three. Again, from Orage’s *Commentary* as found in Nott’s *Teachings*, p.136:

We must always keep in mind what Gurdjieff says about Beelzebub’s Tales: There are three “versions” of the book— an outer, an inner, and an inmost: also, every complete statement in the book has seven aspects.

That information is so important that on page 178 he repeats the thought in different words (a technique learned from Gurdjieff) and he even tells us to *remember* (another point of Gurdjieff’s method):

Remember that in Beelzebub’s Tales everything has three meanings and seven aspects.

One might be interested, by the way, to see how Gurdjieff conveys this “seven aspects” idea within his stories. I refer the reader to *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson*, pages 32-33, the story of Gurdjieff loosing a wisdom tooth – with emphasis on the word “wisdom,” which tooth had seven (7) roots, each of which was topped by a droplet of blood, through each of which was displayed “one of the seven aspects of the manifestation of the white ray.” That is a bit more difficult than Orage’s plain English, but interesting and informative as to what we are seeking. And, although Orage’s remark on the three versions is directed to *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson*, as you will see, that same structure naturally applies to Gurdjieff’s writings in general – the one possible exception being *The Herald of Coming Good*.

John G. Bennett

Now, from the above we know that Gurdjieff said there are three versions of *Beelzebub's Tales*, but, naturally, he has not said of what these three versions consist or what form they might take.

Another of Gurdjieff's close and well known pupils, John Bennett, had this to say on the matter:

It is almost impossible to tell without very deep and persistent study what is meant to be taken literally, what allegorically, and what in the form of a special symbolism. (*Is There Life On Earth*, p. 113.)

According to Bennett, then, the three ways in which any given passage might be intended are: literal, allegorical, and in the form of a special symbolism.

Based on Bennett's remark, and Gurdjieff's previous remarks, particularly the one about the three versions, we might begin to suspect that the structure of his writings resembles something close to the following: an outer so-called literal version with its meanings conveyed via the language of words; an inner version of metaphor and allegory; and the final, inmost version, written in the form of what Bennett calls "a special symbolism," which Gurdjieff referred to as that language which we "do not as yet know."

As we will later confirm, this initial rough outline is very close to the truth.

In the above remark, Bennett's first two terms – "literal" and "allegorical," have already been encountered, and in Gurdjieff's own words, so there are no surprises there. What is new to us is the term, "special symbolism." What does that mean?

Frank Pinder

More simply put is the description by another of Gurdjieff's "old pupils," one who was his very first English pupil and who for some long time served as Gurdjieff's right-hand-man, Frank Pinder. His expression for this is less abstract, more descriptive, and therefore carries more useful information. Frank Pinder's contributions in general (and this remark in particular) are found *only* in Mr. Nott's books. Mr. Pinder said:

Gurdjieff spoke and wrote in a picture-form of speech, symbolical language, which is necessary for understanding, because words... (*Teachings*, p. 228)

That “picture-form” description is more what is called *user-friendly*. And although Pinder uses the phrase “symbolical language,” which is similar to Bennett’s “special symbolism,” it is Pinder’s more descriptive “picture-form” which we will find more productive.

You will have noticed that I cut Mr. Pinder off in mid-sentence, just as he was about to give his opinion as to why words are inadequate. Well, and so I did, and I beg Mr. Pinder’s pardon on that count; but I cut his explanation because I think Gurdjieff does a better job of it, and we will get to his explanation of the inadequacy of words in a subsequent chapter.

Still, you should read Pinder’s full remark in the original text along with his other substantial contributions, many of which are beyond the scope of this book, but which shed considerable light on Gurdjieff’s teaching. And just how important might those contributions be? You must decide that for yourself. Ask yourself this: to what kind of information might Gurdjieff’s right-hand-man have been privy?

A Layered Structure

In expanding slightly on the approximate structure of the three versions mentioned above, we will substitute Pinder’s more descriptive “picture-form” for Bennett’s “special symbolism.”

And to develop Bennett’s description further, we will find that all three versions – the literal, the allegorical, and the one of picture-form, are, at times, presented *simultaneously* in a layered structure, with the outer version of words containing the more subtle inner version of metaphor and allegory, which inner version itself *often* contains the still subtler inmost version expressed in an iconic, or picture-form, language.

In other words, instead of a passage being intended as either literal, metaphorical, or as a special symbolism, we may at times encounter passages composed of all three. Further, as we shall see beginning with our chapter *Some Tools and Techniques*, things are not always as they seem, and each version – each layer, has its own meaning which may be entirely independent of,

that is, unrelated to, and even considerably different from, the meaning of any other layer.

Another way of looking at this is that the three versions are presented in a layered, interpenetrative manner, similar to the description of the three bodies. As man's planetary body is said to contain the finer Astral or Kesdjan body (if any) which itself contains the still finer higher-being body, so the outer version of words contains the more subtle inner version of allegory and metaphor, which itself contains the subtlest inmost version of picture-form language and Illustrative Incultation.

Incidentally, the use of "symbolical" or "symbolism," or similar terms to describe Gurdjieff's method is found in the vocabulary of so many of his more reliable direct pupils that one would think Gurdjieff rather much hammered that into their heads.

Initial Summary

Now, let us summarize what we have so far, and then, in the interest of focus, clear up a few related issues which may have inadvertently arisen.

First, the main topic of this chapter is the question of 'Whether' there are hidden meanings in Gurdjieff's writings. If you have any remaining doubts, anything less than a clear and strong position on that issue, then perhaps you will benefit by reviewing the examples previously covered – but this time in the original sources. There you will confirm the existence of repeated and unambiguous statements from Gurdjieff as well as from various nearby pupils which address this issue, and your answer to that question should now be clear. That there are "three versions," or methods of presentation should also be clear; and in view of Gurdjieff's strong admonition or warning that those who take things literally are without understanding we should now know, and without any lingering doubt, that we must learn to "decipher" his writings.

Lastly, from four of Gurdjieff's strongest first-generation pupils, Orage, Bennett, Pinder, and Nott, we see that his works are "coded" and written at least partially in a "symbolical language," the language in which Gurdjieff most often spoke and wrote, a language of "picture-form".

But all of that is an incredible amount of information to digest in the course of one brief chapter, and much of that material is probably new to many readers. So, just how important is all of that, and what is its significance to each of us personally? I think I will let Mr. Nott answer those questions in the next excerpt below. He has a gift for bringing things into proper perspective, but always in a soft, understated manner.

Exile

For those who are unable to learn from Gurdjieff's many admonitions against taking him literally there is a penalty – a rather harsh one. During the time of the Prieure that penalty took the form of exile. This is relayed to us in Nott's account, verified by Orage and others, of the events played out in the following quiet drama.

The setting is the Prieure. The time, sometime after Gurdjieff's automobile accident when he is well on the road to recovery, and life at the Prieure is slowly beginning to return to normal. *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, page 83, Mr. Nott:

We began to get into our stride again, and to look forward to the new future when work would be organized in the old way. But one morning word went round that Gurdjieff wanted everyone without exception to assemble in the Study House. He was in his armchair in the centre of the floor. We grouped ourselves round him, sitting on the floor and waited. In a quiet voice he began to speak, sometimes in English, sometimes in Russian. He said that now all work in the Prieure had come to an end. He was going to liquidate the Prieure. 'In two day,' he went on, 'everyone must be gone from here, only my own people stay. For a long time I live for others, now I begin to live for myself. Everything now stop—dances, music, work. You all must go in two days.'

As he was speaking our faces grew so long that one would have thought they would touch our chests. After some further talk in Russian he made a gesture with his hand, and we slowly got up and went outside, standing in groups on the lawn and asking each other what it meant.

It was a shock, as it was intended to be. We did no more work that day, but talked among ourselves, trying to discover if anyone understood what it was all about. 'Is this,' we asked, 'the end of all the hopes that have been raised in us? Has everything really come to an end? Is his work really finished?' Everyone was mystified—old pupils as well as young. 'Why is this?' asked some of the Russians of me. 'What is to do? We give up everything, come here, and all is finished. What is to do?' They seemed like characters in a Chekhov play. I knew as much, and as little, as they did.

The next day most of the Russians, some of the Americans, and others, packed up and left, never to come back to the Priure. They took him literally. Some of the Englishwomen went but they came back later. The rest of us also left. We went to Paris and stayed at the shabby little Unic Hotel on Montparnasse. But before we left we had a talk with Mme de Hartmann, with the result that Gurdjieff said that the Americans could return after a few days and stay on, also those 'near' to him could return. Actually everyone, except his family and those who were looking after him, did leave for a few days.

When we returned to Fontainebleau the Priure seemed empty. Only a third of us were left, including the old pupils—those closest to Gurdjieff. Work was resumed in the gardens and the forest, and every evening Hartmann played music to us in the Study House...

Now we see what is meant by "exile." Nott's books contain example after example of Gurdjieff telling and showing his pupils that they must not take him literally. Over and over he reiterates that lesson to different pupils, different groups of pupils, in different ways and settings. But a teacher can only offer the lesson; he cannot force the pupil to learn. Ultimately, that is up to the pupil. The above small drama, earth shattering for some, was much like a final exam – what is called "a practical." It was a test of whether the pupil had, after all, successfully learned one of Gurdjieff's most basic, most important, and most often repeated lessons. And while at the beginning of this section I said the penalty for failure to learn this lesson was exile, we now see that it was self-exile.

Those who took him literally left, never to return. But those who didn't believe him, who doubted his message, those who absolutely refused to take his words at face value and so looked further and asked questions were allowed to continue.

And so it is today. Those who cannot learn Gurdjieff's 'method' of communication, those who in spite of his many admonitions and demonstrations to the contrary insist on taking him literally will be self-banished to the outer version of his Legominism, never to hear his true instruction, never to perceive his teaching. A harsh penalty, perhaps; but one we visit upon ourselves; and it is a penalty which is avoidable by the simple expedient, "Question everything, even yourself."

And so, after that rather somber drama which left a full two-thirds of Gurdjieff's pupils wandering away from the Prieure in the dazed disappointment of self-exile, we, on the other hand, will remain *with* Gurdjieff and continue our search for his hidden meanings.

Simplicity

Now, in all that follows in this book and in your pursuit of the truths contained within the writings of Gurdjieff there is one important remark we have touched upon before and which will help us stay on course. Mr. Nott once asked Gurdjieff, "What about people who have never met you, or will never meet you? How will they be able to understand Beelzebub's Tales?" Gurdjieff replied:

Perhaps will understand better than many always around me. You, by the way, you see much of me and become identified with me. I not wish people identified with me, I wish them identified with my ideas. Many who never will meet me, simple people, will understand my book.
(*Journey*, p. 77)

Which remark is to say that you, as a person who has never even met Gurdjieff, will perhaps have a considerable advantage over some of those who were his direct pupils! How is that possible?

For one thing, as Gurdjieff indicated in *The Herald of Coming Good*, which book we will later cover in some detail, the force of his personality and being was just too overwhelming for most of his pupils to become, or remain, objective, or to retain the *personal*

initiative which is required of those who follow the Fourth Way, and of which Gurdjieff was in particular need on the part of his pupils.

Here he is explaining one of several reasons for the decision to put his teaching into written form:

Secondly with a view, –to counteracting the manifestation in people with whom I came in contact of that inherent trait which, embedded as it is in the psyche of people and acting as an impediment to the realization of my aims, evokes from them, when confronted with other more or less prominent people, the functioning of the feeling of enslavement, paralyzing once and for all their capacity for displaying the personal initiative of which I then stood in particular need. (*The Herald of Coming Good*, p. 12)

Sometimes a little distance can be a good thing. With time and distance then, and with the additional help provided by Gurdjieff through three of his personally prepared “old pupils,” comes a considerable advantage.

Also, and this is our focus at this point, Gurdjieff said, “Simple people will understand my book.” Therefore, whatever our eventual solution to Gurdjieff’s hidden meanings, one thing is certain – the solution *must* be a simple one. And it is. Getting there, however, is another matter. Getting there is like searching for a clearing hidden deep in a forest, one heard of on reliable sources, but not so easy to find. It is as though the seeker has been pushing through a pathless wood in search of that clear place, turning this way and that, around and through tangles of overgrowth and brush, past branches of thorns and twigs that sting the cheek and bring tears to the eye, but still that one does not turn back because, intuitively, he knows something. Somehow he is convinced in his single-minded focus that somewhere out ahead is the clearing he seeks, and he is determined to find it. And that one *will* find it. And when he finally does, and enters that clearing ...ah, but I try to get ahead of myself. In any event, what such a one finds in that clearing you will soon enough see for yourself, that is, if you are of that same single-minded determination. But your trip will be made a little simpler because we now follow a path marked by some of Gurdjieff’s “old pupils,” men who were in fact authorized and prepared by him for such a purpose, which authorization we will document in a later chapter.

But we cannot expect those “old pupils” to do all of the work; we must mark the miles ourselves, and we must work to make our journey simpler by clearing away some of the needless complications which bar our path, beginning in the second section below by greatly simplifying the otherwise complicated tangles of what are called metaphor and allegory. True, his writings are, or seem to be, complex; but it is only one of the three versions, the outer version, which is really complicated, and that is due in large part to the seeming contradictions and absurdities he throws at us, along with his ironic usages, not to mention the intentionally convoluted and compound phrasing of his style. But the fact that his writing is complicated and difficult to penetrate is entirely in keeping with its function as the outer, protective layer.

Burying the Dog

Gurdjieff several times indicated that one reason he held group readings of various chapters from his work in progress was so that he could rewrite the text to the effect of “burying the dog” sufficient to his needs. We have several such reports similar to the following from Bennett:

If Gurdjieff had intended his meaning to be readily accessible to every reader, he would have written the book differently. He himself used to listen to chapters read aloud and if he found that the key passages were taken too easily - and therefore almost inevitably too superficially - he would rewrite them in order, as he put it, to 'bury the dog deeper'. When people corrected him and said that he surely meant 'bury the bone deeper', he would turn on them and say it is not 'bones' but the 'dog' that you have to find. (*Making a New World*, p. 274)

That “dog” must be protected, and, initially, it is the complexity of Gurdjieff’s verbal style which serves that purpose.

However, once we penetrate into the second version things will begin to become a little clearer; and when we finally reach the third, inmost version, his writings (and his teaching) will become simplicity itself. But in order to reach that clearing we must learn to simplify, and that applies to more than just his writings; it applies even to us. If we are to decipher his writing we must learn how to

become, as he said, “simple people,” the difficulty and significance of which goes beyond words.

Now, as a first step in pursuit of that simplicity, let us clear up a small and needless complication.

Metaphor, Allegory, et al

It has recently come to my attention that many are puzzled or even somewhat intimidated by the idea of metaphor, considering it to be ‘*a hard nut to crack*.’ Not to worry; let me share with you a very simple and reliable working definition of metaphor, ‘*in a nutshell*.’

‘*Rolling*’ metaphor and simile into one, metaphor is what you have just read and easily understood in the above two sentences. It is the use of ‘*in a nutshell*’ as meaning something concisely put. It is the use of ‘*a hard nut to crack*’ as meaning something difficult to ‘*penetrate*’ or understand. In both cases we use some form of the common and universally understood “nut” as substitute for the less familiar term “metaphor.” It is as though we are saying that the ‘*meat*’ (meaning) of the ‘*nut*’ (metaphor), is contained within the hard to crack covering of the device.

And we are not in the least concerned with such technicalities as which word serves as metaphier and which metaphrand; rather, in keeping with our goal of simplicity, we will start simple and from there make it even simpler. For our purposes we will adhere to the following somewhat global working definition of metaphor:

One thing, well known, is used to represent another thing,
less well known.

There, have I ‘*hit that nail on the head?*’ (hit, nail) To paraphrase Julian Jaynes in *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, in our above explanation there is, of course, no ‘*nail*’ to ‘*hit*,’ not really, but it does ‘*carry*’ the thought (carry), does it not? In simple form that is all there is to metaphor, if you ‘*get my point*’ (point) – needles and pins have points; words do not have points; they have meanings. If we think about it, we will ‘*see*’ (understand) that metaphor has become so pervasive, so common in our everyday linguistic experience that we seldom recognize it as such, even when we ‘*stumble*’ across it. We use it everyday. It is not so ‘*tough*,’ after all. In fact, our language is ‘*full to the brim*,’

even *'overflowing'* with metaphor. We can't *'escape'* metaphor, and if we try we have as much chance as *'a snowflake in Hades.'*

Now, in order to get to *'the core'* of the matter, it is necessary that we avoid the eternal arguing over *'fine points'* which is one of the *'hallmarks'* of certain "learned beings." So please accept my "sincere" apologies in advance as we intentionally, consciously, and even conspicuously combine all types of analogy – simile, similitude, metaphor, allegory, and, for that matter, for some especially delicious *'seasoning,'* we may toss a *'pinch'* of parable into our increasingly diverse analogical *'stew'*.

What we call these things is of little interest to us. It is of no consequence whatsoever. But, when we encounter such items in the writings of Gurdjieff, understanding what they represent is crucial to our eventual grasp of his picture-form language, and thus his true teaching.

Of major interest will be Gurdjieff's frequent use of metaphorical word-pairs such as "sun and "moon," "dog" and "cat," and many other such pairs of things which are more or less opposites, and which are used to represent something else, less well known, such as the fairly abstract "affirming" and "denying" forces, the active and the passive, as well as some more *'concrete'* items of our neuroanatomical substrata, for instance, that which is often called the *"two men"* within each of us – personality and essence.

In any event, that will be our working definition – something well known is used to represent something else, less well known. We will leave to the learned beings of new formation to argue the merits of this simplification – "After all," said Beelzebub, "they must be occupied with something," while we move on to the more productive task of mastering the steps which lead to a grasp of Gurdjieff's language of form and our eventual understanding of the teachings within his inmost version. In *'closing the book'* on this issue, then, let us *'wrap it up,'* so to speak, by saying that understanding metaphor is as easy as *'falling off a log.'* Anyone can do it; everyone does.

And allegory is simply the sum of a few related metaphors. It can be likened to a compound metaphor which represents some system or other, in part or in whole, and which we will *'cover'* in a more practical way when we *'arrive'* at the section on the

Akhaldan's allegorical beast with its trunk of a "Bull," legs of a "Lion," wings of an eagle, and growing from the neck where the head should be, those remarkable, famous, and oh so pure, "Breasts of a virgin." Allegory, then, is also a *'piece of cake,'* or more correctly, allegory is several *'pieces'* of the same *'cake.'*

So, taking my *'last shot'* on the matter, we *'see'* that metaphor is *'easy as pie.'* It is so simple that persons who can't even spell metaphor use it every day, and use it well. Gurdjieff knew that, and employed metaphor profusely, tossing it out like *'confetti at a parade.'* So then, let us consciously and intentionally recognize our simple everyday use of metaphor, and, as Gurdjieff advised, get on with learning to tell the difference "between what should be taken literally and what metaphorically." And that's all there is to it – *'lock, stock, and barrel.'*

Precision

Now, personally, I would like to move on to our first efforts in deciphering Gurdjieff's text; however, there is one "small" item we must consider first, and which item you will find not only interesting, but helpful in your search for the truth.

"If," Gurdjieff's written work is a coded work and includes, as by definition any Legominism must, hidden meanings; and, "if" he intended that we eventually find the key and unlock those meanings, then it is both logical and necessary that he would have included hints or clues, which, when discovered and understood, will provide us with the ability to decipher his code.

Such clues and hints could not have been made too easy to see, otherwise nothing would be really hidden and there would be no protection offered by, and thus no point to, Legominism. Nor could they be made too difficult, otherwise no one would benefit – Ever! This required a delicate balance on his part – coded, but not inscrutable; hidden, but not forever.

It is reported by Mme. de Hartmann, Mr. Orage, and others involved in translating Gurdjieff's writings into English, that he was at times quite demanding in terms of the choice of words used to represent his meaning. They report he insisted on a degree of precision which they could not always understand. For instance, Olga de Hartmann writes:

“Mr. Gurdjieff, who still did not speak much English, stopped Orage and said that the English did not at all correspond to his original idea. I had to translate again for Orage, trying to help him understand what Mr. G. wished, although I myself was certain that Orage’s translation was very exact.” (*Our Life With Gurdjieff*, p. 128)

“Exact” at the literal level of words and their so-called definitions is one thing, and a comparatively simple matter; but whether a particular word or phrase also carries the esoteric intent at the two deeper levels of metaphor and picture-form is considerably more problematic.

“Exact,” then, at the level of words, was only one-third of Gurdjieff’s consideration. He had to choose his words in view of his intended meaning at all *three levels*, thus he had to be three times careful in word choice.

If we apply Gurdjieff’s general penchant for precision in word choice specifically to the hints and clues which we reasonably surmise he inserted into his coded text, then we must realize that he chose and placed those hints carefully, intentionally, with precision; and that any subsequent changes made to those carefully chosen words and phrases might easily upset the delicate balance of Gurdjieff’s precise communication. Change a word here, a word there, and soon the balance, *in depth*, is destroyed, diminishing our chances of ever finding Gurdjieff’s inmost teaching.

For that reason, among others, in the next chapter we will consider the effect of such changes to Gurdjieff’s texts. And, as an unexpected bonus, when we examine the effect of those changes we will find the solution to the enigma of Beelzebub’s “hidden thought.” In fact, our next chapter is devoted almost entirely to that one mysterious remark.

The benefits of this topic will soon enough become apparent; and, besides, you are about to witness a demonstration of the amazing foresight of Mr. Gurdjieff, and you wouldn’t want to miss that for the world!

Incidentally, in looking for Beelzebub’s “concluding chord,” it may help to remember that Beelzebub (whatever else he may be) is a ‘character’ in Gurdjieff’s book, through whom Gurdjieff expounds

what he calls “various facets of my ideas” (*Herald*, p. 45). And, in addition to that relatively clear statement in *Herald*, Gurdjieff gives us several singular identifiers, three of which are that both of them (he and Beelzebub) were practicing hypnotherapists, they both chose France as their permanent residence, and they both sipped coffee, specifically, at Child’s Café of NY.

Clearly, Gurdjieff is speaking *through* the persona of Beelzebub, Since that is the case, then, Beelzebub’s “concluding chord” is Gurdjieff’s “concluding chord,” which is, of course, his last book, *Life is real*.

The reader is also reminded of Gurdjieff’s first stated intent:

To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.

However, as it may be encouraging, one may be confident that in keeping with his second and third stated intents, what he destroys, he replaces.

Chapter III

Beelzebub's

Hidden Thought

(Gurdjieff's Exposé of Revision)

Gabo, an old Russian pupil, one day told him that he was eating too much fat, it was not good for him. With a quizzical look Gurdjieff asked, 'Since when has egg told something to chicken?'

(Journey Through this World, p. 80)

And Gabo is not alone. Telling others what to do and even how to do it is a long standing tradition with "man," so it is no surprise that some of Gurdjieff's pupils shared that same ubiquitous trait. What is surprising is that they tried to tell *Gurdjieff* what to do, that they presumed to correct their teacher.

But they didn't stop at the point of offering suggestions to improve his diet, they "corrected" his driving, his attitude towards persons, his assignment of responsibility and choice of assistants when it went against their ideas of seniority and rank; and, incredibly, some even questioned his judgment as to when *Beelzebub's Tales* was ready for publication. After Gurdjieff was satisfied that his book was ready for the printer, many of his pupils argued otherwise, claiming it needed more work. For instance:

Frank Pinder, who was there, asked Gurdjieff 'Why do you publish Beelzebub's Tales now? Every page has grammatical errors, faulty punctuation and even mistakes. It ought to be properly edited'. *(Journey, p. 242)*

Like Gabo, they were eggs trying to tell Chicken something; but Gurdjieff was an old hand at fending off such advice, and so easily stood his ground. Gurdjieff knew when his book was fit for his

purposes, and, unlike anyone else on this planet, he knew the all-essential *correct timing*. In continuation of the above excerpt Gurdjieff describes the finished form of *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*:

“It’s a rough diamond,” said Gurdjieff. “There’s not time now to edit it. It will have to go.”

And so he sent it off to the publisher over the objections of many of those near him, and then set about finalizing his plan to counter the inevitable Wiseacring which he knew without any doubt would soon follow.

What is “Wiseacring”?

Revision, said Gurdjieff, has been largely responsible for the loss all of the teachings of past ages. But he did not call it revision; that would have been too direct; he called it “Wiseacring.” In one example in which he both condemns that practice and makes clear his meaning for the term, Gurdjieff, speaking in the person of Beelzebub, who is himself quoting the Buddha, is speaking of:

...that maleficent particularity in your psyche, called Wiseacring.

Owing to this said particularity in your psyche, the beings here already of the second generation after the contemporaries of the mentioned Sacred Individual who had been sent from Above began gradually to change everything he had explained and indicated, and the whole of it was finally completely destroyed. (*BT*, p. 238)

That the process of complete destruction by Wiseacring applies to *all* Sacred Teachings is clear from the continuation of the above:

Again and again the same was actualized by the Most Most High Common Cosmic Final Results, and each time the same fruitless results were obtained.

This message is stated by Gurdjieff repeatedly, sometimes in the less direct form of metaphor. In *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, from page 586 through 587 (see the original) Gurdjieff prepares the background, and then, on page 588, speaking metaphorically, he tells us that nothing survives of such teachings

– nothing but the husks, the hollow shells of their desiccated, mummified, remains.

Gurdjieff's meaning (personalized definition) for "Wiseacre" is found repeatedly in various other passages as well; for instance, *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, p. 734 – 735. Through such repetition Gurdjieff makes it clear that by "Wiseacre" he means: to change, *To Revise*; and that in his well studied opinion the teachings of every previous Messenger From Above – all of them without exception, have by the third generation been destroyed and thus lost to us forever due to just that same practice of Wiseacring (revision). Over the course of centuries and millennia this practice has been so pervasive as to become "the rule," and the resulting destruction of those sacred teachings represents a grievous loss to mankind. Unfortunately, it seems that Wiseacring cannot be remedied. ... or ... can it?

The Setting

Knowing well the almost universal propensity of humans to Wiseacre, Gurdjieff of course knew that his own writings would be no exception to that rule, and would therefore inevitably be subjected to the dreaded Wiseacring. In fact, he had already witnessed the beginning of the movement to revise his works. As mentioned, during the final preparation of *Beelzebub's Tales* for publication, some of Gurdjieff's pupils were boldly telling him how to improve his text, of which they, by their own admission, could understand little. Even his chief translator, Orage, was not clear on its meaning, as he tells us in his *Commentary on Beelzebub*:

Although I've talked over the chapters with Gurdjieff and discussed the *sense* of them, he will never explain the meaning of anything. His task is to write the book, ours to make the effort to understand.' (*Teachings*, p. 125)

The momentum towards "correction" and revision, then, was well established before Gurdjieff's death, and without the force of his continued presence that momentum could only grow stronger and more insistent thereafter. In order to counter the destructive effects of revision Gurdjieff needed a "Miracle." Given his knowledge, based upon direct and personal observation of the beginnings of the movement to revise his texts, and knowing that at his age and in his state of his health he would not live long

enough to supervise the publication of his entire series, and thus control and safeguard the integrity of his written word, Gurdjieff certainly knew that without a miracle, without intervention as if “From Above,” the effects of Wiseacring would inevitably change and eventually destroy his works, as they have destroyed all such teachings. Knowing this, we now consider – what measures might Gurdjieff have taken; what “miracle” might he have “conjured up” to protect and preserve his teaching from destruction by revision?

The Preparation

Since Gurdjieff was personally supervising the preparation of *Beelzebub's Tales* and had control over the final form of the published text, and in view of the fact that he, being the author also of *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *Life is real*, could coordinate any part of his books in the manner of his choosing, Gurdjieff devised a clever yet unobtrusive trap; a trap to ensnare and expose those who based on all historical precedent could be counted on to revise his writings and thus his entire teaching into eventual oblivion. Having laid his snare he could then rest easy in the comfort of knowing that even though he would not be present in the flesh to prevent revision of his books, he could at least posthumously, as if “from the grave,” expose and demonstrate the gross distortions and failings of revision.

A Revision Trap called “The Addition”

In the *introductory book* to his third series, *Life is real*, Gurdjieff includes a section from the last chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, which section is identified in both books by the title, “The Addition”. One example of “The Addition” (*Beelzebub's Tales*) survives in original form, but the other, as found in *Life is real*, which was published long after his death, has been, in keeping with all historical precedent, *extensively* revised.

Therefore, and by way of Gurdjieff's clever provision, we now have two versions of that “same” lecture for comparison: the original as found in *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, protected and personally walked into the publishing house in final form by Gurdjieff; and the so-called same lecture as found in *Life is real*, which according to its preface is a “word for word” replication, but which, as Gurdjieff fully expected, has since been changed.

Thus, we have *Before* and *After* versions of “The Addition” for our personal evaluation of the “blessings” of revision. So let us take advantage of Gurdjieff’s provision and compare the two versions – but not the entire lecture, as it is much too long for the purposes of this chapter. Rather, we will look at one short paragraph, one already familiar to most students of Gurdjieff’s writings, presented below first in its original form as found in *Beelzebub’s Tales*, followed by the revision as found in *Life is real*. In this way we can with our own eyes see the extent of the changes made and judge for ourselves whether the revision is an improvement of the original, or otherwise.

Previous to the paragraph we examine Gurdjieff had been speaking of the two streams of life, the common one leading to the nether regions in the bowels of the earth, and the other leading to the freedom of the boundless ocean, and of the possibility, for some, of crossing from the one stream to the other.

In the comparison we are about to view, remarkably, the first sentence of the original corresponds to the first paragraph of the revision, and the second sentence to the second paragraph.

And as you review the two versions keep in mind that according to Gurdjieff, “The Addition” as found in *Life is real* should be a “word for word” replication of “The Addition” as found in *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson*.

Now, brace yourself.

“The Addition”

Original – *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 1232:

To cross into the other stream is not so easy—merely to wish and you cross. For this, it is first of all necessary consciously to crystallize in yourselves data for engendering in your common presences a constant unquenchable impulse of desire for such a crossing, and then, afterwards, a long corresponding preparation.

Revised – *Life is real*, p. 108:

As to the possibility of this crossing for a man who in his responsible age has already entered into the stream of the 'nether region,' although it is given by Great Nature, I must warn you, in order not to provoke in you so to say 'light-hearted illusions' regarding this possibility to cross from one stream to another, that it is not so easy—merely to wish and you cross.

For this it is indispensable, with a constantly active consciousness, first of all with extremely great intensity to obtain the intentional crystallization in oneself of the data for engendering in one's common presence an unquenchable impulse of desire for such a crossing, and then will follow a long inner struggle, requiring great tension of all the inner forces, with the obvious abnormalities crystallized in one's individuality and evident even to one's own self-reasoning, that is to say, a struggle with the crystallized habits unworthy for man even in his own understanding in a period of repose, which contribute, first to the arising in us of our inner 'Evil-God' and second, to the supporting and increasing in us of its power and strength always and in everything, namely that 'Evil-God,' the presence of which creates ideal conditions, especially in contemporary people, for enjoying a state of 'immutable peace'—speaking shortly, there will be required all kinds of corresponding, very complicated and difficult preparations. . . .

Amazingly, Gurdjieff's single, simple paragraph of 53 words has been "puffed" by revision into a double paragraph of 237 words – an outrageous level of revision!

Be that as it may, and as bad as that may be, we have another method for comparison which gives a better perspective on revision, allowing any changes to stand out in greater relief. In the following presentation, on the top line and in boldface we see Gurdjieff's original text as found in *Beelzebub's Tales*; immediately below, and in italics, we see the revision as found in *Life is real*:

The Two "Additions" in Interlinear Form

Tocross.....

As to the possibility of this crossing for a man who in his

*.....(cross, Cont'd).....
responsible age has already entered into the stream of the 'nether*

*.....(cross, Cont'd).....
region,' although it is given by Great Nature, I must warn you, in*

*.....(cross, Cont'd).....
order not to provoke in you so to say 'light-hearted illusions'*

into.....the.....other.....stream.....
regarding this possibility to cross from one stream to another,

is...not...so...easy...merely...to...wish...and...you...cross.
that it is not so easy merely to wish and you cross.

For...this...it...is...first...of...all...necessary...consciously
For this it is indispensable, with a constantly active consciousness,

.....to.....
first of all with extremely great intensity to obtain the intentional

crystallize in yourselves data for engendering in your
crystallization in oneself of the data for engendering in one's

common presences a constant unquenchable impulse of
common presence an unquenchable impulse of

desire for such a crossing, and then, afterwards,
desire for such a crossing, and then will follow

a long.....
a long inner struggle, requiring great tension of all the

(long, Cont'd).....
inner forces, with the obvious abnormalities crystallized in one's

(long, Cont'd).....
individuality and evident even to one's own self-reasoning, that is

(long, cont'd).....
to say, a struggle with the crystallized habits unworthy for man

(Cont'd).....
even in his own understanding in a period of repose, which

(Cont'd).....
contribute, first to the arising in us of our inner 'Evil-God' and

(Cont'd).....
second, to the supporting and increasing in us of its power and

(Cont'd).....
strength always and in everything, namely that 'Evil-God,' the

(Cont'd).....
presence of which creates ideal conditions, especially in

(Cont'd).....
contemporary people, for enjoying a state of 'immutable peace'—

(Cont'd).....
speaking shortly, there will be required all kinds of

correspondingpreparation.
corresponding very complicated and difficult preparations. . . ."

And there, compliments of Gurdjieff's clever and carefully laid revision trap, we see, unequivocally, and by Gurdjieff's design, the multitudinous "blessings" of revision, including, as the Mullah says, (*Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, p. 322):

"...everything in it except the core or even the kernel."

The changes made are so manifold, with so many extraneous ideas intruding upon the original, that if I had merely heard reports of such extensive revision I would have preferred to think it mere rumor. But in this case, I have seen it with my own eyes, and now you have seen it with yours – or at least you will, when, following Gurdjieff's very good advice to verify everything, you verify the above for yourself in the original sources.

And when you compare those two versions, as preparation for what follows in this book, try something "new." That is, read the passages, but then forget the words and focus instead on the images evoked by those words. After all, this book is concerned with Gurdjieff's Picture-form language, and in terms of picturing, in high contrast with Gurdjieff's original which evokes a relatively simple image of one with a desire to cross from the common stream of life to the other, the revision evokes a confused mosaic of disconnected imagery which is not only useless but even counterproductive. The simple imagery aroused by Gurdjieff's original paragraph is destroyed by the tangential clutter of revision.

The original simply and naturally evokes the imagery and feeling Gurdjieff desired; but the revision not only fails to evoke that imagery and yearning, it as much as scatters them to the wind. It is precisely that loss of imagery (with its attendant feeling and desire) which is the main concern for anyone interested in Gurdjieff's picture-form language, for, if we lose his images, we lose everything of substance.

And consider this: Although for the limited purposes of this chapter we examined merely one short paragraph of "The Addition", actually that section is considerably more extensive – and it has all been subjected to the same "blessings of revision."

And though I hesitate to be the bearer of even more bad tidings, I feel it necessary to add, and emphasize, that not only has "The Addition" been revised, but **the entire book has been similarly "blessed" with revision**, and in some instances the damage is

considerably more serious than in the above example, one or two instances of which we will treat in a later chapter.

And there is another consideration: as you make your review, consider not only whether you prefer the original or the revision, but consider whether your preference (or anyone's) is a valid issue. Gurdjieff wrote what Gurdjieff wrote, and his writing was quite precise. *That*, his original, precisely written text is what we *think* we are purchasing with our money, and, and more seriously, that is what we rightfully expect to be studying when we work so laboriously over months and perhaps years in our attempt to fathom his teaching. But that expectation is not met. Gurdjieff's writings have been extensively Wiseacred; they have been changed, and in places the changes are not only radical but entirely destructive of his message.

But the most important consideration for those concerned with Gurdjieff's hidden meanings and picture-form language can be summarized by the answer to the following question: what if that passage had originally contained a meaning of some significance, but "hidden behind the words," *within the images* of the passage; do you think your chances of finding that meaning would have been improved by the revision, or would they have been dashed?

The Silence

The mere existence of such unfettered revision indicates a worrisome state of affairs; but equally disturbing is that revision of the essential text of *Life is real* is not acknowledged. The changes made are not discussed, nor are they footnoted or documented in any way. The "authorities" in charge of preserving and presenting Gurdjieff's literature act as though revision never occurred. Perhaps they hold the wrong-headed notion that revision was necessary, competently done, and so, in the best interests of all concerned, there is no reason to "muddy the waters" by subjecting the revision to review; which view is, of course, mistaken.

Even when the act of revision *is admitted*, for instance in the prefatory pages of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, it is only lightly mentioned and the changes made are neither discussed nor footnoted within the book, nor are they documented in any other form elsewhere.

In all probability, the book *Meetings With Remarkable Men* has been revised by the same hand (or hands) and in the same manner as “The Addition.” Based upon the extent of damage demonstrated by the above comparison, one is well advised to regard the revision of *Meetings* with genuine fear and trepidation.

The silence with which revision has been treated, in conjunction with what can be accurately described as an incredibly cavalier disregard for fidelity to the integrity of Gurdjieff’s texts carries grave implications for the future, bringing the very survival of Gurdjieff’s Legominism into serious question – all of which, in the greater historical context, is not at all surprising. But that it could happen so recently, and with Gurdjieff’s texts, is both surprising and disheartening.

And, if Gurdjieff had not been so clever as to provide his own delayed exposure of such *Wiseacring*, who would have told us? We would have never known, and the basis for learning his *true teaching* would have faded quietly into to the gaping maw of so-called religious history, along with all past teachings of any significance. Such undocumented and even secret revision is more in keeping with the practices of the dark-ages than the “enlightened” present; but, amazingly, that practice is with us still.

Thus we see, yet again, that the true nature of “man” (man-in-quotation-marks) never changes.

But revision trespasses not only upon the integrity of the writings of Gurdjieff, it is also a serious violation of the reasonable assumption by sincere students of his ideas that as we invest not only our money in his books, but also months, years, or even decades of our lives into great efforts to read and understand his writings we are at least struggling with texts as prepared for us by Gurdjieff. But to our dismay we find that is not so. We find the texts unreliable.

Revision then, is a betrayal of every sincere student of Gurdjieff’s ideas as well as a betrayal of Gurdjieff himself.

Revision is a funeral march, it is a prelude to the death of Gurdjieff’s teaching, and it must be stopped.

But enough of this “gloom and doom!” On the other hand, and keeping things in proper perspective, we should recall that, as

Gurdjieff often indicated, such evil is not conscious – no evil is ever done consciously. I am fully convinced that the revision was not intended to be destructive. Rather, those involved must have thought a revised text would be an improvement, and would in the very least be harmless. But far from being an improvement or harmless, Gurdjieff's originally clear message in the above has been reduced to sheer gibberish by the act of revision, which is the inevitable result of any such action by sleeping people. The revisionists, half asleep, and probably deeply immersed in some private and collective dream-like fantasy of being among the "anointed few" who would *kindly* make Gurdjieff's writings intelligible to the common man, no doubt thought they were doing what is called "the right thing." But it is a strange and sleepy perspective that allows those who would not consider revising such light-weight authors as poets, novelists and such, to rewrite one who is without any doubt the Teacher of this Epoch. That they could so grossly underestimate Gurdjieff and so greatly overestimate themselves as to imagine they could "improve" his Legominism is more than incredible, it is delusional. But however great their error, we will not waste more of our precious and limited time bemoaning the revisionists and the inevitable results of their Wiseacring. Their "hearts" were probably in the right place.

As was once said of others, so we may say of the revisionists, they *knew not what they were doing*. The revisionists, along with their followers and supporters and their present day replacements, should be corrected, and chided, and they should be thoroughly embarrassed; but, in my opinion, Gurdjieff has taken care of that, even as if "from the beyond." Such was his foresight.

Psst!

Once, when I was much younger and encountered an idea in *Life is real* that caught my interest, and when I then brought that passage to the attention of my group discussion leader, I was told in a rather matter-of-fact manner that I shouldn't place too much importance on that passage because – Gurdjieff didn't write it! "That book," she said, smiling and shaking her head, "he didn't write it."

Due, I suppose, to the look of surprise on my face she went on to explain, "It was the family, of course – Gurdjieff's family. They

needed the money, so they *invented* the third series. That's all it is, money for the family. Gurdjieff never finished it."

That quote is only approximate. It has been many years since that conversation took place, and so her remarks are by now in paraphrase, but it is very close to the actual words, and identical in meaning. In addition, I have had similar conversations in several variations many times over the course of the intervening years.

Today, the most popular version by far has it that Jeanne de Salzmann and her near pupils, acting in all sincerity, endeavored to put the book (*Life is real*) together out of mere bits and pieces, which they did to the very best of their ability; and so, although the third series may not be complete, at least the part Gurdjieff was able to finish is accurate – which view, as we have seen by the revision trap (Beelzebub's hidden thought) is not true. (Sources: Personal Communications from about a dozen 'Elders' of the work)

That version of events is supported by de Salzmann's "Foreword" to *Life is real*, where she is quoting Gurdjieff's so-called final instructions, *from his death bed*, to her, which instructions *seem* to give her authority over the publication of the third series:

"To publish the Third Series is not necessary.
"It was written for another purpose.
"Nevertheless, if you believe you ought to do so one day,
publish it."

We will examine the veracity of that remark in greater detail later. Still, and though he may have given her authority in publishing the book, he did not give her leave to *Wiseacre*.

Actually, the "dirty little secret" that the text of *Life is real* is unreliable is no secret at all, but is common knowledge amongst almost all of the elders (sponsors and older group-one members) in America, England, and France. It is only "The Public" who are kept in the dark on that count. Those of you involved in group work can verify this by simply asking the elders of your group, as I am sure they will tell you the truth (as they see it), for they are, in general and to the extent possible for ordinary three-brained-beings, honest and sincere men and women, and, as I've said, it is no great secret. Just be sure to ask those who are 70 or 80 years old!

Further, the inadequacy of the text is acknowledged (almost) in the “Prefatory Note” to the book where it is *mistakenly* noted that:

Although this text is no more than a fragmentary and preliminary draft...”

What is not said, however, what is not admitted, is that the text has been extensively re-written. However, the act of revision was anticipated by Gurdjieff and he made adequate provision for bringing it to our attention.

What happens next, as a result of Gurdjieff’s belated disclosure, will be determined by many factors. There is the hope, and, as we will later cover, it is quite feasible that *Life is real* can be restored to its original, unrevised condition.

Incidentally, the first published edition of *Life is real* ended at the top of page 170, with the words:

...and if he has worked on himself, and has become a so to say “candidate for another life,” he has even three worlds.

The additional ten pages were supposedly found “lying around” somewhere, and then added by Jeanne de Salzmann and company first to the French and later to the English editions. But if you will read across that last original paragraph on page 170 and on through the next two short paragraphs, you will likely notice an immediate change in style, a change in “voice.” The remainder of the book is, in places, somewhat lacking in Gurdjieff’s style as well. The additional material may have been loosely based on some of Gurdjieff’s teachings or remarks, but in my opinion it closely matches the style of the revised form of “The Addition.”

An exception to my suspicions in those final ten pages deals with what Gurdjieff calls “The three worlds of man,” on page 173:

Thus, it is quite obvious that the whole secret of human existence lies in the difference in the formation of the factors that are necessary for these three relatively independent functions of the general psyche of man.

And this difference consists solely in that the factors of the first two totalities are formed by themselves, in conformity to laws, as a result of chance causes not depending on them, while the factors of the third totality

are formed exclusively by an intentional blending of the functions of the first two.

And it is indeed in this sense that one must understand the saying, common to all the old religious teachings, that “man receives all his possibilities from On High.”

His treatment of the three worlds of man is supported by his teaching elsewhere, and so is worthy of our consideration. But not all of the additional pages are so clearly “of Gurdjieff’s voice,” or congruent with his other teachings; nor should we forget the serious distortions revealed by our comparison of the two versions of “The Addition.” A more objective solution would have been to include that above passage and the rest of the ten pages as an addendum. Perhaps that can be accomplished in the future.

In any event, and returning now to the general unreliability of the text of *Life is real*, it is quite common that when a fairly new group member raises a question based on that book, one of the elders will make light of it saying something to the effect, “The third series?” smiling and nodding, “well, we all know about that,” thus dismissing the question almost out of hand due to the widely known unreliability of the text. But such questions will not be dismissed here. On the contrary, they will be asked, examined, explored, and otherwise ‘bothered’ until we find an answer. And that is because...

The Third Version (Series)

The third version of Gurdjieff’s Legominism, that which we seek, is in fact the third series in full form and depth; they are one and the same. But the third series, like Beelzebub’s hidden thought,” which is a part of that series, is hidden. And the book, *Life is real*, is the essential introduction, but *only* the introduction, to that four-book series, as Gurdjieff “tells” us on page 58 of *Life is real*:

In this introductory book of the third series, I shall expose the “quintessence” of five talks...

Life is real may be a rather slim book, but it does not stand alone. It is supported by select sections of Gurdjieff’s three additional books. He describes his third series (*Herald*, p. 49) as being:

“In four books under the common title of “Life Is Real Only When ‘I Am’ “.

Gurdjieff kept his promise; he completed the third series; but as with “Beelzebub’s hidden thought,” we have to dig it out. He “tells” us this in several ways and places (which items we will cover later) and, in his usual indirect fashion, he even provides us with the information required for its disinterment.

The third series has not been widely noticed simply because, like “Beelzebub’s hidden thought,” the major portion of the third series is hidden. To repeat: “Beelzebub’s hidden thought” is part of the third series, which is why the revisionists fell into Gurdjieff’s trap, of course – because they couldn’t see it. As Gurdjieff said, the third series will be accessible only to those who are capable of understanding it. He tells us that he had discovered:

The form of the exposition of my thoughts in these writings could be understood exclusively by those readers who, in one way or another, were already acquainted with the peculiar form of my mentation. (*Life is real*, p. 5)

And he did not subsequently change that form. Rather, he proposed another solution, to which we will get later.

The third series is in our hands, but not yet in our minds – we do not, or cannot, comprehend it – yet. But the third series (his “dog”) is buried within Gurdjieff’s writings, fully intact and waiting, and we will get to that before we are done with this book.

Still, and even at this early stage of our investigations, you should feel encouraged that in your review of “The Addition” you have had your first glimpse of Gurdjieff’s much promised and long awaited third series. That “dog” was cleverly buried, indeed.

As temporary summary: regardless of whether revision was done in good faith out of some imagined “necessity,” or whatever the excuses may have been, Gurdjieff knew that Wiseacring would be visited upon (almost) all of his books, and he prepared a correction for that inevitability by (among several other measures taken, one of which will be discussed in good time) his inclusion of two instances of “The Addition,” which he then brought to our wayward attention by challenging us to find Beelzebub’s “hidden thought.”

Let us prove worthy of his efforts.

Now, the idea that Gurdjieff’s provision for the inevitable act of “Wiseacring” was conscious and intentional has thus far been

treated as a given, as self-evident, which in my opinion is as it should be. However, some may be inclined to take the view that Gurdjieff's provision, although revealing, was mere happenstance or accidental, in response to which we will now look at support for the case that Gurdjieff's provision was consciously and intentionally done, and focused specifically on the task of exposing and countering the effects of Wiseacring, which exposé is of great importance to those seeking the third version of Gurdjieff's writings, and equally important in terms of the integrity and continued existence of his Legominism.

Gurdjieff's Battle against The Downward Ray

Overview

The downward ray affects everything, Gurdjieff's writings included. That is law; and any ordinary teacher, upon becoming aware of that law and its effects, would simply submit, and, in the case of his writings, accept the inevitability of the degrading effects of Wiseacring and the eventual loss of his teaching. But Gurdjieff was no ordinary being. In order to appreciate the full extent of Gurdjieff's battle against revision we will consider two lines of reasoning, and then we will look at Gurdjieff's documentation:

Although, as Gurdjieff tells us, an exact, "word for word," replication of "The Addition" was to be included in *Life is real*, Gurdjieff knew it would not survive intact. If we consider his knowledge of the effects of Wiseacring on all previous teachings, which subject he covered extensively in *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, in conjunction with his personal knowledge of the widespread desire on the part of his pupils to further edit (revise) that same book, then *we know*, that *he knew*, that the replication of "The Addition" in *Life is real* would not and could not possibly retain its original wording. Without Gurdjieff being present in the flesh, it never had a chance.

And to claim that Gurdjieff was not aware of the inevitably of revision one would have to postulate the absurd circumstance that Gurdjieff suddenly forgot all historical precedent of Wiseacring and revision which he presented repeatedly and in many different

forms in *Beelzebub's Tales!* From that, alone, we may reasonably infer that he never expected his work would be spared.

Also, there is no other reason for a duplication of "The Addition" because, as he had done in several other instances and thus established as precedent, when he came to the place in *Life is real* where he mentions "The Addition" he could have simply referred us to the relevant section ("previously covered") as found in *Beelzebub's Tales*. That is, he could have referred us back to the original, including only its continuation in *Life is real*. But this he did not do. He replicated the entire body of "The Addition," and then conspicuously referred us back to the original.

Gurdjieff included "The Addition" in those two separate books, with cross-referencing (see below), for one purpose – to demonstrate to future generations the effects of revision which he knew would inevitably follow, as night follows day, his death. This provision is clearly his posthumous, intentional, exposé of revision.

Although in his battle against the downward ray he could not *prevent* revision, he could provide a *corrective* – a shock, coming from outside and presumably at the right time and place. But how could he be sure that eventually someone would notice the difference between the original and the revision; how could he influence events in the desired direction, events which would occur long after his death?

Among the many possibilities, and not in any way discounting what may rightly be called "help from above," one way that might be accomplished is to provide us with hints, clues, and even documentation of his plan.

Gurdjieff's Documentation of Intent

As previously mentioned, in order to avoid the destructive effects of revision (Wiseacring), which have undermined and eventually destroyed every previous teaching, Gurdjieff needed nothing less than a miracle. But wishing neither to leave the matter to the gods of chance or the forces of the status quo, nor expecting instant reformation on the part of his followers, he wisely devised a "miracle" of his own making. That his provision was conscious and intentional, and designed specifically to expose and counter the effects of "Wiseacring" is made clear by a close, but only by a

close, examination of the documentation provided in the introductory remarks to “The Addition” in both books.

On pages 1188-89 of *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson*, Gurdjieff ties the two occurrences of “The Addition” together, and issues the challenge:

I append just this particular lecture because ... while it was last being publicly read, and I happened myself to be present at that numerous gathering, I made an addition which fully corresponds to the hidden thought introduced by Mr. Beelzebub himself into his, so to say, “concluding chord”...

Thus bringing “this particular lecture” (which includes “The Addition”) to our attention, and at the same time firmly and directly linking this “addition” to Beelzebub’s “hidden thought” – along with the implicit challenge for us to solve the mystery. In other words, he dared us!

More to the point and much stronger, in the prefatory remarks to “The Addition” as found in *Life is real* Gurdjieff provides us with at least five links or clues (the details) to his plan. In speaking of the relationship between *Beelzebub’s Tales* and his current lecture, in the “Third Talk” on page 104, we find:

For example, intending in today’s meeting to speak about a question which is based on data I have already more or less elucidated⁽¹⁾ in the last chapter⁽²⁾ of the third book, namely in the chapter entitled “From the Author,” the deliberations on the proposed question today should be as a continuation⁽³⁾ of this chapter.

With that sentence Gurdjieff tells us:

- (1) The “data” are pre-existing.
- (2) That “data” will be found in the last chapter of *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson* entitled “From the Author.”
- (3) His current talk is a *continuation* of that chapter, strongly implying that they should be taken and studied together, as one.

And then (4) he identifies the relevant section *by name*:

In the present case, one requires chiefly the knowledge of that part of the last chapter called “The Addition,” which...

And (5) finally, as if to nail it down, he introduces “The Addition” on page 105 with the following sentence:

Word for word, the content of these extracts is as follows:

The phrase “Word for word” is yet another invitation or challenge –it almost *begs* to be verified. Then follows (the revised form of) “The Addition”, which, as anyone can plainly see, is anything but “word for word.”

In truth, by the manner in which Gurdjieff embedded that information within the context of those pages, and by the way in which he cleverly broke it up with various interruptions, he buried it just deeply enough so that it would remain unnoticed for a relatively short period of time (half a century!), but that was all he needed. The revisionists missed his clues, and took the bait.

In other words, in the *one* occurrence of “The Addition” Gurdjieff refers us to the other, and in the *other* he refers us to the one, telling us that the second is a continuation of the first. It is that “simple.” The mere existence of such cross-referencing is confirmation that Gurdjieff’s provision was both conscious, and intended as his exposé of Wiseacring.

But, and first, Gurdjieff had to insure that the lecture would be published in original form, hence the reason for his seeing to it, personally, that all details for publication of *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson* were finalized with the publisher before his death. That unaltered original would provide the base-line for our later comparison with the revised version of “The Addition,” and, as such, was an indispensable part of his trap. Then, and with an abundance of lightly concealed cross-referencing, instead of merely referring us to the relevant passage in *Beelzebub’s Tales*, he *otherwise needlessly* included that same lecture, in full, in *Life is real*, the final form of which could, with complete confidence based on all historical precedent, be left to the various forces which are expressed in that form of weakness of human nature which he called Wiseacring. Then, just to be sure, he challenged us, *he dared us*, to find Beelzebub’s “hidden thought.”

A’ hem!

One should note: This is probably the first time in the entire history of mankind that such an amazing posthumous feat has been

accomplished. No previous teacher has ever before effectively challenged the effects of the downward ray. Neither Moses, nor Jesus, nor any others – none, have ever before reached back from the grave to so publicly correct and chide those who would Wiseacre his teaching into pabulum.

But Gurdjieff has done just that. He knew the law, and he *made provision*. That feat should not be overlooked or minimized; nor should the teacher who against all odds designed and implemented such an extraordinary corrective be underestimated. We can say, in the very least, that Gurdjieff knew well the measure of his fellow man in general, and in particular he knew the inherent weaknesses and failings of his pupils as well as their soon to follow followers. All in all, Gurdjieff was as clever as the revisionists were foolish. He was as awake as they were asleep.

Thus, as provided by the teacher Gurdjieff, we see in the full light of day the bounteous “Blessings of Revision,” for which extraordinary provision we can only say, Thank you, Mr. Gurdjieff.

Revision and the Language of Form

Now, the primary focus and ultimate goal of this book is, and will remain, in spite of any and all obstacles, Gurdjieff’s ‘method’ of instruction so that we, individually, and each according to his own measure of being, will be able to read the instructions given in the Third Version by way of Illustrative Inculcation expressed in picture-form language. Despite possible appearances to the contrary, that goal has not changed, nor will it.

However, for us – that is, for those who seek to decipher his hidden meanings, if you will give it even some small amount of thought you will clearly see that if Gurdjieff wished to communicate with us by way of an iconic or picture-form language, then revision with its distortion of Gurdjieff’s otherwise clear imagery is going to complicate the matter as we try to discern his by-words-created-images and the meanings of those images. Thus, the topic of revision has a direct bearing on our subject of picture-form language, and the effects of revision must, to some extent, be taken into account. If we are to grasp those meanings “hidden behind the words,” we must first to be able to see clearly the images he constructs with those words.

Specifically, in the following chapters we must be able to see and identify his “lawful inexactitudes” (*BT*, p. 461, 476); we will need to see clearly, as if at a glance, the “monuments,” “dolmans,” and “flags” (*Meetings with Remarkable Men*, p. 150-1, 272) by which Gurdjieff marks important places and alerts us to locations of particular interest, and by which he gives to us travelers the directions needed in our journey through high uncharted regions; and we must ‘see’ well enough to recognize a *bridge* or a *key phrase* when we come to it. For this we are going to need a precise perception of Gurdjieff’s precise communication, which is best and most reliably (only) achieved if his writings are relayed to us precisely – that is, as written, in unrevised and even uncorrected form, so-called blemishes and all.

Once the genie of revision, or even “correction,” is let out of its bottle, well, see for yourself – take another look at the two versions of “The Addition”. The original text, or an unpolished “rough diamond,” is far more valuable than any shiny and well polished bauble, and that is true for all of Gurdjieff’s books. It was intended by Gurdjieff, and it is reasonable to expect, that we do the required “polishing” ourselves. In fact, therein is found a large part of the value of our struggle.

Our Consolation

Now, a word of both caution and encouragement: At present, and in view of the extent of revision of *Life is real* as demonstrated by “The Addition”, and knowing that *Meetings With Remarkable Men* has been likewise revised, one might be tempted to despair that there is almost nothing left of Gurdjieff’s true Legominism, thinking that except for the original printing of *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson* the monstrous results of revision are all that remain. And yet, while it is true that the text of *Life is real* and even *Meetings with Remarkable Men* may be unreliable, strictly speaking, we will not be stopped in our search for the truth by the Wiseacring of the revisionists. We shall, I am entirely confident, be able to find most of those hidden meanings, those, as Gurdjieff once put it, “pearls in the manure.” After all, they are merely hidden. And, as you will learn later in this book, we have a great advantage – Gurdjieff shows us how to look, and he even shows us *where* to look.

When all is said and done there is this consolation: Gurdjieff was an incredibly clever Being. He hid his true teachings from the cursory glance of the literally inclined eye, and he hid them well. In as much as the revisionists were (and are) in large part literalists, and thus “metaphor-blind,” and since they could not easily revise and obscure that which they could not see, then as we shall soon discover the vast majority of Gurdjieff’s real teachings which are contained within the inner and inmost versions of his texts have remained intact, that “dog” safely buried, and have survived both in the form of metaphor and the language of picture-form in spite of the Wiseacrings of revision, and with only limited damage. Praise Our Common Father and Gurdjieff, it is so, and this you will soon enough see for yourself.

Yet, revision must not be ignored. If Gurdjieff’s exposé of revision was so important to him as to warrant his inclusion of the revision trap, then it should be equally important to all students of his ideas. But revision must not be dealt with by making excuses or the piling up of more revision and correction, and not even by the “band-aid” of a belated so-called documentation of such changes, which would no longer be possible in any event.

Rather, it will be safely and reliably remedied *only* by the publication of Gurdjieff’s works in as close to original form as possible, circa 1949, real and so-called errors included. A sound basis for this recommendation will be more apparent to the reader after the completion of our next two chapters.

Returning to Our Theme

But we will leave further development of that topic for other times and places. We have suffered enough intrusion into our search for the truth of Gurdjieff’s teaching without allowing ourselves to be even further distracted by dwelling overly much on that topic.

But, in truth, we have no need of a “return” to our theme – we never left it. Gurdjieff concealed not only his more serious thoughts in general, but, and necessarily, he concealed his corrective for revision, along with the entire third series!

Now, since we have been dealing with the effects of Wiseacrings in terms of revision of Gurdjieff’s texts, and since there could have been no revision of his texts unless the revisionists had some large measure of what is called authority, perhaps we should look

at the concept of authority itself in a little more detail. The issue of authority is of such vital importance to students of Gurdjieff's ideas, not only in terms of the survival of his legacy but even in terms of one's personal progress, that I think this would be a good place to include a little of what Gurdjieff has to say on the matter, which topic is, ironically, somewhat neglected within the literature relating to Gurdjieff. The following is from a talk by Gurdjieff which has been long and studiously neglected by writers and other "authorities" of things Gurdjieffian; but, given human nature, and in view of the fact that the following talk by Gurdjieff is a blatant, unmitigated (though softly spoken) attack on authority – all authority except that which is internal, I suppose that should come as no surprise.

Gurdjieff on Authority

This record of Gurdjieff's talk comes from the Yale University's Sterling Library, P. D. Ouspensky Memorial Collection. Likewise, interspersed among the chapters which follow we will be looking at some of Gurdjieff's other lesser known or unpublished talks such as may be appropriate to the subject at hand. Any of his other talks which I've found and feel are of possible interest to the reader, especially those which are either unpublished, hard to find, or "Wiseacred," but which I am unable to easily relate to a specific subject matter, will be included in an addendum.

On March 5, 1923, Gurdjieff paid a visit to Ouspensky and his group at Warwick Gardens. Gurdjieff took with him his assistant and right-hand-man, Frank Pinder, to act as translator. As was often the case in meetings with various groups Gurdjieff did not give a lecture; instead he used questions from those gathered as the basis of his talk.

The following is an excerpt from a transcription of that meeting. Since this is from a casual talk there may be a few instances of less than graceful English, errors in punctuation and so forth, but that is only to be expected under the circumstances. All parenthetical and editorial remarks are from the manuscript.

Meeting at Warwick Gardens, March 5, 1923
Ouspensky and his pupils are present.

Gurdjieff is present with major Pinder translating for him.

Miss. Douglas: People talk of union with God and union with Christ. I often feel they do not know what they mean. How can one get away from the herd mind?

Mr. Ouspensky, after translating question to Mr. G. said: Will you repeat your example?

Miss. Douglas: I was saying...

Mr. Ouspensky: No, just repeat the example.

Miss. Douglas: Union with God.

Major Pinder (Trs). Mr. G. asks – Are you hypnotized by such phrases, and you wish to know how to get rid of that?

Miss. Douglas: I want to get rid of the herd mind.

Laughter

Mr. Ouspensky: Mr. G wants to know what you laugh at.

Major Pinder (Trs). Mr. G., he thinks this is one of the best questions, and yet people laugh in derision.

INTERRUPTION – “No, not in derision; we all feel the same.

(P, trs.) Actually everyone suffers from that and the cause is a very small one. The error is because you are tranquilly assured you are already a Christian.

Miss. Douglas. That would be a great mistake to think I was a Christian. (More here, but impossible to follow voice.)

(Continuing) Take all other phrases – We hated the Germans, and now we turn the other way.

G (P): Mr. G wants to speak only of principles. Mr. G. used your word, “Christian,” because that was directly connected to the example you quoted, “Union with God.”

He wanted to explain the hypnotic influence. There is an undesirable quality in everybody and that is authority – “Looking to authority” – is the term – “Reliance on authority.” The self reliance which varies according to the individual is due to preconceived notions which are within us, and which are linked up with faith and belief. For example.

You understand that reliance on authority means reliance on someone else's authority, not on your own?

Miss Douglas: Yes.

G (P): Authority that comes into you from without is erroneous. This error acts as a lever which pulls the machine, making it work wrong, perpetuating the error, and you cannot, having these erroneous conceptions, get rid of this until you have freed yourself from relying on external authority.

Miss Douglas. Is there no self love? There are plenty of people who do not admire outside authority.

Major Pinder (Trs) Mr. G. says that why he connected your example with Christianity is that he limited himself to the nature of the example you yourself put. Relying on the authority of Christians is erroneous. He proceeds to say that Christ, his disciples, their followers in subsequent centuries and followers of other religions never said "We are Christians" but "Be Christians". Mr. G repeats that it was never said and no utterance was ever given "We are such" but "Be such" and he reiterates and emphasis that.

Formerly two teachings went parallel, namely "Be" and "How to be". "How to be" has been rejected and though it still exists it is never used, it does not serve as guide and all that remains is "Be" "We are" "You are". There were two independent programs of Christianity, one was absolutely discarded – thrown out of use – and now people take as a guide merely the other program that remained. People were always the same, just they are at present so they were formerly. It is possible that formerly they were a little more complete, but on broad lines they were just the same as they are now; all nations in all times. PAUSE All nations at all times have followed, talked about and taught Religions, and these religions, if you look into them deeply, have the same aim. Mr. G. says he cannot discern in any one of them any differences in their leading principles, only difference is in their superficial forms.

Formerly, all religions say "love your neighbor," that is regarding the second program, whereas the first said "Teach and learn how to love your neighbor." Some religions at present use both forms. The majority of people here only use the second form. If you do not take it purely as authority – an outside authority – you would not have had the quality in you which forced you on authority, but there would have been something in you which would have made you seek the missing part. You would

have found “Love your neighbor,” and you would have sought to know what it meant because it is impossible to love you neighbor.

Set aside now that reliance on authority, and ask your self – is it possible – can you execute the command “Love your neighbor” and you will see it is impossible. You cannot love or hate to order. Think about it for yourself. It is possible that the teaching has gone on for thousands of years. What time. It is seen it is impossible to carry into effect such a command. It is possible that a small crowd of persons might have been found in all that great length of time to see that it is absolutely erroneous. So if you were to examine all and look into it thoroughly and you were to decide that everyone that lived all that time, were out of their minds and at the same time you saw it is impossible to love your neighbor you would decide there must be some error somewhere. Where is the rub? For either all people are mad or you have made mistake that it is impossible to “love.” And these two things diametrically opposed are both true – that one really can love that it is really possible to love and it is also real that you yourself cannot love. ...

PART HERE NOT CLEAR

It is only by destroying your reliance on authority that you will rid yourself of that hypnotism of which you speak, and of being hypnotized by words and texts. Does this satisfy you, Mr. Gurdjieff asks?

Miss. D: It is the group mind that talks like that, not the individual mind as for instance, in wartime men say “We must be heroes” etc. etc. and everyone repeats.

G (P) Mr. G says you must not look at other people, you must take your own example which was a good one and he restricted himself to religion and that those herds rely on some authority outside themselves. Our thralldom, our inspirations depend on ourselves and it is through them we are inspired by outside authority.

D: We imitate the men who talk like that.

G (P) They are obsessions and we must start by abolishing this hypnotism and when you get rid of this you will become free. It is authority set at the very bottom and we must search to the very roots to find them. In the same way taking the example you said showed you wanted to become free and is an instance of your own observations that you could not accept it

----- End of Talk -----

(P. D. Ouspensky Memorial collection, Yale University Sterling Library, Manuscripts and Archives, Manuscript Group 840, Series 1, Box 17, Folder dated March 1923, Paper dated March 5, 1923, Pages five and six)

The problem, then, is less some strange “herd mind,” something external to ourselves, and more our personal “thralldom” with authority, which Gurdjieff calls an “undesirable quality,” and likens to hypnosis. “...and when you get rid of this you will become free.”

The “herd mind” is merely its collective manifestation.

Related:

And indeed, my boy, at the present time, these three-brained beings who please you, must already as separate persons as well, as entire large and small groupings, infallibly ‘influence’ or find themselves under the ‘influence’ of others. (BT, p. 644)

See also *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, page 26.

There is of course no cure for the “herd mind,” whether of large or small groups, but we *can* overcome our thralldom with authority on an individual basis.

So, the next time someone tells you that they know what Gurdjieff meant by this or that remark simply because Madame “so and so” said so, then, remembering Beelzebub’s “hidden thought,” you just smile and nod, and say to yourself, “Authority that comes into you from without is erroneous.” Even if no one else wants to hear it, you will find that by repeating that one single sentence over and over, it eventually becomes a fairly good mantra.

No one (external) can be your authority, not even Gurdjieff – *he will never allow that*. He insists that you learn to think for yourself. Gurdjieff can, however, become your guide. And in terms of the true Fourth Way, there is no other.

Summary

For now, with the issue of revision and the related topic of “authority” lightly visited and dealt with in at least a cursory manner, let me “climb down” from that one of my several favorite

“soapboxes,” and “return” to our journey towards the language of picture-form.

Having answered ‘Whether?’ in our second chapter, and dealt with a few “blessings” in the interim, in the course of next two chapters we will, as they say, “jump right in” and begin our deciphering of Gurdjieff’s text.

Before we can understand the inner and inmost versions of his writing, there is the matter of the outer version which has carried, sealed, and protected Gurdjieff’s teaching for all these years, which outer version must be penetrated or peeled away before we can go deeper, and so that is where we will begin.

But we will not do so in the usual way; rather, in keeping with the advice of Gurdjieff and his Grandmother, we will not do as others might, but “whole hog, including the postage.” We will attack the outer version not at its weakest, but at its strongest point – the point where the armor is thickest.

One last thing: if you are disturbed by the results of revision, then take my advice and at least for now just forget all about it. Do not allow anything to interfere with your search for the truth, because, there are no excuses allowed in this highest calling we follow; not even the effects of revision can be used as alibi. And so it has always been. Rather, read on and discover for yourself the inner depths of Gurdjieff’s Legominism, and the amazing strength and resilience of his method.