

Unity and Multiplicity:

**Observation, Remembering, and Objective Consciousness
in *Beelzebub's Tales***

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A&E Conference 2021

Part One: Introduction

Beelzebub's Tales as Attention Exercises

Beelzebub's Tales is a series of attention exercises. These exercises use the mind as a vehicle for awareness much as Gurdjieff's Movements use the body as a vehicle for the same purpose. Both practices, at a deeper level, assist a turning of the attention onto awareness itself beyond the functions. Although the *Tales* begin with a cultivation and training of the mind, they ultimately allow for another, deeper level of awareness. Contrary to the suggestions of some traditional theories, the exercises in the *Tales* require an active, participating mind. They are unique in stimulating presence and being in the midst of ordinary mental states and activities.

In a paper written for the 2019 All and Everything Conference, I examined Gurdjieff's explanations of his "Exact Language" in detail, reformulating it in terms of Objects and Modifiers. This new formulation recast the *Tales'* allegories as Mental Objects to be consciously held and manipulated in real-time as the narration unfolds. Much as the piano drives the tempo of a Movement, the narration of the *Tales* drives the rate at which the reader/listener must keep track of several moving lines of thought.

Viewing *Beelzebub's Tales* as a series of exercises is an important shift of perspective. It transforms the *Tales* from a set of written opinions to be either accepted or rejected into a gymnasium in which mind and heart can be gradually transformed through repeated efforts. The exercises are cumulative, forming a complete curriculum left by Gurdjieff for future generations. The *Tales* reflect the entirety of Gurdjieff's understanding as he expressed it.

Perhaps the single most useful allegory in understanding the aim of this course of study lies in the often used abbreviation of the book's title: *Beelzebub's Tales*. Here we have two metaphors: Beelzebub, and his *Tales*. Beelzebub, as an unreliable narrator¹, we may think of as representing the *mind* in the classical Eastern sense connected with illusions about reality. His tales then become the *stories our minds tell us*. Gurdjieff demonstrated his own deep understanding of the mind in the way he reproduced it on paper, consciously imitating its qualities. At the same time, he left a path for students of his writings to become aware of their own minds.

In his preface, Gurdjieff points out his interest in the operations of the mind and also the lack of general awareness of its presence, jokingly referring to his profound concern with it as a "hobby":

"This kind of people among us who have been turned into, so to say, "moths" destroying the good prepared and left for us by our ancestors and by time, have not the slightest notion and have probably never even heard of the screamingly obvious fact that, during the preparatory age, there is acquired in the brain functioning of every creature, and of man also. a particular and definite property, the automatic actualization and manifestation of which the ancient Korkolans called the "law of association," and that the process of the

¹ Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, p 64 and p 270 (number 1 below), p 105 (number 2 below), p 282 (number 3 below), and p 281 (number 4 below). Among the many indications that Gurdjieff's chosen narrator is not reliable, aside from the absurdity of the information he presents generally, we will name four here:

1. He is a devil, shown by his name and description of his hoofs, horns, tale, and fur.
2. He receives information from etherograms, alluding to the old notion of pulling information "from out of the ether."
3. He receives information second hand.
4. He smiles with a double meaning.

mentation of every creature, especially man, flows exclusively in accordance with this law.

“In view of the fact that I have happened here accidentally to touch upon a question which has lately become one of my so to speak “hobbies,” namely, the process of human mentation...”²

The *Tales* begins with mental training. The student intentionally follows a line of thought which changes its direction, and therefore must develop an idea or assumption with a willingness to rework it as new information arises. Constant novelty of thought requires a beginner's mind, starting over time and time again. For this reason the traditional idea that the logical mind *should be turned off* while the book is read entirely subverts the exercise intended for the reader. Tracking and integrating all of the pieces in the book is akin to manifesting the various parts of a posture together in a Movement. The postures in Gurdjieff's Movements are not an end in and of themselves but with them a great aid for the development of being is available. Imagine if one were told to “turn one's body off” during a Movements exercise because the intended purpose was the development of a higher body. For the same reason, the idea that the *Tales* is for a higher or deeper mind and therefore the lower mind should remain inactive, while true in a sense, nonetheless fails to honor the way in which the text integrates all levels of the mind. It is precisely the ability to *be with* every aspect of the narrative, consciously, that prepares the ground for the next stage.

After having trained critical thinking to a certain degree, the *Tales* continue with a lengthy and gradual metacognitive distancing from the mind. In Eastern traditions this is known as thought watching, or inner listening. As simultaneity of thought increases, the practitioner little by little experiences a strengthening of the inner witness above and beyond the psychological self. Eventually, this witnessing reaches a jumping off point and the awakening of an extraordinary clarity of inner vision. It is precisely this inner vision which cannot be touched by ordinary description that allows for a new field of understanding to unfold.

The brief description of this process above has been my experience, and, I argue, is the primary benefit of the *Tales* for one's being. Only to the degree this process has been actualized through continual, unremitting attention to the book can a practitioner perceive how *Beelzebub's Tales* relates to Gurdjieff's Movements, Music, and Meditation as a totality of spiritual practice. Accurately understanding this totality reveals a relationship between the Work and other traditions concerned with Awakening.

This paper will begin by briefly locating *Beelzebub's Tales* in its cultural moment to strengthen the idea of it as a series of exercises for both training and becoming aware of the mind. Next, we will assemble a rough sketch of Gurdjieff's description of the process of self-realization as given in his early teaching lectures, comparing this to the process of learning left for the reader in *Tales*. Later, we will compare some of his statements to those of other traditions who more directly point to stages in the process of Awakening and its integration. This perspective will allow for a re-examination of Gurdjieff's teaching and its possibilities as a whole, both for the practitioner of the Work and in terms of our current spiritual moment in the year 2021.

² Ibid, p 15.

A Stream of Consciousness

The new form of literature Gurdjieff developed in *Beelzebub's Tales* was entirely unique in its manner of fusing Eastern and Western culture.

The Awakening aspect of his teaching was primarily Eastern in that Enlightenment was, and remains, an explicit focus of Eastern religions and spirituality. By contrast, one must read Western teachings allegorically to infer Awakening as an end of the process. In his pre-Beelzebub teaching period, sometimes called the Russian period, Gurdjieff explicitly related his teaching to a process of personal evolution that culminated in Objective Consciousness. He equated Objective Consciousness with Awakening and Enlightenment.³ Gurdjieff and his immediate pupils stated that *Beelzebub's Tales* contained his entire teaching, and it follows that the book would also contain his teaching on Awakening.

Gurdjieff chose to couch this teaching in part in Western cultural forms. An extremely lengthy discourse would be required to survey all of the elements of Western culture present in Gurdjieff's amalgam. Suffice to say, he drew on a range of sources present in Western culture, especially from art, religion, alternative spirituality, and psychology. In this section we will briefly examine one of his artistic influences from the realm of literature, showing that he drew on contemporaneous trends to display what is otherwise a timeless wisdom.

Above we noted the view that Beelzebub, as an unreliable narrator, represents the unreliability of the beginning student's mind. Gurdjieff, in consciously taking the role of the reader's mind through the guise of an old Devil, demonstrates his own self-mastery in directing his mind while at the same time providing exercises for that of the reader.

For instance, the mind tends to wander and become lost in thought. In the *Tales*, therefore, we find Beelzebub tangential several times before returning to the primary line of thought. The content in these tangents sharply contradicts the primary line to help the reader notice the shift. At the same time, tangents always contain information which, upon reflection, relates to the first line of thought. In this way, the student, in continuously assimilating tangents without losing the primary line, manifests a continuity of awareness through unexpected mental shifts and turns. Developing this quality of attention, the practitioner of the *Tales* becomes more aware of all of the places his or her mind prefers to wander. Later in this paper we will expand upon the idea that the *Tales* demonstrates the process of self-observation through the collection of small noticings. The example of tangents in *Beelzebub's Tales* is only one of many different ways in which the difficulty of Gurdjieff's narrative teaches the student inner listening.

In his attempt to artistically represent the mind on paper, Gurdjieff's literary style can be compared to stream of consciousness writing, a style which attempts "to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings which [sic] pass through the mind" of a narrator.⁴ Stream of consciousness narration was a trend in Modernist Literature.⁵ Several famous examples of this kind of literature were being published just at the time of Gurdjieff's public teaching career in Russia and France between 1917 and 1924. In particular, the later very famous *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, was first published in *The Little Review*, under

³ Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p 141.

⁴ J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1984, pp. 660-1.

⁵ We know that Gurdjieff was well aware of current art during his time. His friend and pupil AR Orage was a well known literary critic, and his pupils Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson, among others, were heavily involved in the artistic culture of the time. In the Chapter Art, p 523, he makes reference to eight different artistic trends in his time, such as cubism, synthesism, and surrealism. The implication in the passage is that perhaps he drew from many of these influences in his own art. Gurdjieff made a point of differentiating his Objective Art from all other contemporary art which he called Subjective.

the management of Gurdjieff's pupils Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson. Gurdjieff would have been aware of this literary trend because of his close relationships with his pupils A.R. Orage, Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson.

Individual modernist authors deployed stream of consciousness writing uniquely and to different ends. Likewise Gurdjieff. While writers like James Joyce were highly creative, only Gurdjieff used stream of consciousness writing, a western artistic trend in literature, as a tool for Awakening. As we will see later in this paper, not only do the *Tales* simulate the stream of consciousness in the mind, but also the associations flowing in other centers.

Part Two: An Album of Photographs

Self-Observation and the beginning of Self-Remembering

Gurdjieff described a process of self inquiry in lucid detail during the Russian period of his teaching. This section of the paper will describe parallels between the student's process assimilating the *Tales* with Gurdjieff's account of self study. Understanding how working with the *Tales* cultivates self awareness makes work with the text more focused and effective.

In his lectures, Gurdjieff began with the importance of "self-study" and a method of "recording" subjective data prior to self-analysis:

"Self-study is the work or the way which leads to self-knowledge. But in order to study oneself one must first learn *how to study*, where to begin, what methods to use. A man must learn how to study himself, and he must study the methods of self-study.

"The chief method of self-study is self-observation. Without properly applied self-observation a man will never understand the connection and the correlation between the various functions of his machine, will never understand how and why on each separate occasion everything in him 'happens.'

"...Self-observation, especially in the beginning, must on no account become analysis or attempts at analysis. Analysis will only become possible much later when a man knows all the functions of his machine and all the laws which govern it.

"...attempts to analyze separate phenomena without a knowledge of general laws are a completely useless waste of time. Before it is possible to analyze even the most elementary phenomena, a man must accumulate a sufficient quantity of material by means of 'recording.' 'Recording,' that is, the result of a direct observation of what is taking place at a given moment, is the most important material in the work of self-study. When a certain number of 'records' have been accumulated and when, at the same time, laws to a certain extent have been studied and understood, analysis becomes possible."⁶

With the principle of 'recording' in place, he moves on to the differentiation of phenomena into several centers:

"...Observation must begin with the division of functions. All the activity of the human machine is divided into four sharply defined groups, each of which is controlled by its own special mind or 'center.' In observing himself a man must differentiate between the four basic functions of his machine: the thinking, the emotional, the moving, and the instinctive. Every phenomenon that a man observes in himself is related to one or the other of these functions. Therefore, before beginning to observe, a man must understand how the functions differ...

"...Having fixed in his own mind the difference between the intellectual, the emotional, and the moving functions, a man must, as he observes himself, immediately refer his impressions to this or that category... If the work is carried on properly, the number of unquestionable observations will rapidly increase. And that which seemed doubtful before will be clearly seen to belong to the first, the second, the third center. ... Self-Observation ... will very quickly show us that our mental life is much richer than we think, or in any case that it contains more possibilities than we think."⁷

⁶ Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p 105-106.

⁷ *Ibid*, p 107-108.

Gurdjieff went on to describe how, by means of ‘recording’, one would notice the wrong working of the centers. This led to a discussion of taking complete self “photographs” of activity in all of the centers’ simultaneously:

“When a man comes to realize the necessity not only for self-study and self-observation but also for work on himself with the object of changing himself, the character of his self-observation must change. He has so far studied the details of the work of the centers, trying only to register this or that phenomenon, to be an impartial witness. He has studied the work of the machine. Now he must begin to see himself, that is to say, to see, not separate details, not the work of small wheels and levers, but to see everything taken together as a whole—the whole of himself such as others see him.

“For this purpose a man must learn to take, so to speak, ‘mental photographs’ of himself at different moments of his life and in different emotional states: and not photographs of details, but photographs of the whole as he saw it. In other words these photographs must contain simultaneously everything that a man can see in himself at a given moment. Emotions, moods, thoughts, sensations, postures, movements, tones of voice, facial expressions, and so on. If a man succeeds in seizing interesting moments for these photographs he will very soon collect a whole album of pictures of himself which, taken together, will show him quite clearly what he is. But it is not so easy to learn how to take these photographs at the most interesting and characteristic moments, how to catch characteristic postures, characteristic facial expressions, characteristic emotions, and characteristic thoughts.⁸

Finally, Gurdjieff described how a complete enough “album” of self-observation, that is, of the state of one’s entire being, leads to an accurate self awareness and eventually a disidentification from “oneself”:

“If the photographs are taken successfully and if there is a sufficient number of them, a man will see that his usual conception of himself, with which he has lived from year to year, is very far from reality.

“Instead of the man he had supposed himself to be he will see quite another man. This ‘other’ man is himself and at the same time not himself. It is he as other people know him, as he imagines himself and as he appears in his actions, words, and so on; but not altogether such as he actually is.

“...His work on himself starts from the moment when he begins to feel *two men* in himself. One is passive and the most it can do is to register or observe what is happening to it. The other, which calls itself ‘I,’ is active, and speaks of itself in the first person, is in reality only ‘Ouspensky,’ ‘Petrov,’ or ‘Zakharov.’

“This is the first realization that a man can have.”⁹

“Self-observation becomes observation of ‘Ouspensky.’”¹⁰

“The first stage of work on oneself consists in separating oneself from ‘Ouspensky’ mentally, in being separated from him in actual fact, in keeping apart from him.”¹¹

⁸ Ibid, p 146.

⁹ Ibid, p 146-147.

¹⁰ Ibid, p 148.

¹¹ Ibid, p 148.

Summarizing this, Gurdjieff said that recording without analysis leads to a disidentification from the psychological self. This is where the “first stage of work on oneself” begins. It was implied that the recording without analysis or attempts at change proceeds up to the point when one sees oneself clearly enough to begin questioning the nature of the self. At this point, it is implied there would be enough data to “work on oneself”, because one would know the working of “the machine” sufficiently. The key realization was that the inner witness was not the outward facing self composed of the centers. He went on to speak about this division as corresponding to Essence and Personality, and the gradual growth of the state of self-remembering as a byproduct of the process of self-observation. The states of self-remembering and Objective Consciousness arise after a complete enough separation from the lower self has occurred.

This realization, which Gurdjieff referred to elsewhere as the realization of one’s “nothingness”¹² corresponds to the Buddhist realization of no-self. The transcendence of the self is a stage of spiritual practice in many traditions.

Beelzebub’s Tales and Self-Observation

At this point, we ask some questions: If Gurdjieff placed his entire teaching in *Beelzebub’s Tales*,¹³ where in the text is the process of self-observation and self-transcendence contained? Is the only thing we can really point to the metaphor of Beelzebub’s Teskooano or observatory? If so, how does understanding that really help us? Why would he not deploy terms he had used regarding self-observation like Identification, Buffers, and Internal Considering in a book containing a full account of his teaching?

The answer is that self-observation and self-transcendence are woven into the *experience* of practicing *Beelzebub’s Tales*. All of the obstacles present in his book are precisely the obstacles present in self-observation. Identification, Buffers, Internal Considering, and Self-Observation are present, but they are *demonstrated* through the narrative rather than explained. Reflecting on salient elements of the *Tales* in light of the description from his early teaching period reveals that his teaching did not change. Rather, he transitioned from *explanatory* teaching to *modeling*, a surprising twist considering he had decided to put it into a written form. The use of tangents to depict the wandering of a discursive mind described above is one example.

We’ll now go back over Gurdjieff’s description of self-observation and self-remembering with the *Tales* in mind.

As Gurdjieff noted in our first quote:

“Without properly applied self-observation a man will never understand the connection and the correlation between the various functions of his machine, will never understand how and why on each separate occasion everything in him ‘happens.’”¹⁴

This description of a person’s experience, who, beginning to turn inward, finds a morass of confusing subjective phenomena, exactly describes the experience of the student when first seriously approaching the *Tales* with an aim to understand. The book is rife with apparently random phenomena. The student is left with the feeling of having missed something. There is the sense Gurdjieff means

¹² Ibid, p 148.

¹³ Gurdjieff, *Life is Real Only then when I Am*, p 4.

¹⁴ Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p 105-106.

something by these words or phrases, but the practitioner is at a loss of how to know what meaning he intends. This feeling of confusion and helplessness is the place at which nearly all students of the *Tales* get stuck, sensing the weight of a larger pattern which they nonetheless despair of ever fully seeing.

Comparing this to our life, if we are honest, we see that we live in a soup of unknown inner phenomena. Why do we circle back to eerily familiar inner sensations with the sense that “I’ve been here before”? The stream of consciousness is so inexorable we hardly know where to begin in actually understanding ourselves because the moment we try to understand, the flow of our inner life has moved on. Our own thoughts and feelings are nearly as anomalous to us as the red herrings in Gurdjieff’s text.

The primary assistance given by the *Tales* is to make clear to the student they in fact do not and almost cannot understand what is going on in the narrative right in front of them. The *Tales* forces the student to start at the beginning, an unbearable state for most.

In the first quote above, Gurdjieff pointed out the importance of delaying analysis until a complete enough picture has been created. This way, any changes made will not have negative side effects. Likewise, in the beginning the practitioner is banished to ‘recording’ random anomalies in the *Tales*. Depending on the student, it may take quite some time to realize that the anomalous “bits” they are seeing have any connection to any other “bits” elsewhere in the text. Searching blindly in the wilderness of the *Tales* with neither food nor compass demands a saintly level of patience and determination. One classical Work term for this kind of effort is *Long Thought*. The *Tales* shows the kind of persistence required for self-observation, which requires perceiving many aspects of oneself over long periods without understanding.

Having ‘recorded’ any anomaly in the *Tales*, where is the student to go from there?

Gurdjieff’s account of self-observation helps answer this question. In the quoted lectures above he described the accumulation of small recordings until gradually one is taking photographs of the whole of oneself.

Linking this with Gurdjieff’s written exercises, the next step after noticing and accumulating “red herrings” is the gradual recognition that these “random” tidbits are not isolated, but actually recur throughout the book.

For instance, a given chapter may contain half a dozen references to blood, menstruation, and abortions. The student immediately and justifiably feels uncomfortable. Later, noticing similar references elsewhere, they start to realize, possibly kicking themselves for not having done so earlier, that something entirely unrelated to the literal meaning is being indicated.

The increasing awareness that anomalous phenomena recur throughout the text nudges the student to form *thematic categories* to which these bits may be assigned. A useful analogy: the anomalous bits are like Points, and an assembly of these related Points forms something like a Line. Thinking of these Lines as Series helps us analogize Lines in the *Tales* with Series in the Movements, whether of posture, group formation, or inner sensation. Having assembled a particular Line in the *Tales*, the perception of any Point along this Line now calls forth for the practitioner the entire series connected to it.

It is the presence of associational series in the mind, feelings, and sensations which allow the practitioner to grasp and participate in the attention exercises Gurdjieff constructed in the *Tales*. The invocation of several of these series through specific word use brings out an experience of simultaneity in the *Tales* so characteristic of Movements. Unlike the Movements exercises, which manifest exteriorly in postures and positions, the postures of thought and feeling in the *Tales* are necessarily interior. For this reason, the exercises of the *Tales* are more difficult to initially grasp for students and perhaps explains why there is more active participation in Movements than *Tales* in many Work groups I have visited.

The assignment of superficially random phenomena to a set of related themes can be seen to correspond to different aspects of Gurdjieff's account of self-observation. From one point of view, we can say this process is like the assigning of phenomena to centers. And indeed, separate "lines" do in fact contain qualitatively different content which appears either intellectual, emotional, or physical. Regardless of which aspect of self-observation we may liken it to, if the practitioner has repeatedly assembled enough lines, they may experience a newfound ability to see small characteristic moments of themselves or others more clearly, perhaps beginning to perceive something of their meaning or importance if not yet with a strong sense of completeness. Each session with the book acts like the running of a stone across the blade of the mind. The mind begins to sharpen noticeably in its ability to make distinctions and notice meaningful patterns at the same time enough breadth of view has developed to curtail excessive fixation on particular perspectives.

The grasping of these series or lines is a moment of grace for the persistent and perceptive student. The book has now given feedback that concerted efforts are moving in some direction. If the territory towards which the path is leading remains unclear, nonetheless confidence increases that the anomalies and patterns in the *Tales* are not as random as initially supposed. The flatness or richness of the book reflects one's own attention and creativity.

The accumulation of Lines from Points corresponds with the "album" of self-observations Gurdjieff mentioned. The reader has an "album" of noticing in the *Tales* which are not yet fully integrated. They "see" but do not "understand". Instant recall of these Lines or series of Points reveals each complete statement in the *Tales* as a succession of references to Lines. Drawing from the theory of Objects and Modifiers, two adjectives connected with an Object each send the Object spinning down a different interpretational lane containing a wholly different intonation and set of emotional impulses. Gurdjieff's sentences elicit a chaotic range of associations that simulates the multiple flowing associations present within every human being. The repeated expansion of awareness onto these Lines by the practitioner coincides with an expansion of awareness of the associations flowing in oneself. Adding to the meaning suggested above for the book's title, it is an expanded awareness of one's own storytelling mind, which Gurdjieff imitates via his role as the devilish Beelzebub spinning his tales. In one place, Gurdjieff refers to this as the ability to listen to one's "Darthehlustnian state."¹⁵

At this point the student is truly on the path of *Beelzebub's Tales*. The stark difference in quality of inner experience and awareness in terms of breadth, depth, and clarity begins to fundamentally change the character of one's moment to moment experience in life. The fluctuation of states is the same, but peak moments of clarity begin to enter in at regular intervals like the sun through clouds. At first, a newfound sense of precision and focus may only be activated while working with the exercises, but eventually it begins to arise in ordinary contexts. Developed and stabilized beyond a certain point, one cannot mistake the changes that are beginning to take place and also where they are coming from: working with the *Tales*.

Thinking back to Gurdjieff's description of self-observation, this stage of working with Lines in the *Tales* corresponds with the taking of whole "mental photographs." It is the simultaneous taking in of

¹⁵ Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, 483: "...one of them stood for a while and, as it were, listened to his own what is called 'Darthehlustnian' state, or, as it is sometimes otherwise said, to the state of his own inner 'associative-general-psychic-experiencings.'

"Listening in this way, he would make it clear to his Reason, for instance, that the sum total of his associating experiencings emerged in the form of an urgent inclination to hit another being in the face, the sight of whom had always served as the cause for the beginning of the association of those series of impressions present in him which had always evoked in his general psyche disagreeable experiencing offensive to his own self-consciousness."

everything that is happening within oneself, of everything one is doing, of everything one is perceiving, as a totality. Gurdjieff masterfully captures the nature of the inner world in the outwardly perceivable form of a book.

Fragmentation and Identification: The Difficulties of Lines

Gurdjieff's lectures explored the topics of Fragmentation, Identification, Fear, Lying, Buffers, Considering, and other psychological concepts as obstacles faced during the process of self-observation.¹⁶

As previously suggested, *Beelzebub's Tales* represented a departure in method rather than meaning from his early teachings. Because the *Tales* simulates the inner stream of consciousness and the effort of observing that flow, it follows that the same difficulties would be woven into the text.

This brings us to a discussion of some of the difficulties of what I have called Lines. This section will briefly relate some of the properties of Lines to Gurdjieff's psychology of self-observation.

In describing self-observation Gurdjieff constantly emphasized the lack of unity in human beings. In fact, human beings are so confused, by his account, that we have lost sight of our own fragmentation, believing we are a unified, self-directing whole.

Chief among the *Tales*' obstacles is the complete state of fragmentation of everything the student tries to observe. Everything is in motion. The moment the practitioner begins to contemplate an unfolding piece of the narrative, the story thread has been broken and Beelzebub, that old devil, has moved on. In this way, the *Tales* confront the student with their own moving state of mind in a way they cannot escape. It seems many readers fail to see the similarity between the *Tales* structure and their own minds, perhaps because few observe their own mind carefully enough to have noticed its qualities. As the student makes progress with the *Tales*, the situation flips: the *Tales* become increasingly lucid, while the inconstancy of one's own mind comes into focus in all its fickle horror. Only the development of metacognition, the ability to contemplate one's own thought processes objectively, makes this shift possible.

Gurdjieff engineered a special manner of Sequencing to replicate psychological fragmentation in his construction of Lines. Closely paired with Sequence was his use of Scale. By Sequence and Scale I refer to the fact that the various information arcs or storylines, which I have called Lines, are given out in segments, and that these segments show up at varying lengths of interval.

For instance, some stories, given out in few pieces, are of brief duration and, like a distant satellite, orbit into view only every several hundred pages. Other lines have thick, dense arcs for hundreds of pages. Still other lines are so subtle and of such short duration they are almost impossible to notice.

Keith Buzzell describes Scale beautifully in relation to the enneagram in his book *Perspectives on Beelzebub's Tales*:

“...the enneagramatic principle invests every perspective on *The Tales*. Whether we choose the *Three Series*, the whole of *The Tales*..., or whether we look at individual stories, individual expositions of Law, the Six Descents, the Cosmology, or the Oskiano of Hasein—we will find that the organizing, inner and outer form and sequence is, *in its heart*, enneagramatic.

“...we can appropriately speak of the enneagram as being *everywhere* in *The Tales*. It... blends and binds *The Tales* into a colossal Whole or One.”¹⁷

¹⁶ See Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p 150-155.

¹⁷ Buzzell, *Perspectives on Beelzebub's Tales*, p 9-10.

Leaving aside for now Buzzell's claim that the *Tales* are enneagramatic, the point is that the information in the *Tales* is deeply fragmented in terms of its spatial arrangement within the narrative. Further, it is not only that the *Tales* are a "colossal Whole or One." Actually, the student perceiving them is also a Whole or One. The reason to pursue a perception of the whole of the *Tales* is to develop a capacity to perceive the whole of oneself.

Perhaps the second most famous word from Gurdjieff's early psychological teaching is Identification. Although there are many ways to describe identification, we can say that on one side it is the fixation of the mind on a particular view. Buffers, another classical Gurdjieffian term, arise as compensatory illusions which support and defend these fixed views.

Following Lines in the *Tales*, a persistent student is forced to collect them *in a certain sequence*. The presence of partial information inevitably suggests an initial impression of any Object being studied. Because each Line must be developed separately at first, certain false ideas and connotations are attached to Objects. Later, the simultaneous consideration of disparate Lines causes Objects to "overlap" in the practitioner's mind, producing an absurd impression. The presence of the same Modifier next to two seemingly opposite or unrelated Objects, forces the honest practitioner, sooner or later, to completely reconsider assumptions developed scrupulously over weeks, months, and years. Creating associations and breaking them, over and over, the practitioner of the *Tales* gradually begins to sense a new flexibility and coordination entering into their perceptions of everyday events. From this experience a sense of the nature of self-study and awareness develops beyond what words can tell.

One term we may use to describe the property of intentionally shifting meanings is Metaphorical Transposition. We already discussed the fact that Lines are spatially fragmented in terms of Sequence and Scale, causing the student to work for coherent impressions at the same time they inevitably form false ones. Later, the realization that the same meaning is buried behind disparate metaphors, or, conversely, that one and the same metaphor contains disparate meanings simultaneously, helps to understand how one and the same Line may leave off and pick up under different symbolic guises. This is why so many Lines, when studied, "fall apart", or never complete themselves: the practitioner must overlap and integrate multiple informational or story arcs to "complete the line."¹⁸ In "completing the line", the practitioner completes themselves.

Baseline and Clusters

Although never credited, Gurdjieff was apparently an early pioneer of verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal communication. Subjectively, he taught students to attend to the inner phenomena of thoughts, feelings, and sensations by dividing the centers, but also pointed to objective behaviors visible from the outside, such as facial expressions, gestures, and words spoken.

Gurdjieff modeled these early teachings on communication in the *Tales*. Characters intentionally misquote other characters, implying the student should pay attention to word choice. In the Chapter Art, Ahoon mimics Beelzebub's tone and facial expressions in giving a speech, and later, dons the affectations of a Moscow suburban matchmaker.¹⁹ Gurdjieff nudges the student to attend to these indirect forms of

¹⁸ An interesting discussion arises at this point comparing Gurdjieff's lectures on Laws and Octaves, particularly chapter 7 of *In Search of the Miraculous*. In our first quote from Gurdjieff, he mentioned the need to study and understand Laws in order to observe oneself. In particular, the discussion around deflections in the Octave, posited as an expression of Universal Law, is the key insight which could then be brought into self-observation. In the *Tales*, this is simply expressed in the form the narrative. A discussion for another time.

¹⁹ Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, p 512-516.

communication throughout the *Tales*. All examples imply an observation and conscious deployment of verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal communication.

In the last twenty years, highly sophisticated work on nonverbal communication has been released into the marketplace through books and online content. Famously, Paul Ekman showed through his studies of facial expressions that the human face expresses hundreds of emotions. Specific aspects of self-observation, such as Gesture, have been broken down into useful categories like Adaptors, Illustrators, and Emblems. In general, Gurdjieff's discoveries have been taken much farther and synthesized into digestible curriculums.

Our own and other's nonverbal behaviors are for most of us as random as the "red herrings" in the *Tales*. The same questions of uncertainty surrounding pattern recognition in the *Tales* have also nagged non-verbal communication experts. How can they be so sure what a given behavior means?

Decades of experience have been distilled into a twofold answer: Baseline and Clusters.

Baseline refers to a person's habitual way of behaving. Deviations from baseline, therefore, act as clues, or tells, because they arise as a person's response to external and internal stimuli. If a person is usually loud, then a change to speaking quietly will mean one thing, while if a person is ordinarily quiet it will not contain the same meaning. A high rate of talking indicates anxiety and possibly deception for a person who typically talks slowly, whereas some people simply tend to speak rapidly. Baseline allows the observer to see verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal cues in context. Baseline can be applied to dozens of communication channels, from facial expressions to gestures to eye accessing cues to word use. Each person has a unique nervous system and set of habits. It is the deviation from these habits which gives clues about our inner thoughts and feelings to an attentive observer.

Although he framed it differently, the notion of Baseline is perhaps the single most important element in Gurdjieff's theory of Objective Art. His term Inexactitude encapsulated the recognition that humans become conscious of phenomena most easily through juxtaposition. Sufficiently intense deviations from the norm elicit our attention,²⁰ perhaps because we are wired, evolutionarily speaking, to attend to threats. Just as deviations from Baseline act as "tells", or indications, Inexactitudes are the communication of information through "otherwise." His use of otherwise as a fundamental method of transmission in his writings, movements and interpersonal teaching style built on his earlier concept of Alarm Clocks and the necessity of struggling with habits as a way of becoming aware of them. One can only sense the force of the river by swimming against the current. It seems that Gurdjieff, as a studied observationalist, picked up on the notion of Baseline well ahead of everyone else.

Although instances of deviation from Baseline are helpful in giving isolated inferences, they are insufficient by themselves. In nonverbal communication theory, another important concept is that of Clusters. Clusters are related groups of behaviors or signs which point in a common direction. Mental states and emotions manifest through multiple behavioral channels such as words, intonation, and gestures. In addition, there are relatively uncontrollable signs, such as blood flow (reddening of the skin), blink rate, or generation of mucus in the mouth or fluids in the tear ducts or throat. An inner state of thought or emotion will present itself through more than one channel simultaneously and almost entirely unconsciously. Noticing this, sophisticated observational sciences have been and are being developed to understand these behaviors to make more accurate assessments.

²⁰ The question arises: why, if humans were evolutionarily wired to notice change, wouldn't we have picked up on the concept of baseline and deviations from baseline sooner than the 20th century. The answer is simply that our evolutionary hardware allowed for the perception only of coarse stimuli, whereas the subtle expressions of behavior manifested by the nervous and other systems require trained observation beyond what evolution provided for.

Human beings can only consciously pay attention to and control a very small number of behaviors at a time. The spotlight of conscious awareness can only cover a small area of the entire screen of awareness. This results in part from the limited ability our short term memory has to track objects. There are simply too many nonverbal channels for a human to consciously control them at once. For this reason, a strong baseline coupled with clusters of deviations from that baseline tend to tell an accurate story about a person's unconscious thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

The same reasonable approach applies to observation of *Beelzebub's Tales*. There are clusters of patterns, and accumulation of these data all eventually point in a particular direction. Gurdjieff is leading the student gradually, even inexorably, to certain conclusions, and in the process, training their mind how to accurately observe human behavior, whether their own or that of others.

In putting together all of Gurdjieff's indications about verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal communication, the student must, in the process, manifest the careful observation required to put that knowledge to use in the real world. Most students of the *Tales* don't study long enough to find cohesive patterns, to get "results." Commonly, we want to know why we are studying, *what we will get from it*, before we put in the work. From our point of view, if we are straightforwardly given the knowledge, we will "be able" to put it to use. Gurdjieff very astutely understood that the acquisition of knowledge without the stimulation of the effort required to attain it left students too weak to apply it in real situations. In the *Tales*, by the time the reader has gained any significant knowledge, they will begin to already feel, in their own experience, that which allows the knowledge to carry itself out in life. Inexactitudes are a help along the way.

The practice of the Work is unique not only in predating discoveries about nonverbal human behavior, but remains unique in applying it to spiritual development. Nearly all nonverbal experts use their knowledge for politics, sales, legal trials, or police interrogation. As a result, these powerful tools remain generally unconnected with spirituality and self development. The Work remains relevant in combining many forms of knowledge under the umbrella of one teaching.

Part Three: Unity and Multiplicity

Beelzebub's Tales and Self-Remembering

In Gurdjieff's early expositions of his teaching, the process of taking self-snapshots was intended to generate greater and greater self awareness. This process is very similar to Buddhism's description of mindfulness, but is unique in utilizing the psychological dimension of human awareness to develop Being. The end of self-observation was not merely the growth of intellectual self knowledge but the gradual development of self-remembering. According to Gurdjieff, as more and more of the mind, emotion, and sensation came under the impartial observation of a witnessing attention, a separation between one's Real Self and the lower self occurred.²¹ Gurdjieff described this as leading to his third state of consciousness, self-remembering. self-remembering, for Gurdjieff, was a transitional state between ordinary and Objective Consciousness.

In the *Tales*, the simultaneous attention to more than one moving line begins to produce states of concentration and states of self-remembering. *Beelzebub's Tales*, like a human being, is constructed of several dozen pendulums. It is the swing to and fro of these pendulums that produces the spontaneous havoc experienced when reading or listening. The visualization of these forces in their totality gives rise to states of attention and, later, realizations of a particular quality in ordinary circumstances. These realizations, which arise spontaneously, have been, for me, a byproduct of working with the *Tales*. As a relationship between life and the book forms, insights into the nature of conscious experience itself fundamentally alters the character of work not only with the text, but of Work on oneself and an understanding of self-observation generally. An intuitive knowing begins to arise and guide the project of understanding.

Many have commented on experiences in the Movements where in the midst of chaos it is as if a doorway opens, a sense of letting go and a freedom to *be with* everything that happens as it arises. The same possibility exists also in working with the exercises of the *Tales*. The truly difficult part is to not only have glimpses of this state, but to stimulate it regularly through intense enough practice so that more and more it becomes a part of one's way of being.

Another schema Gurdjieff used to describe the process of self development was the concept of seven types or levels of human beings: his famous Man 1-7. The primary purpose of this scheme was to connect his idea of an Exact Language with the full scope of human development through stages of Being. That is, his understanding that one's level of experience imbues the perception of knowledge with a significance and meaning difficult to express. Gurdjieff's unique use of symbolism anticipates the meanings available to humans with different levels of being. At the same time, it provides a way from one understanding to another.

Ouspensky's account failed to adequately connect these states of Being with other aspects of Gurdjieff's teaching, perhaps due to deficits in his own understanding. As a result it is hard for most students to see what the state of Man 4, 5, 6, or 7 might actually look like in real terms. It sounds so far away. To create some point of reference for Gurdjieff's "seven men" we will compare the schema with Eastern teachings of the path "to and from the Absolute", that is, enlightenment. Students of the *Tales* will notice the similarity in the broad arc of Beelzebub's journey to and away from the Sun Absolute, a metaphorical synopsis of the entirety of the reader's journey with the *Tales*.

One Eastern description of human development speaks of the Absolute and the Relative. These correspond to Gurdjieff's use of the words Unity and Multiplicity, as we will see later in his lecture on

²¹ Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p 148.

Symbolism. The first stage is the Relative: multiplicity or fragmentation of Being. The second stage is an experience of the Absolute, also called Stream Entry, which is the unification of Being, or of the merging of one's Being with the flow of life. The experience of *letting go* or of spontaneously *Being with* reality, experienced in the *Tales*, Movements, and Sittings, corresponds with these expansive states of consciousness and has varying levels of depth and permanency. The third stage, referred to as the Relative in the Absolute, refers to experiencing relative, conditioned reality from the point of view of the Absolute. One's center of gravity is, so to speak, in the Absolute, at the moment of seeing relative phenomena. The fourth stage is the Absolute in the Relative, or seeing that the Absolute is present in every aspect and at every level of the Relative, in all states of consciousness. This fourth stage represents the full blending of the two poles of reality, duality and nonduality, in a completed human being.

Gurdjieff's seven types can be placed in two categories alongside the Relative-Absolute schema. Men 1-3 as a group, Man 5, and Man 7 represent stations, stools, or resting points on the path, whereas Men 4 and 6 are states of transition.

Men 1-3 live in the Relative in a state of fragmentation. Man 4 represents the transitional phase of development toward the Absolute, where Men 1-3 struggle toward unification of the centers. Coming into harmonious balance, Man 5 dissolves into the Absolute. Man 6 represents the "coming down from the mountain", or the integration of nondual consciousness into ordinary functioning. Finally, Man number 7 is the full integration of the Absolute back into the Relative. As is said in Zen, "First there were mountains, then there were no mountains, and then there were mountains again." Another saying encapsulates the highest degree of understanding: "Ordinary mind is enlightened mind."

One can see Gurdjieff struggling to represent his understanding of the Relative and Absolute in his early diagrams. Among these, his Table of Atoms tried to demonstrate the relationship between these two poles of reality. It shows, on the one hand, an unfolding of levels of reality ("materiality") in which the initial atoms of the Absolute coagulate into separate wholes, which themselves in turn collect into further, more complex wholes. Each whole represents a different level of materiality. Although one can see that each atom appears real at its own level, at the same time it can be noticed that in fact all levels are composed of nothing but atoms of the Absolute. Each higher level participates, unseen, as part of every lower level. This and other of his diagrams act as points of contemplation which can be read with varying degrees of comprehension as being and understanding develop. Later, in *Beelzebub's Tales*, he transitioned to allegorical koans of "prime source substances" and many other such devices. Like his Table of Atoms, Gurdjieff's metaphors of Omnipresent Okidanokh and Etherokrilno are koans which both deepen experience as well as reflect the student's own understanding. We may correlate Okidanokh or Etherokrilno with other Eastern formulations for deeply unified states of consciousness such as Buddha nature, the primordial mind ground, and so on.

There are significant deficiencies in the Man 1-7 schema. Primary among these is that it fails to express the impermanence and flux of conscious experience. In reality, human beings fluctuate between states of being. Our experience spans many levels of consciousness, whether or not we have the developed taste to discern that this is so. The evolution from Man 4 to 5, 5 to 6, or 6 to 7 does not mean that humans only have one kind of experience at each stage. In reality, the same flux of states is present, while the scope of experiences perhaps expands to include new forms of awareness.

Symbolism

With a view of Gurdjieff's Men 1-7 in relation to a journey to and from the Absolute in mind, we will now explore his well known lecture on Symbolism. Connecting the *Tales* with Gurdjieff's theory of Symbolism and the transmission of Objective Consciousness grounds the student in the real intent and possibilities of his writings. This in turn allows us to understand the *Tales* proper relationship with Movements and Sitting practice.

Gurdjieff on the use of Symbolism to convey Unity and Multiplicity:

“One of the most central of the ideas of objective knowledge,” said G.,” is the idea of the unity of everything, of unity in diversity. From ancient times people who have understood the content and the meaning of this idea, and have seen in it the basis of objective knowledge, have endeavored to find a way of transmitting this idea in a form comprehensible to others. The successive transmission of the ideas of objective knowledge has always been a part of the task of those possessing this knowledge. In such cases the idea of the unity of everything, as the fundamental and central idea of this knowledge, had to be transmitted first and transmitted with adequate completeness and exactitude. And to do this the idea had to be put into such forms as would insure its proper perception by others and avoid in its transmission the possibility of distortion and corruption. For this purpose the people to whom the idea was being transmitted were required to undergo a proper preparation...”

“...”

“...objective knowledge, the idea of unity included, belongs to objective consciousness. The forms which express this knowledge when perceived by the subjective consciousness are inevitably distorted and, instead of truth, they create more and more delusion. With objective consciousness it is possible to see and feel the unity of everything. But for subjective consciousness the world is split up into millions of separate and unconnected phenomena.”

“...the idea of the unity of everything exists also in intellectual thought but in its exact relation to diversity it can never be clearly expressed in words or in logical forms. There remains always the insurmountable difficulty of language...”

“Realizing the imperfection and weakness of ordinary language the people who have possessed objective knowledge have tried to express the idea of unity in ‘myths,’ in ‘symbols,’ and in particular ‘verbal formulas’...”

“...”

“The symbols that were used to transmit ideas belonging to objective knowledge included diagrams of the fundamental laws of the universe and they not only transmitted the knowledge itself but showed also the way to it. The study of symbols, their construction and meaning, formed a very important part of the preparation for receiving objective knowledge and it was in itself a test because a literal or formal understanding of symbols at once made it impossible to receive any further knowledge.”²²

Everything he said about Symbolism, if true, would have been utilized in his writings. We can infer from Gurdjieff's remarks that the *Tales* are a series of myths and symbols, written using verbal formulas, to transmit objective knowledge in spite of the obstacles of ordinary language.²³ Much could be said about his “verbal formulas” with examples from the text. However, as mentioned before, all

²² Ibid, p 278-280

²³ I have written previously on Gurdjieff's exact language. It would be possible, with sufficient time and space, to examine the nature of his “verbal formulas”, showing that they are highly precise expressions which contain several ideas harmoniously balanced within a carefully composed sentence structure.

explanations fall short of the simultaneous perception of multiple lines and the states engendered through practice. Importantly, we can also infer that the *Tales* were intended not only to transmit without distortion but also to prepare the student for the transmission of higher knowledge. It is this “preparation” which is particularly difficult for students of the *Tales*.

By “Objective Consciousness,” Gurdjieff referred to enlightenment precisely as other Eastern teachings understand it:

“The fourth state of consciousness is called the *objective state of consciousness*. In this state a man can see things *as they are*. Flashes of this state of consciousness also occur in man. In the religions of all nations there are indications of the possibility of a state of consciousness of this kind which are called ‘enlightenment’ and various other names but which cannot be described in words.”²⁴

Understanding that Gurdjieff’s term Objective Consciousness refers to Enlightenment, and that further, Enlightenment is related to the Absolute and the Relative opens up the essential purpose of the *Tales*. We are then able to connect the Work with other traditions having the same purpose but using different methods. We can also look for the ways in which the same understandings are indicated in the Movements, where we find qualities symbolizing and developing these same aspects of reality through qualities held concurrently in the parts of the body.

In the *Tales*, Gurdjieff makes some of these connections for us, for instance, by calling the abode of ENDLESSNESS the Sun *Absolute*. He places the Sun Absolute at the top of his ladder of consciousness.²⁵ Historically, some Gurdjieffians have simply viewed his cosmology as a literal description of the arising of the Universe, rather than more practically as a kind of symbolic device or koan. The Absolute is a ubiquitous term used for Enlightenment in wisdom traditions. The term other traditions use for the state of Multiplicity is the Relative, although Gurdjieff presents this as Solar System Ors (Solar System Arse or Ass). When Gurdjieff spoke of Unity and Multiplicity therefore, he spoke of the Relative and the Absolute, and by this he meant the journey from duality to non-duality.

If the *Tales* are in fact Gurdjieff’s systematic use of Symbolism to transmit Objective Consciousness, where then are Unity and Multiplicity in the book?

In the previous section describing Lines, it was pointed out that the *Tales* are a fragmented totality. Having reached the level of dynamic metaphorical transposition, the practitioner discovers a moving, shifting mass of information which responds to their level of knowledge and attention. If the student pays close attention, with discipline and also an open mind, they will make and break connections between parts of the book in response to allusions stimulated by words and phrases. The coming forth or receding of particular meanings is entirely contingent on the practitioner’s breadth of view at the moment they are perceiving a given passage. It is critical to follow the references the author makes between passages to know how to think about Objects at any given moment. Thus, the book is not only itself fragmented, but gives the practitioner an opportunity to see their own fragmentation as they repeatedly fail to follow the narratives complex structure.

²⁴ Ibid, p 141.

²⁵ Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, p 756: “Our COMMON FATHER CREATOR ALMIGHTY, having then in the beginning changed the functioning of both these primordial sacred laws, directed the action of their forces from within the Most Holy Sun Absolute into the space of the Universe, whereupon there was obtained the what is called ‘Emanation-of-the-Sun-Absolute’ and now called, ‘Theomertmalogos’ or ‘Word-God.’”

The Relative, or level of fragmentation, is easier to perceive in Gurdjieff's writings. By contrast, the level of Unity in the book cannot possibly be described. Of course, this is precisely what people demand when it is claimed to exist. The defects of ordinary kinds of speech, its inability to convey a certain wholeness of thought, led Gurdjieff to create his exact language precisely to overcome this difficulty. Although hard to describe, it is worthwhile saying something about Unity as it can be experienced through cultivated practice with the *Tales*.

Unification proceeds along two lines in the *Tales*. On the one hand, the reader, just in the act of paying complete attention, unifies the mind. The absolute requirement for total concentration at every moment of the narrative itself has an effect that continues to act beyond practice with the book. With the layering of additional threads in the story, more and more of the practitioner's mind is absorbed into the exercise, deepening the state further. Every practitioner will have multiple associations in operation at any given time as they attempt to pay attention. Gurdjieff understood that the reader would have multiple associations in operation at any given time as they tried to pay attention.²⁶ By requiring the reader to put these multiple flowing associations to conscious use as part of an overarching exercise, Gurdjieff ensured a relationship between the different parts of the mind would develop. Each thread of attention folded into the exercises carries some trace amount of being with it. Gurdjieff masterfully brings these separate parts into relationship in the present moment, coaxing them into greater and greater wholeness, all the while respecting the attention's tendency to manifest a need for movement and the mind's predisposition to represent events in space and time. For there to be a felt effect, the critical caveat is that this attention must be produced regularly as a disciplined practice by the student. The more these states are felt, the more the student understands how to self-cultivate through study of *Beelzebub's Tales*.

On the other hand, unification proceeds by way of understanding his symbols' actual meanings. In each story, a series of superficially separate Objects create the sense of a concrete scenario. Characters interact with other characters, create inventions, and at certain times and places, forming chains of apparently discrete events. However, each Object (character, place, thing, or event) has Modifiers connecting it to Lines running through the book. The Lines themselves form contexts which transform the meaning of the Object depending on which lens is used to examine it. To the extent the student "holds" these Lines in precarious balance, they will perceive any particular Object as representing now one, now another, meaning. At some moment in this combinatorial process, the consideration of two Objects adjacent to one another in a given story, because of their individual points of contact with other *Tales*, causes them to spontaneously merge. *They represent the same thing*. The efforts of a Character and his process of inventing some device is in fact symbolized by the description of the device itself. He invented himself. His process of understanding was the process of understanding himself understanding himself. Metaphors, once transformed, are just heaps of the same thing on top of itself, but divided against itself in such a way as to produce a confused separateness. Only the metaphorical housing, usually engineered to demonstrate some form of cognitive bias or other reality distortion, causes them to appear disconnected.

²⁶ Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales*, p 15:

"This kind of people...have not the slightest notion and have probably never even heard of the screamingly obvious fact that, during the preparatory age, there is acquired in the brain functioning of every creature, and of man also.....a particular and definite property...called the "law of association," and that the process of the mentation of every creature, especially man, flows exclusively in accordance with this law.

"In view of the fact that I have happened here accidentally to touch upon a question which has lately become one of my so to speak "hobbies," namely, the process of human mentation..."

Amazingly, Gurdjieff offers Unity at the very same time he demonstrates the impediments in consciousness which refract it into Multiplicity.

Gurdjieff's masterful creation of scenarios, in which a practitioner must perform some feat of attention, itself sufficient to garner a special state of concentration, only by that very act to connect information in such a way that superficially distinct metaphors collapse into a unity, is unparalleled. It is this level of mastery, so rare and of such fragility to hold, which allows us to call his writings Sacred. The process ensures that Unity is found both through Being and through knowledge.

That a truly "exact" language, that is, a special form of language transmitting Unity by means of both effort and content, takes the form of a seemingly inchoate mass of absurdities is an inconvenience worth weathering for students of the Gurdjieff's teaching. If we can't be troubled to take the time to assimilate Gurdjieff's writings, which place all possibilities of understanding within reach, how can we be sure we will carry out that same work under ordinary, practical conditions?

Part Four: Conclusion

Gurdjieff's writings contain his entire understanding. Of these writings, *Beelzebub's Tales* is the greatest in length, the most abstruse and involved in terms of content, and, importantly, the only series published during his lifetime. His book is not merely a series of negative opinions about humanity, but a profound path containing all levels of reality. That it has been transformed largely into a ritual without understanding is a grievous loss. There is a need to completely rethink Gurdjieff's teaching, both in its parts and as a whole.

For one thing, we have material available to us, for instance in the *Tales* and other accounts of the Work, which Gurdjiffian culture at large has not fully assimilated. Sufficiently dogmatic assumptions around the book's ineffability have accumulated that most Gurdjieffians can hardly begin anew. In this paper, we have explored some material from Ouspensky's record to help open "new" ideas about the *Tales* which are in fact the original ideas upon which his text is based. In any case, a common sense reinterpretation of Gurdjieff's written Legominism is in order.

To begin with, in this paper we have shown examples of Gurdjieff's record of the process of self-observation, his Man 1-7 scheme of human development, and his lectures on Symbolism. Hopefully, some sense of the *Tales* role in communicating the same teaching came through. We answered the difficult question of why much of Gurdjieff's teaching didn't make it into the *Tales*: it did, but in a form accessible only through effort. The efforts are not for effort's sake but rather to ensure a quality of being is present in the final apprehension of meaning.

To truly capture the truths available in works from the past such as the *Tales* has practical requirements. Time allotment is key: *the Tales takes time*. Why wouldn't it? The moment a reader truly squares off with the book they quickly realize the immensity of the project. One should assume a fifteen year arc of dedicated work. For most, this is enough to send them running. Worse than a lack of guidance, most have precisely the wrong guidance: that the mind should be uninvolved in the process. Repeating myself, *this is akin to leaving the body out of the Movements*. In terms of practice sessions, density of effort is crucial. Establishing a line, adding another, and another, requires highly focused conditions.

Of course, common sense tells us the *Tales* should not be practiced in isolation from other aspects of the teaching. By themselves, the *Tales* do not generate sensation. Sitting and feeling the body intimately releases awareness and intuition in a way that the *Tales* never will. This is why Beelzebub admonishes Hasein to connect his consciousness with his unconscious parts every morning as a corollary practice. There are instructions in the *Tales* regarding the practice of sensation which are unknown in the Work. Movements, which have been falsely touted to be the only three-centered practice in the Work, are nonetheless incredibly supportive in bringing the embodiment of the sittings into activity. They also contain a teaching of self-observation which mutually fulfills that contained in the *Tales*. Integrative study of Gurdjieff's Writings, Sittings, and Movements, not discussed in depth in this paper, reveals a world of exploration. We are at a time when this totality, thanks to the generous sharing of a few key individuals, is available enough to begin to see how the parts of Gurdjieff's teaching relate to each other and to the whole of the tradition.

“And only then can my hope be actualized that according to your understanding you will obtain the specific benefit for yourself which I anticipate, and which I wish for you with all my being.”²⁷

²⁷ Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales*, from “Friendly Advice”, p vi.

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