

OCTOBER GATHERING 2016 ~ FRIDAY MORNING, FIRST SESSION

READING FROM "FORM AND SEQUENCE"

"When at the beginning of our journey I noticed that you were very interested in the three-brained beings of the planet Earth, I then decided, under the aspect of gratifying that interest of yours, to tell you everything about them in such a way so that there should be crystallized in you for your future being-associations the required what are called 'Egoplastikoori', without any admixture of doubt.

"For this, I have in almost all my tales strictly held to the two following principles:

"The first: not to say anything as if it were my own personal opinion, in order that data necessary for your own convictions should not be crystallized in you in a prepared form according to the opinions of another.

"And in accordance with the second principle: to relate to you in just such an order and in such a premeditated and selected sequence about all the events which proceeded on this planet Earth connected with the arising among these three-brained beings who have taken your fancy, of various gradually progressing inner and outer abnormalities in the process of their ordinary being-existence, the total of which has given them their present desolate and almost inescapable state—in order that you should be able to marshal your own subjective reasoning concerning all causes, only on the basis of certain facts which I have told you.

"I decided to do this in order that many diversely essenced 'Egoplastikooris' for your future logical confrontation should be crystallized in corresponding localizations in your common presence, and also in order that from active mentation the proper elaboration in you of the sacred substances of Abrustdonis and Helkdonis for the purpose of coating and perfecting both of your higher being-parts should proceed more intensively.¹

PARTICIPANT: My relationship to the book seems to be constantly changing. It's a real mystery to me how I can pick that book up, read a portion of it and I may come back to that again at a later date and it's like I never read it before. There is always a new aspect of it for me. A majority of it I do not understand at all. It's only when I am with a group like this who has a sincere desire to plumb some deeper knowledge, a deeper understanding of it, that I begin to have an opening, a small one that I might understand a little more about it. It's not overwhelming but it feels like I will spend the rest of my life trying to understand what is there for me. With everyone else's help, it feel like there will be some result.

KEITH: To continue the story a little bit further because there also comes this point in *The Tales* where Hassein suddenly has his own experience, when he does see and he does dedicate himself in a certain direction. That is also something I would like to get impressions about. What is Gurdjieff trying to give us picture of here when Hassein makes this commitment on his own part? What does this mean?

1 G.I. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales*, pp 1165-1166

PARTICIPANT: I hold this picture of Joseph Campbell relative to myth and I see *Beelzebub* as that. It is a mythical piece of work not only to serve us but to serve our times in the way that Campbell talks about the power and the purposive of myth. Particularly, where he mentions in our time today, we don't have a myth and the consequences of that. But Campbell says that there are four purposes to myth: to reconcile us to life and I think of the Trogoautoegocrat, I eat because I am eaten, that relentless nature of this-is-how-things-are and I think of his admonition to read it three times. The first reading is kind of that reconciliation—this is the way we are, this is the way our inner world is and to reconcile ourselves to that.

The second and the third [purposes of myth] Campbell illustrates are the social. I often think of that in terms of group work or working with others. And then there is the personal which he refers to as the ethical.

And then there is the pedagogical, the fourth is educational that can draw something out of me—the meaning of education is to “draw out.” There can be my experiencing if there is a resonance between the stories that Beelzebub is articulating to his grandson. If there is an experience within me that can resonate with that, it draws something out of me in that moment then I can track that; I have the possibility to plumb the depths of that more to whatever degree is possible given the attention I can hold. The story grows or takes on greater meaning or greater understanding so I oftentimes hold that when I think of Beelzebub and *The Tales*.

KEITH: Anybody have any impressions: why the grandson?

Here is this young being and his father and his uncle are already accomplished beings—one returning to Karatas to eventually become the chief mentor for the whole of Karatas and the other goes to Purgatory to become the organizer of all information that flows in from all over the Universe and he becomes the chief of the communications center.

And here is the grandson, so how does that strike you?

It is an interesting circumstance when I think of it because I treasure my two grandfathers. It was unfortunate that both of my grandmothers died before I was born but I had a very close relationship, especially with one grandfather, but I had a good relationship with the other as well. There are so many things, as I grow older, I remember that I learned from them; if not from what they said but from how they were, the kind of human beings they appeared to me to be, what they brought into my world.

So I wondered about that because my father is my father and he was an extraordinary important person in my life but how do I put my father in the position of going back to Karatas or serving on Purgatory, but it is my grandfather who is my teacher. As a grandson, how do I experience that? How do you take that when you are reading *The Tales* and then you suddenly realize that Hassein has something to do with me then how do I see myself in context of the grandfather?

PARTICIPANT: I've always taken it personally, that I do have a connection with Gurdjieff. I didn't meet him, he is my grandfather kind of thing where he's telling something to the future people in the Work who might not have actually got to meet him. I can sense that his Reason is higher than mine. When I am reading *The Tales*, it almost always influences me in that way where Gurdjieff's Reason power affects me as I am receptive to it and a new level arises in me that allows me to act.

PARTICIPANT: It seems to me that there is the potential for greater objectivity between a grandfather and a grandson. There isn't that conflict of power or intimidation that can go with the father. For the grandfather, it is much more relaxed. It's not my kid; my parenting isn't the issue in an ordinary sense.

I think about the people who were close enough to be Gurdjieff's pupils and what a mixed blessing that was. I don't have the sense of obligation to be like him; I didn't have him as a direct model or to transmit what he gave me exactly as he gave it to me because he didn't give it to me. So in a way, I think the burden for the first generation is different. They couldn't be as objective. And since Gurdjieff says that the Work must change to live and not become repetitive or mechanical or parroting, because we didn't have direct contact with him, inevitably, it's going to come through us differently. There is a potential for more freedom, for a different kind of expression in later generations because we don't have that burden that it can actually be a part of our lives. So there is the danger of more and more wisecracking but there is also the possibility, for those whom the Work comes alive inside, to pass it on in variations that might be more appropriate to the changing times.

KEITH: These are very good points.

PARTICIPANT: There is something about how one's parents, they educate one's personality but there is a vision of people who are closer to death. It has always struck me that it the Chinese grandparents that raise the children. When you started to speak about it, it stuck me there is a direct connection of older people with something more essential. Like that part of me, there are essential parts of me that bypass personality. I never had grandparents but it always touched me when people almost universally speak about having grandchildren or having grandparents in a very certain way as you did this morning.

PARTICIPANT: This kind of echoes what people have said but for me it is like Gurdjieff speaking to our Higher Emotional Center in the sense that parents stimulate one's reactive nature, like the body and feeling and thoughts, but with my grandfather, I feel I could be able to hear him from Higher Emotional Center. When I first picked up *Beelzebub's Tales* and read it, I felt Gurdjieff was speaking to part of me which has rarely ever been communicated to in my life and that was what came alive for me, which had been pretty much ignored apart from having grandparents growing up but that part had never been communicated to explicitly through language.

KEITH: This strikes a real chord with me. I wondered often why I have this feeling that joined *Beelzebub's Tales* with one of my grandfathers, for no reason in ordinary life. My grandfather was a hard-shelled Baptist, very quiet, a hard worker, a carpenter but he was gentle with me, always and his correction was almost always indirect. He never spoke like my Father did. The immediate parents are corrective through the personality most often, through what we do and what we say... "Don't say this and do that." My grandfather was never like this. I've tried a few times to find out why do I have this feeling and you just articulated it very well that there is something in the essence of my grandfather that resonated with Beelzebub, with that perspective of Beelzebub. But I never figured it out logically; I never saw that so that was a help.

PARTICIPANT: My father had a very stressful childhood with his siblings. His father was a strong German. And I certainly have my memory with my Dad and how that evolved and

my own patterns pertaining to my father. But I witnessed his interaction with my two nieces and I could see that he was given a second chance. [With me], he was operating under the Reason-of-knowing, what he knew, the education that his father passed down to him and it wasn't education, it was very limited, he just didn't have the tools. By the time he got to my nieces, it gave him a second chance. Life had changed for him; his emotions had settled, there was more of a feeling. I was just with my two nieces and the memories they have of my father are very heartfelt. And the stories I hear about Mr. Gurdjieff, that the methodology changed as he got older and, as the groups changed, so did the interaction. At the Prieuré there was more shock and driving and when that period ended, it seemed like he had a more being quality. That's being simplistic but they did change.

PARTICIPANT: Yes this is very helpful, especially about the essence of the child. Another aspect also is that Beelzebub invites Hassein to ask him questions; he helps his questions evolve to the point where Hassein has something of his own. I feel reading *The Tales* that when I don't understand, that if I continue to ask and to persevere, that more will be given.

For example, I've always wondered, why does he say to Hassein, in the chapter "Form and Sequence," he will not give Hassein his opinions but the preceding chapters are all 'opinion' chapters ("...Beelzebub's Opinion of War" "In the opinion of Beelzebub, Man's Understanding of Justice..." "In the Opinion of Beelzebub, Man's Extraction of Electricity...")? One thing I had never noticed was that he said, "... not to say anything *as if* it were my own personal opinion..."²

To me, that is an acknowledgment that, indeed, all these things he has given to Hassein are his opinions but he has presented them in a way that Hassein can form his own opinion. This question I have been carrying has now been expanded.

KEITH: This is a great parallel to an experience we had with Mrs. Popoff. In the early time with Mrs. P, she was very careful whenever she started speaking about something that she qualified what she said. She said, "in my opinion" and she would say what she was going to say. So everybody, as is perfectly normal, began to imitate her. When they were asked to report on something or share an impression, they would say, "in my opinion." And this went on for some period of time. And then she blew up on this one occasion, "Of course, it's your opinion, who's else is it going to be???" And then she just gave us this opportunity to see, of course, it is our opinion; it is her opinion also. So why did you take it from me and just prattle on and imitate? It is like that. Suddenly you realize this is Gurdjieff's opinion all the time; this is not playing games, this is the real stuff.

However, along with that he says, you have to test it for yourself. This is the other side of the coin. Being human beings, as soon as we open our mouth, we are giving an opinion. We can't say anything without having to frame it in some way or other and that's going to be always framed as my opinion, that is how I enter this event so, of course we have recognize that but also we have to digest that and come to our own opinion as he admonishes his grandson to do, to come to his own opinion of these circumstances. But that was Mrs. P's approach to giving us a very strong lesson.

PARTICIPANT: I have a daughter and a grandson and we haven't been very close as she lives a distance away. I want to make an effort with my grandson as Beelzebub did.

[a fair amount of skipping in this part of the recording]

² Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales*, p 1165

KEITH: That you are trying to address that question, I think that's the essential part. It is there to be healed and that's the challenge.

PARTICIPANT: Gurdjieff's respect for the good customs. Today we see there are many cultures with a council of elders.

KEITH: Gurdjieff was complementary of customs and the specific customs he makes mention of. How do you understand the word "Egoplastikoori?"

PARTICIPANT: That is his being-efforts.

KEITH: Any other impressions of Egoplastikoori? After all, this is a three-brained event; Beelzebub says I want you to do the work of understanding not to have it pre-packaged.

PARTICIPANT: From *Beelzebub's Tales*:

"I decided to do this in order that many diversely essenced 'Egoplastikooris' for your future logical confrontation should be crystallized in corresponding localizations in your common presence, and also in order that from active mentation the proper elaboration in you of the sacred substances of Abrustdonis and Helkdonis for the purpose of coating and perfecting both of your higher being-parts should proceed more intensively.³

On page 331 he defines 'being-ego-plastikuri' as 'psychic-picturings.'

KEITH: In their construction they have to have the 'elementalness' from which Helkdonis and Abrustdonis can be extracted. All I am saying is that it can't be a story about a snowstorm or what the weather is today, that's not what he is talking about. He is talking about something in the story that is gained in the arena of higher emotion, to be extracted from this and digested from it.

And the same with Helkdonis—something that can be seen, understood, something that can be taken from this that it is a model of, if you will, that you can learn from and this will increase your Reason. So there are both of those features that have to be put into it to begin with. In other words, they have to be part of the Egoplastikooris, part of the shaping of this.

PARTICIPANT: When a moment occurs to me when there seems to be a flash of understanding, I've come to be able to distinguish between an intellectual association, something I've read or heard from the association to actual prescient experience in the past. So there is then the remembrance or in a way reliving of the sensation, feeling, thinking something real. I've come to understand, for me, that those experiences resonate in three places because what is happening inside is some kind of representation of that.

KEITH: True, right.

PARTICIPANT: Then there is real understanding, understanding what it tastes like, feels like; it's not a thought, it's a connection between real events, real experiences.

KEITH: It just occurred to me one of the building blocks, if you will, or the background for the Egoplastikoori; we could take the descents. Take the first descent and the story about young kinsman and all the difficulties and the final resolution. That's a story. What can be

3 Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales*, P 1165

extracted from that, we could ask ourselves, that is of the nature of Abrustdonis? We could talk about that quite a bit.

And then, Helkdonis. What do we learn from it; that this is the way the world is; this is the way the world has to be put back together again or however we see that. But then we can go to the second descent and now we have his interaction with this poor priest and what a picture that is, what a marvelous Egoplastikoori that has so many dimensions that are highly emotional, highly physical and also involve an understanding or lack of understanding or limited understanding in all the implications that the story line carries that certainly from which could be extracted Abrustdonis and Helkdonis, a degree of emotional understanding of higher emotion and of higher intellect.

PARTICIPANT: There is a quality of “been there, done that.”

KEITH: There is also that, yes, exactly.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, I see the young kinsman; I’ve been in that situation; I’ve been in that situation—the apes, yes. So all of those resonate—oh, that’s about me.

KEITH: Right, that is the point I was aiming for, that each of these Egoplastikooris is a story, but he chooses elements and he puts that story together in such a way that there is a real treasure here of Higher Emotional sort and Higher Reason and it is up to us to extract it, to see far enough into that—to suddenly see, yes, this is what he is talking about, this is in my life too, as you point out, we have all been there. We have lived through it, “oh, boy, I remember that; in fact I fell into it yesterday again.”

PARTICIPANT: Many years ago sharing an experience at a meeting of relating how I reacted to much of the literal baggage that my wife had from her travels in Japan. Where we were living, we always had to move it around; it was in the way. One time, just throwing something to the point where I broke something that had great significance for her. I remember relating that event at a meeting and you turned and you said, “now you must always work with that.” Over the years, any time I now pick something up that is hers, there is that remembrance and there is that moment of opportunity; something is there to treat that object, piece of clothing, whatever it may be, shoes, something that is laying around, it’s been there all that time. Each moment, there is something that can be stretched further.

So when I think of Egoplastikooris, it molded into something over the years within me that created that kind of thread through time. It is a real blessing.

KEITH: Yes. This tells us something very important and you can continue to elaborate on that about the nature of Abrustdonis in this case. It is not a one-time thing. It is something that goes into the essence. It then with us forever, it becomes our possession because we have understood something; it is not knowing, it is *understanding* something. So, go on.

PARTICIPANT: Yes and in that moment there is just that gift of the opportunity to stretch a little further into the emotional connection, to be present with that in that space. It resonates with the time you also, years ago, recommended going to Al-Anon. I remember sharing some experiences at Al-Anon the difficulties I had with my father’s alcoholism and I’ll never forget the moment when one of the women in the group said well it’s kind of like where you don’t reach a point where you reconcile to—every moment that you have to wake up to that addiction or that space that you are in. In that moment, there is a real emotional response and new possibilities that could happen in my next step and it’s not a given; it doesn’t become

mechanical but now into kind of like the emotional experience is there that I have an opportunity to think deeper into what I do with that and what I project into her life.

KEITH: So that the Abrustdonis begins to feed Helkdonis, into the higher intellect as well.

PARTICIPANT: I'd like to offer three examples of humor, thinking about how Beelzebub is training Hasein. My grandfather was Irish and the Irish have a gift. Something that stuck with me is his delivery of things that he would say.

He said to me, "What do you think you want to do for a living?" and I said I wanted to be a musician. He said, "I don't think you have what it takes." On the substance and content you would get one meaning but his expression was wry. And so the effect was a paradox; I had to internalize and ponder the question.

The second example is of this guy, a man, who was responsible for the careers of hundreds and hundreds of people and he had a thing that he said to people. And he had a thing that he said to people. He would say, "It's my opinion and it should be yours." And you notice that people laugh when you say that which shows that humor is paradoxical.

What is the conflict in there that creates that laughing and what is the inherent truth? Cognitive dissonance is another name for it. He is saying you are entitled to your own opinion but it should be the same as mine, so it's not really your own. It's funny because the ridiculousness of that position to be in is close to the truth that we are gullible. And he sets up a confrontation that then sits inside.

The third example is in *The Tales*, where, time after time, Beelzebub has an expression that Hasein can't figure out; we never exactly figure out what it means. And sometimes this is followed by something Gurdjieff wants to emphasize. This kind of humor appears throughout *The Tales*. And I would take that also as the hypnotic effect of double messages that Milton Ericson identified. For example Ericson watched his family say one thing and expressing another with their body, which sets up cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance using, not in this case humor necessarily but possibly conflict; the reaction is anger but the effect is similar to that of humor. The former retains the charge and the latter dissipates it.