

JG BENNETT

TALKS ON  
BEELZEBUB'S  
TALES







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JG Bennett



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Compiled by Anthony Blake from the unpublished  
writings and talks of John G. Bennett.

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John Godolphin Bennett, 1973

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“Someone asks him a question about the publication of *Beelzebub’s Tales*. He speaks of his writings, and says that they are his soldiers. With them he will make war against the old world. The old world must be destroyed in order that a new world may be born. His writings will make many friends but they will also make many enemies. When they are published, he will disappear. Perhaps he will not return. We protest that we cannot work without him. If he disappears, we will follow him. He smiles and says, ‘perhaps you will not find me.’”

—JG Bennett

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“The only way to approach Gurdjieff’s masterpiece is to enter into its creative nature, which is to discover new things at every turn. Attempts to rationalize and explain the book are tantamount to taming a wild animal—fine for circuses but not for anyone who loves nature. Bennett is someone who has responded in a right way.”

—Anthony Blake

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## FOREWORD

The *Prologue*, which opens this book, as the *Epilogue* that closes it, was written by JG Bennett in 1950 to introduce a series of writings on the ideas of Mr. Gurdjieff, which also included "A Study: Gurdjieff's *All and Everything*." These circulated amongst people in Bennett's groups but were never published. Their origin goes back to the year before, 1949, the period just before Mr. Gurdjieff died. Bennett described it as follows:

"In 1949, Mr. Gurdjieff was living in Paris and his pupils were visiting him from all parts of the world. By far the largest contingent came from England, principally from the three groups led by Jane Heap, Kenneth Walker, and myself. I used to go as often as possible to Paris, and once a week held meetings at Denison House near Victoria Station for those who could not get to Paris. At that time, Mr. Gurdjieff spoke of coming to London and said that if he came, he expected the pupils to be familiar with *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. We therefore held weekly public readings of the book.

"I told him that many had asked me to help them to understand the difficult words and even more difficult ideas in the book. He said that I should do so as well as I could, because he would be able to say what he wanted only to people who had thoroughly studied *Beelzebub's Tales*."

In June and July of 1949, Bennett gave six lectures just before he went to Paris for a prolonged stay, three months before Gurdjieff's death. Bennett began preparing these lectures for publication as late as 1973:

“... in spite of the development of my own understanding since they were given. At that time, I was in almost weekly contact with Gurdjieff and very much under the influence of the many talks I had with him about his works and his plans for the future.”

Bennett's project was abandoned; and this compilation represents what might have been.

“I was so deeply impressed by the extraordinary and powerful ideas of *Beelzebub's Tales* that I expected that when published they would make an instant appeal to those who throughout the world were searching for new concepts of God, the World and Man. In the event, the book that appeared about a year after these lectures made little impact outside the circle of those already interested in Gurdjieff's ideas. The book is too hard for the ordinary reader to take, and yet its message is for everyone.”

Approaching the end of his life while teaching at The International Academy for Continuous Education, at Sherborne in Gloucestershire, Bennett gave many talks on the meaning of *Beelzebub's Tales* and luckily most of these were recorded. Some of these talks have been incorporated into this collection. The material spans almost twenty-five years, from 1950 until his death in 1974. The book is in six parts, for convenience arranged under the headings of Prologue, History, Cosmology, Cosmogony, Work, and Reality. The sequence of these sections is intended to correspond to a progression from general overview to practical method and from the prospect of superhuman intelligence to our acts in daily life. Cosmology is basically “the law of three” and cosmogony, “the law of seven.” Those interested in the “difficult words” Gurdjieff invented\* can track Bennett's interpretations from the index of this book.

What follows are some of my reflections now thirty years after this collection of essays was published, about which I can paraphrase Bennett's own remarks about *Beelzebub* and say: “These essays made little impact even within the circle of those already interested in Bennett's ideas.” Such is progress.

### **Reflections**

When I first came across *Beelzebub's Tales*, I was astonished. The words seemed to have a direct conveyance of meaning and, as I read

\* See, Nicolas Tereshchenko. *Mister Gurdjieff's Hapax Legomena*.

parts of the first chapter, “The Arousing of Thought,” I felt I was hearing the voice of the author and also the voice of consciousness itself. I did not need to “try to understand” what the words meant, because they acted directly. But sitting down by oneself and reading through the whole thing is not so easy. I was lucky in being around John Bennett who was able to pick up on threads and illuminate them, bringing them into the realm of possible dialogue rather than instruction. He also introduced me and many others to the experience of *Beelzebub’s Tales* read aloud. I was not present when he underwent his marathon reading of the whole book with four hours on and four hours off, but had many chances to hear him read passages from it. At Sherborne, it was read through in hourly sessions before dinner and later, after Bennett’s death, this wonderful duty fell to me. Later, I embarked on making a series of recordings from the book (still to be completed).

Gurdjieff’s own advice to the reader was first, to read it like anything else, then to read it (as if) aloud and only then, finally, to grapple with its meaning. Reading aloud does something to the reader. In many ways, it is almost impossible to do correctly, as sentences elaborate into complex clauses, interweaving, replete with neologisms, and barely an allowance to take breath. Reading aloud is important because the reader has to use his body and breath and attention, giving them wholly over to the text. There would seem to be no time or space free to “understand” the text; its sheer performance taking all one can give. However, it is just under those conditions that some other kind of attention, some perception from eternity, comes into play.

This “perception from eternity” is won through physical effort. I believe it is the source of mythological thinking. Bennett, like Denis Saurat, quickly recognized that *Beelzebub’s Tales* was an *original* mythological text, a revelation of a kind that could only be entered into if the shell of conditioned thinking were ruptured and the reader willing to give rather than to take. According to Gurdjieff, air and breath are our “second being food” and the sacrifice of this in reading aloud his text is an ancient thing.

As a mythological text it speaks to the unconscious, to feelings and images, in spite of being made of words. It speaks to what one knows but does not know that one knows. Gurdjieff’s expressed wish was that *Beelzebub* would become an inspiration for artists in the future. He turned away from the “scientific” sounding expositions that Ouspensky faithfully recorded in *In Search of the Miraculous* and practiced what he preached—that understanding needed the whole of us: body, heart and mind. *Beelzebub* is written so that real intelli-

gence can awaken: the intelligence that is equally scientific and artistic, religious and skeptical, verbal and psychological. The Tales were also known as *All and Everything*, but Bennett told us that they were one time known by the even more profound title of *All of Everything*. This is, of course, the essential nature of mythology, which is not just “making things up” but expressing a vision from the all or whole of everything. As Bennett points out, this is only possible through a great passion: only someone torn out of himself can allow the all of everything to come through.

I mentioned the comments that Denis Saurat made about *Beelzebub* and these are worth at least some exemplification here, since they constitute some of the most insightful ever made. Denis Saurat was a professor of literature at the Sorbonne and made extensive studies of French and English poets, but with a vision that saw a deeply running current of wisdom almost entirely beneath the surface of “educated” consciousness. Two of his books, *Gods of the People* and *Death and the Dreamer* are constantly with me and directly concern this “underground current.” Though never a “follower” *per se* of Gurdjieff (and this is highly significant because in some sense those who were close to Gurdjieff could be seen as somewhat “blinded” by him) he corresponded with Stanley Nott and Louis Pauwels about *Beelzebub's Tales*. These letters are available to the public and necessary reading for any student of Gurdjieff's masterwork. I cannot resist quoting from them.\*

Before the book was published, on reading the manuscript, Saurat first wrote to Nott:

“Thank you for allowing me to see it. It is, in my opinion, a great book and it is a thousand pities that it cannot be published. There is a very great amount of wisdom and knowledge in it and, as I became more familiar with it I realized that practically every page is full of sense and information. Beyond some excusable mannerisms and the peculiarities that give charm to every author, I see nothing in the book that could be objected to. But no doubt its allegorical or philosophical meaning, which is easy enough to someone who has studied the traditions, would be completely beyond the public. I am glad to say that I found no difficulties in the book. It is a work of art in the first magnitude in its own peculiar way. ...

“If only it were possible, as I do not think it is, it would give me the greatest pleasure to give a course of lectures to

\* Full texts can be found at <http://www.gurdjieff-bibliography.com>

explain the book according to my lights. Of course, you will realize that every commentator would have his own way of explaining the book.”

Later, after its publication, he wrote to Louis Pauwels:

“Nothing much may happen in our time. We are in too much of a hurry.

“We have no sense of real time in the West. Perhaps in fifty, or a hundred years a group of key men will read it. They will say, ‘This is what we’ve been looking for,’ and on an understanding of it, may start a movement which could raise the level of civilization. ....

“*All and Everything* is a critical study of certain fundamental points of our civilization, and of our ways of thinking. If we could understand the book it would be of immense value, but that is the great difficulty.”

I have to speak here as just myself, an ordinary person, but one who has been touched by the mystery so powerfully evoked by Gurdjieff’s life and writings. What I can say might well appear as so much obscuration of the keen light that Bennett brings to bear in his talks. I’ve never found *Beelzebub* particularly “difficult.” It is much less so than *Finnegan’s Wake*, for example, or even Heidegger’s writings. It appears difficult only when one tries to “understand” the text solely with one’s mind. In his chapter on Religion, Gurdjieff is at pains to elaborate why it is that people have become largely unable to understand sacred texts such as the Gospels and, in particular, that this is due to the fact that:

“... their being mentation began to proceed without any participation of the functioning of their what is called ‘localizations of feeling,’ or according to their terminology, ‘feeling center,’ chiefly in consequence of which this mentation of theirs finally became automatized.” (*Beelzebub’s Tales*, p. 739).

The very idea that it is not possible to understand without the “participation” of feeling is only now just beginning to be entertained and remains largely ignored and rejected in practice. Once one begins to allow feeling to play an equal part with thought, one begins to see that the text is generating an actual experience in reading it: it is not simply “about” something but is working in oneself.

In the first part of this book, Bennett draws attention also to the essential role of *sensation*. No matter how far-flung the discourse, there is always some concrete phenomenon involved. He cites the



surreal episode of the tooth knocked from a boy's mouth revealing the cosmic law of seven. In ordinary "respectable" discourse, "important" ideas are talked about importantly—but this misses the point. Without the unique, concrete, and specific, nothing can be understood and one is left with generalities with *no substance*. Gurdjieff was and remains the master of expressing ideas in a way that they can be understood only through "working on oneself." He understood that *reading* in the sense of understanding—that is, of fusing knowledge and being—was not to be taken for granted as automatically guaranteed. Reading is thought of as purely "mental" but as such is incapable of giving anything to us as embodied human beings. In Gurdjieff's terms, reading requires transubstantiation: a chemical action in us. This is produced by "work on oneself," a Gurdjieffian term that is widely misunderstood as exerting effort.

What I understand by true work on oneself is participation in an action involving all three centers. In this book, Bennett comments on Gurdjieff's idea of *djartklom*—when the three impulses of a triad separate. These, then, "strive to reblend" in an *action*. First, separate; then, allow reblending. Gurdjieff's text blows us apart so that we can come back together in a new form. This coming back together "makes" understanding. Here we can see how Gurdjieff is totally holistic, but in a precise sense. Of course, it is highly disturbing to most people to contemplate undergoing such a disruption and synthesis "just" in order to read. It exemplifies Gurdjieff's idea of "intentional suffering," which does not mean making oneself miserable but *allowing* an action in oneself that can create a new perception.

The methodology of three centers exemplifies Gurdjieff's central principle of the "law of three" and one can hardly do better than read Bennett's explanations in this book, especially on *harnelmatznel*. As he points out, the "law of three" illuminates why it is that forces for change and improvement get nowhere and often make things worse. Gurdjieff himself makes it absolutely plain by stating that the idea of good and evil is the most pernicious in human life. It is tantamount to insanity. He creates the character Makary Kronbernkzion to highlight this, a sacred individual of good will who nevertheless brought immense harm upon humanity by the invention of this idea and languishes upon the Holy Planet Purgatory until its effects can be ameliorated.

The prospect of higher individuals making mistakes recurs throughout the book. In this, Gurdjieff takes the old idea of "fallen angels" to new heights. The idea that Satan is essential to the workings of the divine is to be found in most esoteric traditions; but Gurdjieff exhibits this idea in a multitude of ways from the perspective of the law of three, as an essential principle. Of course, part of

this approach is simply to give us a “shock” by turning received wisdom on its head; but he also constantly suggests that there is a way out, or that redemption is possible. His main character, Beelzebub, is banished to the solar system because of transgressions in his youth but by his labors over millennia in studies of the “strange three-brained beings of the planet earth” he redeems himself in the end.

Writing this foreword in 2006, I must at least mention the publication earlier this year of the *Gospel of Judas*, a text that largely confirms Gurdjieff’s account of this special disciple of Christ. According to Gurdjieff, Judas was the wisest and best of the disciples, the one who sacrificed himself to help fulfill Christ’s mission. Bennett went even further in his book *The Masters of Wisdom*\* to claim that it was Judas who was the “lamb” who “took away the sins of the world.”

There is much in *Beelzebub’s Tales* about ancient, religious, and recent history and people wonder whether it is to be taken “literally.” Bennett spent a great deal of time in researching human history and believed that Gurdjieff’s stories were far more “historical” than they might first appear. In his Second Series of Writings, Gurdjieff recounts his astonishment on reading the story of Gilgamesh, which was only translated from the cuneiform at the end of the nineteenth century, because it confirmed the accuracy of the oral version he had heard from his father, who was an *ashok* or bard. The stories, songs, and monuments from ancient times carry very old information of surprising accuracy over so long a time and scholars, concerned almost exclusively with written texts, have only recently begun to take them seriously. One of the most important books of the twentieth century was *Hamlet’s Mill* (G. de Santillana and H. von Dechend, authors), which was one of the first to start to “decode” myth to reveal early astronomical knowledge *on a global scale* and also to articulate myth as a method of transmitting knowledge to future generations.

Gurdjieff returns again and again to history as centrally concerned with humanity, or at least some small group of it, coming to some understanding or knowledge of the true situation on earth and having this lost through some natural or man made catastrophe. A total realist, he considered such real knowledge as precariously held, not least because it required a corresponding “ableness” on the part of people to make use of it. In his Russian period, he declared that “there is no progress whatsoever”: whenever there has been a period of genuine learning, it has been followed by some war or disruption that led to its destruction. Gurdjieff’s chapter on War, one of those chapters that Bennett mentions, is a unique contribution to our

\* See, JG Bennett, *The Masters of Wisdom*. Santa Fe: Bennett Books, 1995.

understanding of this curse. The survival of any genuine knowledge has been hazardous to say the least. To assume, as most tend to do, that our contemporary western knowledge is the summit of human reason is simply wrong.

There have been various books published on *Beelzebub's Tales* since this book first came out in 1977, including Sophia Wellbeloved's *Gurdjieff, Astrology and Beelzebub's Tales* and Keith Buzzell's *Perspectives on Beelzebub's Tales*. They have some merits, but both suffer from attempting to make sense of the book according to preconceived ideas; in the case of the first, based on astrology and in the case of the second, partly on Buzzell's understanding of the enneagram. Any effort is to be welcomed, but these remain so to say "outside" the book and do not have the passionate depth of Saurat's appreciation and insight. I see Bennett's contribution as enabling the reader to enter into its mentation. The reader of *Beelzebub* is, of course, a fourth character along with Hasein (Beelzebub's grandson), Ahoon (his servant) and Beelzebub himself; and we should bear in mind that the book developed through readings to various groups (Gurdjieff closely attending to the reactions and states of the listeners) and intense discussions around its translation into English.

It is essential to mention A.R. Orage, who worked with Gurdjieff on the book, playing a collaborative role in regard to writings similar to that of Thomas de Hartmann in regard to music. It seems that Gurdjieff started the book around 1925, first as a small series of pieces, and gradually coming to center on the character of Beelzebub and then embark on a massive exposition. In 1932, there was a privately circulated version of the book restricted to one-hundred-and-two copies. Gurdjieff continued to work on *Beelzebub*, preparing it for publication until his death in 1949. The first publication was in 1950. There is little doubt that Orage contributed a very great deal to the English version and this is recognized as the standard, in spite of the later efforts of the French Gurdjieff Foundation to produce a new "translation." Some of Orage's commentaries on *Beelzebub* are to be found in Stanley Nott's *Teachings of Gurdjieff: The Journal of a Pupil*.\*

The text of *Beelzebub* was subject to extensive revision and discussion. Louise March describes how Gurdjieff:

"... considered a single word or the flow of sentence so very important ... we translators knew Gurdjieff as the 'teacher of exactness.' With Gurdjieff, we came to use the words exactly. He stated clearly that philology was a better

\* see also, A.R. Orage's *Commentaries on Beelzebub's Tales*, edited by C.S. Nott, Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press.

route to Truth than philosophy. We looked at roots of words.  
There were many philological rows.”\*

Though it was never mentioned by Bennett, and maybe he would not have agreed with me, I think it important to suggest that a possible “model” for *Beelzebub’s Tales* was the *Mathnawi* of Jalalu’d-din Rumi. Unless one knows such texts and has gone into them, Gurdjieff’s work appears uniquely bizarre. A reading of the *Mathnawi* quickly reveals a similar kind of complexity to the interweaving structure that is brought into such effect in *Beelzebub*. For those not familiar with Rumi’s writings, one needs to know also that they are often strange and wild and even sometimes bawdy. (Some early translations into English put the sexual content into Latin to save the reader’s blushes!) Just recently, Simon Weightmann, once a student of Bennett, has brought out a book on the structure of the *Mathnawi*—*Rumi’s Mystical Design*, co-authored with Seyed Safawi—that may surprise most of its contemporary readers, not least because it claims that this sprawling, inspired book, sometimes called “the Qur’an of the Persians,” has a structure. Rumi has become widely popular in the US in various racy translations, but few even consider how the work hangs together synoptically as a whole. Weightmann’s researches have shown that the *Mathnawi* is a “ring composition” such as anthropologist Mary Douglas has identified in some books of the Old Testament and Homer. In a ring composition, narrative episodes are conceived in a circle, end joining back into beginning, with a pivotal “turn” in the middle such that episodes match each other across the circle and a “latch” that unites beginning and end. It is likely, though as yet unproven, that *Beelzebub’s Tales* has such a composition and this is why Wellbeloved can find an “astrological” structure in it; only the essential pattern is not specifically astrological and is probably far more complex. Here we simply draw attention to the fact that the first chapter, “The Arousing of Thought” and the final one, “From the Author” “latch” together.

As for more western precedents, one need only think of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1725), a story of four voyages that begins with a ship-wreck and is an allegorical satire on contemporary mores, while strangely recording the two moons of Mars before they were observed, imagining floating cities and inventing new words such as *yahoo* (possibly taken from Sanskrit). Undoubtedly, Gurdjieff was well read in western as well as more eastern literature, though we have no evidence as to what he actually read and can only guess. As early as

\* Louise March in, B. McCorkle. *The Gurdjieff Years 1929 -1949: Recollections of Louise March*.

1835, the Russian writer and traveler, Osip Senkovsky, wrote a kind of science fiction fantasy, *The Fantastic Travels of Baron Brambeus*, and one should certainly not forget the remarkable works of Konstantin Eduardovich Tsiolkovsky such as *The Exploration of Cosmic Space by Reaction Vehicles* (1903) which undoubtedly influenced Gurdjieff's descriptions of different kinds of spaceship propulsion in *Beelzebub*. And, as many have observed, Gurdjieff was writing about the same time as James Joyce and both men were delving into mythical lore to structure and convey their visions and stretching language to its limits. These remarks are not to suppose Gurdjieff imitated this or that work but as a reminder that *Beelzebub* should not be treated in isolation—as a “sacred scripture,” which some Gurdjieff followers would like to do—because there is little doubt that Gurdjieff studied and explored a great deal, absorbing information from wherever he could get it and was as much a part of the twentieth century as Einstein or Jung.

In spite of Gurdjieff's avowed interest in and approval of eastern thinking, and his recurrent attacks on western culture, what he writes in *Beelzebub* requires little or no knowledge of particularly eastern ideas. As far as I know (which makes it of course questionable) nor does his arcane terminology include Arabic, Sanskrit, or Chinese roots. Even the apparent genre of the book as a science fiction novel is a particularly western and recent form. Any study of this book, therefore, has to be very different from what happens in, for example, study circles around the works of Ibn Arabi (one of which operated not far from Bennett's school in Sherborne) or any other “classical” esoteric source. For Gurdjieff's book there are no terms of reference, no tradition and next to no history of commentary. It was a new kind of global vision, possibly a hundred years ahead of its time, embracing science and religion, west and east, ancient and modern, though of course in a rather provocative way. I mentioned Einstein and Jung before because they also were harbingers of a new vision but in their case almost in spite of themselves.

The protagonists of *Beelzebub* are a strange mixture of “laws” and “sacred individuals” and this is unparalleled in any other literature. Bennett explains in an appendix to his book *Gurdjieff—Making a New World*\* that we should not regard the “laws” in terms of concepts in our minds or as subject to our manipulation but more as *kinds of seeing that look through us*. This insight exemplifies the “reversal of forces”—called *fagologiria* in the original version of *Beelzebub*—and which might be related to the Greek word *metanoia*. Beelzebub proclaims that “man sees reality reflected in his attention upside-down”

\* See, JG Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*. Santa Fe: Bennett Books, 1992.

and we need to undergo a radical inversion of mind to truly understand the world and our place in it.

The next-to-penultimate chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales* is of particular interest for understanding the nature of understanding. It is called "Beelzebub Explains to His Grandson the Significance of the Form and Sequence Which He Chose for Expounding the Information Concerning Man" (usually referred to by Bennett just as "Form and Sequence") and it is typical that this appears almost at the end of the book, instead of at the beginning, and is followed by "The Inevitable Results of Impartial Mentation." "Form" is a reference to the law of three and "sequence" to the law of seven and the chapter is a relatively simple exposition of the need for at least two ways of seeing in order to understand, which is to see "in depth."

Beelzebub explains why the sequence of his exposition has been the reverse to what one would expect. This kind of reversal is typical of his approach and is echoed throughout the book, as in his assertion that modern man is only aware of the "negative" spectrum of light and not of its "positive" form, which echoes the treatment in modern physics of the forward and retarded waves of light, the former traveling backwards in time. Reversal of sequence is a main feature of ancient "ring composition."

Gurdjieff sets out a primary distinction between reason-of-knowing and reason-of-understanding and this is fundamental to the method needed for reading the book. In reason-of-understanding, a new impression takes the role of the active force (of the triad) and what has been fixed has then the role of the passive or denying force. The "third force" comes from inner work. This means that, at every moment, there can be a new beginning. Instead of ignoring or deflecting the newness of impressions, or assimilating them into one's mental schemata, they become the start of a new dynamic. This is totally in contrast with what people ordinarily take to be understanding, which is simply being able to accommodate new information into old frameworks. When people look for a consistent and rational system in *Beelzebub*, they are bound to be frustrated, because every part of it is a new departure.

The only way to approach Gurdjieff's masterpiece is to enter into its creative nature, which is to discover new things at every turn. Attempts to rationalize and explain the book are tantamount to taming a wild animal—fine for circuses but not for anyone who loves nature. Bennett is someone who has responded in a right way. The proof of reading is in making a new meaning, not in rendering the book into a form that can be appropriated to any scheme, including any that have been proposed to encompass Gurdjieff's vision.

There is obviously still a need for proper scholarship, though this has been made extremely difficult because Gurdjieff consistently refused to give us any definite information on his sources, particularly written ones. His neologisms have been analyzed in terms of roots from various languages, particularly Greek, Russian, and Armenian and including Parsee, the language of the Zoroastrian Iranians. People ask why he used such arcane terminology, but it is obvious that quite simply he wanted people to start from some kind of recognition that they did *not* understand the principles. In the final chapter, "From the Author," he goes into the problem of what he calls "mentation by word," which he explains as necessarily subjective and requiring a totally different kind of language to make it work correctly. Gurdjieff had an immense skill with words and records of his later teaching—as with the women who formed the group known as "The Rope"—display an extraordinary playfulness and rapidity of association, improvising extemporaneous discourses that are near profanity and wildly comic.\* In *Beelzebub*, even the jokes are presented in a ponderous parody of themselves. In this parody, Gurdjieff is intensely modern.

Many comparisons can be made between *Beelzebub* and such things as alchemical writings. However, it is far more modern, self-reflective and paradoxical. In a narrow aspect, parts of its description of human life challenge even Samuel Beckett for supremacy in depicting futility.\*\* In a larger view, this is never without some prospect of a way out. Traditional religious values are presented side by side with a harrowing vista of human life as mechanical, egoistic, stupid and mistaken. Bennett was always at pains to emphasize the aspects of hope and faith, because he was well aware of the dark side of Gurdjieff's vision but sincerely felt that this had to be gone through because of the promise of salvation it harbored. In a way, it is this promise that lies "hidden" in Gurdjieff's text and is what some of his followers believe makes him a true prophet for humanity.

As for a proper exegesis of the text, this still lies in the future. Maybe, it is necessary that the old "believers" die away. The world is very different from when Gurdjieff was writing. In the 1970s an American writer, Brian Hartshorne, wrote a new addition to "Beelzebub in America" updating Gurdjieff's chapter. It would be almost unbearable

\* See, W.P. Patterson and B.C. Allen. *Ladies of the Rope: Gurdjieff's Special Left Bank Women's Group*.

\*\* Peter Brook, a student of Gurdjieff, has staged some of the most acclaimed productions of Beckett's work. It may also surprise people to know that one of Gurdjieff's foremost pupils, Pierre Schaeffer, was the inventor of the experimental form of music called *musique concrete*.

to do the same today. Sadly, Brian died while still very young, but even he would have found it next to impossible to do now, since things have gotten so much worse: the madness and stupidity of “power-possessing beings” has become so blatant that it is beyond satire. At the same time, modern complexity has made it possible for an increasing number of people to understand that there can be no “system” or final answer to human problems but each of us has to “make it happen” for ourselves, in our own way: which is, I believe, the real import of *Beelzebub’s Tales*.

An exegesis would take the text at its face value and interpret it in terms of itself. No one has begun to do this. We must take seriously Gurdjieff’s pronouncement that his writings were his “soldiers” and that he turned to writing because he had realized that his face-to-face teaching was not effective. He is reported as saying that the people he had to deal with did not have “enough words” to discuss important matters. As Louise March wrote, he was a “teacher of exactness,” which suggests that *Beelzebub* should be seen more as higher mathematics than as rambling discourse. Indeed, it might be seen as so complex in its structure as to defy analysis; consequently, some people have adopted the view that we should only listen to it being read, allowing the text to work on us, and avoid any interpretation.

Bennett knew Gurdjieff briefly in Turkey, for a short period in the Chateau du Prieuré, and intermittently over some months in Paris. For that reason, he has sometimes been castigated as a mere passer-by; but his relatively short personal exposure may be seen as an advantage, since it was Bennett who above all attempted to make Gurdjieff’s writings accessible to a wider public.

It must be remarked that Gurdjieff’s legacy divided into at least two main parts. The first consists of the writings and the second of the “movements” (or sacred dances) and the music. The movements were mainly transmitted by the women, while the ideas were mainly transmitted by the men. The music has been fostered by both men and women. The movements are as enigmatic as the writings, but continue to inspire people who have no capacity or interest in the ideas. It’s important to bear this in mind. It has been reported that readings from *Beelzebub* at the Prieuré were prefaced by music created by Thomas de Hartmann with the guidance of Gurdjieff. The music and movements are part of *Beelzebub’s Tales*.

Gurdjieff’s stated that the purpose of *Beelzebub* was “to destroy, mercilessly, without any compromise whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.” He was later to remark that only those who had already a “peculiar” mentation could read



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