# The Cosmology of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (A Partial Examination)

## I. Introduction

There are numerous approaches to the esoteric cosmology presented in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. Overflowing with complex, obscure, and parabolic allegory, and populated with beguiling details, it invites any number of possible explanations. Distracted by the allure of the many exotic trees, most readers are immediately tempted to overlook the forest; and yet this book is not just a botanical garden of the soul.

It represents an ecosystem, which needs to be wholly understood in such as way so that we experience it as a living entity.

This, then, is an effort to look at the book from the 30,000 foot view; to see the forest, its rivers and streams, the continent it lies on, and perhaps even get a glimpse of the planet it inhabits and the orbit it occupies. That effort will force us to ignore the endless colorful details in the book in an effort to grasp the *gist* — that is, the substance or essence, the main point, of the novel. And novel it is; that is, *a fictitious prose narrative or tale of considerable length in which characters and actions representative of the real life of past or present times are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity*. (Oxford English dictionary.)

It's easy to forget that the book is a novel; yet this is most certainly a substantial part of its essence. The primary function of a novel is to tell a story by exposing a plot; this serves both to entertain and inform, but it is most often understood as a form of entertainment, and—notwithstanding his protestations against *bon ton* literature—Gurdjieff has gone to great lengths to make sure the book is boldly entertaining, underscoring the fact that he fully understands he has written a novel.

So, yes, it's a novel—but it is also two other overarching things.

Second, it's a *mythology*.

Mythologies are also meant to entertain, but their primary function is to impart meanings — whether hidden or apparent — to the social and religious consciousness of the society they arise in. They conflate multiple events and cause them to acquire a greater significance in the context of the world at large: a function which novels may serve, but which is not of necessity or by default a part of their essential nature.

A mythology is, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, *a purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions, or events, and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena*. As a mythology, it is a *body of myths, relating to a particular person or belonging to the religious literature or tradition of a country or people.* (OED).

We should note in passing that Gurdjieff would have contended his book was, on the whole, what he called a *legominism,* an invented word which means, "a record of events which have actually happened." That is, even though the book functions as a parable and an allegory on many different levels, its underlying integrity depends on the assertion that it's a factual record of events, not a work of fantasy.

It depends, in other words, on more than an intentional suspension of disbelief in order to create its effect. It depends, rather, on an *invocation of belief*. The tension between its supposed divine origins (a tale told by a fallen, but well-informed and well-connected archangel) and the self-professedly preposterous and absurd contentions it contains, deliver a massive set of contradictions designed to confound the reader with a mythology that both affirms and denies itself at the same time, forcing the reader to insert his conscious powers of discrimination over and over again during the course of the narrative with what become a nearly endless series of questions.

The narrative arc of this mythology, moreover, spans the ages from the beginnings of the universe through modern times, making it the very rarest of things: a fully *contemporary* mythology. Not enough attention has, in my opinion, been paid to this feature of the book.

Third, it is a *cosmology*.

While its nature as a novel and as a mythology need to be examined in the context of the book's nature as a whole, it is this particular aspect of it that we are going to examine in this essay.

Before we embark on this journey, let's take a look at the word cosmos (and its related fellows) as defined by the OED.

## II. Definitions

***Cosmos (OED):***

*The world or universe as an ordered and harmonious system*

*An ordered and harmonious system of ideas, existences, etc.: that which constitutes the sum total of experience.*

*Order, harmony: the opposite of chaos.*

*The word is derived from the Greek word cosmos, meaning order, ornament, world or universe (so-called by Pythagoras or his disciples from its perfect order and arrangement).*

The word *cosmos* as we see it defined here is directly related to Gurdjieff's teaching on the harmonious development of man. There is a direct relationship between the idea of a harmonious system in the cosmological sense and a harmonious system in the sense of the inward order of a human being. We thus see a direct reflection of Gurdjieff's snapshot of man as a cosmos in miniature.

***Cosmology (OED):***

*The science or theory of the universe has an ordered whole, and of the general laws which govern it. Also a particular account or system of the universe and its laws.*

*Also, that branch of metaphysics which deals with the idea of the world as a totality of all phenomena in space and time.*

*Derived from a word that means, "discourse plus world", or, world – discourse.*

The idea of a cosmology — a science or theory of the universe — is directly mirrored in Gurdjieff's third obligolnian striving: the conscious striving to know evermore and more about the laws of world-creation and world-maintenance.

This striving operates on all seven different cosmoses (see *In Search of the Miraculous*, pages 211 through 215.) In human beings, it relates to the creation and maintenance of an inner cosmos that belongs to the individual (*OED*: one in substance or essence; forming an indivisible entity; indivisible.)

***Chaos (OED):***

*A vast gulf or chasm, the nether abyss, empty space, the first state of the universe.*
*a gaping void.*

*The formless void of primordial matter, the great deep or abyss out of which the cosmos or order of the universe was evolved.*

*A state resembling that of primitive chaos: utter confusion and disorder. Anything where the parts are undistinguished. A confused mass or mixture, a conglomeration of parts or elements without order or connection.*

We can't examine the idea of a cosmos or cosmology without understanding the relationship between the cosmos and its origins. A cosmos is an *emergent* entity. This means, an entity assembling itself out of smaller parts which has organized properties displaying relationships and abilities greater than the apparent sum of its parts. Our cosmos, or harmonized system, emerges from the primordial state of chaos. The final description from the Oxford English dictionary— a confused mass or mixture, a conglomeration of parts or elements without order or connection — is a succinct summary of Gurdjieff's description of man *as he is*.

## III. Beelzebub's Cosmology— an Overview

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson occupies a singular place in world literature. The only known western cosmology written as a piece of literature by an acknowledged spiritual teacher, it enters the literature of cosmology as a decided latecomer. We need to distinguish it from works that discuss or introduce cosmologies as didactic exercises, because it is primarily and above all a work of literature, an *artistic* rendering of its cosmology— something like a painting by a Renaissance master, rather than a treatise by an enlightenment scientist. They are not the same thing at all; and it pays to keep this in mind, since the aim of literature is ultimately different than the aim of science. Science aims to inform and enlighten the intellect; literature and art aim for the deeper territory of the psyche and the emotive Being of Man.

Notable literary cosmologies in the Western world are few and far between: Milton's Paradise Lost certainly qualifies, as does Dante's *Divina Commedia*. A much later entrant in the genre is The Chronicles of Narnia by CS Lewis. All are, by one definition or another, works of fantasy, but the last is the most so by far, creating a juvenile world heavily populated by magical creatures and mythical beasts. Gurdjieff's very adult book places itself more comfortably with Paradise Lost and the Divine Comedy. It qualifies in its own right as a peculiar form of magical realism, a genre of literature certainly broad enough to encompass its content. Readers who object to that comparison will find it well worth their while to read the Wikipedia entry on the etymology of the word, which offers many specific points that underscore the contention.

Readers of Beelzebub's Tales can be broadly divided into two classes: adherents of the Gurdjieff philosophy, and readers of world literature at large. The book enters the literary mainstream as a book that must, first, be judged in its own right as a piece of literature. In this sense it does a very respectable job, presenting an epic even more detailed and complex than, for example, Moby Dick— and lest readers feel this an invalid comparison, compare Melville's ironic sense of humor to Gurdjieff's; there are relationships. Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce, 19th century writers who left us with similarly acerbic critiques of mankind, did not quite manage (in this area) to scale the literary heights Gurdjieff attains; counterintuitively, Gurdjieff's self-confessed inexperience as a writer did not prevent him from realizing what were, in essence, vast ambitions.

We cannot, then, judge the book first as some special or remarkable book that has to be treated with kid gloves and analyzed with a respect, circumspection, and even reverence greater than that offered to other lesser pieces of literature; we have to judge it first for what it is in the ordinary sense before we sign on to it as a teaching from some higher level.

It passes the first test admirably; true to its alternate title, *All and Everything*, it transcends Shakespeare's classic comment about the cosmology of man's life — a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing— by offering us a tale told by a genius, signifying everything. It is, perhaps, the most anti-nihilistic piece of literature one could imagine: a cosmos imbued from the depths of its beginnings with meaning, a cosmos which may, in fact, be about nothing *but* meaning and signification.

The cosmology is distinctly Christian. Perhaps we should expect this; not just because it is written by a man brought up as a Greek orthodox Christian, but also because it stems from our Western religious tradition, which is overwhelmingly dominated by Christian practice. Nonetheless, accented by Buddhism, heavily peppered with Islam, and steeped in practices that originated in an emphatically pagan (read: Babylonian) society, we are offered an amalgam of world religion, even if the cosmos it organizes itself in is the traditional angelic hierarchy of Christianity. The most distinctive hero of the book, Ashiata Shiemash, is himself a product of the pre-Christian era; so the brushstrokes it paints with fall every which way outside the margins of its own roots. And, we should remind ourselves, the roots themselves are fundamentally challenged — if not outright uprooted themselves — by the fact that the protagonist and narrator is, so to speak, the devil himself. This flies in the face of all Christian tradition and represents a near masterstroke of misdirection; yet that masterstroke of misdirection is yet again misdirected, because the devil turns out to be a likable guy with, to our astonishment, the better interests of the human race at heart after all.

This actually restores the devil — Satan, the adversary, — back to his original, radical place in the Judeo-Christian tradition; a creature appointed as the one who tests the faith of God's subjects. Intriguingly, in his introduction, Gurdjieff warns the reader that the book is intended "To destroy, mercilessly and without any compromise whatever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world." Our author, in other words, assigns himself this role from the outset.

Turning the traditional Christian universe the book is set in on its head, Gurdjieff does not stop with this recast of the devil as a positive influence. Judas himself is rehabilitated as a pivotal figure who makes the Last Supper possible, sacrificing his own presence in the interests of the others. And even this outrageous violation — which is, amazingly, a possibility recently validated by the discovery of hitherto unknown texts — is not enough. In a final act of defiance, as if to tweak the noses of the Christian readers one last time, it turns out that even the devil can be redeemed.

This cosmos is, above all, a merciful one.

## IV. The Broken Universe: a Cosmology of Imperfection

Gurdjieff's cosmos is identifiable: it's Christian. It is—uniquely—technological: populated by spaceships designed by angels and archangels. In this sense, it's the only truly modern cosmology on the table. His characters don't fly around on winged horses. It is material; as souls progress, they eventually find themselves on a physical planet (purgatory). It's a location borrowed from Dante's Divine comedy, which shares a few peculiarities with it, notably, the fact that great suffering takes place there. Despite all its recognizable features, there is one thing about Gurdjieff's cosmos that sets it apart.

It's *imperfect*; broken.

A cosmology of imperfection is without a doubt the precise inflection we need to describe Gurdjieff's cosmology. The word *perfect* is derived from the Latin *perfectus*, the past participle of *perficere*, meaning accomplish, finish, or complete.

A perfect universe is a complete universe; but Gurdjieff's universe is far from complete; rather it is a work in progress which has hit some catastrophic bumps, even early on. In a very real sense, the woes of the planet Earth— the comet Kondoor, the moon, the organ kundabuffer and all— are merely a smaller mirror of the woes that afflicted the universe-at-large, which has experienced an equally disastrous rupture.

This rupture begins at the very beginning, when it turns out that time (the merciless Heropass) is eroding God's place of existence— leaving us, incidentally with a mortal God of limited power. His solution turns out to be as flawed as the situation He begins in: He is forced to create a universe where the souls around Him are unable to purify themselves enough to re-blend with His Most Sacred Being. This is not the omnipotent, transcendent Father we expect from the Christian Bible; actions on all the levels below him are strictly limited by laws. Every one of these levels is populated by its own set of at-least-partial-incompetents, including angels and archangels unable to set the course of comets correctly, and unable to undo the malevolent consequences of the catastrophes that ensue. Far from being perfect places populated by perfect beings, Heaven is penetrated throughout with incompetence and — in the case of our narrator, Beelzebub — ne'er-do-wells. The entire saga is one of a search for redemption in the face of irreversible catastrophes.

Mankind's role in all of this, of course, is not a consequence of his own agency. There is no apple on a tree to bite, no snake to tempt, no Eve to serve it (Beelzebub's cosmos is remarkably, even astonishingly, bereft of women.) Human beings are the victims of divine incompetence, even if the sins they engage in eventually become their own responsibility.

We have here a cosmos where no one can get anything right. It is not a cosmos at all, in at least one sense of the word: the system is deeply *disharmonious*, beginning with the machinery that runs it, which has built-in irregularities. (The law of octaves, with its shortened, lengthened, and disharmonized intervals.)

Gurdjieff's cosmos is a substantial deviation from a version of the universe as a perfect creation by a perfect God. The cosmos is an unfinished creation — and its very nature embodies the *antithesis* of one of the meanings of the word cosmos—that is, a harmonious system. This cosmos was, at one point, perfect and uninterrupted — but the action of time corrupted it, and it has become, consequently, a developing universe which *moves towards* harmony in a cyclical fashion. Now, the idea of eternal recurrence and a cyclical cosmos is a truly ancient idea, but this idea of a broken cosmos in need of eternal self-repair is a special feature of Gurdjieff's teaching. The concept that it proceeds along the lines of an octave is almost certainly related to the original teachings about the cosmos in the Pythagorean school (see the Oxford English dictionary definition of the word); but, perhaps equally interesting, the first true cosmology recorded in Western literature is that of the Memphite theology as recorded on the Shabaka stone at the British Museum. The Memphite cosmos, like the Pythagorean octave-based concept of the cosmos, is an ennead (ninefold) construction.

We can thus see that the idea of a cosmos of progressive development based on a ninefold system, and incorporating the idea of ordered increases in rates of vibration, does indeed come from ancient philosophical schools that predate Gurdjieff by many thousands of years. Although his presentation of the ideas was unique, it is certainly feasible that — as he himself contended — it was not "his" teaching, but a much earlier teaching which, in its quintessential form, remained hidden from the outside world throughout most of the course of its existence.

This ordered—if not properly harmonious—cosmos arises from the primordial substance "ethernokrilno," which represents a doctrinaire origin—that is, out of chaos, the primordial state or void. It's worth noting that God, in this cosmos, inhabits that primordial state or void before the existence of the present universe; and, that in the return to God, as in Zen Buddhism (where *going beyond* everything is the aim), one would have to by default abandon all form, as in Meister Eckhart's comment on the nature of God:

*"I have sometimes said there is a power in the soul which alone is free. Sometimes I have called it the guardian of the spirit, sometimes I have called it the light of the spirit, sometimes I have said that it is a little spark. But now I say that it is neither this nor that… it is free of all names and void of all forms, and entirely exempt and free, as God is exempt and free in himself."*

— M. E. ,The Complete Mystical Works, p. 80

Perhaps it's not quite fair to say that Gurdjieff's cosmos is disharmonious. It embodies the potential for harmony; but that potential is fulfilled through the inclusion of imperfections which need to be surmounted through what he calls conscious labor and intentional suffering. This is a cosmos that requires *agency* in order to achieve its completion; and said agency needs to be recruited on every level. Within each of the seven levels Gurdjieff proposes, the agency of consciousness is absolutely necessary in order for the disrupted and discontinuous harmonies to be restored.

It’s not just the planet Earth that has suffered catastrophe as a result of miscalculation. Take note that Gurdjieff refers to the dis-harmonization of the universe (the *chootboglitanical* period) as a “terrifying cosmic event” (Chapter 39, *The Holy Planet Purgatory.)* The appellation makes it clear: this is not just an unforeseen event, it was beyond even God’s control; else it would not have happened. So we exist in a cosmos where catastrophes take place, and are presented with a God who *makes mistakes*. One might infer that the law of accident—like time—even acts on God Himself.

The existence of such a cosmos and such a God may help us understand the central place of consciousness and attention in Gurdjieff's picture, not only of mankind, but of the universe. These two forces are continuously necessary on every level in a cosmos of this nature; it's a place eternally under maintenance and repair. As Gurdjieff told his pupils, “use the present to repair the the past and prepare the future.” This advice applies at all levels of the Beelzebub cosmos, an essential task for all creation.

## V. A Personalized Cosmology

Cosmologies are vast things. We encounter them as we encounter stars in the night sky: beautiful, comprehensible from a superficial point of view, but immeasurably distant and impossibly large, so much so that our understanding is disabled and we have nothing but awe left at our disposal.

This kind of reaction — a natural one, to be sure — leaves us oddly separated from the cosmos and cosmology. Our own lives appear to be taking place at the level of chaos: we are so tiny that we seem to be particles in the primordial void, not participants in what Gurdjieff called world-creation and world-maintenance. The Oxford English dictionary definition of the word chaos seems to say the same thing about our lives that Gurdjieff said about the life of man in general. We appear, indeed, to be "a confused mass or mixture, a conglomeration of parts or elements without order or connection" (OED.)

How, then, can we approach this idea of cosmology, of meaning, harmony, and order, and incorporate it into a personal meaning that has daily relevance? Simply adopting a form and creating a set of rituals that acknowledge our position — which is what religion does, offering significant solaces but no truly practical solutions— isn't enough. There needs to be a physical, emotional, and intellectual component to cosmology.

Our cosmology, in other words, must become not just an abstraction or a philosophical exercise, but a cosmology of the psyche.

The word *psyche* means animating spirit or soul, which is derived from the Greek word *psÿchien,* for breath. Our inner (as well as other) cosmology may thus be considered as the breath of our lives, that which animates us. It is what gives birth to the mind—taken in the sense of the *soul* as the center of our thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

This challenge asks us to transpose ideas of the cosmos at large onto the template of our own being. As "cosmoses in miniature," as Gurdjieff called us, we contain within ourselves and our being the same origins, catastrophic collision events, and disharmonizations present in the cosmos-at-large, as well as the obligations for repair that devolve upon the angelic hierarchies in *Beelzebub's Tales*. This is, in our own case, a do-it-yourself universe; just as God cannot interfere with the cosmos in *Beelzebub* (even if He could, it's entirely uncertain He would know what to do), He cannot directly interfere with our own lives. It's up to us to undertake the necessary work for cosmic maintenance and repair: hence, theurgy, or inner work on behalf of God.

This is a work not just of voyeuristic transposition, whereby we become mirrors for cosmic processes at large, but a work of transubstantiation —the practical transformation of substances. Just as the cosmos at large is a machine for the transubstantiation of substances (and even in a modern Western scientific model, that is a precise definition of the nature of the universe) so, too, man becomes a vehicle for that same activity on a much smaller scale. Spirituality and organic chemistry discover a new relationship with one another.

We transubstantiate our whole world; that is to say, we don't just physically take carbohydrates, sugars, and so on and turn them into more complex proteins and other molecules; we take that intangible and mysterious substance called *meaning* and transform it.

*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* represents a transubstantiation of meaning on a cosmological scale; it presents us with a unique new mythology, a different vision of the cosmos than anything we grew up with. But the transubstantiation is ultimately meant to create a transformation of meaning within our being; this is a deeply personal and intimate process: not one of sciences and philosophies, but one of feelings and sensations.

It's impossible to undergo this transubstantiation of Being in the mind alone; it doesn't have enough substance, enough gravity, to anchor it within our lives. Clearly, the transformation of our inner cosmos has to take place in a *three-centered* way, that is, according to the original meaning of the word psyche as it was applied to mind at the beginning of the 20th century: the thought, emotion, and behavior (physical expression) of Being.

In the world of 20th and (lately) 21st-century psychology, the idea of a need for self-repair has fully arrived. The proposition that our Being, our personhood, arrives on the doorstep of everyday consciousness damaged, traumatized, and deeply flawed—displaying a wide range of contradictory opinions and feelings—is not just accepted; it's almost popular. It has spawned a bewildering range of self-help disciplines, philosophies, and methodologies that come as New Age additives (or even replacements) to the ancient traditional remedies of religion and philosophy, which — while they may seem weaker and less valid to the sophisticated modern mind — have withstood the tests of many centuries and still demonstrate an inarguable relevance. (Read Taleb's *Antifragile* for commentary on the relationship between time and value when examining such ideas.)

The point is that we *know* we live in an inner universe that is broken and needs repair. Gurdjieff's Beelzebub remains the only modern effort at a legitimate mythology, based on truly ancient principles, to provide a template with a harmonious, or holistic, approach to that repair. He presents it not as a teaching, but a story, because it is the *inner narrative* of our lives that needs repair; that is, our attitude. The way that we assign meaning to ourselves, the trajectory of our inner narrative, is what gives us the essential nature of our Being. No one, in my opinion, has said this any better than Viktor Frankl in his Classic Man's Search for Meaning:

*"...mental health is based on a certain degree of tension, the tension between what one has already achieved and what one still ought to accomplish, or the gap between what one is and what one should become. Such a tension is inherent in the human being and therefore is indispensable to mental well-being. We should not, then, be hesitant about challenging man with a potential meaning for him to fulfill. It is only thus that we evoke his will to meaning from its state of latency. I consider it a dangerous misconception of mental hygiene to assume that what man needs in the first place is equilibrium or, as it is called in biology, "homeostasis," i.e., a tensionless state. What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen*

*task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him."* (page 127.)

This tension Frankl describes shares an identity with our disharmonized cosmos: an ordered system which requires the conscious participation — a freely chosen task — of its inhabitants in order to maintain its well-being and proceed towards harmony. If the cosmos embodies meaning, then the task of engendering it — rendering it both fertile and fecund— falls on the conscious inhabitants it produces.

I use the word *fecund* in the sense of receptive, and *fertile* in the sense of productive, according to the modern sense of the two. Fertility depends first on fecundity; so the productivity of the universe depends first on what is received. This is reflected in multiple laws in Gurdjieff's cosmos, notably the law of Heptaparaparshinokh (the law of seven) with its disharmonized intervals, or *stopinders*; and the law of reciprocal feeding.

As I stated at the beginning of the essay, it's not my intention to dissect the particular details of Gurdjieff's cosmology. It is, however, mentioning one particular point of commonality between Meister Eckhart's teaching and Gurdjieff's Law of Heptaparaparshinokh.

Of the third stopinder, Beelzebub says,

*"As regards the third stopinder which was changed in its subjective action and which is fifth in the series and called 'harnel-aoot,' its disharmony came about by itself, simply as a result of the change of the other two stopinders.*
*"This disharmony of its subjective functioning, resulting from its 'asymmetry' in relation to the whole process of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh, consists in the following:*
*"If the completing process of this sacred law flows in conditions in which it is subject to many 'extraneously' caused' vibrations, its functioning produces only external results.*
*"But if this same process takes place in absolute quiet, in the absence of any extraneously caused vibrations whatever, all the results of the functioning of this stopinder remain within that concentration in which the process is completed, and these results only become perceptible to the outside on direct and immediate contact with it.*
*"But if during the functioning of this process neither of these two sharply opposite conditions predominates, the results of its action usually divide into the external and the internal."*

— Chapter 39, *The Holy Planet Purgatory*

Compare this, if you will, to Meister Eckhart's instruction on inner practice:

*"Now you might say, 'Oh sir, is it really always necessary to be barren and estranged from everything, outward and inward: the powers and their work, must that all go? ...If a man is in such a state of pure nothingness, is it not better to do something to beguile the gloom and desolation, such as praying or listening to sermons or doing something else that is virtuous, so as to help himself?'*

*No, be sure of this. Absolute stillness for as long as possible is best of all for you. You cannot exchange this state for any other without harm. That is certain. You would like to partly prepare*

*yourself and partly let God prepare you, but this cannot be. You cannot think or desire to prepare yourself more quickly than God can move in to prepare you. But even if it were shared, so that you did the preparing and God did the working or the infusion— which is impossible— then you should know that God must act and pour Himself into you the moment He finds you ready… as and when God finds you ready, He has to act, to overflow into you, just as when the air is clear and pure the sun has to burst forth and cannot refrain. It would surely be a grave defect in God if He performed no great works in you and did not pour great goodness into you whenever He found you thus empty and bare.*

—Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works*, Sermon 4

This particular stopinder—the fifth, or note *sol*— is the point on Gurdjieff's enneagram that marks the transition between the material and spiritual—Being and non-Being—domains of activity. From a conceptual perspective, it marks the original boundary between God and creation. Crossing from the note *fa* in the enneagram to the note *sol*, a human being acquires the capacity for true inner development in service to God. Meister Eckhart's *absolute stillness* corresponds directly to Beelzebub's *absolute quiet*. It is necessary, in other words, to cultivate an inward stillness in order to receive the proper kind of vibration needed to elevate and develop one's inner work; and, indeed, in many different spiritual practices — quite notably in Gurdjieff and de Salzmann's practical work — this is exactly the kind of effort which is undertaken in order to counteract the otherwise constant and vibration-degrading influences of the outer world. We see here a specific, cosmos-conforming role for the inner contemplative practice which directly corresponds, as well, with the instruction from the classic Christian esoteric work *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

This is, then, a deeply intimate and personal practice related to the functional maintenance of the cosmos at large — both as it manifests on a universal scale and as it arises within the Being of mankind.

**VI.**