

# Gurdjieff Oskiano

24-August-2023

## The Language of The Work.

### Robin Bloor presentation

Attendees: Robin, Paula, Sandra W, James, Robert P, Stephen F, Sasa J, Bobbie P, Stephen A, Kelly Connor, Marnie Haluska, Michelle F, Daniel // Mark Cleven, John Amaral.

SF: Using word 'relative' in a way that means opposite to my understanding – antonym is absolute. So relative implies more ambiguity and opportunity for misunderstanding. You using meaning to make more precise.

RB: You have got that right – taking word from Gurdjieff. He calls it 'relative sense'. There is potential for ambiguity there. There is use of that word in philosophy ...

SF: Grammar of associations. Prevalence of consonance – how we acquire language – if think meaning is similar, associating sounds of the two words. You imply he is using grammar of associations to minimise misunderstanding.

RB: First point is from moment we are born we use method to understand words – not involve dictionaries. May be some words very well defined. In normal work language don't have that. That is how you understand most of the words you use. Grammar of associations – imagine we have perfect understanding of English language and relationship to every idea of the Work, then every idea would be related to every other idea in the work ... think that is what he is trying to achieve in the Tales. Trying to give you the associations that should be there for it. Does appear that ... it isn't what is happening. If you study the Tales realise there is a connection. Also, a number of things we encounter don't know the background or scientific fact relating to it – this has come to light in a number of the studies of the Tales.

MH: That was fascinating! Image of Tower of Babel from Genesis. I have an emotional relationship to that story – difficulty in connecting with another human being – do we really ever understand one another? Allegory of Babel and expand from perspective of the Work.

RB: If as described in The Bible, different to how G describes in The Tales. My biblical attitude to Tower of Babel – for me the idea was there was a kind of intellectual arrogance going on and attempt to build the Tower of Babel was to rise to level of Absolute – flawed idea and couldn't be done by the intellect. Consequence of trying to make such a construct ... whole thing collapsed and ceased to understand each other. Narrative of arrogance of the intellect. In the Tales – maybe same story, but not told in same way – does man have a soul or not have a soul. Accusation from Hamolinadir agrees with all the theories and doesn't think there is anything going on in terms of whether man has a soul or not. Not going to be able to resolve particular questions in that way.

RB: There are about 4K human languages ... or 8K if you count in another way. Consonance ... Can start to form your own language – will vary and does. More computer languages than human! Instead of trying to unify them, as they could ...

SW: Three universal languages – idea of simple concept link for all words – what! Stalin's choice of word 'hand' and G's 'evolution'. Totally new to me and don't understand how we can associate all words with that one.

RB: Depends on how you define English – some say 100K and others 40K words. Talk about Hebrew language – created by Moses, conscious human being and for Torah. Wasn't Aramaic

but related to. The Alphabet – most important letter is yod and symbol is a finger pointing down. All other letters in Hebrew alphabet – connecting different yods to each other. Can create a language that uses triples to create the words and all nouns are created from verbs. How Moses created a language ... If you don't think the yod is the same as the Ray of Creation ... it is.

How can you relate all English words together? Fundamental activity in this universe is Ray of Creation – created everything in the universe – words can fall off from that ... law of three and law of seven. That is how you sweep up the ocean of words – from the top down.

SW: Language and hearing – consonants and formation of words from consonants. Reading relates to computer language?

RB: Computers capable of imitating monkey behaviour and good at it. Not capable of level of abstraction of thinking centre. Belief that computers are going to be smarter than man – reason can't be equalled by computer – no emotional center.

Have situation that particular sounds create particular resonances – important – last slide about Hebrew is important – gives sense that everything can come from one point. If we weren't so haphazard as human beings, would be so much better. Hebrew demonstrates it. I believe Sanskrit is the same – don't know who created it. Consonance problem – as soon as you get word that has wrong sound in respect of vibration of what it applies to, error is going to be ... ends up with word like 'gangbusters'.

J: Two mentations. Still unsure about these two mentations – by form and thought. A couple of years ago I wrote to someone I respect – student of Mr Nyland. [James read the exchange. Notes below only partially capture.]

Q: Main reason for writing – important aspect of G's teaching – mentation by thought and form. Spoke about it at the meeting last night and C mentioned you had spoken of it in seminar ... mentation by form is assimilated in childhood to the age of being able to read. Adopt word from people around us and through verbal and physical encounters. Consonance seems to have a significant part ... same all over the word. People from different races, castes, locations can't understand people from other part of the world – due to differences in context and consonance. Mentation by form – picturings, guesses – associations ... this is what I have been observing in myself – familiar. Mentation by thought – words always ... relative sense employed ... When I work and try to be present and when working with others, shift in my mentation – mentation by thought? Exactness?

A: I have probably simplified my understanding. Mentation by form more universal means of communication by pictures, rather than by words. Whole of Tales is picture, story, metaphors, symbols .... To communicate. Mentation by thought – uses – tower of Babel – animals think in pictures since don't have written language. More awake, there is no language – identification with ordinary personality will use words that are pictures of what has taken place – “flash of light in dark room” ... pictures can describe uncontainable word. Mentation by form closer ... exact language is one that we as a group agree upon because experience is common, confirmed ...

This explanation causing lots of yeses and noes in me. Are both good and equal? Should I strive towards mentation by thought?

RB: Not in alignment with what he has written. Have to address the words G uses. Mentation by form – not any different in us than in two brained beings. Does not necessarily include any contribution from thinking center. Doesn't understand words. Doesn't call mentation by form by accident – talking about formatory apparatus – structure built on top of lowest part of intel-

lectual and cannot be just that – has to be on top of lower part of moving and emotional center also. What receives impressions first. Don't think G explained in detail. Gave us the allegory of a receptionist ... Fundamental thing – two parts of us aside from the body that are not necessarily doomed to die with the body. The essence is of the octave of breath and forms the kesdjan body if allowed to crystallise – fundamentally emotion. The other is the soul – driver of carriage – intellect. Destiny is to ascend through many gradations of reason. My understanding of that is you begin with something like Hebrew – concepts related one to the other which you can manipulate. Abstraction in terms of words, symbol, vibrations – capabilities of the intellect. Might be limited at lowest levels but highest thing in man is higher intellectual center and ladder to that is reason. Capable of words and symbols and comparison and other two centers not capable in that way. Mentation by form misses all of that – doesn't have intellectual center involved.

Talking about nature of human being before get to the Work. Most people's understanding of words don't involve intellectual center at all. The idea of a universal language and language of the Work – has to do. Can learn Ray of Creation as if it is the ten times table – not going to help. If we understand how the law of 7 behaves in a process – not going to be lower emotional center and moving center that understands that – going to be ability of intellectual center to abstract. There are different approaches to the Work, and one is to study through the enneagram. Begin with intellectual center.

Understand the problem – I had that to begin - studied mentation by form for over a year until I realised it is related to formatory – has to be.

Natural relationship between oneself and outside world is for intellect to be active.

All things you learned at school are not connected in any meaningful way – same as saying we have to eat personality.

SA: What would you understand as the difference between these two types of thinking, word and form ... and pondering?

As I listen – part listening to the words and part looking around. Put myself into a state not thinking, sensing, watching, observing, being present and things appear in my mind – then will direct my attention to them and turn around and watch for associations to come in. Not same as formatting process and an examination of concepts and ideas by putting into language and manipulating ... also include state of watching and being open for things to appear rather than pursuing through formatted process or trying to manipulate. More active/passive mental alertness. Fits into this process? Or talking about another level entirely which can observe mentation by form and thought and notice two different ways of working?

RB: Very good. Pleased that has been raised. Let's take a particular activity. Reading of the Tales for somebody else to listen to. When you do that well, a number of things going on. Moving center – vocal cords – intellect taken up with parsing words in order for it to understand how to direct the moving center and third part is emotional center also giving attention to the words to announce in a way that expresses their meaning – three centered activity.

PS: Emotional aspect of considering who you are reading to – even if reading as if out loud to yourself.

RB: Second is situation where emotional center is active and keeping personality in check. What usually happens is intellect is making up lies ... intellect is active, moving center passive and emotional is becoming neutralising. Can be master in carriage. Raised the idea of pondering.

Idea of not staying in same place and emotion being involved in the action. Not ponder an

elephant and ... intellect planning path around elephant ... not productive unless emotional center is involved – has better idea of how and where to look.

Pondering/contemplation is not necessarily like idea of pondering – in Work about pondering ray of creation.

SF: Thinking exercise – example of pondering. The way my mind works ... more often than not manipulating images – representations of thoughts and then I see something and a part of me looks for words to accurately convey the insight and the feeling that goes with it. Uses visual forms – not formatted. That is a type of thinking process of some sort.

RB: I would agree. Playing chess ... moving center working with intellectual center – holding hands. Intellectual center doesn't have any pictures.

SA: A lot of the pictures would be by association – have to pay more attention to that. Effort that involves culmination of levels. Observation – can watch lower centers work and direct or manipulate.

RB: Problem not discussing single event ... Solving equations in mathematics – moving center – can see the symbols moving about. Learn to do things in a certain way. Going to use all centers in some combination. Might be different for different individuals.

SJ: Don't understand precise meanings. Language is a tool to communicate with other humans. Not English or other language – much wider – can be body language. Universal language cannot be English ...

Developed his approach and language and Ouspensky ... doesn't use same – can make a lot of problems. Try to understand Tales from something I learned before but is not the same. Should give words from the Tales as the Work language – to be exact. Subconscious and essence not the same ... essence something we are born with and not learned through life.

So much material here and think how to work further in this direction.

RB: Agree – difficult – the reference book is The Tales. If you put together with ISOM there are things from PoV of The Tales doesn't always agree. Were Ouspensky's words.

The only thing I can think of doing – very productive – is to write about and see where difficulties arise.

Contribution from someone who speaks a different language is valuable ...

SF: That helped me underline a point – precise use of language what is in a word and also what is NOT in a word. Subconscious is not the essence for example. Because I heard them used to refer to similar idea – probably not.

SA: ISOM and Tales. How to use ISOM? More understandable and structured. Tales is more like something continually in motion and rising. Purgatory chapter ... G said Ouspensky good reporter ... comparing Ray of Creation with how described in Purgatory – I like the one in The Tales better. G working towards a way of experimenting with and ended up with same essence and data but a very different approach.

RB: I go to The Tales when I am unsure of anything. ISOM is a light 'how to' manual – not to in any way condemn it.

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24-August-2023

**Presentation by Stephen Aronson:**

**I Have a Body, But I Am Not My Body**

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SF: My first reading of this increased a realisation – even though I read ISOM over 50 years ago, not realised what separation means. Subtle ways I am identified with my body – even when I think I am not.

SA: Understanding is culmination of information and experience. I hear a word and assume I understand – do with ideas all the time. Until we have had the experience, we do not understand – we know about it ...

SW: I read this about a week and a half ago and I am aware how different it sounds – the memory of my own voice going over the words – different from your voice, to me is familiar and brings emotions and esteem that I attach to your voice. Questions you raise – how I identify with my body – more than when I read it. Not being comfortable with the answers I am giving myself intellectually.

SF: Can try to ignore your intellectual suggestions ... you know ...

MF: I remember ... locked in my body in childhood, chained and mind tried to get out – experience – could see staff going around the corridor and locked in a room and on a bed. Experience of not being able to use that body.

SA: Mind not in space-time – can go to past, future, imaginary world. What is that?

SF: The experiment with raising the hand is mysterious to me. Something non-verbal has to happen – volition for my hand to rise. Something has to happen to deliver a motor impulse – decision for me to raise my hand. That is how my brain puts together. Reality in volition – I cannot do – something outside – personal agency allowed me to raise my hand. Could say just reacting to situation that Stephen Aronson set up. Thing called ‘volition’ ...

SA: How do we think about the unthinkable – ineffable – if we just spent more time in our body. G’s man cannot do, just happens – and yet there is ‘will’ or volition and sometimes I seem to be directing it. Hierarchy of worlds – consciousness, energies of hydrogens. Direct experience of this mystery. I don’t see the synapse between the intent and action. My body engages in all sorts of actions in which my mind was not the initiator.

SW: Is watching intellect part of watching what is going on internally? Is that part of experience?

SA: Were you able to experience the mystery of the experiment we just did? You are already there. It is interesting to try to delve into “what part of what center did that come from”? But it is an experience ...

RB: I have had an experience several times and the first time was a long time ago – lying asleep on a rug in front of the fire and woke up but couldn’t move my body. Dramatic experience. Didn’t know what to do. I was trying to command the body to move but it didn’t move. This isn’t a new mystery to me – has haunted me for a long time. I can just move my hand and yet I know I have been in a state where I couldn’t – so more of a mystery.

SA: Familiar with sleep paralysis – partially awake, but still paralysed. There is another quality – I wake in the morning and lying in bed and sensing my body – how long will it take for some part of me to initiate it. Interesting experiment ... now walking towards the bathroom ... didn't initiate.

SW: The feeling that came out most strongly was laughing at myself – wanted to seize onto 'I am my awareness' – laughed at myself.

SA: Something in our intellect that needs to clarify, classify and label things. It doesn't like ambiguity ... gets anxious. Thinks it is supposed to know all this stuff.

If you are thinking about your feelings – don't. Try to sense your body and see what is going on.

RB: I have developed a habit when certain emotions arise, I do what has been described to me as the cleansing breath and the emotion changes – habitual, it will work. Also, I know there is a particular position in the big seven movement where you point and stride forward and I know I can go into that posture and it will change things. Can make the emotions different.

SA: Difference between sensations in the body and higher emotions that don't have that physiological underpinning – awe, respect, reverence – to do with valuation. Certain sensations that we call feelings will reflect body posture – if we learn how to relax, breathe differently, clear our heads of different thoughts – can calm down. How to willingly create a state of awe or reverence – can bring myself to a state ... Not controlling my autonomic nervous system responses, learn how to influence them. Happening faster than my attention is able to know. Do not recognise the trigger that has influenced my body. Work is about training attention and being faster than the responses. Being able to relax my body, change my thoughts – learning to work with my feelings?

MH: Over the course of last several months become aware of a bodily habit – my body knows an emotional state before I do. Will be fidgeting and it cues me in that I am anxious. Being driven by an emotion that I hadn't consciously recognised yet. Body very wise and begins these mechanical repetitive habits.

SA: Good example of sub-conscious that G refers to. Material in our architecture not in our awareness – doesn't exist for us in the moment. ... not aware until my muscles start tensing – what is my body reacting to? A lot of my manifestations happen like that – must not have been in my right mind – what is my right mind?

SF: Why is it that when in a state of greater presence – watchman more active for a while. Why does it go away when it is clearly a better way to live. It is more interesting to watch and wonder who is pulling the puppet's strings and yet surrender and become the puppet again. Do not choose to do it and happens before I realise. What lets me let go of the witness so quickly?

MH: I caught several times that I was wanting to go from presence to intellectual grasping. State of witnessing and being aware collapsed. Intellectual grasping. That is how the falling back asleep happened for me.

SJ: Witness or something which is not my thinking or emotion or body get caught immediately when knowledge or experience ... centers try to build on or use ... to be free from knowledge or experience or outside of my function. As soon as I have a question, witness cannot have question. Step we need to make which is very strange.

SA: The voice is not the witness – may be representative. Voice has mechanical nature – may represent something higher or lower in me. For me – confusion about having to do this – stay awake. G says about levels of energy. Have experience of running low on mental energy and

rises and falls. My emotions become energised and depressed ... energy is always emotion – energetic and comes in waves. Psychic energy associated with self-observation is of a high quality ... waves go up and down. Assume I can control wave – have to learn to surf. Madame de Salzmann: have to be aware of our inattention – can study rise of attention and form of attention. Need to suffer the fact that not in control of this cosmic energy. Rise and fall with it. Depends on my preparation ... for whatever time I am on the crest, work with it. When I realised I was asleep and think ‘damn I fell asleep’, I just gave that awareness away.

Don't know where these energies are – sentience. Know that depending on the type of brain and architecture – sensitive to different wavelengths and things that lay outside of that don't exist for us. Depending on maturity and crystallization can pick up other frequencies. Frequencies will vibrate in their own pattern – exercise in intentional suffering – have to experience the rise and fall and stay in front of the fact that I am not in charge of it. Can learn to be more open, but not in charge of the energy flow. This something I want is not something I am in control of.

The work is part of me and I am in a relationship with it. It comes and visits and I learn from it.

SJ: By witnessing that I am not in control I suffer? Is it just watching the part of me that wishes for control? How is it possible to have suffering without resistance? There is something that resists.

SA: That is where non-identification becomes essential. I am aware of the pain, but don't have to become the pain or react to the pain. Difference between I am angry and I notice anger in me. That is possible. If I practice how not to identify with it even though I feel it. Getting used to recognition that I am not in control ... die to myself. Not helpless. Capacity to move towards non-identification and the witnessing state – where we can learn. Mostly just sleep walking and in a dream world. See that, feel sadness and horror, but not identify. A lot of people mistakenly believe not going to have a feeling – not like that at all. That is one aspect of intentional suffering. Connected to the fifth stage of grieving – not that I want it, accept it. Not wasting energy resisting reality – a lot of me doesn't like this, but so what? Can I deal with it without wasting energy?

SW: Extremely valuable additional approach. I didn't take a single note! Now get past anxiety that I won't remember enough about it.

SA: In an earlier part of my life, when I used to take notes, realised it made it impossible to remember because I wasn't listening. If I could find an affirming experience, I didn't have to remember, it would come back when it was needed. What is it that goes looking for a memory?

SF: Big learning is I realise the extent to which I am identified with the idea that I have the power to summon the watchman – and I don't. My approach is to think about the concept of the watchman, which does nothing. What I want to work with – if I do ask myself: who is watching the thoughts – if not body, thoughts, feelings. Useful tool.

SA: How would you describe the taste of the watchman state?

SF: Freedom, greater interest in these processes that are taking place I couldn't see before.

SA: Awareness of body or breath change?

When the watchman is present, is your body also present? For me there is a distinct taste to the state – watchman/witness.

I know that I can invite the state: relax my body, breath, wish, wait. Am I in same state as

before? – no. Learned enough to move myself to that quality of state and see what happens. In Purgatory chapter, G tells us that these beings are in a certain high state but have picked up contamination and have to work on themselves ... exist in a beautiful place – spend most of their time inside trying to work on the impurities. So much else has become free and from time to time endlessness makes an appearance. Can be interpreted as he is such a tease ... I see as encouragement. I'll be back. Purgatory is intentional suffering. I know too much, I can't do ... I am going to die. Who designed this system? ... I work when I can and presence turns up. What to do in the few seconds I am awake?

James: Touched deeply by things you have said. Realisations I have never had before – tremendous experience. Being able to think of something after 2 minutes – made a wish/aim. A huge flock of starlings flew over my house into the sun earlier today – I was thinking of that after the 2 minutes. Kept pink elephant out of the imagination.

BP: I first sense reactions. My feelings are all reactionary – to something else. Might be able to put something more positive to initiate a feeling. 2 minutes clear mind – only lasted a second. Put in sensation, but wasn't enough. Had to have a regulator to hold it in place. Watchman is fulfilling, breath is fulfilling.

James: Is the watchman the conscience?

SA: Conscience is consciousness in the feeling part. Have to define consciousness. Working with the awareness of awareness. There are different levels of consciousness. When my awareness of being aware goes into my feeling part aware of what is moving around in there. See range and complexity. In the case of remorse, when a buffer falls and I see two parts that are discordant, is a real shock. Going forward – G describes in The Tales ... if that happens with identification different without identification when I just suffer it. For myself no trouble in distinguishing between that and guilt and shame. Need to do that inside myself ... review the movie in a state of presence and develop a different reaction to it because I no longer identify myself as 'it'.

KC: I saw the dreams come in. They were images – felt delicious and tempting to go there. It is what is going to happen – go up and down – makes me feel peaceful.

SA: Daydreams don't have to go away, but don't always have to be captured by them. Where did I go? What happens? As long as we are on the upside of the identification.

RB: Impressed with how you have managed to create an atmosphere over zoom – has had a positive impact. You asked us to invoke the watcher ... meetings we have where we sit in a circle, and nobody speaks until we can tell the truth – speaking from state. Beguiling state – struggle going on – things trying to attract you in the inner world, lunges of imagination trying to capture this thing sitting there in silence. Not going to say anything if any hint you are lying. Sense of being absolutely sincere – staying silent until something worth saying. Brought me close to that and grateful.

SA: I know this as speaking from the moment. Wonderful exercise to give people. Good practice of sincerity – free association – not used to watching without not doing something or reacting. What is happening in me at the moment without having to do anything. ... just reading to you from what is going on inside – that is where all the data is and way to see less subjectively is to move towards objective witness state.

RP: Difficult for me – something deep inside that is more or less fixed – watch myself too much. Can stand for 45 mins and just watch myself (Qigong).

I see weakness, sensations of being hot, warm in my body, slouching and falling apart. Inside identification with a state that is constantly there – not mine, but I feel it.



SA: Those are feeling sensations – biochemical processes. This other feeling?

RP: A sorrow all the time.

SA: Difficult not to identify. What part is grieving and pulling the rest along. Psychotherapist ... wonderful way to speed up discover of small 'I's and agendas. Find out where the sorrow comes from and learning roots can help.

SW: Robert - I call you out because I like you so much.

SA: Another practical example of what G is talking about – different I's – sad parts of me and can end up living in fragments. Need to develop awareness of most of fragments simultaneously.

I may be the only one in the Gurdjieff Work who thinks highly of the Enneagram Personality system ... helps me understand why I react to some people in particular way.

Don't need to suffer – most suffering comes from identification and believing our stories and being stuck in conditioned responses.

Trying to stay awake but always distractions ... thoughts and reactions are carnivores – they want to eat our attention and we become their food source. Can challenge them – why do I believe that? If I learn to identify them ... a thought will appear associated with one of them, or emotional reaction – know which one that is. Helped me to be more patient and compassionate with others – what hope is there for people who don't have this knowledge?

Not responsible for being a mess, but I am responsible for working on it.

MC: Much of this session was exploration of pondering. Once I was trying to get pictures of rafters in white water and slipped and fell and was instinctive sensing of danger and body straightened out in space, rotated and fell flat on the back on a very narrow path and only at that point did the mind become aware of what happened. Experiment with raising of hand – came back. Statement – we are not our body and also not not our body either. A lot of experiencing and came up with deeper questions more than answers.

SA: That experience of the body knowing what to do when 'I' don't know what is happening.

RB: A couple of things I have noticed in terms of how I behave. One is the intervention of the moving center unasked – remember being in a pub when I was about 17 – woke me up – someone knocked the table and the pint of beer fell and I caught it in mid-air. Hadn't even noticed it and I remember saying "I can't do that". Another phenomenon – no idea what is really going on – I can be looking at the computer and I see a fly move in an area that I am not aware of – how am I doing that?

SA: It just happens and sometimes I notice it.

Not the mechanical functions of my body, but my ordinary psyche is intimately caught up with the functioning of my body. The part of me that identifies with the body – capacity above that in the witness state.

SW: The term 'the witness state'

SA: Taste – direct experience of that quality that we want to find.

SW: Giving a name to it lets me know what state I am in sometimes.

SA: Whatever helps – just not to confuse the name with the taste.

The thing that lies behind that is the most mysterious, is 'I'.















































































































































































































































































































































































