

This property newly formed in me after this event—when I, of course with the co-operation of our ALL-COMMON MASTER THE MERCILESS HEROPASS, that is the “flow of time,” was transformed into the young man already depicted by me—became for me a real inextinguishable hearth, always burning, of consciousness.

The second of the mentioned vivifying factors, this time for the complete fusion of my dear grandmother’s injunction with all the data constituting my general individuality, was the totality of impressions received from information I chanced to acquire concerning the event which took place here among us on Earth, showing the origin of that “principle” which, as it turned out according to the elucidations of Mr. Alan Kardec during an “absolutely secret” spiritualistic seance, subsequently became everywhere among beings similar to ourselves, arising and existing on all the other planets of our Great Universe, one of the chief “life principles.”

The formulation in words of this new “all-universal principle of living” is as follows:

“If you go on a spree then go the whole hog including the postage.”

As this “principle,” now already universal, arose on that same planet on which you too arose and on which, moreover, you exist almost always on a bed of roses and frequently dance the fox trot, I consider I have no right to withhold from you the information known to me, elucidating certain details of the arising of just that universal principle.

Soon after the definite inculcation into my nature of the said new inherency, that is, the unaccountable striving to elucidate the real reasons for the arising of all sorts of “actual facts,” on my first arrival in the heart of Russia,

## The Arousing of Thought, 35-42

### Alan Kardec

Gurdjieff deliberately misspells the name Allan Kardec as “Alan Kardec.” He misspells other names at various places throughout *The Tales*. It is not clear why, but in every instance it is the name of someone of whom he is critical.

Allan Kardec was the pen name of the French educator, translator, and writer Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail (1804–1869), who became famous as the founder and “codifier” of Spiritism. Rivail did not choose this pen name randomly. According to his account, during a “communication with a spirit named Zéfiro,” he was told that in a previous life, he had lived as a Druid in Gaul, and in that lifetime, his name was Allan Kardec.

In the mid-1850s, Rivail began investigating the phenomenon of “turning tables.” Starting around 1852, it became a fashionable parlor activity for groups of people to sit around a table with their fingertips lightly touching its surface, waiting for it to move. The sitters joined hands or placed fingertips on a wooden table to form a “chain of energy.” After a period of quiet concentration, the table would begin to shake, rotate, or tilt. When that happened, participants would ask questions. The “spirits” would supposedly answer them by tilting the table—for example, one tilt for “yes” and two for “no.” To spell out words, someone would recite the alphabet, and the table would tip when the correct letter was reached.

Though initially skeptical of these séances, Rivail became convinced that the communications were originating from spirits. He adopted the pseudonym Allan Kardec to separate his Spiritist writings from his professional educational works.

He codified the Spiritist movement's principles through five foundational books, often called the Spiritist Codification. They are: *The Spirits' Book* (1857), *The Mediums' Book* (1861), *The Gospel According to Spiritism* (1864), *Heaven and Hell* (1865) and *The Genesis According to Spiritism* (1868).

His teachings embraced reincarnation, maintaining that spirits inhabit different bodies over multiple lifetimes in pursuit of intellectual and moral perfection. He asserted people could communicate with the deceased via “gifted” mediums. He also asserted that life exists on other planets and that there are other planes of existence.

His grave at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris is one of the most visited. It features the inscription:

“To be born, to die, to be reborn again, and to progress constantly, such is the law.”

### A further note on Spiritism

The table turning craze was so widespread that it caught the attention of Michael Faraday, the famous physicist. In 1853, he conducted a series of rigorous experiments to determine if the table movements were caused by spirits, electricity, or “animal magnetism.” To do so, he created an apparatus using layers of cardboard and glass rollers placed between the sitters' hands and the table. His experiments revealed that the table movement was caused by the participants' own muscles moving involuntarily. Because they expected or wanted the table to move, their bodies made tiny, subconscious movements that eventually gained enough momentum to shift the furniture.

When Faraday used an indicator (a small needle) that showed the sitters they were the ones pushing the table, the “supernatural” movements immediately stopped because the participants became consciously aware of their actions.

It seems then that whatever communications occurs in séances happen, perhaps unconsciously, through the participants.

### The “all-universal principle of living”

The formulation in words of this new “all-universal principle of living” is as follows:

“If you go on a spree then go the whole hog including the postage.”

**spree:** “a lively frolic, rowdy drinking bout,” 1804, slang or colloquial, earliest in Scottish dialect works, a word of uncertain origin. Perhaps an alteration of French *esprit* “lively wit”, although early uses suggest the original pronunciation was as *spray*. According to Klein, Irish *spre* seems to be a loan-word from Old Norse *sprakr*. Watkins proposes a possible origin as an alteration of Scots *spreath* “cattle raid,” from Gaelic *sprédh*, *spré*, “cattle; wealth,” from Middle Irish *preit*, *preid*, “booty,” ultimately from Latin *praeda* “plunder, booty”.

Etymologists believe that “the whole hog” idiom developed from the act of buying an entire animal rather than just specific cuts. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, “going the whole hog” meant you weren't just settling for the cheap parts or a few sausages; you were buying the entire carcass.

This is reflected in the work of British poet William Cowper in his 1779 poem *The Love of the World Reproved*. He tells a satirical story of Muslim theologians debating which part of a hog was “forbidden” to eat. Since they couldn't agree on which specific part was haram, they ended up eating the whole thing.

In 17th and 18th-century Ireland, a “hog” was a slang term for a shilling. If someone spent a “whole hog” on one item (like a single drink), they were being extravagant or “going all out” with their money.

The phrase gained massive popularity in the United States during the 1820s and 30s. It was frequently used in the context of Andrew Jackson's presidency. His supporters were called “Whole Hogggers” because they supported his policies completely, without compromise.

Postal systems have a long history rooted in the ancient need for rulers to maintain control over vast empires. The first truly sophisticated postal system was created c. 550 BCE in Persia, under Cyrus the Great. The Persians calculated how far a horse could run at full speed before tiring and built relay stations (called Chapar Khaneh) at those exact intervals along the Royal Road. Couriers would carry a message to a relay station, then immediately transfer the message to a fresh rider and horse. The message would travel without pause.

The Romans adopted a similar system. The word “post” comes from the Latin word *positus*, the past participle of *ponere* (meaning “to place” or “to set”). In Rome, it referred to the stations (the “placed” spots) where couriers and fresh horses were positioned.

### A bed of roses

*As this “principle,” now already universal, arose on that same planet on which you too arose and on which, moreover, you exist almost always on a bed of roses...*

The term “bed of roses” is an English idiom used to describe a life or situation that is easy, comfortable, and free from trouble.

In Ancient Rome, wealthy Romans were known to fill their mattresses with rose petals or scatter them inches deep on the floor during banquets. The Roman philosopher Seneca (1st Century AD) used the image to contrast luxury with hardship. In his writings, he noted that one does not learn how to endure suffering by lying on a “bed of roses.” The idiom also took root in Renaissance poetry in its use by English poet and playwright Christopher Marlowe in his famous 1599 poem, *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*.

### The fox trot

*and on which, moreover, you exist almost always on a bed of roses and frequently dance the fox trot,*

The fox trot is a classic ballroom dance that emerged in 1914 and ultimately became the most popular dance of the 20th

century. However, it was considered rebellious and even scandalous when it first debuted.

The dance originated in New York City and was named after vaudeville performer Harry Fox. It is a smooth, progressive dance where couples travel counter-clockwise around the floor. Nowadays, it is characterized by long, flowing steps and a “Slow-Quick-Quick” or “Slow-Slow-Quick-Quick” rhythm.

To the Victorian-minded older generation of 1914, the foxtrot represented a breakdown of social morals. This was because of the physical proximity of the two dancers (the “closed hold”) where the leader’s right hand was placed firmly on the follower’s back. To critics, this was “unseemly” and suggested a level of intimacy that should not happen in a public ballroom.

The dance also coincided with a shift in women’s fashion. To perform the fox trot’s long strides, women had to ditch their restrictive corsets and wear shorter skirts. This link between the dance and the “New Woman”—who was more independent and physically active—was abhorred by social conservatives.

the city of Moscow, where, finding nothing else for the satisfaction of my psychic needs, I occupied myself with the investigation of Russian legends and sayings, I once happened—whether accidentally or as a result of some objective sequence according to a law I do not know—to learn by the way the following:

Once upon a time a certain Russian, who in external appearance was to those around him a simple merchant, had to go from his provincial town on some business or other to this second capital of Russia, the city of Moscow, and his son, his favorite one—because he resembled only his mother—asked him to bring back a certain book.

When this great unconscious author of the “all-universal principle of living” arrived in Moscow, he together with a friend of his became—as was and still is usual there—“blind drunk” on genuine “Russian vodka.”

And when these two inhabitants of this most great contemporary grouping of biped breathing creatures had drunk the proper number of glasses of this “Russian blessing” and were discussing what is called “public education,” with which question it has long been customary always to begin one’s conversation, then our merchant suddenly remembered by association his dear son’s request, and decided to set off at once to a bookshop with his friend to buy the book.

In the shop, the merchant, looking through the book he had asked for and which the salesman handed him, asked its price.

The salesman replied that the book was sixty kopecks. Noticing that the price marked on the cover of the book was only forty-five kopecks, our merchant first began pondering in a strange manner, in general unusual for Russians, and afterwards, making a certain movement with his shoulders, straightening himself up almost like a pillar and throwing out his chest like an officer of the

## Blind drunk

The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the term “blind drunk” back to at least 1740. At that time it was a figurative description of someone who was so intoxicated they could “see no better than a blind man.” It described the physical symptoms of heavy drinking—so intoxicated that one’s senses, judgment, and physical coordination are severely impaired.

Later, in the US, the phrase became associated with the dangerous bootleg liquor of the 1920s, Illegal “moonshine” or bootleg spirits were often poorly distilled or intentionally “cut” with methanol (wood alcohol). When digesting this, formic acid is produced, which specifically attacks the optic nerve.

## Russian vodka

Russian Finance Minister Sergei Witte introduced the State Vodka Monopoly in 1894 motivated in part by concerns over public health but also a desire for massive tax revenue. This eliminated the private distillers, who sold adulterated spirits, and ensured that the state received 100% of the profits. By the early 1900s, vodka revenue accounted for nearly one-third of the Russian Empire’s entire budget.

The state established strict recipes, the most famous being “Moscow Special” (Moskovskaya Osobaya), which included small amounts of sodium bicarbonate and acetic acid to soften the taste. Also, charcoal filtration was introduced and this process absorbed “fusel oils” (unpleasant fermentation byproducts), resulting in a clear, odorless spirit that became the benchmark for “Russian quality.”

At the time, vodka was rarely drunk alone. It was the centerpiece of the “Zakusochnyi Stol” (snack table), paired with salty and fatty foods like pickled cucumbers, herring, rye bread, and lard.

guards, said after a little pause, very quietly but with an intonation in his voice expressing great authority:

“But it is marked here forty-five kopecks. Why do you ask sixty?” Thereupon the salesman, making as is said the “oleaginous” face proper to all salesmen, replied that the book indeed cost only forty-five kopecks, but had to be sold at sixty because fifteen kopecks were added for postage.

After this reply to our Russian merchant who was perplexed by these two quite contradictory but obviously clearly reconcilable facts, it was visible that something began to proceed in him, and gazing up at the ceiling, he again pondered, this time like an English professor who has invented a capsule for castor oil, and then suddenly turned to his friend and delivered himself for the first time on Earth of the verbal formulation which, expressing in its essence an indubitable objective truth, has since assumed the character of a saying.

And he then put it to his friend as follows:

“Never mind, old fellow, we’ll take the book. Anyway we’re on a spree today, and ‘if you go on a spree then go the whole hog including the postage.’”

As for me, unfortunately doomed, while still living, to experience the delights of “Hell,” as soon as I had cognized all this, something very strange, that I have never experienced before or since, immediately began, and for a rather long time continued to proceed in me; it was as if all kinds of, as contemporary “Hivintzes” say, “competitive races” began to proceed in me between all the various-sourced associations and experiences usually occurring in me.

At the same time, in the whole region of my spine there began a strong almost unbearable itch, and a colic in the very center of my solar plexus, also unbearable, and all this, that is these dual, mutually stimulating sensations,

## Oleaginous

*... making as is said the “oleaginous” face proper to all salesmen,*

This word comes from the Latin *oleaginus*, meaning “of the olive tree,” referring to the oily and greasy properties of olive oil. It is used here figuratively to describe a salesman, implying someone who is slippery, insincere and employs excessive flattery.

## A capsule for castor oil.

*... he again pondered, this time like an English professor who has invented a capsule for castor oil ...*

Creating a capsule for castor oil turns out to be a highly specialized engineering task—although not one that an English Professor would be likely to concern himself with. Presumably Gurdjieff is hinting here at the laxative (purgative) properties of castor oil. The Russian merchant simply decides to purge himself of the problem rather than argue the point. And so he utters for the first time this memorable “all-universal principle of living.”

## Hivintzes

*it was as if all kinds of, as contemporary “Hivintzes” say, “competitive races” began to proceed in me between all the various-sourced associations and experiences usually occurring in me.*

Gurdjieff was unable to pronounce an English “h.” The original Russian word was probably Khivintsy (Хивинцы). This word refers to the people of the Khanate of Khiva, a historical state in Central Asia (modern-day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan).

The Khivintsy are part of a profound Central Asian equestrian culture where horses and racing have been central to life for over a thousand years. Horse races are a staple of festivals, weddings, and religious holidays. The races are typically long-distance endurance tests over open terrain, testing a horse's stamina and its rider's ability to navigate the

harsh desert and steppe environment of the Khwarazm region.

They also play a sport called Kupkari (or Ulak-kupkari), where hundreds of riders on horseback compete to grab a goat carcass and carry it to a goal. While it involves “racing” to the finish line, it is more like a massive, mounted wrestling match.

Khiva was a major trade hub on the Silk Road and was famous for its “Heavenly Horses” (Argamaks). These horses were prized for being incredibly fast, lean, and possessing a “metallic” sheen on their coats.

### Constate

This (page 38) is the first time that the word “constate” is used in the text of *The Tales*. The word means “to establish, or verify a fact.” Gurdjieff uses the word repeatedly throughout the rest of *The Tales*.

**constate:** Borrowed into English in the 18th century from the French verb *constater*. In French, *constater* means “to state as a fact, to certify, or to notice a reality.” The French term is derived from the Latin *constat*, which is the third-person singular present indicative of the verb *constare*. *con-* (together/thoroughly) + *stare* (to stand).

It is a fundamental aspect of The Work that one needs to establish for oneself what is real.

### The paragraph that spans pages 37 to 39

Starting on page 37, Gurdjieff writes a single long complex paragraph that ends on page 39. It takes some unpacking. We print the beginning and the end of this long paragraph below:

*At the same time, in the whole region of my spine there began a strong almost unbearable ...*

*... a drunken state by a person quite alien to me—some merchant of “Muscovite brand.”*

Our summary is this:

As soon as Gurdjieff understood this universal principle, his mind became a chaotic mess of competing thoughts and memories, (competitive races). This mental chaos triggered intense physical pain—an unbearable itch along his spine and a sharp, “colicky” cramping in his solar plexus.

He says that his “I” turns his attention inward and then it, i.e. the attention, constated. So, his attention constated, not his “I”.

His “I” is able to do this because it is the same “I”. The word “same,” as we learned from *Life Is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'*, is important because attention is defined as “the degree of blending of that which is the same in the impulses of observation and constation in one totality’s processes with that occurring in other totalities.”<sup>1</sup>

So his “I” has observed the same thing going on in all three totalities: sensation (itchiness in his spine), colic in his solar plexus and the thought “when you go on a spree...” in his thinking centre. So his “I” is now this same I, powerful because the attention has blended together the same data from each separate centre.

So his “I” knows only because his attention knows it, i. e. has blended all of the same data in three centres together. The “I” is defined as a “relatively transferable arising...” so it is not permanent but can range or transfer on to any function or not. It can also hover (arise) over oneself without identifying with this or that particular instinct, feeling or thought.

This gave way to a deep, rare peace (which he compared to a high-level spiritual initiation.) In this calm state, his “I” observed this principle merging with the two established values within him (grandma’s behest and the wisdom tooth) to create a new “substance” that settled into every atom of his body. He then realized that he was “fated” for the rest of his life to act in accordance with these three things. Before this, he had acted differently from others just by habit. But now he began to act with full consciousness and a sense of duty to “Great Nature.”

<sup>1</sup> *Life Is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'* p147

after the lapse of some time suddenly were replaced by such a peaceful inner condition as I experienced in later life once only, when the ceremony of the great initiation into the Brotherhood of the “Originators of making butter from air” was performed over me; and later when “I,” that is, this “something-unknown” of mine, which in ancient times one crank—called by those around him, as we now also call such persons, a “learned man”—defined as a “relatively transferable arising, depending on the quality of the functioning of thought, feeling, and organic automatism,” and according to the definition of another also ancient and renowned learned man, the Arabian Malel-Lel, which definition by the way was in the course of time borrowed and repeated in a different way by a no less renowned and learned Greek, Xenophon, “the compound result of consciousness, subconsciousness, and instinct”; so when this same “I” in this condition turned my dazed attention inside myself, then firstly it very clearly constated that everything, even to each single word, elucidating this quotation that has become an “all-universal life principle” became transformed in me into some special cosmic substance, and merging with the data already crystallized in me long before from the behest of my deceased grandmother, changed these data into a “something” and this “something” flowing everywhere through my entirety settled forever in each atom composing this entirety of mine, and secondly, this my ill-fated “I” there and then definitely felt and, with an impulse of submission, became conscious of this, for me, sad fact, that already from that moment I should willy-nilly have to manifest myself always and in everything without exception, according to this inherency formed in me, not in accordance with the laws of heredity, nor even by the influence of surrounding circumstances, but arising in my entirety

### **Making butter from air**

*... the ceremony of the great initiation into the Brotherhood of the “Originators of making butter from air” was performed over me; ...*

Metaphorically, “making butter from air” might describe the act of creating something valuable, or substantial from seemingly nothing. We were unable to find any reference to any such Brotherhood. We are unsure as to what Gurdjieff is trying to convey.

### **The Arabian Malel-Lel**

*... according to the definition of another also ancient and renowned learned man, the Arabian Malel-Lel, ...*

The term “Arabia” first emerged over 2,800 years ago, appearing first in the records of ancient Middle Eastern empires to describe the people and lands to their west and south. Its use evolved from a vague label for “desert dwellers” to a formal name for the specific geographic Arabian peninsula.

In that historical timeframe the name “Malel” (or variants like “Malel-lel”) most likely relates to a specific phonetic rendering of a local Semitic title. The name “Maleleel” would be a Greek/Latin variation of the Hebrew Mahalalel—a name that appears in the lineage of the patriarchs (he was the grandfather of Enoch). But that was a long long time before the word Arabia existed.

The name could mean “The Shining One of God” or “Praise of God.” Helel (the root H-L-L) was used throughout the Middle East to describe the Morning Star. In ancient North Arabian scripts, the word for king is “Malik.” Malel-lel could be a phonetic transcription of a title like “Malik-al-...” (King of...). Despite a long research effort, we found no individual in history with the name Malel-Lel.

### **Xenophon**

*which definition by the way was in the course of time borrowed and repeated in a different way by a no less renowned and learned Greek, Xenophon,*

Xenophon (c. 430–354 BCE) was a multi-faceted Greek figure who excelled as a soldier, historian, and philosopher. He was a student of Socrates, but he is also remembered for his daring military leadership and for writing the world's first first-person military memoir.

As a young man, he was part of the intellectual circle surrounding Socrates. Unlike Plato, who focused on abstract metaphysics, Xenophon's interest in Socratic thought leaned toward practical ethics and leadership.

His "Socratic works" (like *Memorabilia*) provide a crucial alternative perspective to Plato. Xenophon portrays Socrates as a practical moral teacher concerned with civic duty and self-control. He pioneered the "biographical novel" with *Cyropaedia* (*The Education of Cyrus*), which explores the qualities of an ideal ruler and influenced political thinkers for centuries.



under the influence of three external accidental causes, having nothing in common, namely: thanks in the first place to the behest of a person who had become, without the slightest desire on my part, a passive cause of the cause of my arising; secondly, on account of a tooth of mine knocked out by some ragamuffin of a boy, mainly on account of somebody else's "slobberiness"; and thirdly, thanks to the verbal formulation delivered in a drunken state by a person quite alien to me—some merchant of "Muscovite brand."

If before my acquaintance with this "all-universal principle of living" I had actualized all manifestations differently from other biped animals similar to me, arising and vegetating with me on one and the same planet, then I did so automatically, and sometimes only half consciously, but after this event I began to do so consciously and moreover with an instinctive sensation of the two blended impulses of self-satisfaction and self-cognizance in correctly and honorably fulfilling my duty to Great Nature.

It must even be emphasized that although even before this event I already did everything not as others did, yet my manifestations were hardly thrust before the eyes of my fellow countrymen around me, but from the moment when the essence of this principle of living was assimilated in my nature, then on the one hand all my manifestations, those intentional for any aim and also those simply, as is said, "occurring out of sheer idleness," acquired vivifyingness and began to assist in the formation of "corns" on the organs of perception of every creature similar to me without exception who directed his attention directly or indirectly toward my actions, and on the other hand, I myself began to carry out all these actions of mine in accordance with the injunctions of my deceased grandmother to the utmost possible limits; and the practice was automatically acquired in me on beginning anything new

### Ragamuffin

... a tooth of mine knocked out by some ragamuffin of a boy, ...

**Ragamuffin:** mid-14c., "demon;" late 14c., "a ragged lout," also in surnames (Isabella Ragamuffyn, 1344), from Middle English *raggi* "ragged" + "fanciful ending" [OED 1989], or perhaps the second element is Middle Dutch *muffe* "mitten." As Johnson has it, "From rag and I know not what else." Ragged was used of the devil from c. 1300 in reference to his "shaggy" appearance. *Raggeman* (late 13c. as a surname, presumably "one who goes about in tattered clothes") was used by Langland as the name of a demon (late 14c.), and compare Old French *Ragamoffyn*, name of a demon in a mystery play. The specific sense of "dirty, disreputable boy" is attested by 1580s. Also compare *ragabash* "idle, worthless fellow" (c. 1600).

### Slobber

... a tooth of mine knocked out by some ragamuffin of a boy, mainly on account of somebody else's "slobberiness"; ...

**slobber:** late 14c., *sloberen*, "dribble from the mouth," probably of imitative origin; compare Frisian *slobberje* "to slurp," Middle Low German *slubberen* "slurp," Middle Dutch *overslubberen* "wade through a ditch." Related: Slobbered; slobbering. As noun from c. 1400 as "mud, slime," 1755 as "saliva." Congreve has *slabber* (v.), from Middle Dutch *slabberen*.

### Muscovite Brand

... by a person quite alien to me—some merchant of "Muscovite brand."

First consider the word "brand." It has the following etymology:

**brand:** Old English *brand*, *brond* "fire, flame, destruction by fire; firebrand, piece of burning wood, torch," and (poetic) "sword," from Proto-Germanic *brandaz* "a burning" (source also of Old Norse *brandr*, Old High

German *brant*, Old Frisian *brond* "firebrand; blade of a sword," German *brand* "fire"). The meaning "iron instrument for branding" is from 1828. The meaning "mark made by a hot iron" (1550s), especially on a cask, etc., to identify the maker or quality of its contents, had broadened by 1827 to include marks made in other ways, then to "a particular make of goods" (1854). Brand-name is from 1889; brand-loyalty from 1961. Old French *brand*, *brant*, Italian *brando* "sword" are from Germanic.

We might be inclined to think that Muscovite simply means an inhabitant of Moscow, except that this merchant, as previously stated in the text, was not from Moscow at all, but from the Russian provinces. This is reinforced by the word "brand" implying that the merchant was fundamentally (i.e. branded) a Muscovite. The word Muscovite has several possible implications:

1. In literature and history, "Muscovite" evokes a specific aesthetic of pre-Petrine (before Peter the Great) Russia. It suggests stasis, religious orthodoxy, and ancient tradition. To call something "Muscovite" in a literary sense is to call it heavy, ornate, and steeped in a medieval past.
2. Historically, "Muscovite" was used by Western Europeans to distinguish the people of the Moscow-centered state from "Europeans." It suggests a culture that is inherently alien, Asiatic, or semi-Oriental, rather than Western. So, by calling someone a Muscovite instead of a Russian, it may imply that the person belongs to a tradition of "Eastern despotism" that is fundamentally incompatible with Western liberal values.
3. In contemporary Eastern European discourse (particularly in Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic states), the term is sometimes used to strip away the "All-Russian" identity and frame the Russian state as merely the "Muscovite Tsardom"—suggesting an expansionist power occupying territories that do not belong to it. Because Moscow was the engine of the unification of Russian lands, "Muscovite" often carries the weight of unrelenting central power. Thus it may

imply a "center-of-the-universe" mentality where the periphery exists only to serve the capital.

4. Due to the climate of Moscow and the historical reputation of its rulers (such as Ivan the Terrible), the word has developed a figurative association with severity. A "Muscovite" temperament is often depicted as stoic, cold, calculating, and perhaps slightly ruthless. It suggests a person hardened by a harsh environment and an even harsher political system.
5. In early modern diplomatic texts, "The Muscovite" was often used as a title for the Tsar when Western monarchs wanted to subtly insult him by denying him the title of "Emperor" or "King of all the Russias."

Our view is that Gurdjieff intends us to take the first of these different implications of "Muscovite."

## Corns

*... began to assist in the formation of "corns" on the organs of perception of every creature similar to me without exception ...*

Corns do not normally form on the organs of perception, so we can assume this is a metaphor. But we will probably know that from the many mentions by Gurdjieff of "corns" in the Work literature. For example:

*And what seems to be positive in the emotional states experienced by people in ordinary waking state can go sour and turn into negativity with just a little pressure on one of what Gurdjieff called our "corns"—sensitive psychological issues and images which are generally founded on pride or vanity.<sup>1</sup>*

Biologically, a corn is the result of a process where the skin's outer layer (the stratum corneum) thickens in response to chronic mechanical stress. They are frequent on toes and the sole of the foot, due to the constant pressure of footwear, but can develop in other areas of the body where there is repetitive friction or pressure.

<sup>1</sup> *The Gurdjieff Work* by Kathleen Riordan Speeth p46

Because of frequent friction, the body detects potential tissue damage. To prevent an open ulcer or blister, the skin accelerates the production of keratin, a tough, fibrous protein. The keratinized cells "pile up" into a dense, conical shape that points inward, pressing into the deeper, nerve-rich layers of the dermis. This is why they are often painful, particularly if subjected to pressure.

Metaphorically, the foot symbolizes personality and corns symbolizes sensitive areas of personality that Gurdjieff was adept at discovering and pressing down on.

So the paragraph:

*... on the one hand all my manifestations, those intentional for any aim and also those simply, as is said, "occurring out of sheer idleness," acquired vivifyingness and began to assist in the formation of "corns" on the organs of perception of every creature similar to me without exception who directed his attention directly or indirectly toward my actions, and on the other hand, I myself began to carry out all these actions of mine in accordance with the injunctions of my deceased grandmother ...*

... states that Gurdjieff's manifestations became energized and irritated everyone around him and, as suggested by his grandmother, he didn't do as others do.

## The whole Universe

*This psycho-organic principle of mine I shall this time begin to actualize not by following the practice of all writers, established from the remote past down to the present, of taking as the theme of their various writings the events which have supposedly taken place, or are taking place, on Earth, but shall take instead as the scale of events for my writings—the whole Universe.*

True to his word, Gurdjieff does indeed write about the whole universe and he does so from multiple perspectives. It could also be said that he chooses to touch on many separate topics that would be unlikely to be brought together in any book other than an encyclopedia.

and also at any change, of course on a large scale, always to utter silently or aloud:

“If you go on a spree then go the whole hog including the postage.”

And now, for instance, in the present case also, since, owing to causes not dependent on me, but flowing from the strange and accidental circumstances of my life, I happen to be writing books, I am compelled to do this also in accordance with that same principle which has gradually become definite through various extraordinary combinations created by life itself, and which has blended with each atom of my entirety.

This psycho-organic principle of mine I shall this time begin to actualize not by following the practice of all writers, established from the remote past down to the present, of taking as the theme of their various writings the events which have supposedly taken place, or are taking place, on Earth, but shall take instead as the scale of events for my writings—the whole Universe. Thus in the present case also, “If you take then take!”—that is to say, “If you go on a spree then go the whole hog including the postage.”

Any writer can write within the scale of the Earth, but I am not any writer.

Can I confine myself merely to this, in the objective sense, “paltry Earth” of ours? To do this, that is to say, to take for my writings the same themes as in general other writers do, I must not, even if only because what our learned spirits affirm might suddenly indeed prove true; and my grandmother might learn of this; and do you understand what might happen to her, to my dear beloved grandmother? Would she not turn in her grave, not once, as is usually said, but—as I understand her, especially now when I can already quite “skillfully” enter into the position of another—she would turn so many

times that she would almost be transformed into an “Irish weathercock.”

Please, reader, do not worry ... I shall of course also write of the Earth, but with such an impartial attitude that this comparatively small planet itself and also everything on it shall correspond to that place which in fact it occupies and which, even according to your own sane logic, arrived at thanks of course to my guidance, it must occupy in our Great Universe.

I must, of course, also make the various what are called “heroes” of these writings of mine not such types as those which in general the writers of all ranks and epochs on Earth have drawn and exalted, that is to say, types such as any Tom, Dick, or Harry, who arise through a misunderstanding, and who fail to acquire during the process of their formation up to what is called “responsible life,” anything at all which it is proper for an arising in the image of God, that is to say a man, to have, and who progressively develop in themselves to their last breath only such various charms as for instance: “lasciviousness,” “slobberiness,” “amorousness,” “maliciousness,” “chickenheartedness,” “enviousness,” and similar vices unworthy of man.

I intend to introduce in my writings heroes of such type as everybody must, as is said, “willy-nilly” sense with his whole being as real, and about whom in every reader data must inevitably be crystallized for the notion that they are indeed “somebody” and not merely “just anybody.”

During the last weeks, while lying in bed, my body quite sick, I mentally drafted a summary of my future writings and thought out the form and sequence of their exposition, and I decided to make the chief hero of the first series of my writings ... do you know whom? ... the Great Beelzebub Himself—even in spite of the fact that this choice of mine might from the very beginning

### The Irish weathercock.

... and do you understand what might happen to her, to my dear beloved grandmother? Would she not turn in her grave, not once, as is usually said, but—as I understand her, especially now when I can already quite “skillfully” enter into the position of another—she would turn so many times that she would almost be transformed into an “Irish weathercock.”

The weathercock Gurdjieff is probably referencing is the Salmon of Shandon, which perches on top of the 170-foot Shandon Bells tower of St. Anne’s Church, Cork. It is, of course, not exactly a weathercock, but a 13-foot-long “weatherfish”, the most famous weather vane in Ireland. The fish is, of course, a potent Christian symbol.



Fig 7. The Irish weathercock.

### Heroes of such type...

*I must, of course, also make the various what are called “heroes” of these writings of mine not such types as those which in general the writers of all ranks and epochs on Earth have drawn and exalted, ...*

In English literature, there are several different categories of hero types:

- The **warrior hero**, embodying the values of a warrior. Think Achilles or Boewolf in classical literature. Modern day version are comicbook heroes like Batman, Spiderman et al. Often they have to fight against some major weakness. to protect their community.
- The **gallant knight** (a chivalric hero) emerged in early English romances derived from Arthurian legend. This hero is a blend of power and refined conduct. They are

generally governed by some “code of chivalry”—loyalty, courtesy (toward women), and a degree of religious piety. They struggle against temptation.

- The **tragic hero** is typified by many Shakespearean characters. They are noble, but possessed of a tragic flaw that leads to an inner struggle that inevitably causes their downfall.
- The **outcast hero** (the Byronic Hero) is moody, cynical, highly intelligent, and emotionally “wounded.” Good examples are Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* or Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. They are social outcasts who reject conventional morality, and tend to brood over some “secret” past.
- The **anti-hero** (or everyman hero) is ordinary, rather than noble. They struggle with everyday life and societal pressures. They may lack heroic qualities like courage or idealism. They maybe dishonest, or even passive, yet they are the command the reader’s attention.

The heroes of *The Tales* do not conform to such literary “heroic models.” All of them, particularly the anti-hero, fail to acquire during the process of their formation up to what is called “responsible life,” anything at all which it is proper for an arising in the image of God.

## Beelzebub

... the Great Beelzebub Himself—even in spite of the fact that this choice of mine might from the very beginning evoke in the mentation of most of my readers such mental associations as must engender in them all kinds of automatic contradictory impulses ...

The associations that arise in the reader’s mind will depend entirely on the various sources which engendered them. However, it is very likely that the automatic picture engendered by these associations will be very negative.

Beelzebub is a synonym for the Devil. Etymologically, the name came from the name of a Canaanite deity Ba’al Zebul,

where *Ba’al* meant “Lord” and *Zebul* implied “Height,” or “Exalted Dwelling.”

Ba’al Zebub (similar but not the same) appears in the Old Testament (2 Kings 1). It appears that the ancient Israelites intentionally changed the last syllable to mock the foreign god—Zebub being the Hebrew word for “Fly.” Ba’al Zebub was thus “Lord of the Flies.” (From where William Golding got the title for his famous book *Lord of the Flies*.)

In the Greek New Testament and Rabbinical literature, the name often appears as Beelzebul or Beelzeboul. This form of the name served as a dark pun in Aramaic and Hebrew—*Zebel*: meaning “dung”—hence “Lord of the Dungheap.”

By the time of Jesus, the name Beelzebub had been thoroughly “demonized.” It was used by the Pharisees as a title for the “Prince of Demons” (Matthew 12:24).

In Dante’s *Inferno* (1320) Beelzebub is not a separate character from the ruler of Hell; rather, Beelzebub is one of the various names Dante uses for Satan.

In John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667), Milton depicts Beelzebub as Satan’s second-in-command, arguably the most important character in Hell after the Devil himself. He is not a monster, but a fallen angel of immense majesty and intellect. While Satan is the fiery, ambitious leader, Beelzebub is the pragmatic counselor.

In various occult and theological traditions, Beelzebub was not just a common angel but a high-ranking member of the celestial hierarchy. In many Catholic demonology traditions (such as the *Admirable History* by Sébastien Michaëlis), Beelzebub was a Seraph, which is the highest order of angels, who had served under the Archangel Gabriel.

Most traditions that treat him as a separate entity from Satan place him at the very center of the war in Heaven. He is often depicted as the first angel to join Satan’s rebellion. Because of his high status and powerful intellect, he became the Chief Lieutenant of the rebel army.

Gurdjieff never mentions Satan in *The Tales*, preferring the name Lucifer. Gurdjieff's Beelzebub is distinct from Lucifer and was personally responsible for the revolution in Heaven, which led to exile.

### Lucifer

The word "Lucifer" is not a name in that originates from biblical texts. It comes from the Latin *lucifer*, which literally means "light-bringer" (*lux* "light" + *ferre* "to bear"). As such, in the Roman world it was the name for the planet Venus, which appears as the "Morning Star" just before sunrise. In the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 14:12), the title is Helel ben Shahaar, meaning "shining one, son of the morning."


So Lucifer's "origin story" as a fallen angel follows a similar path to the demonization of Beelzebub. The passage in Isaiah 14 was originally a taunt directed at a human king of Babylon, comparing his political downfall to a star falling from the sky.

Early Church Fathers began to interpret this passage metaphorically. They linked the "falling star" in Isaiah to Jesus' statement in the New Testament: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). This had the effect of merging the two figures, creating the modern "Lucifer": God's most beautiful and highest-ranking archangel who, fueled by pride, led a rebellion against the Creator and was cast down to become Satan (the "Adversary").

Gurdjieff's Lucifer is such a human adversary.

evoke in the mentation of most of my readers such mental associations as must engender in them all kinds of automatic contradictory impulses from the action of that totality of data infallibly formed in the psyche of people owing to all the established abnormal conditions of our external life, which data are in general crystallized in people owing to the famous what is called “religious morality” existing and rooted in their life, and in them, consequently, there must inevitably be formed data for an inexplicable hostility towards me personally.

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### Abnormal conditions

This is the first instance in *The Tales* where Gurdjieff states that the modern conditions of life are abnormal.

### Religious morality

**morality:** late 14c., *moralite*, “moral qualities, virtuous conduct or thought,” from Old French *moralite* (Modern French *moralité*) “moral (of a story); moral instruction; morals, moral character” (13c.) and directly from Late Latin *moralitatem* (nominative *moralitas*) “manner, character,” from Latin *moralis* “of manners or morals; moral” (see moral (adj.)). Meaning “doctrine or system of ethical duties” is from mid-15c. Meaning “goodness, characteristic of being moral, virtuousness” is attested from 1590s.

In general culturally accepted morality derives from religious scripture:

- Judaism: from The Torah
- Christianity: from The Gospel / New Testament
- Islam: from The Quran / Sharia.
- Buddhism: from The Five Precepts and The Eightfold Path
- Hinduism: from The Dharma

Those who adhere to any of the first three of these will naturally feel a kind of animosity to anyone who champions a notorious fallen angel.