

***Beelzebub's Tales***  
in  
**Gurdjieff's *All and Everything***

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The iconoclasm of this book is so violent that Nietzsche's iconoclasm seems by comparison feeble. To quote his own words the Author has wished

to destroy mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and the feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.

The first surprise is to discover that the hero of this series of adventures is none other than Beelzebub, the prophetic divinity of the Old Testament, the Prince of Demons of the Evangelists. In *All and Everything* Beelzebub, who was born on the planet Karatas, enters the service of His Infinity on the Sun Absolute; from there he thinks he notices something "illogical" in the behaviour of the Universe. Being young, head-strong and rebellious he tries to intervene in the ordering of things, and to punish him for his unfortunate attempt he is exiled to a distant solar system—our own. His conduct on Mars, Saturn and on our Earth is so meritorious that, after many centuries, His Infinity forgives him and allow him to return to his native planet. We first meet him on the interplanetary-spaceship travelling towards Karatas; to pass the time he tells his grandson Hassein, the story of his six descents to Earth. The first descent was during the Atlantean civilisation and the last one lands him in America in 1921.

Beelzebub is an extraordinary creation; he has been given a cosmic point of view, and a historical perspective that goes back almost as far as the origins of mankind. He speaks of human communities as a much-travelled Parisian might speak of African settlements, and his historical knowledge extends into the past as far as the time when a collision separated two fragments from the Earth, the Moon and another satellite unknown to astronomers. All said and done, Beelzebub is a wonderful story-teller, much better even than Sheherazade.

He manages to discuss almost everything that has exercised the human mind in the past. Here is a very incomplete list of the subjects he broaches to enlighten his grandson:

- the civilisations beyond the Gobi Desert
- the distortions incurred by Buddhist teaching
- the real significance of the Last Supper
- the re-instatement of Judas
- the esoteric meaning of the architecture of Mont-Saint-Michel
- perpetual motion
- the mysteries of electricity
- Bolshevik revolutions in ancient Egypt
- the riddle of the Sphinx
- polygamy in Persia
- objective music that can cause a boil to appear on a man's leg
- the persecution of Mesmer
- the bad effects of the cult of Sport in Britain
- the bad effects of American food
- the experience of emptiness on Saturn
- the fact that Leonardo da Vinci succeeded in discovering nearly all the secrets of objective art

On reading *All and Everything* one soon realises that it is a strange kind of allegory. The book most like it that I can think of is *A Tale of a Tub* by Swift. What is the key of this allegory? The author tells us in the Epilogue, where he describes man as a mechanical being, without real freedom, who nevertheless, thanks to a special training, can harmonise his "three brains" and acquire initiative and will-power.

It is safe to predict that at first *All and Everything* will not make much of a stir and will probably be considered a heavy book, but I believe it will endure, attract more and more readers and prove a rich source for future writers.

