



Tale of Two Sermons, by G.I. Gurdjieff

I must tell you that in our brotherhood there are two very old brethren; one is called Brother Ahl and the other Brother Sez. These brethren have voluntarily undertaken the obligation of periodically visiting all the monasteries of our order and explaining various aspects of the essence of divinity. Our order has four monasteries, one of them ours, the second in the valley of the Pamir, the third in Tibet and the fourth in India. And so these brethren, Ahl and Sez, constantly travel from one monastery to another and preach there.

They come to us twice a year. Their arrival at our monastery is considered among us a very great event. On the days when either of them is here, the soul of every one of us experiences pure heavenly pleasure and tenderness. The sermons of these two brethren, who are to an almost equal degree holy men and who speak the same truths, have nevertheless a different effect on all our brethren and on me in particular.

When Brother Sez speaks it is indeed like the song of the birds in Paradise; from what he says one is quite, so to say, turned inside out; one becomes as though entranced. His speech purls like a stream and one no longer wishes anything else in life but to listen to the voice of Brother Sez. But Brother Ahl's speech has almost the opposite effect. He speaks badly and indistinctly, evidently because of his age. No one knows how old he is. Brother Sez is also very old, but he is still a hale old man, whereas in Brother Ahl the weakness of old age is clearly evident.

The stronger the impression made at the moment by the words of Brother Sez, the more this impression evaporates until there ultimately remains in the hearer nothing at all. But in the case of Brother Ahl, although at first what he says makes almost no impression, later, the gist of it takes on definite form, more and more each day, and is instilled as a whole into the heart and remains there forever.

When we became aware of this and began trying to discover why it was so, we came to the unanimous conclusion that the sermons of Brother Sez proceeded only from his mind and therefore acted on our minds, whereas those of Brother Ahl proceeded from his being and acted on our being.

Yes, professor, knowledge and understanding are quite different. Only understanding can lead us to being whereas knowledge is but a passing presence in it.

--G.I. Gurdjieff, in 'Meetings with Remarkable Men'

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