

Science of Idiotism Extended – 717 Words

SCIENCE OF IDIOTISM

TOAST OF THE IDIOTS

“There are twenty-one gradations of reason from that of the ordinary man to that of Our Endlessness, that is, God. No one can reach the Absolute Reason of God, and only the sons of God like Jesus Christ can have the two gradations of reason that are nineteenth and twentieth. Therefore the aim of every being who aspires to perfection must be to reach the eighteenth gradation. You must understand that the people you know do not have any reason at all. They live in their dreams and have no connection with reality. Whoever has any contact with reality is called an Idiot. The word idiot has two meanings: the true meaning that was given to it by the ancient sages was *to be oneself*. A man who is himself looks and behaves like a madman to those who live in the world of illusions: so when they call a man an idiot they mean that he does not share their illusions.

“Everyone who decides to work on himself is an idiot in both meanings. The wise know that he is seeking for reality. The foolish think he has taken leave of his senses. We here are supposed to be seeking for reality, so we should all be idiots: but no one can make you an idiot. You must choose it for yourself. That is why everyone who visits us here and wishes to remain in contact with us, is allowed to choose his own idiotism. Then all the rest of us will wish from our hearts that he will truly become that idiot. For this alcohol was used by the ancient sages; not to get drunk, but to strengthen the power to wish.”

Gurdjieff had a fixed ritual in proposing the toast of the idiots. The Director started with ordinary idiots, going on to the super idiot, then the arch idiot. The fourth, the hopeless idiot, was again and again chosen by Gurdjieff for an explanation of what he meant by dying an honorable death. The false hopeless idiot is satisfied with himself and does not see that he is a ‘candidate for perishing like a dog!’ The true hopeless idiot sees his own complete nothingness and does not realize that this death of self is the guarantee of his resurrection. From this stage he becomes a compassionate idiot, whose reason has opened to enter into the sufferings of others. The sixth is the squirming idiot who is not yet ready for help. There are then three ‘geometric’ idiots – square, round and zigzag – who represent stages in the establishment of true reason, at first only momentarily, then comes the discovery of one’s own identity and third the desperate struggle to break free. Gurdjieff said of him that he ‘has five Friday’s in the week’ – an example of a meaningless saying that communicates better than much good sense.

At the Saturday evening meals, the toasts seldom went beyond the zigzag idiot, unless he wished to associate someone present with the characteristics of one of the next series. These are the enlightened, the doubting and swaggering idiots. Beyond these again are idiots whose characteristics are deep in their essential nature. At each stage there is a death and resurrection before a new gradation of reason is attained.

Gurdjieff gave a most significant twist to the Science of Idiotism when he explained that no one could go beyond the enlightened idiot unless he had first ‘consciously descended’ to the first gradation of the ordinary idiot. His explanations made it clear that he was referring to the same

secret as Jesus when he said: “Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.” Having heard scores of times Gurdjieff’s explanations of the idiot toasts, I can only marvel at the insights into human nature that he was able to express in such simple terms. His talks about the tragic situation of the enlightened idiot whom ‘even God could not help’ invariably sent a shudder of horror down my spine. Nothing has done so much to convince me that we must totally shed any pretension to be ‘special people’ if we hope to attain true freedom.

Gurdjieff: Making A New World
by: J. G. Bennett
pages 157-158