

COURSE SYNTHESIS NO. 14

THE CIRCLES OF HUMANITY THE DIFFERENT PATHS

Man can be classified into different worlds or circles. The external world, or outer circle, consists of ordinary people. The exoteric circle, composed of those people who are interested in a spiritual teaching, has four gates of access. The third circle is the mesoteric circle, composed of those people who are not only interested in a teaching but who have started applying its principles, engaging themselves on a spiritual path, which consists in meditative practice and the application of certain rules of life and moral qualities.

Three different ways can be practiced, corresponding to three different types of schools: the way of the monk, usually practiced by someone who is predominantly emotional, the way of the ascetic (or way of the fakir), more adapted to physical man, and the way of the sage or scholar, generally practiced by intellectual man.

Certain people engaged on these paths may, with time, reach the inner circle, the esoteric circle. These different circles coexist everywhere where a teaching is given.

There also exists a special way, a direct way; this is known as the Fourth Way, or the way of the clever man. This is the way that is most adapted to man of today.

The Sufis compare man to a house. They say that in his ignorance, he is only living in the very smallest room, in spite of the fact that there are four other, much more spacious rooms. Since he is afraid, he never steps out of his accustomed room. However, some people who are more curious decide to set out in search of the other rooms.

One of the rooms corresponds to the physical way. Some people explore this room, finding it so interesting in comparison with the little room they had previously been living in that they remain there all their lives. In this room they succeed in acquiring great strength and the mastery of will as a result of many sacrifices, much renunciation, and many exercises which may sometimes seem quite strange to us. Unfortunately, this mastery is acquired at the expense of the possibility of exploring further rooms, and one life is insufficient to attain their goal.

Other people – monks, mystics, and sometimes artists – choose to visit the room in which they learn to transform their emotional world, directing it toward the feeling of devotion toward God, love of God, the force of Beauty. But this transformation often takes place at the expense of the body, which is treated harshly or which degrades to the point that the evolution they are seeking becomes impossible.

Still other people explore the room corresponding to the development of Knowledge. Here they learn to understand other people and the world. But just like the ascetic and the monk, the scholar passes his entire life in this room.

None of the people engaged on any of these three paths succeeds in exploring the fourth room, which is in fact the most beautiful and elevated of them all.

The ascetic thinks he is conquering a force of evil which dominates the world of matter, the asuras. The monk thinks he is dominating another force of evil, Lucifer, who exercises his influence on the astral world. The scholar thinks he is conquering the force of evil that rigidifies the intellect, Ahriman.

These three ways are very difficult; they require one to withdraw from the world and enter a school specific to the way in question, and these schools are rare and not always serious. The ascetic imitates a master, the monk must completely submit himself to the authority of his master, and the scholar must learn for a very long time from those who have preceded him before he can himself become creative.

The way most suited to man of today is the Fourth Way. It does not require us to withdraw from the world, but allows us to continue living our family, social, and professional lives. Even further, this life is considered to be necessary for the compensation of our karma. It thus represents the very best place for us to progress toward the realisation of ourselves, since it corresponds to who we are, that is, to what the past has made of us.

Work is done simultaneously in the physical, emotional, and intellectual realms, since this teaching presents an idea that the other teachings do not reveal until the very end of their respective paths. This idea says that in order to evolve, it is sufficient to produce a certain substance, a particular energy, which the pupil of the Fourth Way learns to produce himself or to draw from the external world. Certain masters call this “swallowing the pill.” At this moment, the path that requires an entire lifetime on the other ways requires only a few years for someone who is truly engaged on the Fourth Way.

This path consists firstly in the practice of meditation and self-remembering, but also in developing certain moral qualities in one’s relationships with other people, and finally in acquiring knowledge of oneself and of the principles that govern the functioning of worlds. On the Fourth Way, it is not sufficient to understand these principles intellectually; they must be genuinely lived and felt inside us.

There exist four inseparable principles, four verbs that can be found in all the schools of wisdom, Eastern or Western: to know, to dare, to want, and to keep silent.

To know what must be done, for example, to dare to do it, to want to follow the teaching and understand it. An example of keeping silent is to not talk about the teaching to someone outside of the teaching, since he or she would not understand it. It also means to stop useless chatter.

The Fourth Way corresponds to true Rosicrucianism, or Christian Rosicrucianism, which is not connected to the movements that call themselves Rosicrucian.

The three initial ways have always existed and will continue to exist in order to allow a few special types of people, for karmic reasons, to realise themselves. They will continue to exist for a long time and will permit certain men and women to truly evolve.

As for the Fourth Way, it has the particularity of only manifesting itself periodically, and for a length of time that cannot exceed 100 years, since it must each time be newly adapted to the contingency; if this were not the case, it would necessarily become rigidified. If the pupils survive the instructor, they continue to pass on the teaching, but the teaching itself progressively deteriorates.

Each time, a new instructor bringing a new impulse is necessary, and only through such an impulse is it possible for humanity to progress. It is for this reason that the people who claim to be the guardians of a tradition of the past are certainly referring to a teaching that has already become rigidified.

This rule of a hundred years was true up until the beginning of the 19th century. In our day, man and the earth are in such a state of spiritual emergency that things happen more quickly.

The real way we can help the earth is by progressing on a spiritual path, provided there are a sufficient number of people who practice it seriously.

This is the reason why this teaching exists. In the past, the mysteries were guarded in schools; today it is possible, while remaining in the external world, to bring about progress through the level of being one manifests, through one's living example. This is what motivates the other person to ask the question, "But how did you get to be the way you are?" Only when the other person asks this question can one reply to him. It is incidentally not right to want to convince other people of the truth of this teaching, to want to convert them; this leads absolutely nowhere.

In order to become engaged on a spiritual path, three things are necessary : to want to meet one's Creator, with the awareness that we owe everything to Him, to be kind to other people at all times, and to be always honest and sincere with ourselves, accepting ourselves as we are.