

COURSE SYNTHESIS NO. 26

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRITUAL SCHOOLS

There are actually three reasons to undertake a spiritual or inner path: our own personal evolution, to help other people, and to serve God, the divine, and humanity.

Although such a path allows the seeker to continue living his social, professional, and family life normally, he cannot progress on the path alone. Inner evolution, just as any form of evolution, is governed by the law of the octave, that is, it follows seven stages that are punctuated by two points of interruption, two “intervals,” that must be bridged in order for the following stage to be reached. But it is as good as impossible for an isolated individual to bridge these intervals by himself. Indeed, in order to evolve innerly, we must make parallel efforts along three lines: in addition to work on ourselves – which comprises the first line – we must work with other people – the second line – and also for the school – the third line, with the awareness that the two intervals are present in each of these lines, and that the simultaneous work on all three lines is what permits them to be bridged.

Work on the first line includes several aspects: the acquisition of knowledge through study, which implies the will to truly understand, the reflection on ourselves and our own lives, meditation, and efforts to change ourselves for the better, especially in our attitudes toward the people who are close to us. Our first obligation on a spiritual path is to learn to know ourselves, by means of study, reflection, and observation, in order to see what we need to change.

A minimum of understanding is necessary in order to work correctly and start practicing correctly. In a spiritual school, the teaching must always be put into practice concretely, and we always need to know *why* we are making a certain effort on the path, since our understanding conditions the result we will obtain. It is incidentally the quality of the pupils and their work, and not the quality of the teaching, that determines the quality of an esoteric school or school of the Fourth Way.

On this first line, we receive. In a school of the Fourth Way, a considerable amount of knowledge is given that it is impossible for us to discover on our own, even if we happen to be the greatest genius of all ages, since it originates in a consciousness that is higher than the consciousness of man. But we must put the knowledge we acquire into practice, we must give it or pass it on further in one form or another; otherwise it is as if it had been stolen, and what is more, the knowledge will act as a foreign body in our soul and even have a destructive effect on us, just as a foreign physical object in our physical body that our organism is incapable of assimilating.

One way of passing on the knowledge we have acquired is to share it with other people on the Path, in the context of our work on the second line, in which we both give and receive, with the awareness that in the spiritual domain, certain things can only be truly understood when we talk about them with other people. Work with other people also permits us to experience friction with them, and this corresponds to a necessity on the path, namely of discovering and overcoming certain negative aspects of ourselves. This confrontation is equally indispensable to our progress.

As for the third line – work for the school – this consists in helping the school to exist and transmitting the Teaching to other people besides those who already benefit from it. On the third line, we place our talents, aptitudes, and abilities at the service of the school and the Teaching. When we do not do what we are capable of doing for the school, we are not working, or not working correctly, on this third line, on which our effort consists in giving. The development of the school, the fact that there are continually new people who are touched by the teaching – particularly thanks to the publication of the books – is a necessity for the pupils' own evolution, since a given individual can only evolve on his own path when another person is willing to occupy the place he has left vacant. This opening of the Teaching is also necessary in order to avoid the rigidification that necessarily besets any group of pupils that is closed in upon itself and around an instructor.

Let us now turn our attention to the subject of knowledge. Knowledge is material and thus limited in quantity. At a given moment of its evolution, humanity has at its disposal a definite quantity of knowledge in connection with the level of consciousness of its individual members. Due to the limited character of the quantity of knowledge available, if this knowledge were to be distributed among a very great number of individuals, each of them would receive only very little. Such a dilution of knowledge would have practically no effect whatsoever on the evolution of the humanity, since this evolution is not brought about by the masses – the fact that knowledge is so available and widespread in our day, incidentally, poses a significant threat to humanity – but by the individuals who, using the quantity of knowledge they have received, become truly creative and place this knowledge at the service of other people.

If the limited character of knowledge prevents it from being given to everyone, it is also true that few people, in fact too few people, are really interested in it at all. The study of knowledge demands at once intelligence, heart, and will, and more of these than is demanded by the acquisition of any other kind of knowledge – indeed, a great deal of work and very many efforts are necessary – as well as the help of someone who is more evolved, who has already travelled the path, with the awareness that a precondition for the transmission of knowledge is the presence of a sufficient number of interested people gathered together in the context of a school.

In order to have access to this knowledge, we need to set out on the path that leads to it, and the further we progress on this path, the more we understand and the fewer mysteries there are.