

## COURSE SYNTHESIS NO. 33

### LISTEN, SO THAT WE MAY ONE DAY UNDERSTAND THE NECESSITY OF REPETITION JUSTIFICATIONS AND BUFFERS

The Evangelist Matthew wrote in a parable: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” (Matthew, chapter 7, verse 6)

And in another parable, that of the sower, which he subsequently explains (Matthew, chapter 13, verses 4-16), he speaks of the seeds that fall by the wayside and are eaten by the birds, commenting that this refers to someone who hears the Word without understanding it. Then Evil arrives and takes possession of what has been sown.

Other seeds fall upon stone and do not bring forth fruit, and Matthew says that this refers to people who receive the Word with joy, but who have no roots in themselves and succumb to the slightest difficulty or persecution resulting from this Word. Other seeds are crushed by thorns, and this refers to the people who hear the Word, but attach greater importance to the wealth or pleasures of the world, with the consequence that the Word cannot bear fruit here, either.

Finally, a few seeds actually fall on good soil and sprout; this represents the person who hears the Word and also understands it. And this seed bears fruit, producing “some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold,” as Matthew tells us. He concludes his parable with the words, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Thus according to the parable, there are many people who hear the teaching, but few who understand it.

There are several phases of understanding. The first consists in listening, taking in information with our intellectual center, but this alone does not suffice. In order to truly understand something, we need to involve our other centers as well, and the knowledge must be practiced concretely – otherwise it all remains just theory.

Our practice and personal verification of the Teaching means that we bring in our heart – by loving what is said – or apply it concretely, by which we bring in our physical center.

Understanding with our intellectual center alone remains very limited, but it is nonetheless an indispensable phase – since it is impossible to practice something that we have not first understood.

The parable of the sower speaks of the seeds that fall upon the intellectual center alone, as into an empty vessel, and, failing to reach the other, emotional and physical centers, do not sprout, do not take root, and produce neither plant, flower, nor fruit. The seeds must be watered, that is to say, we have to practice, otherwise we cannot expect any results.

The second parable is of the pearls cast among swine, who trample them, unaware of their value, and even turn against the one who cast them. This parable refers to the phenomenon that certain people take the Teaching at the ordinary level, failing to perceive its higher dimension, and these people are incapable of having a real relationship with the Teaching.

To recognise the higher value of this Teaching, we must first listen to it, that we may be capable of hearing it one day. Constant repetition is necessary, and this repetition makes it possible for the principles of the Teaching to take root in us.

For example, one of the first principles of this Teaching is self-observation, something that is very simple to practice. The problem is that we constantly forget to observe ourselves, and particularly to do so without judging; hence the importance of repetition, here as in other areas.

Justification represents a great obstacle on our path. Inner justification is responsible for the fact that we avoid calling ourselves into question, finding good reasons for justifying

whatever we do. This justification serves to maintain our image of ourselves, the image we want to project to other people and to ourselves. It is important in this regard not to confuse explanation, which is done for other people, with justification, which is done for ourselves, and whose aim is to save our image.

Our perpetual justifications are indeed one of the major obstacles to our evolution, preventing us from working on our negative emotions, since through our justifications, we convince ourselves that they have a good reason for being there. When we justify something, we are not being honest with ourselves. We either refuse to look, denying for example that we are negative, or we justify, accusing other people or the world for being responsible for our negative emotions.

As a rule, we find good reasons and good excuses for justifying our behaviour, both to other people and to ourselves. In this way we seek to preserve a false image of ourselves; other people of course see perfectly well that we are negative, but we are unaware of this fact due to the mechanism of buffers. When we are annoyed, for example, we affirm energetically, “No, I’m not angry!”, lying both to other people and to ourselves.

Justification and buffers are related. Buffers are the mechanisms that make our contradictions bearable to ourselves. The more we justify, the more buffers we have. Inner justification is the worst of all, as it prevents us from seeing the truth about ourselves.

The work consists in observing our own contradictions in our everyday life, particularly the contradictions between the way we think we are and what we actually do. For example, a person may consider himself to be quite tolerant and open in spite of the fact that he constantly refuses to listen to any opinions that are different from his own, under the pretext that the other person is obviously mistaken. Or he may give a very pleasant image of himself in the professional domain, whereas he is exceedingly unpleasant with his family.

Recognising our buffers means recognising our contradictions. And a clear vision of our contradictions permits us to observe our inner division.

What typically happens is that one part of us does something, and another part denies it or makes justifications, finding good reasons for having done it. To repeat, the more a person justifies, the more buffers he has, and the less honest he is with himself, the more difficulties he will have progressing, since he is thus unable to see where he needs to work, where he needs to change something.

The fact that we justify also reveals our lack of courage, as we do not assume responsibility for who we are or what we have done.

Our first effort consists in observing ourselves without justifying, and this effort leads to a face-to-face encounter with what is negative in ourselves. We must then accept what we see, without justifying and without adding yet another negative emotion on top of it such as self-pity, guilt, or depression. On the other hand, it is not abnormal to have an unpleasant feeling in connection with what we discover; this is an obligatory stage, and generally even a good sign, since it is going to motivate us to overcome our state, provided we do not identify ourselves with this unpleasant feeling or linger on it.

An essential effort for a seeker of Truth is to observe all his forms of outer justifications, but above all – and this is more difficult – to observe his inner justifications, deciding to stop them definitively.