February 13, 2020 – The Fourth Way
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P.D. Ouspensky in his book, *The Fourth Way* relates that thousands of years ago, mankind realized that it was possible to develop and change internally. Three different paths or ways were formed that related to three broad categories of men (“men” as used in the Work refers to both men and women.) The defining characteristic of these first three ways is that one leaves one’s life and everything belonging to it behind and enters a School of one kind or another. Also, each path aims to create a unified will through specific disciplines.

* The first way is the way of the Fakir. A Fakir attempts to develop unity of will by subjecting the body to extreme, and even torturous disciplines such as holding the arms out to the side for months or years. Although a permanent will can be achieved in this way, the emotional and intellectual functions remain undeveloped, and so the resulting will is of virtually no use.
* The second way is that of the Monk, who aims to attain a unified will through devotion, faith and religious feelings. His or her practices are focused on subjecting the emotions to his faith which can result in a unified will. Yet the moving and intellectual centers can remain undeveloped.
* The third path is the Way of the Yogi, the way of knowledge and the mind. The Yogi develops the mind and control over the thoughts, and very well might attain a unity of will, yet if the body and emotions are excluded, he or she might not be able to make use of the results of this attainment.

The Work teaches that each of these three ways corresponds to the categories of humans called man No. 1, man No. 2 and man No. 3. Like the Fakir, man No. 1’s center of gravity lies primarily in the moving/instinctual center, someone whose focus and perspective is on movement, such as an athlete. Similar to the monk, man No. 2’s focus is on the emotional life. If developed, this could be an artist, or just someone who swings between their likes and dislikes from day to day. Man No. 3, like the Yogi, lives out of his or her intellectual center. Maurice Nicoll describes this person as “feeling that logic and reason govern life or should do so.”

We all have each of these “men” within us, and through consistent observation, we learn which center we live from. It is also useful to observe how our centers are stacked, so to speak - most developed to least developed. We can see ourselves as, for example, 123, 132, 231, 213, 321 or 312. The important thing to remember is that men nos. 1,2 & 3 constitute sleeping humanity. They may be more or less developed in their particular perspective and life, but they are not awakened or trying to awaken to the inner, vertical life.

So moving to the Fourth Way…in contrast to the first three ways, those of us who enter the Fourth Way remain in life, exactly as it is, knowing that where we are is exactly where we need to be for our transformation. We see every event, in fact EVERYTHING that we encounter in life as an opportunity to wake up, to take off the overcoats that hide our inner reality. And we aim to create a unified spiritual will - a will grounded in the vertical and aimed toward becoming Christ. Unlike the other three ways, we work in and on all three centers and thus move towards becoming Man No. 4 or Balanced Man - someone who has developed to an extent all three centers, and is able to use the energies of each for the appropriate task. She or he has self-awareness, can remember her- or himself, and thus can receive influences from the higher emotional and intellectual centers. For this to be possible, we must use life as our teacher, through learning the ideas of the Work and applying them to ourselves. How do we learn the best? Unlike in the second way, the Way of the Monk, the Fourth Way is not based on faith but instead on UNDERSTANDING. And we gain understanding by verifying each idea for ourselves. I feel this is a crucial idea and aim, especially when beginning the Work of Inner Christianity.

At the beginning of my journey in the Work, I somehow missed this completely! It really didn’t become clear to me until years later, that I did not verify many of the ideas for myself, and that consequently my understanding was pretty shallow. In fact, I saw that throughout my entire life, I tended to not verify or question much of anything. As a child, I developed a fear-based respect of authority figures, and so I learned to keep quiet, do what I was told without question, and became the “good” girl. The educational system encouraged that behavior, valuing memorization and recitation of facts over true understanding. Over time I became more and more fearful of making mistakes, looking bad and losing approval. I put the authority figures that I respected on pedestals and did what I was told. When I joined the Tenth Man School in 2001, my programs for happiness were well-established. Obedience to the commitments was easy for this personality that tends to be scrupulous, and because I was good at memorization, work on the side of knowledge wasn’t difficult either - as long as I made the effort to learn. I certainly did apply the knowledge to my being to an extent. But for the most part it was because I was told to, and consequently, I didn’t gain the deep understanding that would have come with open-minded verification. And unknown to me, this left me on very shaky ground. A part of my house was truly built on sand! So when the Tenth Man School in its original form dissolved, and the First Force of the Teacher was removed, in many ways it felt like the rug had been pulled out from under me. I woke up to see that I had little First Force in myself, little that came from my own thinking, and that I didn’t know what was really true for me. So, I finally began to question and verify. That life event of the School, and my inner reactions to it, were my very generous teachers, and I gained deep understanding about myself from them. And it continues; I’m still very much in a place of questioning and wondering what is true, AND there’s much more courage to stand in that truth.

I’d like to end with a quote from Byron Katie that’s in the Mark this month:

*"Life is simple. Everything happens for you, not to you. Everything happens at exactly the right moment, neither too soon nor too late. You don’t have to like it…it’s just easier if you do.”*

So remember: verify all the ideas of the Fourth Way with delight and open-hearted wondering. The understanding you gain will serve you well!