

## MEETINGS IN ITALY

### The Fourth Way

The 'Fourth Way' is an idea particularly associated with G. Gurdjieff. He proposed it as an alternative to the three traditional ways concentrating on the body and effort (way of the Fakir), feeling and devotion (way of the Monk) and thinking and concentration (way of the Yogi). The fourth way would combine elements of all three but also be brought into practice in the conditions of ordinary life.

Various followers of Gurdjieff's ideas such as John Bennett explored the ramifications of this idea, continuing to experiment with methods from various sources. Anthony Blake, a student of Bennett, found himself researching into new avenues such as dialogue to help address the aim of people learning how to talk with and understand each other. The 'old teachers' of the fourth way had largely died out and he wanted to find methods that would not depend on an established authority system.

Many people these days have some notion of an 'inner life' and seek out some technique or other by which they can cultivate this inwardness. They are aware of the immense pressures on people to follow the crowd and the various ways in which media, consumerism, and even formal education make people 'strangers to themselves' and want help in seeking something that does not come from outside, something that is not manufactured and artificial.

In the fourth way, inwardness is cultivated in the midst of ordinary life. That is where it matters. It is one thing to go on a retreat and achieve some 'better state' but quite another to realise this while under external pressures. It might even be argued that having some people who are a little more free in themselves might benefit society at large.

The fourth way as it has become institutionalised can become as mechanical as anything else. From time to time, people need to start again and take a fresh look at what 'works'. In spirit, the fourth way is a way of understanding and concerns what we can do. Understanding is not explaining things away or forming comfortable theories to soothe the mind. It is quite the opposite. It realises that we can never know for certain anything.

## Conversation and Experiment

Instead of simply adopting some practice or other such as meditation and trusting it will produce benefits, we try to begin with conversation amongst ourselves to understand what it is we want to achieve and why. There is no slavish adherence to any belief system or ideology. Of course, we all have belief systems – even if we deny this is so – but they are the resistance to understanding and not its sources.

At the same time, unless we do experiments we are unlikely to see anything new. To experiment means to do things ‘otherwise’ than we habitually do. It also means that we have to be intelligent about it. No mechanical means can help us to be more free. As Gurdjieff put it, ‘Consciousness can only come from consciousness’.

Useful conversation is an art and just talking and arguing does little. So, learning how to talk together is a major issue. If we have put aside reliance on some authority figure to do our thinking for us then we have to rely on each other to develop. But nearly everyone assumes that we already know how to talk with each other – after all, are we not civilised and educated people!

We spoke in terms of ‘looking within’ because this signifies the hope that we can access levels of ourselves – whether regarded as psyche or body – with the capacity to generate new kinds of information, different from what we have accumulated from the outside. This is not so mysterious, in that anything we do can reveal new dimensions if we pay attention to it. The basic functions of talking, moving, thinking, etc. are just where we can make a new beginning but usually ignored by those only concern with ‘important’ things.

We also spoke of working ‘under the conditions of ordinary life’. Yet, we have first to learn how to do this. We need concentrated periods of working together – when there is more ‘energy’ available – to give us a taste of new directions of attention that can later be carried back into life.

We just spoke of ‘energy’. Most hopes for changing oneself or transformation of life are unrealistic because we do not take into account that any change requires enough corresponding energy or fuel. Just wishing for something or trying to do something is not enough. Energy has to be freed up from where it is enslaved in routine mechanisms. It cannot just come out of thin air. If we can lessen the amount of energy we waste we might be able to change something in ourselves.

## Meetings in Italy

If the ideas briefly discussed in this brochure resonate with you then you can follow them up by coming to meetings in xxx on September xxxx where we offer opportunities for you to ask questions and have some small tastes of relevant experiences. Nothing is guaranteed, of course.

The weekend of September xxxx we are running an event that is more structured and detailed. During this weekend, we will present various methods that may interest you and also assist you in making your own experiments. These will include work on inner attention, movement, talking and listening and other things that may emerge as relevant when we meet together.

We will begin the weekend with meeting together to allow everyone to articulate their aim. Formulating an aim for oneself is a major component of the fourth way, because this way is highly individual and does not seek to impose the same regime on everyone. It is not so easy as it sounds and nearly everyone finds that they have to start in a very tentative way. There is also the fundamental issue of trust and perhaps, in life, we have become afraid of speaking of what comes from within with others who may be critical and dismissive.

We have to develop what works for us in our own way but the company of others is of inestimable value for doing this. Instead of competing with and denying each other we can co-operate and affirm each other. This does not mean lack of discrimination, however.

## Anthony Blake

Anthony spent 15 years with John Bennett learning much not only from his lectures, writings and guidance but also through osmosis. His background like Bennett's was scientific. He studied physics and met with David Bohm. He found himself forced to hold together the disciplines and scepticism of science with the insights and faith of mysticism and spirituality. As Gurdjieff once advised, 'Take the wisdom of the east and the knowledge of the west and then search'. Anthony is the author of several books including *A Seminar on Time*, *The Intelligent Enneagram* and *The Supreme Art of Dialogue*. He is co-founder of The DuVersity, a non-profit serving researches into diversity and intelligence and has engaged with diverse 'remarkable people' from the diverse worlds of Group Analysis, Amerindian culture, Jungian analysis, intellectual technology, creative development, etc.