

SILENCE: INNER LEARNING THROUGH THE POWER OF SILENCE

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A Pythagoras statue on the island of Samos, Greece, where he is believed to have been born.

Before he would initiate a neophyte into the mysteries of his teachings, the philosopher Pythagoras would subject the candidate to various ordeals which were designed to strengthen the initiate's character and which would allow Pythagoras to judge them. Thus newcomers amid the sages of Crotona listened but never asked questions. For months on end, they were subjected to the discipline of silence, so that, when they were finally allowed to speak again, they would do so only with circumspection and respect. They had learned inwardly, through personal experience, that silence is an almost divine power—the mother of all virtues.

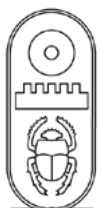
Alas, why are we not still today under the genial authority of Pythagoras? The main trouble with today's world is the lack of silence. Not only is contemporary society literally poisoned by the tumult of machines (including talking ones), but also—and especially—it is saturated with

loud and empty words. It is a question of who will speak the loudest, who will make the most statements, who will tell their story with the most trifling details.

How correct was Kierkegaard, the great Scandinavian thinker, when he wrote: "The world in its present state is sick! If I were a doctor and was asked for advice, I would answer: 'Be silent!'"

Yes, true Rosicrucians can be recognized by their oral temperance, among other virtues. They speak only sparingly, and the words they speak are rich in meaning. They practice the following advice from a Sufi teacher: "If the word you are going to speak is not more beautiful than silence, then do not say it!"

When we apply for initiation, we must remain silent not only toward others but toward ourselves also. Let us understand this well. It is in silence that the Cosmic, the Divine, communicates with us. In order for us to hear the Divine's advice,



to receive intuitive flashes, we must know how to silence the profane voice within. The Hebrew Scriptures teach this symbolically in the First Book of Kings (19:11-12), where the prophet Elijah is shown taking refuge in the desert and waiting for a message from the Divine:

[The Divine] said, “Go outside, and stand on the mountain before ADONAI [the Divine]”; and right then and there, ADONAI [the Divine] went past. A mighty blast of wind tore the mountains apart and broke the rocks in pieces before ADONAI [the Divine], but ADONAI [the Divine] was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but ADONAI [the Divine] was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake, fire broke out; but ADONAI [the Divine] was not in the fire. And after the fire came a quiet, subdued voice.

It is then that the Divine appeared to Elijah. In his famous treatise entitled *The Conference of Birds*, the mystic Attar expresses the same truth in a different way: “As long as they walked, they talked; but when they arrived, all talk ceased. There was neither guide nor traveler; even the road had ceased to exist.”

One of the greatest French mystics, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, deserved to be named “the Unknown Silent One” by his disciples. More than anyone else, he exalted the virtue of silence. He wrote, “Great truths are taught only through silence.” Better yet, he made this remark which unfortunately applies so well to our times: “Is there a greater proof of human weakness than the multiplicity of our words?”

It is very true that silence is a real test to the one who, through habit or tendency, does not know how to observe it. Tradition relates that the ancients had made a divinity out of silence; male in

Greece, where it was named Harpocrates, and female in Rome, where it was called Tacita—well named since it is derived from the Latin *tacere*, which means “to be silent.” This demonstrates to what extent our ancestors worshiped this virtue; also, that the Romans did not consider gossip as a foible of the fair sex.

As explained in this message, the discipline of silence is a power; it allows us to maintain within a vital influx that useless words waste away. Before you speak, try to evaluate if what you intend to say is worthwhile: if it can do some good and especially if it is not going to cause any harm. You will notice that the effort you exerted in repressing a useless word causes a reaction within, a struggle against temptation. Each victory shall give you new power. That is why it is wise to follow the Sufi’s advice, and if what you are about to say is not more beautiful than silence, then abstain from speaking.

Meditate upon this message; think about it often. It is hoped that it will help you to ascend one step higher on the ladder of spirituality.

