



# **THE WAY OF INITIATION**

**RUDOLF STEINER**

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# **THE WAY OF INITIATION**

**BY  
RUDOLF STEINER**

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY MAX GYSI

WITH SOME BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF THE AUTHOR

BY EDOUARD SCHURÉ

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on which thought and feeling are now to be concentrated.<sup>8</sup> Let the student fully realize that this invisible something will later on translate itself into a visible plant, perceptible by him in shape and color. Let him dwell upon the thought: "*The invisible will become visible*. If I could not think, then I could not now realize, that which will become visible later on."

Particular stress must be laid on the importance of *feeling with intensity* that which one thinks. In calmness of mind a single thought must be vitally experienced within oneself to the exclusion of all disturbing influences. Sufficient time must be taken to allow the thought, and the state of feeling connected therewith, to become, as it were, imbedded in the soul. If that is accomplished in the right way—possibly not until after numerous attempts—an inward force will make itself felt. And this force will create new powers of perception. The grain of seed will appear as if enclosed in a small luminous cloud. The spiritualized vision of the student perceives it as a kind of flame. This flame is of a lilac color in the centre, blue at the edges. Then appears that which one could not see before, and which was created by the power of thought and feeling brought into life within oneself. That which was physically invisible (the plant which will not become visible until later on) has there revealed itself to the spiritual eye.

It is pardonable if, to many men, all this appears to be mere illusion. Many will say: "What is the value of such visions or such hallucinations?" And many will thus fall away, and no longer continue to tread the path. But this is precisely the important point—not to confuse, at this difficult stage of human evolution, spiritual reality with the mere creations of phantasy, and to have the courage to press manfully onward, instead of growing timorous and faint-hearted. On the other hand, however, it is necessary to insist on the necessity of maintaining unimpaired, and of perpetually cultivating, the healthy attitude of mind which is required for the distinguishing of truth from illusion. Never during all these exercises must the student surrender the fully conscious control of himself. He must continue to think as soundly and sanely in these spiritual conditions as he does with regard to the things and occurrences of ordinary life. It would be unfortunate if he lapses into reveries. He must at every moment be clear-headed and sober-minded and it would be the greatest mistake if the student, through such practices, lost his mental equilibrium, or if he were prevented from judging as sanely and clearly as before, the matters of work-a-day life. The disciple should, therefore, examine himself again and again to find out whether he has remained unaltered in relation to the circumstances among which he lives, or whether perchance he has lost his mental balance. He must ever maintain a calm repose within his own individuality, and an open mind for everything, being careful at the same time not to drift into vague reveries or to experiment with all sorts of exercises.

<sup>8</sup> Anyone who might object that a microscopical examination would reveal the difference between the two would only show that he has failed to grasp the intention of the experiment. The intention is not to investigate the physical structure of the object, but to use it as a means for the development of psychic force.











































## CHAPTER 8. THE CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

The conditions of entrance into an occult school are not of a nature to be formulated in an arbitrary way by anyone. They are the natural outcome of occult knowledge. Just as a man will never become a painter if he does not choose to handle a paintbrush, so can no one receive occult training if he is unwilling to fulfil the claims which are put forward by the occult teacher. In fact, the teacher can give nothing but advice, and it is as such that everything he states ought to be considered. He has already trodden the probationary path which leads to the knowledge of higher worlds. From experience he knows what is necessary, and it all depends on the free will of each particular person whether he chooses to follow the same path or not. If anyone, without intending to satisfy the conditions, should demand occult training from a teacher, such a demand would be equivalent to saying: "Teach me to paint, but do not ask me to handle a brush." The occult teacher never goes a step further, unless it be in accord with the free will of the recipient. It must be emphasized that a general wish for higher knowledge is not sufficient, yet many will probably have but such a weak desire. For him who has merely this vague idea, and is not prepared to accept the special conditions of the occult teacher, the latter, for the present, can do nothing. This ought to be kept in mind by those who complain that occult teachers do not "meet them half way." He who cannot, or will not, fulfil the severe conditions necessary, must for the time abandon occult training. It is true that the conditions are, indeed, hard, and yet they are not severe since their fulfilment not only ought to be, but must be, an altogether voluntary deed.

To him who does not remember this it is easy for the claims of the occult teacher to seem a coercion of the soul or the conscience; for the training here mentioned is founded on a development of the inner life, and it is the work of the teacher to give advice concerning it. And yet, if something be demanded as the result of free choice, it cannot be considered as a fetter. If anyone says to the teacher: "Give me your secrets, but leave me my customary feelings and thoughts," he is then making an impossible demand. Such an one desires no more than to satisfy his curiosity and thirst for sensations, so that by one who takes an attitude like this, occult knowledge can never be obtained.

Let us now consider in their right order the conditions of discipleship. It should be emphasized that the complete fulfilment of any one of these conditions is by no means demanded, but only the effort to gain such fulfilment. No one can at first reach these high ideals, but the path which leads to their fulfilment may be entered by everyone. It is the will that matters, the attitude taken when entering the path.

1. The *first condition* is the directing of the attention to the advancement of bodily and spiritual health. Of course, discipleship does not in the first place depend on the health of a man, but everyone can endeavor to improve in this respect, and only from

a healthy man may proceed a healthy perception. No occult teacher would refuse a man who is not healthy, but it is demanded that the pupils should have the desire for a healthy life. In this respect he must attain the greatest possible independence. The good counsels of others, which, though generally unsought, are received by everybody, are as a rule superfluous. Each must endeavor to take care of himself. From the physical aspect it will be more a matter of warding off harmful influences than of anything else. For in carrying out one's duty one has often to do things which are disadvantageous to health. One must learn how, at the right moment, to place duty higher than the care of health; but with a little good-will, what is there that cannot be omitted? Duty must in many cases be accounted higher than health, indeed, if need be, higher than life itself, but the disciple must never put pleasure as high as either one of these. Pleasure for him can be only a means to health and life, and in respect to this it is absolutely necessary that we should be quite honest and truthful with ourselves. It is of no avail to lead an ascetic life so long as it is born of motives like those that give rise to other enjoyments. There are people who find satisfaction in asceticism, as do others in wine-bibbling, but they must not imagine that asceticism of this kind will assist them to attain the higher knowledge. Many ascribe to their unfavorable circumstances everything which apparently prevents them from making progress in this direction. They say that with their conditions of life they cannot develop themselves to any great extent. For other reasons it may be desirable for many to change their conditions of life, but no one need do so for the purpose of occult training. For this it is only necessary that one should do for one's health so much as one finds possible in the position one holds. Every kind of work may serve the whole of humanity, and it is a surer sign of greatness in the human soul to perceive clearly how necessary for the whole is a petty—perhaps even an unlovely—employment than to think: "This work is not good enough for me: I am destined for something else."

It is especially important for the disciple to strive after complete spiritual health. In any case, an unhealthy emotional or thought-life leads one away from the path of higher knowledge. The foundations here consist of clear, calm thinking, reliable conceptions, and stable feelings. Nothing should be more alien to the disciple than an inclination toward a whimsical, excitable life, toward nervousness, intoxication, and fanaticism. He should acquire a healthy outlook on all circumstances of life; he should go through life steadily and should let things act on him and speak to him in all tranquillity. Wherever it is possible he should endeavor to do justice to life. Everything in his tastes and criticisms which is one-sided or extravagant ought to be avoided. If this be not so, the disciple will strand himself in a world of his own imagination, instead of attaining the higher worlds, and in place of truth his own favorite opinions will assert themselves. It is better for the disciple to be "matter-of-fact" than overwrought and fanciful.

2. The *second condition* is that one should feel oneself as a link in the general life. Much is included in the fulfilment of this condition, but each can only fulfil it after his

own manner. If I am a school teacher and my pupil does not answer what is desired of him, I must first direct my feeling not against the pupil but to myself. I ought to feel myself so much at one with my pupil that I ask myself: "May not that in the pupil which does not satisfy my demand be perhaps the result of my own faults?" or if perchance it be his unconscious, or even vicious error, as *teacher*, instead of directing my feelings against him, I shall rather cogitate on the way in which I myself ought to behave, or in kindness show him what is right, so that he may in the future be better able to satisfy my demands. From such a manner of thinking there will come gradually a change over the whole mental attitude. This holds good for the smallest as well as for the greatest. From this point of view I look on a criminal, for instance, altogether differently from the way I should have looked upon him of old. I suspend my judgment and think to myself: "I am only a man as he is. Perhaps the education which, owing to favorable circumstances, has been mine, and nothing else, has saved me from a similar fate." I may even come to the conclusion that if the teachers who took pains with me had done the same for him, this brother of mine would have been quite different. I shall reflect on the fact that something which has been withheld from him has been given to me, and that I may, perhaps, owe my goodness to the fact that he has been thus deprived of it. And then will it no longer be difficult to grasp the conception that I am a link in the whole of humanity, and that consequently I, too, in part, bear the responsibility for everything that happens. By this it is not implied that such a thought should be translated immediately into external action. It should be quietly cultivated in the soul. It will then express itself gradually in the outward behavior of a person, and in such matters each can begin only by reforming himself. It were futile, from such a standpoint, to make general claims on all humanity. It is easy to form an idea of what men ought to be, but the disciple works, not on the surface, but in the depths. And, therefore, it would be wrong if one should endeavor to bring these demands of the occult teacher into relation with any external or political claims. As a rule, political agitators know well what can be demanded of other people, but they say little of demands on themselves.

3. Now with these demands on ourselves the *third condition* for occult training is intimately connected. The student must be able to realize the idea that his thoughts and feelings are as important for the world as his deeds. It must be recognized that it is as pernicious to hate a fellow-being as to strike him. One can then discern also that by perfecting oneself one accomplishes something not only for oneself but for the whole world. The world profits by pure thoughts and feelings as much as by one's good behavior, and so long as one cannot believe in this world-wide importance of the inner Self, one is not fit for discipleship. One is permeated with a true conception of the soul's importance, only when one works at this inner Self as if it were at least as important as all external things. It must be admitted that one's feelings produce an effect as much as the action of the hand.

4. In so saying we have already mentioned the *fourth condition*: the idea that the real being of man does not lie in the exterior but in the interior. He who regards himself as merely a product of the outer world, a result of the physical world, cannot succeed in this occult training. But he who is able to realize this conception is then also able to distinguish between inner duty and external success. He learns to recognize that the one cannot at once be measured by the other. The student must learn for himself the right position between what is demanded by his external conditions and what he recognizes to be the right conduct for himself. He ought not to force upon his environment anything for which it can have no appreciation, but at the same time he must be altogether free from the desire to do merely what can be appreciated by those around him. In his own sincere and wisdom-seeking soul, and only there, must he look for the recognition of his truths. But from his environment he must learn as much as he possibly can, so that he may discern what those around him need, and what is of use to them. In this way he will develop within himself what is known in Occultism as the "spiritual balance." On one side of the scales there lies a heart open for the needs of the outward world, and on the other lies an inner fortitude and an unfaltering endurance.

5. And here, again, we have hinted at the *fifth condition*: firmness in the carrying out of any resolution when once it has been made. Nothing should induce the disciple to deviate from any such resolution once it is formed, save only the perception that he has made a mistake. Every resolution is a force, and even if such a force does not produce immediate effect on the point at which it was directed, nevertheless it works in its own way. Success is of great importance only when an action arises from desire, but all actions which are rooted in desire are worthless in relation to the higher worlds. There the love expended on an action is alone of importance. In this love, all that impels the student to perform an action ought to be implanted. Thus he will never grow weary of again and again carrying out in action some resolution, even though he has repeatedly failed. And in this way he arrives at the condition in which he does not first count on the external effect of his actions, but is contented with the doing of them. He will learn to sacrifice for the world his actions, nay, more, his whole being, without caring at all how his sacrifice may be received. He who wishes to become a disciple must declare himself ready for such a sacrifice, such an offering.

6. A *sixth condition* is the development of a sense of gratitude with regard to everything which relates to Man. One must realize that one's existence is, as it were, a gift from the entire universe. Only consider all that is needed in order that each of us may receive and maintain his existence! Consider what we owe to Nature and to others than ourselves! Those who desire an occult training must be inclined toward thoughts like these, for he who cannot enter into such thoughts will be incapable of developing within himself that all-inclusive love which it is necessary to possess before one can attain to higher knowledge. That which we do not love cannot



manifest itself to us. And every manifestation must fill us with gratitude, or we ourselves are not the richer for it.

7. All the conditions here set forth must be united in a *seventh*: to regard life continually in the manner demanded by these conditions. The student thus makes it possible to give to his life the stamp of uniformity. All his many modes of expression will, in this way, be brought into *harmony*, and cease to contradict each other. And thus he will prepare himself for the peace which he must attain during the preliminary steps of his training.

If a person intend, earnestly and sincerely, to fulfil the conditions mentioned above, he may then address himself to a teacher of Occultism. The latter will then be found ready to give the first words of counsel. Any external formality will consist of giving to these conditions a complete expression, a knowledge of which can only be imparted orally to each individual candidate. Since everything interior must manifest itself in an exterior way, they teach a very important lesson. Even as a picture cannot be said to be here, when it exists only in the brain of the painter, so, too, there cannot be an occult training without an external expression.

External forms are regarded as worthless by those only who do not know that the internal must find expression in the external. It is true that it is the spirit and not the form that really matters; but just as the form is void without the spirit, so would the spirit remain inactive as long as it could not create a form.

The stipulated conditions are so designed that they may render the disciple strong enough to fulfil the further demands which the teacher must make. If he be faulty in the fulfilment of these conditions, then before each new demand he will stand hesitating. Without this fulfilment he will be lacking in that faith in man which it is necessary for him to possess; for on faith in man and a genuine love for man, all striving after truth must be founded. And the love of man must be slowly widened out into a love for all living creatures, nay, indeed, for all existence. He who fails to fulfil the conditions here given will not possess a perfect love for all up-building, for all creation, nor a tendency to abstain from all destruction and annihilation as such. The disciple must so train himself that, not in deeds only, but also in words, thoughts and feelings, he will never destroy anything for the sake of destruction. He must find his pleasure in the growing and creating aspect of things, and is only justified in assisting the apparent destruction of anything when, by such readjustment, he is able to promote a greater life. Let it not be thought that, in so saying, it is implied that the disciple may allow the triumph of evil, but rather that he must endeavor to find, even in the bad, those aspects through which he may change it into good. He will see more and more clearly that the best way to combat imperfection and evil is by the creation of the perfect and the good. The student knows that nothing can come from nothing, but also that the imperfect may be changed into the perfect. He who develops in himself the tendency to create, will soon find the capacity for facing the evil.

He who enters an occult school must be quite sure that his intention is to construct and not to destroy. The student ought, therefore, to bring with him the will for sincere and devoted work, and to this end he ought to be capable of great devotion, for one should be anxious to learn what one does not yet know; he should look reverently on that which discloses itself. Work and devotion,—these are the fundamental attributes which must be claimed from the disciple. Some will have to discover that they do not make real progress in the school, even if in their own opinion they are unceasingly active; they have not grasped in the right manner the meaning of work and meditation. That kind of learning which is undertaken without meditation will advance the student least, and the work which is done for selfish returns will be the least successful. In the love of work, the love to do better work; yes, the love to do perfect work, is the quality which unfolds occult power; and in qualifying for better things one need give little heed for greater returns. If he who is learning seeks for wholesome thoughts and sound judgment, he need not spoil his devotion with doubts and suspicions.

The fact that one does not oppose some communication which has been made, but gives to it due attention and even sympathy, does not imply a lack of independent judgment. Those who have arrived at a somewhat advanced stage of knowledge are aware that they owe everything to a quiet attention and assimilation, and not to a stubborn personal judgment.

One should always remember that he does not need to learn what he is already able to understand. Therefore, if one desires only to judge, he is apt to cease learning. What is of importance in an occult school, however, is study: one ought to desire, with heart and soul, to be a student: if one cannot understand something it is far better not to judge, lest one wrongly condemn; far wiser to wait for a true understanding.

The higher one climbs up the ladder of knowledge, the more he requires this faculty of calm and devotional listening. All perception of truths, all life and activity in the world of spirit, become in these higher regions delicate and subtle in comparison with the activities of the ordinary mind, and of life in the physical world. The more the sphere of a man's activity widens out before him, the more transcendent is the nature of the task to be accomplished by him. It is for this reason that, although there is in reality only one possible fact regarding the higher truths, men come to look at them from such different points of view. It is possible to arrive at this one true standpoint if, through work and devotion, one has so risen that he can really behold the truth.

Only he who judges in accordance with preconceived ideas and habitual ways of thought, rather than from sufficient preparation, can arrive at any opinion which differs from the true one. Just as there is only one correct opinion concerning a mathematical problem, so also with regard to things of the higher worlds; but before one can arrive at this knowledge he must first prepare himself. Truth and the higher

life do, indeed, abide in every human soul, and it is true that everyone can and must sooner or later find them for himself.

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