

Initiation

Initiation (from Latin: initium "entrance, beginning, start") can be attained step by step through a path of **spiritual practice** which serves the spiritual development. The spiritual disciple will work according to literary instructions or seek advice and help from a spiritual teacher who will point out to him suitable exercises for concentration and meditation (soul exercises) and other rules helpful to the training of the spirit. The **path of initiation** is a **path of knowledge** on which the spiritual disciple works on his etheric body, after after he has previously purified his astral body. Once he has completed his spiritual training, he becomes an initiate.

„Everything that works only on the astral body is only preparation for the actual esoteric training, for the actual occult training. Occult training begins where we learn to work into the etheric or life body, where man is enabled, through the guidance given him by the occult teacher, to transform the temperaments, inclinations and habits, where man becomes another. With this comes only the insight into the real higher world, that man becomes another man.“ (Lit.:GA 96, p. 258f)

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An important principle of occult development

„An important principle in occult development is that of attaching no other value to oneself than that which comes from the achievements in the physical world within the present incarnation. This is extremely important. Any other value must first come on the basis of a higher development, which can only come about when one first stands firm on the ground that one considers oneself to be nothing other than what one has been able to achieve in this incarnation. This is also natural if one looks at the matter objectively, for what one has achieved in the present incarnation is also the result of previous incarnations; it is what karma has made of us up to now. What karma still makes of us we must first have made; we must not include that in our value.“ (Lit.:GA 136, p. 41)

Three ways into the spiritual world

Basically there are three different ways of training and gaining knowledge, corresponding to the three soul forces of thinking, feeling and willing.

„Man must be prepared in such a way that during ordinary daily life he does those exercises which are prescribed for him by the initiate schools, meditation, concentration and so on. These exercises are basically the same in all schools of initiation as far as their importance for man is concerned. They are only slightly different from each other in that the further back we go into the pre-Christian schools of initiation, the more they are directed towards exercising, training the thinking, the powers of thought. The nearer we approach the Christian times, the more they are directed towards training the powers of feeling, and the nearer we approach the more recent times, the more we see how in the so-called Rosicrucian schools, conditioned by the demands and needs of humanity, a special kind of culture of the will, of exercises of the will, is introduced. Even if the meditations are at first similar to those in the other pre-Christian schools, a special training of the will element prevails everywhere at the bottom of the Rosicrucian exercises.“ (Lit.:GA 104, p. 53)

On the Rosicrucian path of training, which is the most modern of these three paths of training, it is above all the element of will that is active in thinking that must be grasped:

„Thinking exercises on the one hand, will exercises on the other, must be done if the gate is to open to the supersensible world into which we must enter, if we want to recognise ourselves, as human beings, according to our Eternal, and if we want to recognise the world according to the Eternal. The exercises of thought are accomplished precisely by remembering how will always plays into thinking; the exercises of will by observing the play of thinking into the will. It is only in ordinary life that we do not observe this willfulness. In order to arrive at modern initiation, we must pay attention precisely to the quiet will that is within the life of the imagination. We must gradually achieve this through the exercises I have described in my book "Knowledge Of The Higher Worlds And Its Attainment". This is precisely what I want to suggest here: we must let what is usually the most important thing, the thought-content, recede and learn to use the will consciously in thinking.“ (Lit.:GA 211, p. 144)

The three basic spiritual training paths

All spiritual paths of training are variations or mixtures of the three basic paths, which start from thinking, feeling or willing. Every disciple of the spirit should choose the path that is appropriate to his or her nature. These three paths into the spiritual world are:

- Yoga path of spiritual training - thinking
- Christian path of spiritual training - feeling
- Rosicrucian path of spiritual training - willing

„Actually, there should be a special initiation path for every human being. But all paths go back to three different types: to the yoga path, the Christian Gnostic initiation and the Christian Rosicrucian initiation. So one can follow one of these three different paths. They are different because there are three kinds of people. Among European people there are only a few who can walk the oriental path of yoga. Therefore, it is generally not right for Europeans to walk the yoga path. For in the Orient people live in a quite different climate, under a quite different sunlight. The difference between the Oriental and the European will not be so easily proved by anatomy, but there is a deep mental and spiritual difference between them, and this must be taken into account, since the inner development deeply intervenes in the mental and spiritual nature of man. The finer structure of the Hindu brain is not perceptible to the anatomist. But if the European were expected to do what the Indian can be expected to do, he would be ruined. You can prescribe certain activities for the Indian that are of no use to the European or even bad for him. The path of yoga makes a basic demand on the student, without which it is impossible to follow this path. It demands the strict authority of a teacher, a so-called guru. Whoever wants to follow this path has to obey the guru's instructions down to the last detail of life. Apart from that, the Indian path of yoga can hardly be followed if one does not tear oneself away from the outer conditions of life. It is necessary to take various external measures to support the prescribed exercises. If one has certain experiences which make an impression on the emotional world, this will have a profound influence if one undergoes an inner occult development. That is why the oriental student of yoga must ask the Guru in all details of life. If one wants to make any changes in life, one must let the guru show him the way. So the path of yoga is one that requires absolute submission to the guru. One must learn to see with the guru's eyes and learn to feel like him. One cannot walk this path without deep trust, without perfect love, united with unlimited trust and unconditional surrender that transcends everything else.

In the Christian Gnostic path there is only one great teacher, the central guru. What is required is faith in the Christ Jesus himself, not only in his teachings. The Christian Gnostic disciple must be able to believe that in the Christ Jesus the only high divine individuality was incarnated, an individuality that cannot be compared with any other, even the highest individuality. All other individualities began on this Earth on a lower level and then ascended, like Buddha, Hermes, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, so that their spiritual form is the result of many previous incarnations. This is not the case with the Christ Jesus. He cannot be compared with any other individuality, with anything else on Earth. Without this faith, one would not be able to follow the purely Christian-gnostic path.

A third way is the Christian Rosicrucian way. Here the teacher is the counsellor who limits his advice preferably to the measures of spiritual development itself. This spiritual development must be arranged in such a way that it has a profound influence on the life of the human being. A teacher must always be present at the initiation. There is no serious ini-

tiation without a teacher. Anyone who would claim this would be saying something as foolish as someone who considered the birth of a child possible without the interaction of the two sexes. Initiation is a process of spiritual fertilisation. If this were not brought about in the dual relationship between teacher and pupil, it would even be a harmful process.“ (Lit.:GA 97, p. 193ff)

Overview of the training paths discussed by Rudolf Steiner

In addition to the three basic types of training path already mentioned, Rudolf Steiner also discussed the Mithras initiation in more detail.

The anthroposophical training path is the direct continuation of the Rosicrucian path. As a rule, all training paths comprise seven stages, as mentioned above. However, Steiner also describes the yoga training path as an 8-step initiation path. In principle, however, it is identical with the 7-stage path, but here the 6th stage is divided into two separate stages. The table below shows a comparison of the different training paths:

Mithras Initiation	Christian initiation	Rosicrucian initiation
Raven	Foot washing	Study
Occult	Flagellation	Imaginative knowledge
Striker	Crowning with thorns	Inspiration or reading of the occult scriptures
Lion	Crucifixion	Preparation of the Philosopher's Stone (Intuition)
Persian	Mystical death	Correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm
Sun Hero	Entombment and Resurrection	Living into the macrocosm
Father	Ascension	Godliness

The fact that spiritual training paths are usually presented in seven stages is connected, among other things, with the fact that in the course of training, through suitable soul exercises, the seven main soul organs of perception, the lotuses or chakras, are gradually awakened for spiritual perception, which in turn are in a certain connection with the seven planetary spheres. The lotuses are, after all, organs of the astral body - the star body.

The sevenfoldness of the path of training is therefore well founded in the cosmic relationships. Nevertheless, it must not be taken in a pedantically schematic way, for in practice individual stages can be subdivided even more finely, which then leads to apparently deviating, larger numbers, which nevertheless have the number seven in the background. For example, Rudolf Steiner himself vividly depicted the modern anthroposophical Rosicrucian initiatory path in 9 or 10 stages in the motifs of the 9 stained glass windows of the first Goetheanum.

In another respect, too, one must not simply proceed schematically. The lotuses are by no means simply awakened one after the other in the planetary order, but there are great differences in the individual training paths, which are connected with the advancing spiritual development path of humanity. As a rule of thumb, however, one can say that in the old oriental paths, one started from the lower chakras, or rather from the root chakra in general, and from there gradually awakened the other soul organs of perception, approximately in the planetary order. With this, however, the spiritual work begins with deeply subconscious forces, which is no longer appropriate for our present age of the consciousness soul. Modern spiritual paths of initiation must seek their starting point in the upper lotuses, whose activity is easier to raise to consciousness. Today, one begins primarily with the forehead, throat and heart chakras. Also, the lotuses are not activated strictly one after the other, but sometimes also together, in which case the emphasis of the exercises lies only on one or the other chakra. Common to all paths, however, is that the highest chakra, the 1000-petaled lotus, which manifests itself through the head aura, only fully

awakens at the very end of each path, not through individual special exercises, but as the result of the entire fully completed path of training. In the Christian path of training this corresponds to the stage of "ascension", in the Rosicrucian path to "godliness".

Future significance of the path of spiritual training

„The coming youth comes from completely different cosmic worlds than we do, that will increase. They bring with them a tremendous ability to think, a virtuosity of thought. But this is the greatest temptation and at the same time the greatest Ahrimanic attack against Anthroposophy. There will be the danger that, through the tremendous ease of grasping the anthroposophical concepts, the matter will get stuck in thinking and a tremendous feeling of well-being will develop in the thinking of Anthroposophy; but one will not be pushed through to training.

The only thing that the youth can get, that will steel it to withstand future events, is that it meets Anthroposophy in training. Training is the foundation through which alone can study be led to a true goal. - If Anthroposophy is taught as a science, it becomes harmful. Anthroposophy must never be mere theory; it must become immediate life. If it is allowed to be mere teaching, it is killed and handed over to Ahriman, the Lord of Death. - But it is much more convenient for people today to think and to acquire a few anthroposophical concepts than to discard a single habit.

What Anthroposophy makes of our souls is much more important than even so much theoretical knowledge of spiritual-scientific concepts.“^[1]

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Rudolf Steiner Handbook - Christian Karl's proven standard work for orientation in Rudolf Steiner's Collected Works for free download as PDF.

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