

THE
TRAINING AND WORK
OF AN INITIATE

By
DION FORTUNE

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FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH *The Training and Work of an Initiate* is complete in itself, and an entirely independent work, it is complementary to the author's previous book, *The Esoteric Orders and their Work*.

Consequently, many points which are dealt with at length in that book are only touched upon briefly in these pages.

The two books, taken together, cover the whole field of initiation upon the Right-hand Path of the Western Tradition. Information concerning the nature and working of the Black Lodges is given in another of Dion Fortune's books, *Sane Occultism*.

INTRODUCTION

OF all those who study the spiritual science that used to be called occult, or hidden, but is fast ceasing to deserve that name, not many will ever go on to the higher degrees of initiation and aspire after adepthood. We may reasonably ask, if this science is literally esoteric or reserved for the few, whether it is worth while for those who cannot dedicate their whole lives to its pursuit to study it at all?

It cannot be denied that the higher achievements in any pursuit can be obtained only by the man who gives his life to it. Esoteric science is no exception to this rule. Nevertheless, it has a very great deal to give even to those who only touch the hem of its garment. From its teachings there arises a philosophy of life which not only illumines our profounder problems, but shines on our daily path and reveals significances of which we have never dreamt. It shows us that our individual lives, and every happening of those lives, is an integral part of the cosmic whole; it shows us our individual relationship to that whole. A knowledge of even the elements of esoteric science leads to a complete change of all our values. We see that things we considered of supreme importance are not the vital points we thought they were; we see that things we did not think mattered at all are the real strategic centres of our lives.

Moreover, we find that there are certain powers in our minds, not in the least rare or supernatural, for we are using them every day, which, if developed and consciously directed, will produce the most remarkable results.

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Generally speaking, there is no reason why everybody who is drawn towards the study of occultism should not make a beginning with the use of these powers. Unless deliberately perverted to evil they can be productive of nothing but good, and the results which they will yield to steady and regular application, even if the time that can be given is no more than a few minutes a day, are amazing in their cumulative effects.

It is not everybody who is ready for initiation. It is said that it takes three lives of steadfast effort to find the Path ; but even if we see no likelihood of the goal being achieved in this life, let us remember that everything must have a beginning, and we cannot have a third life of achievement until we have had a first and second life of preparation. Even if we have no hope of making this life one of achievement we can resolve to make it one of preparation, and as time on the Inner Planes is measured differently from time on the earth-plane, it may be that we shall achieve more than we had ever thought was possible.

Some things at least we shall not fail to achieve, and that right speedily—a new interest in life, an unflinching spring of hope and inspiration, and the ability to straighten out some of life's lesser tangles. Above all, we shall be lifted into a serener air, clear of the accumulated heap of daily pettiness that threatens to bury us. We shall have ceased to wander aimlessly through life, day succeeding day and bringing us nowhere. The sense of aimlessness will be gone and we shall have got a key to the problems of existence.

The philosophy of the initiates can be brought home to men's business and bosoms, and throws light on many of the dark places of life. The wider it is spread among man-

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kind, the better is the purpose of the Inner Plane hierarchy served. Let no one turn away because they feel they are not ready for it or it is too profound for them. There is something for everybody ; each one can take just as much as he needs and make use of it. That which he has not got he cannot, of course, make use of ; but even that which the smallest cup can carry away is the true water of life.

Neither are we obliged to come once and once only to the well ; we can return again and again with our pitcher. Therefore let no one despair or be faint-hearted, there is room for all and something for everybody.

PART I

ETHICAL

CHAPTER I

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

TH**ERE** has always been a widespread belief that some men know more than others, and that instead of sharing certain aspects of their knowledge with their fellow-men, as they were willing, nay eager, to do with certain other aspects of it, they kept them sedulously to themselves, or communicated them only to a chosen few, whom they either bound to inviolable secrecy, or permitted to impart the knowledge in their turn only to those who were prepared to assume the same obligations and who were judged worthy to receive this great privilege. This tradition meets us in the literature of all peoples in all periods of their history, and we find the belief generally held that these secret doctrines concern the inner nature of man and the universe, the aspect that is not observable by the direct action of the five physical senses, but for whose perception the higher senses have to be brought into play. Further, it was generally believed that a large portion of the secret teaching was concerned with the training of its students to use these higher senses for the purpose of observation, as the student of the physical sciences is trained in laboratory technique and the use of the microscope. It was also held that occult science had its practical aspect, and that the knowledge of its laws conferred power in the subtler worlds, just as knowledge of natural laws conferred power in the dense physical world.

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That this knowledge was carefully guarded by those who were its custodians was also recognised, and throughout the ages the same reason for their caution was assigned ; that in the wrong hands this power, if abused, could produce serious harm, because men had no right to make use of it for any personal end, since it was derived from the Great Author of the Universe. The men who held it were trustees and not owners, and might not appropriate this sacred power to their own uses without being guilty of a crime against their God and their fellow-men ; and we have many traditions of the swift and heavy punishment which befell those who thus offended, either at the hands of their fellow-initiates, or of the higher powers against whom they had sinned.

It was also held, however, that although this knowledge was kept so secret that none knew where were its colleges, its libraries, or its students, yet if a man by his character and his life rendered himself a worthy recipient, sooner or later he was brought in contact with those who were competent to instruct him, and then he also passed under the ban of secrecy.

Literature and history bear universal testimony to the existence of this belief among all people in all ages ; many times has this belief been expressed, and as many times contradicted, only to be reasserted in each succeeding generation. That there can be no smoke without fire, and especially such a large volume of smoke as we see here, will be acknowledged by most people, and that this knowledge and method of training do actually exist as an organised system can be vouched for by many who have encountered them at first hand.

As of old, it is declared that it is only necessary for the student to fit himself for this knowledge for the mysterious

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currents that play upon the universe to bring him in contact with those who can enlighten him, and many can vouch from personal experience that this belief is well founded. Whosoever formulates, even sub-consciously, a wish to study the higher knowledge, will be given the opportunity to do so. Life by life, he will be given the training necessary to fit him for its study, until finally, if, through all the hard discipline to which he has been subjected, it has still maintained its place in his esteem as the one thing worth while, this sub-conscious wish will work through into consciousness; that which was formless will become articulate, and the man will deliberately take up the quest of the evidence of things not seen.

What, then, can a man do so to cultivate his mind as to be ready for this higher knowledge when it shall come to him? What can he do by way of preliminary training, working as a solitary student, to fit himself for the reception of the knowledge he desires? The student who is not grounded in the elements cannot understand the advanced teaching, he who has no knowledge of arithmetic cannot grasp mathematics. "Earn the means first, God surely will contrive use for our earning," said one who himself had trodden the path of knowledge. What can the student do who has not yet found his Master?—though many lives before his Master must have found him, or he would not have attained the articulation of his wish. What can he do to make the utmost use of the material that lies to his hand, so that, when the time of his training shall come, there may be nothing left undone that could have been done before, and his progress may be unimpeded by the absence of that necessary ground-work of mental culture which it was in his power to lay while as yet he was without the gate? Much time is wasted in teaching a man what he

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ought to have learnt in the schoolroom in order to enable him to grasp the import of the knowledge of which his initiation makes him free.

It is true that, although glorious glimpses are caught by the intuition unaided by the intellect, much more is lost from sheer inability on the part of the student to grasp the significance of his opportunity. Infinite things can be perceived by the spiritual intuition, but unless the intellect be fitted to co-operate, these things can seldom be rendered of practical avail for the solution of world-problems. The mystic has his moments of ecstatic emotion during which he reaches great heights, but he is seldom able to bring back water from the wells of life for those he has left behind. It is only when each vehicle of consciousness in man is in perfect correlation that the current of inspiration can flow through him and be translated into manifestation in the physical world in which we are living to-day; and while a man can learn great things and store them in his sub-conscious mind, it is only during the life in which he has learnt to correlate his vehicles so that he can bring the spiritual through into manifestation, that he can be of service to his fellow-men.

I would, therefore, urge those who desire the higher knowledge to set immediately about the task of correlating their vehicles of consciousness, and especially the mental one, so that when the higher knowledge is revealed to them they may act as links between that which is above and their fellow-men who as yet stand upon a lower step of the great stair. I would urge them, if they need any spur to this effort, to remember how much it would have meant to them, when they themselves stood upon that self-same step, had the help which it will be in their power to give been available. No effort after development is wasted, even if

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he who strives seems to lose sight of his goal and turn aside. It is the passage of many feet that widens the path for the multitude ; we, in our day, will never have to face such trials as did the earlier initiates who broke the way for us.

With regard to the practical consideration of the problems involved in this correlation of the vehicles of consciousness, it is important that the student should think of his vehicles as something separate from himself, as tools which he uses to carry out his work ; for this purpose he sharpens and cares for them, and the higher the level upon which he can accustom himself to function, the better start he will have when his opportunity presents itself. Few enlightened people identify themselves with their physical bodies, but many can live in their emotions ; some can think freely and coherently upon concrete subjects, but only a few can reason in terms of the abstract, and only one or two in a generation can experience the intuitions of the spiritual plane in such a way as to be able to think in terms of inceptive and unmanifest thought.

The initiates of the occult sciences are taught to function upon these different levels, to use a terminology derived from the East ; or, to express the same idea in Western words, to think in these different ways. Before we are ripe for a Master's teaching we have to conquer the physical and emotional levels for ourselves, for to this stage the normal state of evolution enables us to develop without any external interference. We must render the body an absolute servant which has no longer the power to make its needs imperative ; it is to this end that much of the extreme asceticism of the Yoga methods of India is directed. We of the West, however, do not practise these methods ; it is enough that the body should be rendered a voluntary collaborator and not an abject slave. Turn a man's desires

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towards a higher level, and they will automatically lift him there ; as a great Initiate said : " As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

The emotions must flow freely, without conflict or distortion, in the channels which Nature has appointed for them before they can be lifted to a higher level. You cannot sublimate a pathology.

The direction of the energies of life must be removed from the domain of the desires to that of the will. Until this is done there can be no steady progression in any direction, for the desires are called forth from without, not directed from within, and vary with the external stimulus.

Let us now consider the culture of the mind in preparation for occult training. It must be remembered that there are two distinct levels of the mind, the region of concrete thought and the region of abstract thought, and each of these requires culture. To a man who is accustomed to think in nothing but concrete forms, the abstract appears meaningless when first he comes in contact with it. Its terms evoke no corresponding image in his consciousness, but are just so many words to him, and it is necessary to habituate the mind to think in ideas instead of images. One of the readiest ways to do this is the study of algebra, for here the mind is forced into an elementary type of abstract thought and acquires the habit of thinking of proportions apart from things. From this point advance may be made to the study of philosophy and metaphysics, and a good introduction to this study is Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*.

With regard to the level of concrete thinking, we can do much by way of preparation for the higher training. The field before us is wide, so wide that it would be difficult to extend our studies beyond the bounds of usefulness. The

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larger the sphere of our knowledge, the more numerous are our points of contact with the cosmos.

The student who wishes to acquire knowledge direct from the Cosmic Mind proceeds in much the same way as a patient who is submitting to psycho-analysis, only in this case his attention is directed outward and not inward. He starts with an idea in his own mind, and follows the chain of associated ideas till he reaches the root-complex in the Cosmic Consciousness. So it will be seen clearly that unless he has a starting-point in his own consciousness, some clear-cut idea fairly intimately connected with the subject of study, he cannot begin to wind in the links of the association chain and so draw the root-complex within the field of his consciousness.

The good occult student should have a sound general knowledge of natural science, history, mathematics and philosophy. He cannot, naturally, have a thorough knowledge of all these subjects, but he should know their outlines ; he should be familiar with the principles of all the sciences and know the methods of philosophy. Then, when he acquires special knowledge, he will be able to see it in relation to the cosmic scheme of which it forms a part, and hence will *know* it in a very different way from the man who perceives it apart from its environment. The one has the living plant in the garden under his observation, the other has the dried specimen in the herbarium. The relativity of knowledge has long been realised, but the unity of knowledge has not yet received justice. Although a man can only excel by specialisation, it is essential that he should have a background against which he can see his knowledge in perspective.

For the occult student there is another reason for this framework of general information ; in seeking to study by

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contacting the Cosmic Mind he will often gain access to a mass of miscellaneous ideas, but will frequently let slip a piece of priceless information for lack of realisation of its worth ; or bewildered by an unfamiliar terminology, he may not grasp the import of what he is learning.

The professors of a university are not willing to ground students in the elements of knowledge that belong to the schoolroom, and when the student wishes to undertake the higher studies of esoteric science, he should come as completely equipped as exoteric studies can make him.

CHAPTER II

THE WAY OF INITIATION

THE great majority of our fellow-men are willing to take the world as they find it, and so long as it does not treat them too hardly, they are content. Others, however, question what lies behind the world as they see it, and until they learn the answer to that question, suffer from the divine discontent which has for ever urged men to "seek beyond the skyline, where the strange roads go down."

Most men are also inclined to take for granted the inevitableness of suffering, and unless they are brought into personal contact with some flagrant case, or are themselves the victims, they offer no protest; others, however, seem to be so linked with the human race that they suffer with the suffering of humanity, and cannot accept happiness or peace for themselves while any are in grief or pain. In the older days such natures were few and far between, but now they are very many, and none who are observers of mankind can fail to be struck with this sense of fellowship with all things which is becoming increasingly common among us.

When we consider these two types in relation to the problem of evolution we can see that they react to it differently, yet that the result of their attitude is fundamentally the same; the one type seeks to improve upon evolution by the application of science, so as to hasten the slow processes of Nature, the other seeks to lessen the suffering which the working out of Nature's plan entails; and both seek knowledge in order that they may more efficiently serve their fellow-men.

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If we study the lives and writings of these men and women who sought to know, not merely for the sake of the knowledge, but in order to apply that knowledge to the relief of human suffering, we shall be struck by the fact that these lives have many things in common, factors which mark them off from the lives of eminent men of other types. They usually have from early childhood a sense of some work which they are to do ; sooner or later they find this work, and never falter in their devotion to it ; and thirdly, whether they are agnostics or believers (we seldom find atheists in their ranks), they have a sense of being in contact with something higher than themselves which uses them as instruments for the service of their fellows ; and we also see that these people, though often frail of body, possess an almost superhuman power of endurance when in the service of this power, and that they invariably ascribe their strength to a source outside themselves.

We cannot fail to be struck by the fact that all these men and women, whatever may be the particular piece of work they are embarked upon, look upon life from the same standpoint, that of universal sympathy. We notice, moreover, if we observe them closely, that some, though not all, have tricks of phraseology in common, which indicates that they are familiar with some subject which has a terminology a little out of the ordinary, and that, although this subject is never directly referred to, its phraseology has influenced their literary style and unconsciously creeps into their writings.

We see then, that these workers for humanity had, one and all, community of character, and that some must also have had community of study. We also see that, one and all, they are no longer content to be borne along by the slow tide of natural evolution, but have commenced

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to swim. Self-consciousness has transcended the blind urge towards other things, and they dimly sense their goal, as it is said a thirsty horse will sense the presence of water afar off. And finally we notice that from afar off comes the response, and some power, such as material science takes no cognisance of, seems to co-operate with their efforts, to guide them in doubt and to support them in difficulties. The history of these individuals gives weight to the claim that this contact with something higher than themselves is no figment of an over-wrought imagination, for they achieved what men have seldom achieved, and with frail bodies endured what would have availed to break down the strongest.

What is this power that great souls contact? Esoteric tradition affirms that they take initiation of one kind or another ; for there are two kinds, physical and non-physical, which are usually taken together, though sometimes only one and not the other is experienced. The physical initiation admits to the study of the esoteric wisdom acquired by generations of men who sought beneath the surface of existence, who sought the inner meaning of things rather than their outer forms ; it admits the student to the fellowship and confidence of these men, and disposes them to share their knowledge and to accept the initiate as a co-worker or pupil.

The second form of initiation is declared to be a spiritual experience, wherein the soul establishes contact with the higher powers and is admitted to the fellowship of great souls on the Inner Planes. Of these two forms of initiation, sometimes one and sometimes another comes first ; sometimes the physical, the lesser initiation, is the earlier, and the student is then taught how to prepare himself for the spiritual experience. In other cases it is the spiritual

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initiation that comes first, and then the student is shortly afterwards placed in the way of taking the physical initiation if he so desires ; but esotericists are all agreed that, although individuals may not necessarily take both initiations, the one always carries with it the opportunity for the other.

How is it, we may ask ourselves, that any individual should come to step out of the march of evolution? We notice, in the first place, that it is only men of advanced character who take this step. What is it that causes this abnormal development of character?

Esoteric science has its traditional explanation of this problem also. It begins by premising that the evolution in which we find ourselves taking part is not unique, but was preceded by other evolutions and will be succeeded by still others. It also declares that evolution is not a blind, mechanical, material process, explicable in terms of physics and chemistry, but is essentially a mental process, a coming into manifestation, the embodying in a concrete form of an idea in the Divine Mind. Esoteric science further declares that the subjects of this evolution can bear a part and aid in the work, for as soon as we become conscious of an idea that the Divine Mind is expressing, we ourselves are expressing it, we have given it a concrete form and embodied it in our lives, and so have ourselves taken up the work of evolution ; we are consciously co-operating with God ; for it is seldom that anyone who has achieved to the realisation of the greater purpose remains passive ; this great idea fructifies within him so vigorously that he is compelled to colonise mentally, as a vigorous nation colonises physically.

We take spiritual initiation when we become conscious of the Divine within us, and thereby contact the Divine without us.

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It is well known that like attracts like, and that sooner or later we tend to drift into the society of our fellows. Especially is this true of those who have contacted the Divine ; the great mental currents which play through the cosmos, just as the invisible magnetic currents play round the earth, bear him to his appropriate place. This is why esoteric science never goes out to seek its pupils ; it knows that its pupils will come to it. We never see the occult lodges advertised on the hoardings, but we do feel the setting in of a current in men's minds.

What are the ways whereby a man reaches the point when he is ripe for this deep spiritual experience? We have seen that it is a particular type of character that takes initiation ; how is that character acquired? Esoteric science gives the explanation under the doctrine of reincarnation, the theory that the immortal soul takes many bodies, acquiring experience and character-growth in each, discarding each as its use is fulfilled and taking a new one for new work. Esoteric science always thinks in terms of an evolution, whereas the ordinary man thinks in terms of an incarnation, a single life ; this difference of view-point fundamentally influences their attitude towards life ; to the one, death is the end of all ; to the other it is the end of a phase. To the one it is a cataclysm ; to the other a sunset.

If, in the course of the long ages of evolution a soul shows the educability and the capacity to profit by the fruits of experience beyond its fellows, those great Intelligences, the product of earlier evolutions, who are consciously co-operating with the Divine Mind in concreting the abstract idea of good—just as we ourselves do when we become self-conscious of the Divine—these Intelligences pick that individual out from the generality of his fellows

