

On the occult school-project

Our approach to education is very individualistic. What we put in focus is “me and my interests”, “me and my career prospects”. And there is often nice talk about lifelong learning. The purpose of the educational system is to prepare the individual so that he or she can handle the demands and the competition on the labour market as successfully as possible for the sake of the continued development of a modern materialistic society totally committed to economic growth.

In occult terminology, the educational system is focused on contributing to the development and integration of the personality. Furthermore it includes a systematic method of recognizing and rewarding the individual by the issue of different certificates and authorizations indicating the possession of a specific expertise. It is consequently a system that is intended to determine different types of hierarchies of competence. Admission to the highest levels of these hierarchies usually requires the taking of a doctor’s degree.

The fact that we are all well acquainted with how the educational system is constituted and how it works is interestingly enough having an influence on our expectations concerning the occult school-project. What easily takes over is a kind of spiritual selfishness which is analogous to the materially oriented selfishness that is cultivated in the general system of education. Since one of the main roots of the school-project is the Bailey tradition it becomes natural to believe that the coming form of education being offered will be found to be on a high intellectual level and that in the long run it is actually a matter of establishing a so-called occult university.

The idea of an occult school can therefore arouse in an individual everything from vague spiritual dreams and expectations to more focused efforts and even pure spiritual ambition. And if this line of thinking is pursued you can see how the correspondence in occult education to the conferring of a doctor’s degree will be an initiation of a certain more or less high degree. What would more attract the spiritual ambitious individual than to be crowned with the laurel wreath by an incarnated Master? Well maybe the correspondence to a Nobel Prize ceremony, i.e. an initiation where the insignia is presented by the King himself, Sanat Kumara.

The announcement of the fact that the building up of the Swedish occult school has begun has of course not stirred up openly such exaggerated reactions of the last mentioned kind. Several reactions have instead been deeply intuitive, but despite this the most marked reaction has been what could be called “a positive wait-and-see attitude” woven into a fabric of different more or less clearly articulated spiritual expectations. This is a reaction corresponding to how presumptive students at a planned school with purely worldly aims would react if they were informed that the construction of the school in question had begun, a reaction that in the simplest of terms corresponds to the feeling: “when the course catalogue comes, maybe I can find something that really suits *me*”.

But it must be pointed out with the greatest emphasis that the different variations of this quite understandable reaction are making the establishment of the school more difficult to achieve and are based on at least two misunderstandings.

The first misunderstanding concerns the exaggerated emphasis on the individual dimension of spiritual development. All spiritual development does indeed start when the limited and separatistic personality begins to feel a spiritual longing and to have various spiritual ambitions. But as long as the personality sets the pace when it comes to spiritual development there will be a lot of activity without substantial results. The dimension that must begin to emerge and in due course take full control is the soul. And the soul is group conscious. It is even misleading to talk about “my soul” since there ultimately is only one soul. Or as it is expressed in *Esoteric Psychology – II*: “It is wise always to remember that on the plane of soul existence there is no separation, no ‘my soul and thy soul’. It is only in the three worlds of illusion and of maya that we think in terms of souls and bodies.”¹

When this emphasis on the individual is extended so as to include the initiations this leads to deeper and worse misunderstandings and illusions. In *The Rays and the Initiations* the Tibetan speaks out very clearly about the spiritual selfishness that “has led the average esoteric student to appropriate initiation and to make it personal and individual. Yet one of the prime prerequisites for initiation is a clear and concise recognition of one's own group, not through a process of wishful thinking, but through factual cooperation and work upon the physical plane. I said group, my brother, and not organisation, for they are two very different things. Have carefully in mind, therefore, the fact of group initiation, and forego the process of considered thought anent your preparation for initiation.”²

The whole idea of a totally individual process of spiritual development or education beginning with self improvement and character development studies and courses that are in due course crowned by the successive initiations is consequently an illusion. In this context it does not matter that the process of spiritual development in a certain sense starts in an individual way. There will be no real momentum until the group dimension is in focus. In other words it has to do with the soul and about becoming conscious of one's soul group.

But even when it comes to the process of discovering one's own soul group it can easily happen that the habitual spiritual selfishness plays different tricks on that person. The prime temptation is to interpret the idea of discovering one's own soul group as a call to form a group in which one places oneself at the centre as leader. This in practice means that one is doing something as paradoxical as trying to “individualize the group consciousness”, and consequently fooling oneself into the belief that being the leader of a group means that one is group conscious. The Tibetan speaks with extraordinary clarity about this temptation in *The Rays and the Initiations*. He says:

¹ *Esoteric Psychology – II*, p. 116.

² *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 342.

“Some well-meaning aspirants interpret the group idea as the instruction to them that they should make an effort to form groups—their own group or groups. This is not the idea as it is presented in the Aquarian Age, so close today; it was the mode of approach during the Piscean Age, now passed. Today, the entire approach is totally different. No man today is expected to stand at the centre of his little world and work to become a focal point for a group. His task now is to discover the group of aspirants with which he should affiliate himself and with whom he must travel upon the Path of Initiation—a very different matter and a far more difficult one. He needs to bear in mind the meaning of the following words from the Archives of the Masters, given in question and answer form. The questions are addressed to the neophyte who is getting his first glimpse of group relations leading to group initiation:

‘And dost thou see the Door, O Chela in the light?’

I see the door and hear a calling voice. What should I do, O Master of my life?

Go through that Door and waste not time in backward glances at the road just trodden. Go forward into light.

The door is far too narrow, O Master of my life. I fear I cannot pass.

Go closer to the Door and take the hand in thine of another pilgrim on the way of life. Go closer to the Door; seek not to enter it alone.

I cannot see the door, now that I grasp the hand of the brother on the right and the brother on the left. I seem surrounded by the pilgrims on the way. Alike they seem, their note is one; they seem like unto me, and press around on every side. I cannot see the door.

Move forward on the Path, O pilgrim in the light, and stand together, hand in hand, before the Door of Light. What seest thou?’

The door again appears, and wide it seems, not narrow as before. What was that I saw before? It was not like the door which now confronts this band of brothers as we stand together on the Path.

The door you saw before was a figment of your mind; a thoughtform of your separative creation, something that cuts you off from truth—too narrow for your passing yet full of wrong allure. Only the man who holds his brother's hand can see the Door in truth; only the man, surrounded by the many who are one, can enter the Door which shuts itself upon the man who seeks to enter it alone.’”³

It can hardly be more clearly said that the adherence to a purely individual approach makes it impossible to realize the spiritual development described in the treasure-trove of occult knowledge. And this has very clear implications for the Swedish school-project. Many projects that will be carried out within the framework of this project will of course be addressed to the general public, and in these there will be no

³ *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 344-345.

special demands put on the participants stating that they must have reached a certain degree of spiritual insight. But when it comes to those activities that constitute the school itself the participants must demonstrate that degree of soul-founded group-consciousness required of them if they are after reasonable effort to be able to profit by the teaching. The corresponding requirement in the occult school to the admission requirements of ordinary schools is therefore not primarily to be widely read in the occult field but to have sufficient soul awareness and accordingly sufficient readiness for and demonstrated ability to serve.

The second misunderstanding underlying a wait-and-see attitude to the school has reference to the idea that it has nothing to offer at the present time. And that is in a certain sense true, but in another sense it is totally wrong. Maybe it comes as a surprise, but the fact is that the educational activities of the school have been going on for quite a long time, and the first and only “course” that is at present being given is about the building up of the school.⁴

This means that the group that is at present working concretely with the building up of the Swedish occult school is at the same time following a fundamental aspect of the education that the school later will offer. This group, then, consists of individuals that have not only discovered that inner reality which we call the common soul-tone of the group but also committed themselves individually to it in all earnestness. This holds the group members together in intense and dedicated work on the outer and inner planes in order to realize the project. On the inner plane the focus is consequently on strengthening and stabilizing the soul platform that makes it possible for the ashramic will impulse behind the project to reach brain consciousness with the clarity needed for the concrete realization of the project within the boundaries given by the guiding originating impulse.

In terms of pedagogical jargon the project could therefore be described as “learning by doing”, i.e. learning occurs through the actual work of realising the school-project. But it must be added that the inner meditative focussing must at the same time be sufficiently clear that contact with the ashram does not run the risk of being distorted or broken. This means that the teaching of the school is not and will not be centred primarily on eager studies of occult theories. Instead focus is and will be on reaching through concrete work that inner clarity needed for incorporation of the occult knowledge in a real – i.e. to a considerable extent self experienced – manner and not as a construction of speculative theories. The direct occult education presently going on is therefore closely related to and stimulated by inner and outer experiences gained in the concrete work of realizing the ashramically founded school-project.

A somewhat problematic circumstance in the present situation is that the obscurities and misunderstandings here somewhat touched upon – as well as others not mentioned – that characterise the thinking about this project are making it more

⁴ This work is described in rough outline in the booklet *The Swedish Occult School* (www.tibetanensbokfond.se/The%20Swedish%20Occult%20School%20-I.pdf)

difficult for those who are not aware of belonging to the group to perceive the existing harmony between their own individual tone and the tone of the group. These unaware group members are consequently keeping themselves at a distance from the project because of their susceptibility to different illusions that are blocking the wills of their own souls.

The reason for spreading these reflections about the school lies therefore in the hope that they will reach as many as possible of those individuals who are not aware of their soul-based membership in the group and to stimulate them to think deeply about the basis of their own attitude to the project. Such a reflection will then hopefully aid them in achieving that meditative lucidity that is needed to make it possible to perceive with sufficient clarity that the tone of the group and ones own tone is in harmony.

Out of such reflection and an inner listening of this kind a clearer picture can emerge of how one's own relationship to the group ought to be if the soul were to become prevalent. It is self-evident that the faster this awakening takes place within those individuals that are unaware of their membership in the school group and the truer it is the faster will the building project reach that point when the establishment in question can start functioning in the intended way. With greater resources available and more hands involved in the work no other consequence is possible.