



THE TWELVEFOLD PATH OF INITIATION

Preface

In this course, one in the series called “The Inner Source”, we will focus on the path of initiation for the modern human being. On the path of initiation latent divine powers in us are awakened and brought to development. In this course, we will look at important aspects of this path, using a text from the Greek culture which appeared in the first century AD: The Nuctemeron. In this short text, the author, Apollonius of Tyana, puts into words the path of initiation in the form of a day with twelve hours.

Every human being’s calling is to make contact with his or her inner source, the immortal divine principle in the heart. The International School of the Golden Rosycross has developed the series of courses entitled “The Inner Source” to bring seekers closer to their inmost being. This is done using authentic external sources:

Gnostic writings about the path of becoming truly human. Ageless teachings are being placed in the living now.

The six lessons of “the Twelfefold Path of Initiation” are for an important part based on the comments by Jan van Rijckenborgh on the Nuctemeron. These comments have been published by the Rozekruis Pers in Haarlem, the Netherlands, under the title “The Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana”. In the lessons we also quote from other classical texts, to throw light on the practical aspects of going the path of initiation. Some of these are: “The Golden Verses of Pythagoras”, “The Admonition of the Soul” and “The Voice of the Silence”.

The International School of the Golden Rosycross began its work in 1924 in Haarlem, the Netherlands, to offer gnostically sensitive people the possibility to go the path of

initiation. It has its roots in an ancient tradition of gnostic schools, but is modern in its message and method. The founders of this School, Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, have gone this path of initiation and have explained it for the modern human being. They wrote many books in which they make the gnostic philosophy accessible for today's human being.

The human being who has become full in experience, who no longer expects his salvation from this world, finds in the School of the Rosycross a stimulating environment in which he can be nourished and schooled. Within this School he can work his whole life long - next to his daily existence in society at self- initiation, at the process of inner reversal which in the Gospel of John is indicated as the rebirth of Water and Spirit. We wish you an instructive and fruitful course.

LESSON 1: Teachings about initiation.

As human beings we have been given possibilities to live out of and to work with the powers of the divine world. These possibilities lie as a seed enclosed within us. They can manifest themselves when our human system has experienced a fundamental change. The process, in which this fundamental change gradually takes shape, is known as the path of initiation.

At the beginning of this six-part course about the twelvefold path of initiation we want to place you before an image. It is that of an ancient symbolical portrayal of the human being who is going this path.

The human being on the path of initiation is pictured as an old man trekking in the dark through the desert. His head is covered by a hood. In his right hand he has a burning oil lamp and in his left hand he holds a staff. This image contains much profound wisdom.

The fact that what is portrayed here, is an old man, certainly does not mean to say that the path of initiation is meant for old people of the male sex. Men and women, young and old can go the path of initiation. The younger one starts, the better. But one has to be ripe.

That is the deeper meaning of the advanced age of the pilgrim. One's ripeness is not only determined by one's biological age and by the experiences gathered in this life, but also by experiences of previous inhabitants in our human system (the microcosm). The sum of the experiences of many incarnations is registered in the human system and is known as karma.

Continuous change and breaking.

The person who is ripe for the path of initiation does not feel entirely at home in this world. He has recognized life's relativity. He realizes that his insight in the essential things of life is very limited that as far as that is concerned, it is dark around him. He has experienced that everything in this world is subject to continuous change and breaking. Everything that appears in this world, also disappears again. After the birth of something or someone, there follows successively growth, bloom, decay and death. Everything that has a beginning in this world also has a lawful end. The author of the Bible book Ecclesiastes describes that deep insight very beautifully on the basis of his own experience:

I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, man's delight. So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

So I hated life, because what was done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind

I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who comes after me; and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be

*master of al/for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.
(Ecclesiastes 2: 4-11 and 17-19).*

He, who has out and out tasted the relativity and the transience of this world, can begin to experience this earthly field of life as a desert. Then there is no longer any urge to lay out vineyards and pleasure gardens. A deep longing develops to acquire qualities and capabilities which are timeless and eternal.

At a certain moment this person may decide not to remain in the desert, but to travel through it. Then he becomes a pilgrim. He enters the path of initiation, the path of personality reversal. He sets out for the radiating heights in the distance, for the divine world. His innermost being comes from that field of life, which is characterized by eternal growth, freedom, justice and harmony. His innermost being's calling is to return to this divine world, enriched by the many experiences from earthly lives. Is the divine world far away? No, it is very near! That world namely irradiates our world. But we do not really notice that, because the vibrations of the divine life-field have a much higher frequency than we can discern. There yawns a seemingly unbridgeable chasm between the vibrations of this world and those of the divine world.

Journey through the desert.

On his journey through the desert many dangers threaten the pilgrim, both from within as well as from without. That is why he needs to be watchful and may not let himself be distracted. The hood makes it impossible for him to look left or right. He can only look ahead. The human being who has become conscious of his calling, and follows it, does no longer worry about his past nor yearn for pleasures that would slow him down in his development. He does not turn into side roads and byways. The pilgrim is directed to the victory in singleness of purpose, so he can make it known to others.

The burning oil lamp in the right hand of the pilgrim lights his path. The light of the lantern gives insight in the way the path has to be walked, step by step. This light is the inner knowledge that flows from the immortal divine principle in the heart of the human being, the divine spark. It is the same inner knowledge of which humanity's holy writings testify. That is why the Psalmist could write:

*Thy word is a lamp to my feet,
and a light to my path. (Psalm 119: 105)*

The lantern does not illuminate the whole path, but only a small part of it. If the pilgrim were to view the whole path, then, seeing all the difficulties and trials up ahead, he might lose courage. That is why the path is shown to him step by step.

The pilgrim goes his path alone. This is the only way possible, for nobody else can go the path of initiation in his stead. No loved one, no master, no redeemer. The path is one of self-initiation on the basis of self-authority. Even so, the pilgrim certainly receives support from others who are also on the path of initiation, as well as from entities who have gone the path before him. That is indicated by the staff, which keeps him from stumbling. The staff portrays his link to the mystery school in which the path of initiation is followed. Without this link to an authentic spiritual tradition it is practically impossible to reach the goal. A mystery school shows the right direction and provides protection and spiritual nourishment.

So it is important on the path of initiation to become acquainted with the experiences of people who have gone this path. There are many writings in which authors describe the different phases of the path of initiation based on their own experience. Authentic texts about the path of initiation can be compared to a map. They map out a terrain we do not know, so that we can prepare ourselves well, don't have to get lost and can reach our goal.

In this course we will go into aspects of this path using a compact, but very profound text by Apollonius of Tyana, a great initiate who was active in the first century AD in the area around the Eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean. Ancient manuscripts tell us that he taught, performed miracles and healings. He based his view and mode of life for an important part on the mystery tradition whose foundations were laid by Pythagoras, five centuries earlier. Therefore we will now first look more closely at Pythagoras.

Mystery tradition of Pythagoras.

Long before Pythagoras founded a mystery school in Southern Italy, there were mystery schools in ancient Greece in which myths were central. Very well known are the Eleusian mysteries, where the goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone were revered, and those of Delphi, where Orpheus and Apollo played a central role as protectors of the mysteries. Above the gate of the initiation temple of Delphi was written the well-known saying "Man know thyself". Up to this day self-knowledge is a basic condition for going the path of initiation.

Around the sixth century BC a different type of mystery school came into being, which better fitted the consciousness and level of development of the human being of that time than the mythologically inspired mysteries. Humanity faced the task of developing the thinking. Schooling became more abstract and the thinking began to assume a central place. The importance of imposing temples, statues and large symbols which spoke to the senses as well as the feeling, began to diminish.

It is remarkable that around the sixth century BC various great teachers appeared, to acquaint humanity with what sometimes is called the Universal Teaching. Lao Tzu worked in China, Gautama Buddha in India, Zoroaster in Persia and Pythagoras in Southern Europe. Most people know Pythagoras mainly as a mathematician via the axiom of the right-angled triangles named after him: the sum of the squares of the sides of the right angle, is equal to the square of the third side. Pythagoras however, also was the founder of a mystery school; he can be seen as one of the most important links in what sometimes is called the hermetic tradition. Pythagoras ideas influenced nearly all mystery schools which later were active in the West.

A mystery school only can give its pupils access to the divine world and be of help to them on the path of the mysteries, if there are people in that school who have completed the path of the mysteries, and who therefore are linked with the forces and laws of the divine world.

Pythagoras was such a person. He had gone the path of the mysteries in Egypt and had obtained access to the divine world. That is why he was entitled to found a mystery school. Only in this way could he show the path of the mysteries to others who were ready for this, and connect them with the necessary forces. During his journeys in Egypt and Babylon Pythagoras, as a pupil in the mystery schools, step by step developed the powers which gave him insight into the divine world and led him to a higher consciousness, which he later in his turn passed on to his pupils.

In the teaching of Pythagoras the number stood centrally. The number and number symbolism had taken the place of the myth. With the Pythagoreans the number did not have just a quantitative and functional meaning. They considered numbers as qualities and structures of, in the first place, the divine world, and only in the second place, of the world in which we live. With the Pythagoreans the number not only stood central in their cosmology, but also in the four sciences they practiced: arithmetic, geometry, music and astrology.

Apollonius of Tyana did not occupy himself with those sciences. His work aimed at spreading the religion for which Pythagoras had laid the foundation: a religion which aims at connecting the human being with the divine world. The text by Apollonius which we will discuss in this course, is known as the Nuctemeron. The title can be freely translated as: "The day of God shining in the darkness"

In this short text Apollonius describes the path of initiation in the form of a day with twelve hours. He conveys in the Nuctemeron wisdom which, if well understood, is still very topical for today's human being.

Three dimensions.

We emphasize that the Nuctemeron is the path of initiation "in words". It is not a description. When we describe something, we make it into an object. Then there is a clear separation between ourselves (subject) and that which we describe (object). The danger in describing the path of initiation is that we place that path exclusively outside of ourselves. When we consider the path of initiation as something that lives outside of ourselves, then we cannot go that path. In the Divine Plan lies enclosed that we become the path, that we become a living link between the world in which we live and the divine world. In the little book "The Voice of the Silence", a classical text of initiation from the Buddhist tradition, we read:

Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become the Path itself

On the path of initiation one works consciously and conscientiously at the realization of the link between this world and the divine world. Not only for oneself, but especially also for one's fellow human beings. When that link has developed, completely or partially there are degrees of initiation one is an initiate.

The Nuctemeron has been written - like many other holy writings -- from a level of experience that we cannot grasp with our "normal" reason. That means that we cannot penetrate into the deepest depth of such texts with our normal understanding. When we let the texts of holy writings repeatedly work in on us, we can gradually develop a certain sensitivity for the path. Then there is the possibility that for a moment we will rise above the horizontal plane, which is formed by the dimension of objectivity and the dimension of subjectivity, and that we can experience a little of the third dimension of true spirituality, of Gnosis.

Human experiences can relate to three dimensions, two horizontal and one vertical. The first horizontal dimension relates to the senses or their extensions. This deals with the experiencing of objects, of things outside of ourselves in the three-dimensional world of space, for instance the seeing of a table. This objective dimension we can experience because we have a body. The sciences occupy themselves exclusively with this dimension.

The second horizontal dimension stands at a right angle to the first dimension and relates to subjective experience, for instance one's experience of loneliness. This is the dimension with

which psychologists occupy themselves, as well as many people who think they are spiritual. This subjective dimension has to do with our personality. Most people move within the plane of the two horizontal dimensions and do not rise above these.

We only can speak of true spirituality, of Gnosis, when also a third dimension is experienced. This is a vertical dimension which stands perpendicular to the two horizontal dimensions. This is not about contents of experiences, but about structures of experiences. The vertical dimension bypasses both objective and subjective experiences in space and time. This dimension relates to what is timeless, the eternal, and is connected with the new soul. He, who goes the path of initiation, notices that his action radius in the three dimensions discussed gradually increases.

When we want to speak about true spirituality, we are confronted with a problem. True spirituality, Gnosis, has to do with the living spiritual experience which flows forth from the divine principle in the heart. When we are going to write or talk about this, we objectify the living experience, so that it no longer is the living experience. It is possible that then thoughts and images develop about the path which can keep us from becoming the path.

Even so we will speak about the path in this course, as so many before us in the history of humanity have spoken about it. We cannot get around this method, because our consciousness is continuously narrowing. To clarify aspects of the path, parables, symbols, metaphors and analogies were and still are being used in spiritual traditions. In this lesson many have been mentioned already. The path is also a metaphor, because it is not a real path. When we direct ourselves continuously to the path, we develop sensitivity for it, so that our wrong ideas about the path eventually will be corrected by the living experience.

With the preceding introductory remarks a basis has been laid in preparation for lending an ear to the text of the Nuctemeron. This text is not about contents of experiences, but about structures of experiences. The Nuctemeron is a symbol for the axis of the vertical dimension on which here 12 levels are differentiated, 12 hours.

The Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana.

First Hour –

In unity the demons praised God, losing their wickedness and wrath.

Second Hour –

Through duality the fishes of the Zodiac praise God, the fire-serpents entwine the serpent-staff and the lightning becomes harmonious.

Third Hour –

The serpents of the serpent-staff of Hermes are thrice-entwined. Cerberus opens its triple muzzle, and the fire praises God with lightning's three tongues.

Fourth Hour –

In the fourth hour the soul returns from visiting the graves. It is the time the four magical lanterns are lighted at the four corners of the circles. It is the hour of enchantments and delusions.

Fifth Hour –

The Voice of the Great Waters glorifies the God of the heavenly spheres.

Sixth Hour –

The spirit remains immobile, he sees hell's monsters advancing upon him, yet he is fearless.

Seventh Hour –

A fire imparting life to all soul-beings is directed by the will of pure people. The initiate stretches forth his hand and suffering passes into peace.

Eighth Hour –

The stars speak to each other. The soul of the suns responds to the sigh of the flowers. Harmony's chains render all the creatures of nature in agreement with each other.

Ninth Hour –

The number that may not be revealed.

Tenth Hour –

It is the key of the astronomical cycle and of the rotation of man's life.

Eleventh Hour –

The wings of the genii move with a mysterious rustle they fly from one sphere to the other and convey the messages of God from world to world.*

Twelfth Hour –

Here the works of the eternal Light are being fulfilled by the Fire.

Possibly you taste something of the great power which is hidden behind these words. At the same time, you will most likely agree with us when we say with a feeling for understatement that the Nuctemeron does not excel in clarity. That is because we are dealing here with mystical language, the language of the mysteries. The text is written from a level of experience with which we are not yet familiar. The Nuctemeron is written for those who have been introduced to the basic principles of the gnostic mysteries and are found on the path of initiation, or are informing themselves about it.

Keys to understanding.

The keys to a good understanding of Apollonius' text are described by Jan van Rijckenborgh in his book with commentaries on the Nuctemeron. From the introduction to that book we can learn why Apollonius of Tyana is not very well known. The life and the teachings of Apollonius were fought by certain representatives of the Christian church of that time, because he was considered to be a formidable competitor of Jesus. In the introduction of this book we can read further:

The Gnostic School Apollonius of Tyana founded had as its aim the direct realization of the life of the soul. He wished to go straight for the One Goal! Therefore he turned to those who he could expect to be open and capable of understanding His teachings could not possibly be turned to any dialectic use; they were wholly unsuitable for the servants of this world. People later sometimes took offence that Apollonius of Tyana refrained from associating with "everyone", that he selected, that he "screened" his audience.

Yet we would be doing Apollonius an injustice, if we did not establish at the same time that the light of his love and his intense compassion embraced the whole of mankind, and that he worked his miraculous deeds and cures for all people everywhere, without exception. Only with respect to the 'bringing home' to the true Reality, did he turn to those who were then ready to be brought Home. Because he knew that his brothers were working in different and broader areas; like for instance, Jesus the Lord, who worked more particularly for the elect of the future. That is why Jesus spoke mainly for the masses, though also - as we know - sometimes for his intimates, his disciples. He spoke in parables, in shrouded terms and symbols to arouse a spark of longing, of faith in the people. That is why the adversaries could corrupt Jesus' language for their own uses. What a perfect method it was to appropriate the language of a Divine envoy, directing himself to the masses, using it to disguise their own ends. What a perfect method it was for them to make Jesus into a God, an unassailable, unreachable God, and to make themselves His church and His priesthood! But then Apollonius of Tyana had to be made to disappear, and his direct teachings obliterated, like all other Gnosis. Because Apollonius preached and taught the God-in-human-form of the Hermetic philosophy the human being who could rise directly into the liberating life itself by transfiguration and rebirth of the soul, thereby wholly setting free the god-in-him, bringing him to activity.

On the path of initiation we need our reason and other capabilities of our personality. However, we can go the path of initiation only on the basis of the divine principle in our heart, which will have to awaken again. This is beautifully expressed in chapter 44 of the Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ by Levi, in which Jesus at the request of Apollonius addresses the Greek masters in the amphitheatre at Athens. We conclude this lesson with a fragment from this chapter.

*Of all the parts of earth there is no place more sensitised, more truly spirit-blest, than that where Athens stands.
Yes, all of Greece is blest. No other land has been the homeland of such mighty men of thought as grace your scrolls of fame.
A host of sturdy giants of philosophy, of poetry, of science, and of art, were born upon the soil of Greece, and rocked to manhood in your cradle of pure thought. I come not here to speak of science, of philosophy, of art; of these you are the world's best masters now.
But all your high accomplishments are but stepping stones to worlds beyond the realm of sense; are but illusive shadows flitting on the wall of time.
But I would tell you of a life beyond, within: a real life that cannot pass away. In science and philosophy there is no power strong enough to fit a soul to recognise itself or to commune with God
I would not stay the flow of your great streams of thought; but I would turn them to the channels of the soul
Unaided by the Spirit-breath, the world of intellection tends to solve the problems of the things we see, and nothing more.
The senses were ordained to bring into the mind mere pictures of the things that pass away; they do not deal with real things; they do not comprehend eternal law. But man has something in his soul, a something that will tear the veil apart that he may see the world of real things.
We call this something spirit consciousness; it sleeps in every soul, and cannot be awakened till the Holy Breath becomes a welcome guest
This Holy Breath knocks at the door of every soul, but cannot enter in until the will of man throws wide the door.*

There is no power in intellect to turn the key; philosophy and science both have toiled to get a glimpse behind the veil; but they have failed.

The secret spring that throws ajar the door of soul is touched by nothing else than purity in life, by prayer and holy thought

Return, o mystic stream of Grecian thought, and mingle your clear waters with the flood of Spirit-life; and then the spirit consciousness will sleep no more, and man will know, and God will bless.