

Fernando Pessoa

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Initiation

How, then, is a man who seeks «initiation» to train himself for it? How, in other words, is he to take within himself the Neophyte Grades of the Inner Order? He should begin by making himself acquainted with philosophical systems and with such philosophy as emerges, rightly or wrongly, from the more recent acquisitions of science. Once thus grounded, he should reflect and compare, putting system against system, theory against theory, and part of each system against other parts. He will thus develop his abstract intelligence, without which the intuition he seeks to develop will be no more than emotion.

He should begin by stripping himself of all dogmatic prejudices, of all things that have been put into his mind by education and custom. The path of initiation cannot be reached through the portals of any of the churches, but either through the portals of all at the same time, or by the portals of none. He should next make himself acquainted with religious systems of all kinds, with philosophic systems and(ut supra).

He should then elaborate, as well as he can, a system of his own, build up slowly, out of what he has learnt, and not necessarily writing it, a system, as coherent as he can make it, of the interpretation of the universe in the triple lines of truth, beauty and conduct.

He will then proceed to abandon the system he has formed. He will have come to love it, but it is now for him to reflect, that it is not worth more than the other philosophic systems, which has compared among themselves, and, since he has established his own system, rejected.

He will thus have traversed the four stages which are the temptation of the World — Dogma, Concrete Intelligence or Science, Abstract Intelligence or Philosophy, and Critical Intelligence.

Dogma, by which he is tied to others; Science, by which he is tied to Nature; Philosophy, by which he is tied to the minds of others; his own philosophy, by which he is tied to himself. For the World is all these. Once he has passed these four stages of the Neophyte stage, he is ready for initiation. It lies then with him to choose on which path he shall make it — if on the mystical, the magical or the gnostic path. It is juster to say the path on which he shall begin to make it, for the full initiation in the Adept Stage includes all three. In the first Adept Grade he will take the one path he has chosen and complete his way in it; in the second Adept Grade he will take one of the other two paths; in the third Adept Grade he will take the one that remains.

He has to conquer the three temptations which are under the Flesh — lusts, which are conquered by mysticism; indecisions, which are conquered by magic; delusions, which are conquered by the gnosis. He has to conquer

It will be said that this makes initiation X very difficult task. It makes it because so it is. Why should initiation be easy? It will be said that only a man of special intelligence can take the neophyte grades, since to be grounded in philosophy the capacity for abstract reasoning is required, and not all men possess it. But why should all men be fit for initiation? If it be said that that is unjust we may reply, either that why should the universe be just? which is perhaps a wrong, but is certainly a sufficient, reply; or that the question is put on the assumption that there is no development in the world, otherwise that the man is ended in one span of earthly life, and that it is possible that reincarnation be true, when there is no injustice but only degrees, as in outer life itself there are degrees in strength, beauty, intelligence and the like.

A man can at least yearn for initiation, and, if abstract intelligence is the first stage in the path and he has not abstract intelligence, he can at least yearn for it; it costs him as much, or as little to yearn for intelligence as for initiation, and he is really yearning for the same thing in the proper order when he yearns for intelligence.

(The mystic without intelligence has not attained the first Adept Grade: he has no more than attained the intergrade between the Neophyte and the Adept Grades, the blank purgatory of wrong ascent).

s. d.

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“Essay on Initiation.”