

The Esoteric Training of the Arcane School

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Thank you for inviting me to speak about the work of the Arcane School. It's a joy to do so because it has meant so much in my own spiritual life. For the past 18 years I've had the opportunity to serve in the School from the perspective of the headquarters group which oversees and administers it. This has been a great privilege: to see aspirants to discipleship come into the School and be spiritually quickened by its stimulation, which is the impact of group life. As those who work within the Arcane School over a long period of time know, the training in discipleship is truly transforming, and I know of many, many people, including some here today, who feel the same deep gratitude I do to the School, its workers, and its founder, Alice Bailey.

Alice A. Bailey came into incarnation as a senior disciple in the Ashram of the Master Koot Humi or "K.H." with two missions to which her soul was pledged. One was the collaboration as an amanuensis or scribe or secretary to the Master Djwhal Khul or D.K., often called just "the Tibetan", himself a disciple in the Ashram of K.H. As I'm sure you all know, their work together, which lasted 30 years, produced the books of esoteric philosophy published under Alice Bailey's name but which were entirely the Tibetan's. The giving out of this Ageless Wisdom teaching was the second of three phases of teaching intended for the roughly 150-200 year period covering the transition from the age of Pisces to the age of Aquarius. And I think we'd all agree the production of these books marked a tremendous achievement.

The other soul-chosen task of Alice Bailey was the founding of an esoteric school for training modern men and women to become conscious disciples. The term "disciple" covers a wide range of spiritual development, and it simply means "learning boy". A disciple is someone who is learning, educating himself, training to become responsive to the indwelling divinity or Christ principle, the soul. To be specific, the Arcane School is a school for training people to be "accepted disciples"—those who are on the last stages of the probationary path and ready for training in conscious, pledged responsibility to the Plan.

The Arcane School has existed for nearly 75 years now to train disciples to aid the Hierarchy at a time of planetary crisis so urgent that it will bring forth the reappearance of the Christ, the World Teacher. The Arcane School is not preparing to become one of the new Schools. Either of initiation or of preparation for initiation, that are described in Letters on Occult Meditation. Its task is to help establish the foundations of esoteric training, based on the Rules for Applicants and for Initiates, that may help to bridge between the current esoteric schools and those which will be supervised by senior disciples from the ashram.

Origin of the Name

The name "Arcane School" comes from a school H.P. Blavatsky evidently intended to establish but never did. In many ways Alice Bailey carried on the work established by H.P.B., for as I've already mentioned, the books she wrote were the second phase of a three-part release of the Ageless Wisdom for the modern world, the first being H.P.B.'s magnum opus *The Secret Doctrine*. Alice's esoteric foundation was within theosophy, and she had the rare privilege of being taught by two of Blavatsky's personal students. She and her future husband Foster Bailey met at the Theosophical Society's Krotina grounds in southern California, and both were active in leadership positions in the Society until deciding to go their separate way as her work with the Tibetan and her plan to found an esoteric school began to demand more of her energy. But the early lessons of the Arcane School, before the books were published, drew especially heavily from theosophy and students are still encouraged to study the writings of Blavatsky and Annie Besant, among others.

As a result of her experiences in the Theosophical Society, Alice was vividly aware of the problems incurred when spiritual seekers are brought together on the outer levels—the all too familiar problems of the personality with its gl amours and illusions which can cloud the real soul bonds that unite a group of working disciples. So the Arcane School from the beginning has always been conducted by correspondence. No classes are held, there are no teachers. Lessons and instruction are provided, so that the student is given guidance and support and yet is left entirely free to take or ignore that support, as he chooses.

One of the fundamental principles of the Ageless Wisdom is that the esotericist is essentially self taught. The student is encouraged to develop an awareness of the inner self, the soul, which is the first Master, the Master in the Heart. And the first meditation work is designed to effect this contact and bring it to conscious awareness. All true esoteric schools emphasize occult obedience, but that obedience is not to an outer authority but to the soul, which has its life intention, its dharma or duty. The recognition of a divine Plan and of the soul's part in the Plan is brought over by some

disciples who are quickly able to bring it to conscious awareness. For others, it is a recognition that is made in meditation and, for some, through the wonderfully practical lessons of trial and error. One cannot be a disciple unless he's willing to make mistakes, for those are often our greatest teachers. Our obligation is not to avoid them by doing nothing, but to learn from them. One of my favorite quotes is from Cardinal Newman. Who said: "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."

The Role of Headquarters

The relationship of the student to the School is watched by the headquarters group and by the senior student or secretary to whose group the student is assigned. Each month the student sends in a report on his daily meditation practice and, when it's ready, a study paper on the lesson work he has been studying—always some aspect of esotericism with a practical application to today's problems and special needs. These papers are then read and recorded at headquarters and sent to the student's secretary or fellow but senior student, who then writes to him each month. Copies of these letters are also sent to headquarters. So there is a triangular relationship of student/secretary/headquarters. This structure has been proven to be sustaining yet leaves the student free: free to work out his spiritual problems and to develop his field of service as seems right and possible in light of his personal circumstances and commitments. The headquarters group is there to provide guidance and to answer questions when asked, but the student must make his own choices. He's free to leave the School whenever he chooses. And many leave after having received what they were looking for and deciding that it's time to move on. Others stay, literally, for a lifetime, continuing to serve in the School after they have completed the course work,

A Threefold Balance

The training of the Arcane School is threefold in its emphasis on meditation, study and service. The meditation techniques, which are progressive, are based on raja yoga, the science of mind. The study work is based primarily on the books of Alice A. Bailey but also other sound esoteric writings, including Agni Yoga, and students are encouraged to read widely. The service aspect is according to the student's capacities, environment and circumstances, and I'll say more about this later. But essentially, meditation and study without service is, as the Bible says, "faith without works". You can't have one without the other, for the disciple must learn to think. And meditation teaches one how to use the mind—to think abstractly, while applying what he knows practically and concretely. It is an occult law that all spiritual development must be shared, for "that which is received vertically must be distributed horizontally".

Group training is a fundamental feature of the new-age discipleship which is rapidly being developed today. The work of the University of the Seven Rays is one experiment in progress, the Arcane School another. Although students don't attend classes in the Arcane School, they are very much a part of a group process in spiritual development, and as this realization gradually dawns upon the student, it brings a deep joy and a sense of the sustaining bonds of companionship that are such a powerful feature of the Path, but which are virtually impossible to convey to anyone else. This is just one aspect of the spiritual life about which there can be only silence in the face of those who don't yet share the Path. The subjective companionship is touched on in a number of ways by the ancient "Rules of the Road," which conclude, "the Pilgrim knows he travels not alone."

This companionship is fostered through the progressive meditation techniques of the School, which are shared by all students working in the same degree, or level of course work. Regardless of language or nationality. And today we have students on every continent, except Antarctica, and in many countries throughout the world. The work is coordinated by a headquarters group in the three centers, New York, London and Geneva. Students living in the Americas and Asia work through New York, in either English or Spanish. Students living in the Commonwealth and English-speaking students in Europe and Africa work through London, while Geneva serves students in Dutch, French, German, Italian, and Spanish for those living in Spain.

Impersonality

The emphasis of the Arcane School is on impersonality and on group work, and you can't have one without the other. Impersonality has a bad connotation for many people in the "warm and fuzzy" tenor of these times, and this is very unfortunate. For impersonality is that healing balm which makes group relations not only possible, but nurturing, fostering and invocative. The soul is naturally, inevitably group conscious, for the soul knows no separation and recognizes no barriers. Impersonality means not coldness or isolation from others, but the benign indifference to the personality—the separated self. Impersonality is the capacity literally to overlook the lower self and all that divides us from each other, and to focus on our common ground, our unity in the one soul.

No obedience or loyalty is ever asked for or expected by the School, for the only school that matters is the inner universal school of occultism centered in Shamballa, where all true esoteric schools have their origin and foundation. All outer expressions belong to the one inner Wisdom School, and this subjective, vertical affiliation is always the important relationship.

Financing the School

No fees or charges are ever asked by the Arcane School. for there can be no price put on discipleship training, and it can never be withheld from one because he lacks the needed funds. But there are expenses to administering any project on the physical plane, and students are expected to share in the responsibility for financing the work of the School and its activities according to their ability to contribute. This view of money is a significant feature of the Arcane School. Which encourages students and anyone else who is interested to participate every Sunday in a worldwide meditation service on the redirection of money for hierarchical purposes. It's part of a two-fold meditation effort. the other being the special Thursday meditation done by many people throughout the world to aid in the preparation for the reappearance of the Christ. The redirection of money into the hands of those who would serve and share is a fundamental development needed in order to create the proper subjective atmosphere in which Christ can work, for it will indicate that a true sense of sharing has finally penetrated human consciousness. For sharing is a fundamental outer expression of love, the energy embodied by the Christ.

Service is the keynote of the Arcane School, for service is the most natural expression of the soul. The goal of an expanding consciousness is to become of greater and greater service to the Plan of Hierarchy for humanity. Personal growth and development are only the means to this end. Some may think of service as work with the Red Cross or delivering meals to the homebound, but it's far more than those very worthy efforts. Service has been defined as the right meeting of need on any level of consciousness. and it is a scientific process that leads, more than anything else, to spiritual development. Light can never be dammed up, retained for oneself. It is energy of the most potent kind and it must be shared freely. but also with wisdom. for service requires wisdom to be effective. Without wisdom, service can just be meddling interference. With wisdom, which is an expression of love. service can provide that spur to the indwelling soul that enables another living thing. be it a flower, an animal or a human being. to quicken and grow towards the light. Service is the effect of radiation, and it affects the heart center. "the seat of the life."

Discovering a Field of Service

In the Arcane School students are encouraged and helped to discover their field of service and we know that the new group of world servers, of which all working disciples are a part. is actively serving in many phases of human living, including the three major

departments of Hierarchy—government, religion and education, and the "sub-departments" within education including science, psychology, arts and culture. and finance or economics.

This realization that the new group of world servers is active today on many fronts is a great comfort, for it assures us that no one of us is required to save the world and it spares one from any messianic tendency that might lie quietly waiting to spring to life. The point of identification is found in the heart center of the new group of world servers which is formed by the esoteric nucleus of trained occult workers everywhere in the world. And here perhaps it is useful to keep the Tibetan's perspective on service in mind: that "the disciple—if true to his soul and the ashram—serves his fellowmen as an esotericist as well as a humanitarian and a psychologist.- In other words, to serve within the world of meaning and significance where cause originates. The soul is. after all, the causal body.

The need to serve is a soul urge, not a requirement imposed by the Arcane School. It is as natural to the soul to serve as it is to the body to breathe, for the soul aspect is consciousness, which gives awareness of relationship and, therefore, of identification and responsibility. Service is the note of Aquarius. And increasingly we find that students entering the School are already well placed in a particular field with opportunities to make a real difference. The School training for them gives a spiritual context to their life's direction. techniques for developing mental polarization and the spiritual will. which is always the will-to-good of the whole.

Other students are still searching for their right "niche". and we have a series of lessons called "The Service of the Plan" which are composed of extracts taken from the books of Alice Bailey and which focus on a particular department such as government or psychology, and each of these lessons contains a meditation technique for developing an awareness of service in that particular field. These are available to anyone, Arcane School students or not. upon request.

There are also two service activities of the Arcane School in which many students, but not all, participate. They are Triangles and World Goodwill. Whatever the student's decision about where to direct his energies, students aren't told what their field of service should be. but they are encouraged to develop a field of activity in which they can learn to serve as esotericists: where the expression of the soul. which is right relationship. can be tried out. tested and experimented with, in accordance with the teaching that an ashram is a center in which relationship is tried out.

This definition touches on a fundamental aspect of the Arcane School and of all schools upon our planet: the fact of a hierarchy or gradation of life and livingness which is known as the great chain of being. All living things evolve and grow in capacity and potency through the stimulating effect of the higher vibration of a more advanced form

of life. Hierarchy serves humanity in this way. just as humanity in turn stimulates and acts as steward to the so-called lower kingdoms, animal. vegetable and mineral. Within a group of disciples this same principle applies, and thus. As I said, an ashram is a center in which relationship is tried out—where disciples empower and stimulate each other according to their levels of spiritual development. How grateful we should be for this fact. knowing that it's a sign of wisdom to recognize those who can so stimulate our spiritual growth. and those whom we in turn can aid in their development.

The New Discipleship

The new discipleship now being developed by esoteric schools is an experiment whose main objective is not the perfecting of the individual but the creation of a useful, productive group. This means that. in some cases. individual growth must be slowed to adapt to the group pace. For others. it means speeding up one's efforts—undergoing a forcing process—to meet the requirements of the group life. In the creation of an internally unified. telepathic ,group. criticism, analysis and judgment have no place and create only barriers to the free flow of love. In this aura of love each disciple finds it possible. finally, to lose sight of his own precious, unique identity— something utterly contrary to the present world tendency which is to enhance individuality and to focus on all the ways in which oneself and one's group are different and stand apart from the larger whole. Yet, in the release of an identity that is separate and unique, one finds a wider range of awareness and of identification that is truly liberating and expansive. For. we are told. inclusiveness is the key to understanding consciousness.

As I mentioned, a central feature of the training of the Arcane School is meditation, for this is the means by which the head center is awakened, leading to the fusion of soul and personality, of inner and outer man. The head center is the center of reception and the ajna center of distribution. and in their fusion the soul and personality are merged in complete synchronicity of purpose. consciously, willingly cooperating in the Plan of God. From this stage then follows the developing expression of the Monad—pure Life—through the spiritual Triad, and then one is on the way to becoming a Master. But for most of us, that is a long way ahead, and we must be realistic in our assessment of what is possible while, at the same time, developing an appreciation for the long-range goal and the span of the progression of Hierarchy. In this is no cause for discouragement—only for recognition of opportunity, for the Hierarchy depends on its disciples who function at the periphery of the one great Ashram. for they are those who have contact with and understanding of humanity and can give voice to the "cry of humanity" for the Hierarchy to hear.

The Arcane School places an emphasis on the Problems of Humanity throughout the training, and this creates a point of crisis for many students. In fact, when the Problems

course was introduced in the late 40s it created quite a crisis in the group, I'm told. The thoughtform then of esotericism was that it was only vertically oriented, abstract in focus and concerned only with the inner. subtle planes, whereas in fact esoteric understanding must always be applied to the outer planes of living, for that is the sphere in need of redemption, which is the purpose of esoteric training. There is a direct link between the outer state of affairs and the inner subjective conditioning, both in the individual's personal life and the world as a whole. The disciple's task is to probe the world of meaning for an understanding of the subjective causes behind outer appearances, and thus help bring about the reorientation in humanity's thinking that is so urgently needed.

The Esoteric Worldview

Many sincere esotericists seem to feel that to be spiritual, one must turn away from the world. from the problems. stupidities and all too often horrors of life on earth. Yet. where shall the solution to the world's problems. the healing, come if not from the trained esotericists—from those who have cultivated the capacity for "dual vision"? They are those who can look into the world, into humanity, and see both its divine origin and the source of its failures in the glamour, illusion and mays of the three lower worlds. The development of the esoteric view enables the disciple to see the meaning and significance behind the outer apparent reality, and thereby point the way to the solution to the world's problems, so many of which were created by humanity itself.

We know that esoteric knowledge is not intended to drive one's spiritual life more and more inward, for that leads to a spiritual introversion that is the way of the mystic. The Tibetan says that "exactly the reverse is intended; all that the disciple essentially is upon the inner planes has to become objective; thus his spiritual livingness becomes an everyday affair." Through the cultivation of the dual vision. the sense of synthesis is fostered, and it is this which is so in need of development in all true esoteric schools today. Those who are trained in the schools can convey the realization of the synthesis of life on earth to a needy. struggling and doubting humanity. And particularly at a time of transition such as this. from an old age to a new and from one 2000 year ray cycle to another, much is being called into question. Old foundations, structures and methods are no longer accepted without question, but their replacements aren't visible yet either. The inner synthesis which holds the Plan for our world in the tension of the Will-to-Good must be revealed by those who have made the intuitive recognition of it themselves.

The Basic Requirement of the New Schools

One of the fourteen Rule for Disciples and Initiates given in *The Rays and the Initiations* is "The macrocosmic Whole is all there is. Let the group perceive that Whole and then no longer use the thought. My soul and thine.- This sense of the wholeness, the synthesis of life—of its complete integrity and perfection in which no part, however small, is outside the sphere of divinity—is the occult view, not the mystical. And this demand, we're told, will be the basic requirement of the new schools of occultism. The mystic yearns for unison with "the other—with something outside and beyond himself. And we have all trodden that way. The occultist, though, knows that what he seeks is awaiting discovery within, for divine Life permeates all the manifested world and "all that is, is ever present". Meditation, study of the ancient, Timeless truths which have been passed down from time immemorial, and service are the three-fold path. A path like that of Ariadne's thread which is spun from one's own transfigured substance, known as the antahkarana.

Krishnamurti, in his famous 1925 renunciation of Theosophy, said "truth is a pathless land" and declared that no teacher, school or text could lead one there. Well, I disagree, but perhaps Krishnamurti was simply.. in his bold and fearless way, trying to express a central fact of the occult life, which is experienced as a path one treads, but which one gradually discovers is a path forged from within oneself, out of one's own substance much as Ariadne did. All true esoteric schools, including the Arcane School, seek to give the disciple-in-training the keys to unlock the door to his own liberation. The need for the guru is past, because modern disciples have the education, the training and the group resources to chart their way forward.

We should never underestimate the invocative power of group life in spiritual development. The increasing mental polarization of today's disciples is what makes group life possible. Without the ability to think through to reality, free—or striving to be free, of conditioning glammers and illusions—the disciple is a prisoner of the astral realm with its shifting tides and appeals. To know one's own mind is a necessary criterion for discipleship, but ultimately this, too, must be set aside in the effort to merge with the group mind—to think as and with the group. "The power of unified thought," we're told, "is little grasped as yet, and the power inherent in the light of many minds, rendering them effective instruments in world affairs, penetrating and dissipating world glamour...will be part of the new modes of work in the new age." What could be a more powerful beacon to the world than the light generated by the world's disciples out of their transformed lives and focussed in their unified thought?