

Talk by Alice Bailey to Arcane School students January 14, 1944

AAB: We talked last week about esoteric schools, and I decided to ask the Tibetan about attracting more students to the work. He is writing an article on “What is an Esoteric School?” and he suggests sending this article out with the entrance papers. If this opening door of the new cycle is going to enable us to be one of the schools that is laying the foundation for the esoteric work of the future, then it is essential that we should be thinking along the lines outlined here so that when this article goes out it will be sent out on a flood of mental understanding and aspiration of the Headquarters Group. I thought you might be interested if I read the first few pages of what the Tibetan has written about esoteric schools under the title “Esoteric Schools Today.” [Reading from what is today published in the Appendix of *The Unfinished Autobiography*, p. 264-265]:

The schools now forming, such as the Arcane School, are concerned with training disciples and preparing them to tread the Path of Discipleship and to come – at some later date – into direct contact with the Masters. The new schools that will appear in the next century will take disciples and prepare them to tread the Path of Initiation.

We have thus one graded, unified effort for which the Masters are responsible. The schools now forming to train disciples are intermediate in nature and are intended to bridge the gap between the esoteric schools of the past and the true schools that will later appear. These facts might be summarized as follows:

1. Esoteric Schools in the Past

These are the schools with which we are most familiar, such as the inner schools of the many Theosophical groups, the Rosicrucian orders and the countless mystical and metaphysical organizations. They are definitely exoteric in nature but are useful in challenging public interest. They convey much useful information about the three worlds of human evolution – the physical world, the world of the emotions and the mental world. They are definitely for neophytes upon the Path of Probation. They are concerned with the heart approach to God and with the deep human instinct, if haply man may find Him.

2. Esoteric Schools of the Present

These schools, now forming, have more esoteric knowledge; this is being correlated and applied. Much remains theoretical, but theory must ever precede practice. These schools will advance the teaching beyond the point reached in the earlier schools, carrying it out of the three worlds into the realm of the soul. They will deal with the world of occult values and will be mental in nature, laying the emphasis upon Knowing God, and not just upon feeling after a sensed divinity. At their best, the old schools brought about the integration of the personality and made the essential dualism of the mystic factual. The new schools aim at a higher fusion – that between the integrated personality and the soul. They reveal that behind the dualism of the mystic (a necessary stage) there is the occult fact of identity with the divine.

3. Esoteric Schools in the Future

These schools will be truly esoteric for humanity will then be ready. The higher consciousness of the disciple will be evoked and trained. He will be taught to work consciously on spiritual levels and to act as a soul in the three worlds of human evolution, through the medium of a highly intelligent personality. Disciples will be prepared for

initiation, and initiates will be trained to take the higher major initiations. Emphasis will be laid upon the right handling of energies and forces, upon wisdom as the result of applied knowledge and upon the work and plans of the Hierarchy. The intuition will be developed and a still higher fusion brought about – between the spiritual man and the universal One.

It is interesting for me what the inspiration or impression coming from the inner side has done for the Arcane School, for we really have unified all those three in a sort of way. The work for beginners is intended to integrate them and give them some control of their mental processes. Our end has always been to train disciples. It is not our work to take an emotional type and make him a devotee of the Masters. We should take people who have some indications of mentality and train them and teach them so that they can be intelligent disciples, that is, bring about fusion of Soul and personality. Then, for the last three years, we have organized the Antahkarana Degree. I don't know a single Antahkarana student who can make fusion between Monad and personality and no longer needs the Soul. We have the germ of the thing there. Always within is the germ of that which is to be. The Tibetan has picked people here and there to train them for initiation. If you place this number against the entire population of the world, it is infinitesimal, but it is the germ of future progress. We have apparently done the inner work of fusion and developed it as was intended. It isn't so much what you do for the individual; it is whether we are building something that fits into the structure of the Hierarchical Plan. I believe we can see that, with all our mistakes and blunders, we have built true to the pattern, and we hardly knew that we were doing it. It isn't as though we were acting under instructions to do it. [Reading further, p. 266-270]:

I. Some Definitions of Esotericism

The words “esoteric” and “occult” signify “that which is hidden”; they indicate that which lies behind the outer seeming and point to the causes which produce appearance and effects; they are concerned with the subtler world of energies and forces that all outer forms veil and hide. They deal with that which must be known before the initiate consciousness can be developed.

Emphasis in the past has been upon subjective but nevertheless material forces (hidden within the human being), and frequently upon the psychic powers, such as clairvoyance and clairaudience, which man shares in common with the animals. Physical purity has been enormously emphasized in the old schools and concerns the cleansing of the forms through which the Soul must manifest. This cleansing is not esoteric in nature and is no sign of esoteric or of spiritual unfoldment. It is only a most necessary preliminary stage; until this purification has been undertaken, more advanced work is not possible. The physical disciplines are needed and useful, and must find their place in all schools for beginners; by their means the neophyte establishes habits of purity and builds the type of body required by the disciple when he starts true esoteric work.

This elementary training enables the neophyte to shift his consciousness out of the tangible world of daily living into the subtler worlds of his personality forces. He becomes aware of the energies with which he must deal and dimly to sense that which lies behind them – the soul in its own world, the Kingdom of God.

The new schools are occupied with more esoteric values. They train the disciple to work as a soul in the three worlds and prepare him to work in a Master's group as a pledged disciple. Most of the schools that belong to the old order have ignored the stage of personality integration and of trained knowledge of life in the three worlds in which the beginner should be instructed. Instead, they have held out to the beginner the tempting prospect of contact with a Master and a Master's group, and this before he was even a coordinated person, when

he hardly merited the word “intelligent” and before he had any Soul contact. Emphasis was, and is, laid upon devotion – devotion to the teacher at the center of the group, devotion to the truths enunciated by the teacher, devotion to the Master, plus a fixed determination to merit the title of “disciple” and so be able, some day, to say, “I know this Master or that.” At the same time, the beginner is given no true idea of discipleship or its responsibilities. The new schools, now forming, convey very different ideas to their students and very different techniques of training.

1. An esoteric school is one in which the relation of the Soul, the spiritual person, to the personality is taught. It is the major line of approach to the student, and Soul contact becomes his first great endeavor. He comes to know himself and struggles to work as a conscious Soul and not just as an active personality. He learns to control and direct his lower nature through a technical understanding of its constitution and to pour through it the light, love and power of the Soul. Through alignment, concentration and meditation, he establishes a permanent contact with his inner spiritual being and is then well on the way to become a useful server of humanity.

2. An esoteric school is an extension into the physical outer world of the inner group or Ashram of a Master. Just as the individual disciple is taught to regard himself as a channel for the Soul, and as an outpost of the consciousness of the Master, so the true esoteric school is the outpost of some subjective spiritual group or Ashram, conditioned and impressed by the Master, as the disciple is by his Soul. Such a group is, therefore, in direct relationship to the Hierarchy.

3. A true esoteric school works on four levels of service and of experience. This enables the disciple to make a complete approach to humanity and to use all of his equipment. In the true spiritual schools, as approved and endorsed by the Masters, service to humanity is taught and not the need for the disciple to be in touch with a Master, as is the case in the majority of esoteric schools of the old order. Contact with the Master is contingent upon the measure and the quality of the service rendered by the disciple to his fellowmen. This is a point oft overlooked by teachers, who lay the emphasis upon the personal attainment of the individual and upon individual perfection. The new schools, now forming, are preoccupied with training people to meet world need and to serve spiritually, upon the following four levels of conscious activity.

a. That of the outer world. The disciple is taught to live normally, practically, effectively and spiritually in the everyday world. He is never a freak or a crank.

b. That of the world of meaning. The disciple is taught the why and the wherefore of circumstances and happenings – both individual and universal. He is thus trained to act as an interpreter of events and to function as a light bearer.

c. That of the Soul in its own world. This makes the disciple a channel for divine love, for the nature of the Soul is love. He heals and carries inspiration into the world.

d. That of his Master's Ashram or group. He is taught to cooperate with the Hierarchical plan as it is gradually revealed to him and to arrive at the knowledge that will permit him to direct some of the energies producing world happenings. He thus carries out the purposes of the inner group with which he is affiliated. Under the inspiration of the Master and His band of working disciples and initiates, he brings to humanity definite knowledge about the Hierarchy.

4. An esoteric school trains the disciple in group work. He learns to relinquish personality plans in the interest of group purpose – ever directed to the service of humanity and the Hierarchy. He becomes merged in group activities and – losing none of his individualized and particularized identity – he is a dedicated contributor to the Plan, with no thought of the separated self conditioning his thinking.

5. An esoteric school is not founded upon authority or on the demand of some teacher for recognition and obedience. It is not based on the claims of some usually mediocre person to be an initiate and, because of his status, authorized to speak with dogmatic emphasis. The only authority recognized is that of truth itself, intuitively perceived and then subjected to the mental analysis and interpretation of the disciple. The disciple who (working under some one of the Masters) starts an esoteric school has absolutely no authority, except that of a life lived as close to the truth as possible, plus the measure of truth that he can present to his group. The obedience developed in his group of students is that of recognizing joint responsibility, united loyalty to group intention and purpose, as indicated by the group leader (suggested by him and not presented as a command). The presence of authoritative statements, emanating from the teacher of the group, or any demand upon his part for recognition, or for the unquestioning obedience and loyalty of his followers marks him out as a beginner and as simply an aspirant – well meaning and with good intention. It indicates that he is not a disciple, charged with the work of the Hierarchy.

6. An esoteric group is one in which the rounded-out development of the disciple receives attention. Character-building and unselfish aspiration are regarded as necessarily present, but no great emphasis is laid upon the ordinary virtues, or upon the purity in the outer life, or on kindness, good temper and freedom from self-assertion. These qualities are regarded as basic essentials and as present in some measure, but their further development is regarded as the personal problem of the disciple and not that of the teacher and the group. Mental development is emphasized in order that the disciple may be intelligent, analytical (but not critical) and in possession of a rich, well-organized mental equipment. The head and the heart are regarded as of equal importance and as equally divine. It is with the states of consciousness of men everywhere, of all ranks, races and nations that the Hierarchy works and disciples are trained to work the same way, eventually themselves becoming Masters of the Wisdom. This they achieve by mastering all difficulties and obstacles by the power of their own souls. They thus release some Master, now active in the world, for higher and different work.

7. An esoteric school is, therefore, a medium through which the disciple's life focus becomes that of the Soul; neither the physical world, nor the emotional and mental worlds are to him the major sphere of his activities. They are simply his field of service, and his personality becomes that through which his Soul serves. He learns to work entirely from spiritual levels, and his consciousness is stably centered in the Soul and in his Master's Ashram. The esoteric school teaches him how to achieve this, how to make contact with his Soul, how to live as a Soul, how to recognize a Master and how to work in a Master's group. He learns the techniques whereby he can register impressions from the Master and be responsive to group intent and thus increasingly sensitive to the Plan with which his Master and the Ashram is pledged to cooperate. He is taught how to play his part in raising the consciousness of the race; this he does through a conscious, directed use of the trained mind, of his controlled emotional nature and his responsive brain. He becomes proficient in playing the difficult, dual role of the disciple. This is to live as a Soul in the life of every day and to work consciously in relation to the Hierarchy. There are many other definitions of an esoteric school but I have chosen the simpler of them, and the ones that must be first grasped if right progress is to be made. Step by step the disciple is led forward along the Path until

the time comes when he is ready for those great unfoldments of consciousness that we call “Initiations.” He then begins consciously to tread the Path of Initiation with which the esoteric schools of the future will familiarize the general public.

We have something there that I think will be useful. We will send it out to each student and then to everyone who applies for admission to the School.

P: I think many of the new students will not understand it.

AAB: If they don't understand it, they won't come into the School.

P: They may never have heard of the Hierarchy.

AAB: They have heard of the Hierarchy. The thought of the Hierarchy has to be spread.

RK: I think anyone, even if he has not heard of the Hierarchy, would be intrigued, because there is so much common sense there.

AAB: It is going to be an interesting experiment.

B: It will be a screening process.

CH: It will let them know what they are getting into.

AP: The words “hierarchy” and “hierarchical” are in common usage today. I think it would be definitely intriguing. I don't think the way it is used there would be an obstruction.

AAB: I wonder if you appreciate what a basic change it will mean in our work, because we have always soft-pedaled the Masters. Now, if they get this, and they know this is a school that is teaching that, we are released in a way from an old inhibition.

R: The sending out of that pamphlet ought to send a lot of light right through the School.

N: One hour before coming here a very strong impulse came to me to write a few lines, and I will read them. Last week you asked what esoteric teaching was and what an esoteric group should be. [Reading]:

What is the meaning of esoteric teaching in the world? It is to show people how to live. An esoteric group should make itself felt in the everyday life of humanity. It must concentrate upon the question of how to remove the ills of the race. An esoteric group should be the focal point of Soul consciousness and a distributor of Soul energy. The presence of each member, wherever he may be, should evoke wisdom, love and power through inspired action and illumined service. An esoteric group should be a channel for the sincere seeker of the good, the true and the beautiful.

AAB: It has never bothered me that we lose so many. When we first visioned the School we thought if we got 150 people in the course of the years who were really trained for discipleship we would be successful. Do you realize how few disciples there are in the world? Twenty years ago the Tibetan said there were 400 in the world. Several years later he said there were 1,000, and I am convinced that owing to world pressure their number is getting to be legion.

The thing I am anxious to see happen is that this group think clearly along the line of what is an arcane school. I think secretaries have to get it. They think that a school where we teach people to be better than they are and give them a smattering of knowledge, which some think very profound, is an esoteric school. It is a most difficult thing to convey to anybody what esotericism is. You can't be an esotericist without that knowledge, but you can have all the knowledge and not be an esotericist. I wonder if you can tell me why. We have borderline cases that just need a little light and they will step over the border and onto the path of discipleship.

BG: There are a number of business people in the world today who are very intelligent, definitely people of goodwill and they are working toward spiritual objectives, but they are also a little bit lost because they are not entirely satisfied with orthodox religion and have never had any contact with an esoteric school. I think the Arcane School would have something tremendous to offer such people, but I am afraid they would have to be led very slowly into occult terminology and occult knowledge. They might be repelled by the novelty and apparently bizarre nature of occult teaching, whereas if they could be led into it gradually, they might accept it.

AAB: A man or woman makes application. Something has attracted him or her to this School, which is known throughout the country as an occult school, and this person will not be put off because he has made application. The people you mention have not made application. They have to have a period of preliminary training and have to have preparation, as a person of science has to be trained. I don't think it is our function to meet their need. I think they have so many adjustments to make before they come in. I was 35 before I touched anything to do with the occult, and it took me quite a number of years of diligent study alone by myself until the thing clarified in my mind.

AR: As things go on, don't you think the School would influence many of the leaders of groups like Unity?

AAB: No, I think this pamphlet would arouse enmity. It isn't the leaders of the old groups who are going to be aroused by it. The average Unity person would find it difficult to become an occultist.

C: You said something about being through with the old teaching. So many who come into the School through Christian Science, Unity and New Thought, they are not through with it, and I think the danger is to have them come into the School and try to graft their old teaching onto the School. Anybody who can go back to the old thing isn't ready to go on with us.

P: You say that many, when they get the preliminary papers, are scared away. Therefore this pamphlet would scare them away.

AAB: They have made application to the Arcane School, and therefore they must expect it. There has always been that feeling that we have to boil down and dilute the Tibetan's language, but it has never worked. The first pamphlet, "The Next Three Years," was abstract, and yet the general public ate it up like pie. We distributed close to 300,000. The Tibetan's stuff carries. We have tried to write it down, and nobody was interested.

M: There is something sort of romantic about many of the things he writes, and it holds the imagination of masses of people whether they understand it or not.

AAB: If the Tibetan is what he describes himself to be, the power of the Hierarchy lies behind those writings, and who are we to say who will respond and who will not.

AP: I know people it leaves absolutely cold. They are the types who cannot be reached through their minds. His books put me into such a state when I first read them, because my approach is not

through the emotions but through the mind. There isn't any use in taking his work and stepping it down. It is for us to step it down. Someone said that the Fox group was an antechamber to the Arcane School. The people who are still emotional but are learning something from the emotions, they have to learn that before they can take this, before they can get the heart thing out of the mental presentation.

CH: Don't you think the only way a thing like this can continue to succeed is to use the Hierarchical method? You said that several years ago the Headquarters Staff decided the School should be run by a group and that it didn't work because they didn't use Hierarchical methods. It is an intangible and esoteric way, and you can't believe it will work, and yet it is the only way.

M: I have wondered about a written explanation of Hierarchy. I think your course of lectures on the Hierarchy was most significant.

AAB: We are in the process of rewriting the preliminary papers to go out with this. Because of all that is explained in this, we can reduce the preliminary papers. Among those papers is a questionnaire, and we might include in this questionnaire some question that would have in it something to draw the student out on the subject of Hierarchy. I want to make a change. When the preliminary papers come in, we have taken off information that should go on data sheets and have then sent the student a welcoming letter. I think we have to change that procedure and have a group of people who will take those preliminary papers and write to the student who is joining the School about their work and their stage in evolution and what we can do to help them. I think we will have a deepening sense of responsibility. Handle it more like an analysis.

B: What would be the title of such a document?

AAB: "What is an Esoteric School?" I think that will be a useful title because they have made application to an esoteric school. I think that in thinking these things out and talking them over and ourselves getting a grasp and understanding of what esotericism is, we are really feeding the whole School thoughtform, and through our thinking we will affect the secretaries, and through the secretaries the membership.

B: It isn't a matter of terminology, but a matter of specific gravity, whether the material is or is not in the student. It has to be there.

JL: Isn't the Tibetan making one of his very subtle suggestions? "This is what we are and what we have to give" and leave it to the student?

N: Which one of the Tibetan's books would you recommend for a person who has himself written many books, has been an agnostic throughout his life and is now quietly receptive?

AAB: The first two books we published were the most occult: *Initiation, Human and Solar* and *Letters on Occult Meditation*, and yet people got the most out of them; they are the bestsellers. Give him *Initiation, Human and Solar* and see what happens.

M: I still think the question of the Hierarchy is the one they will be asking about the most.

AAB: We have the literature: *Initiation, Human and Solar*.

RK: As you said, regarding the lower concrete mind, if we satisfy, we stupefy. One thing in an occult school is that we throw the question back to the student in a way that makes him deal with it himself.

AP: This new book [*Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. I*] has a penetrating quality in regard to what it says about the Hierarchy that I have never felt in anything else. There is an immediacy in their state of consciousness in brooding and hovering over humanity, and there is a sense of their closeness to us and of their reality.

AAB: It is absolutely new teaching.

AP: There was an analysis at the end of the first part that moved me so that I could hardly bear it. Where the Tibetan says that we have an idea that they are way off in their safe retreat, and he goes on to analyze their state of mind. He says that they know that humanity must not have this opportunity taken from them. They have the power and could stop it, but they must stand by and not interfere and that, because of Hierarchical sensitivity, they suffer spiritual agony that we cannot have any consciousness of.

AAB: I think one of the most valuable things is the instruction to people who failed and had to leave the group. At the end of each instruction to these different people it says, "I doubt, my brother, whether you can make the grade, but I am giving you the opportunity." Five years of struggle, and it is interesting to see where they failed. This is the most constructive book on discipleship I have ever come across.

JL: To one he said, "You are not succeeding; if you want to resign I will let you." Inside of a year he said, "You surprise me; you have made the grade."

AAB: He gives the five rays that condition each one of them, and he tells them all what their rays are, and then you can trace why they failed or succeeded and where their problem lies.

RK: I like what JL said, that when he was reading it he underwent several minor initiations.

AAB: I think we are getting a wonderful start on the inner side. The School stands or falls by us. If you don't deepen your inner life and tread the path of discipleship, the School will fail, because they look to us.

FB: We are probably finishing up a cycle of School suffering (for about six years), and it is that that is enabling us to go on less blindly. We had a very painful birthing process and quite a struggle in our adolescence.

JL: How are we going to reach the type of business person who is probably very busy making an integrated personality out of himself, but who is just about ready for alignment?

AAB: I think the thing we all have to do with ourselves, our students and everybody, is to draw on the Soul more. You have to trust their Souls. When they come we give them all we can, but they have to do the coming.

JL: I like to feel that we perform an act of evocation when they do the invoking. We stay where we are and pour out.

AAB: One of the things Foster and I have fought for from the very start is that we would not let the School be a preparatory school and do the work these preparatory schools have done very adequately. It is our function to take the integrated people and lead them onward.

RK: There was a Bishop who said to one of his flock, "I am pointing ahead of myself as well as of you." The group itself goes along with the student, facing the same way.

AAB: My nightmare is that we would have a static group of secretaries and settle down into a crystallized group. We will if we don't keep fluid and become esotericists ourselves. How can we pretend that it is an esoteric school if we ourselves are not esotericists?

RK: That mantra from *White Magic* still applies:

May the all embracing life, which expresses itself through love, lead us, one and all, nearer to the center, closer to each other, and further on the way that leads to bliss and life abundant.

M: "Man's reach must exceed his grasp, else what were heaven for." [Robert Browning]

FB: We discussed this problem in 1923 and came to the conclusion that what we ought to do was to be willing to accept anybody who came, regardless, and then set the student to work so that if he does not belong he will be eliminated and so not hurt the group or step it down, and do away with any preliminary requirements whatsoever. We took the position that we were going to train disciples without regard to who they were. We would give them the chance to get the training to be disciples. If we sounded the right note, we would get the right people, and we have held the note all through the years. There are certain students who thought the work was too hard and regretted that we did not attract more students. I would say, if you see that need, go and fill it. There are people, such as BG mentioned, but it is not the business of the School to meet their need; it may be the business of individuals to do something about it.

BG: I am talking about people who are extremely mental, not emotional, very intelligent, and for whom nothing would have to be written down, people who are a little familiar with the esoteric cults but who have found them inadequate because they are emotional. My feeling is that they would be inclined to associate the Arcane School with these other groups. I am wondering whether there is not something here that they need.

RK: Don't you think the answer is to let them read the Tibetan's books?

AAB: I think this pamphlet would do.

BG: There are people who have come up against the supernatural and they are not impressed. They are, however, very spiritual in their lives and interests, and the apparently supernatural tone might be inclined to discourage them before they had the opportunity to see that the whole foundation was spiritual and that the rest was more or less the mechanism.

AAB: I wonder what we could do.

B: There are those people who manage to get through to the point of applying. Then there is the correct handling of them and tying them in.

AAB: There is our weakest point in the School. We have to get it right. Every seeker, every aspirant, has to make the application himself. That is the law. It isn't for us to go out after them; they have to be driven by their own Souls to find the group they need. I think they get further if they are left alone to make their own approaches. I wish you would think about this idea of dealing with people who come into the School in a way that would show them that we understand their problem and can help them.