

THE AGELESS WISDOM: STAIRWAY TO 'HEAVEN'

This essay is part of a series I am writing for my study to the Ageless Wisdom at the Morya Federation. This Federation is an international, internet-based esoteric meditation school for online study to the Ageless Wisdom. These Eastern Wisdom Teachings are given by the Tibetan Master Djwhal Kuhl and are written down by Alice Bailey in her so-called Blue Books. See for more information www.moryafederation.net. I am following the five-year program which is called the Quest Universal. This series of essays is growing and can be find on www.sensability.nl.

INTRODUCTION

Since the start of the new millennium a remarkable growth can be seen throughout the world in the number of spiritually minded people without bondages to or preferences of any religion. These people are becoming more and more aware that a new dimension can only be found in the interior world, or in other words: inside themselves. They understand that they have to tread a path of inner transition on which they must awaken their inner perception and intuition. This is called in the Ageless Wisdom the *Probationary Path*.

Until now the largest part of this group consists of the *Mystical Aspirants* who are in the early stages of the Probationary Path. A smaller group is treading the Occult or Esoteric Path. These are the *Probationary Disciples* who are on the later stages of the Probationary Path. It can be said that both groups have set their first conscious steps on the *Stairway to 'Heaven'*, which is a metaphor for climbing towards higher and more complete consciousness. Of course 'heaven' is a state of being and not a place, and the word is put into quotation marks because a heavenly state of being is not a fixed state with a certain end point, but indicates the process of growth in consciousness which has many different stages or levels. For a description of these levels I refer to another article of me in this series: A Hidden Reality.

This essay endeavors to give interested people, specifically the ones on the Mystical Path, an insight in what it means to be on the Probationary Path, the Hindrances on it and the ways to overcome them. Some extra attention will be given on the money issue, one of the most important tests upon the Probationary Path.

THE PROBATIONARY PATH

The Probationary Path is only the first stage on the larger Path towards Discipleship, which consists of six stages (Note I). In this essay we focus on the first stage, the one of the Probationary Path, which is the path of purification (Light

of the Soul, LOS, p. 384) with the 1st initiation as its goal. The human soul undergoes different initiations on his evolutionary journey to a superhuman, spiritual and holy being. This is quite complex information for which I refer to the book 'Initiation, Human and Solar (IHS) from Alice Bailey. With this 1st initiation the child of Christ is born in the heart, and this child starts on the pilgrimage of the Path. The 1st initiation is therefore only the start of the larger Path towards Discipleship (Initiation, Human and Solar, IHS, p. 63).

The Probationary Path is the preparation of this start and it marks the period in the life of a human being when he definitely chooses the side of the forces of evolution. From now on he starts to build his own character. He takes himself in hand, cultivates the qualities that are lacking, and seeks to bring his personality under control. He is building the Causal Body, or the Egoic Lotus, with deliberate intent, filling any gaps that may exist, and seeking to make it a fit receptacle of the Christ principle (IHS 63-4). This he is doing by living a concentrated, thought-governed life to develop his concentration, followed by disciplined meditation. His first steps are: organizing his daily life, regulating his activities and becoming focused and one-pointed in his manner of living (Intellect to Intuition, ITI, p. 200). With this he begins to focus himself on the mental plane and trains himself in the powers and uses of thought.

The Probationary Path, the first stage on the Path towards Discipleship, has different stages within it.

The Mystical Aspirants

We find these in the early stages. They are in the process of engaging the heart and focusing on the vision of unveiling the soul by working in the astral world. This means: with the power of emotions. Their activities in this field are masqueraded as devotion, that's why they are often called 'devotees'. They are not yet entering the realm of mental perception and they fail to bring their idealistic dreams into physical expression. They are often misled and overcome by the glamour of the spiritual life in their yearning to oneness and/or contact with 'the Divine'. All kinds of symbols can be used for this intense longing, such as: a marriage with the Beloved, life in the Holy City, participation in some ecstatic vision of God, or adoration of some deified and loved individuality, such as the Christ, the Buddha, Sri Krishna or Sri Bhagavan.

These somewhat harsh sounding remarks of the Mystical Aspirants are mirroring the direct language of Master Djwhal Khul in the books of Alice Bailey. They are not meant to disqualify or underestimate the importance of the mystical stage. This stage is a very important and necessary preliminary on the Probationary Path. Its main goal – the engaging of the heart – is a crucial step to be made before the mental aspect is developed, because without it the aspirants would be in danger of becoming black occultists.

The Probationary Disciples

These we find on the later stages of the Probationary Path. They focus on the mental plane via meditation, study and service, and become one-pointed in their aspiration. They apply themselves with dedication and work on the purification and building of their character. Therefore they move forward faster than the Mystical Aspirants who tend to avoid any crisis or application of discipline or sacrifice. Thereby their consciousness and awareness of the Soul is expanding and this leads them to become sensitive to the vibration of their Master's group. They develop the ability to bridge the link between the lower and higher mind, thereby expanding the expression of the Soul. In this process they turn away from the personal, lower self and become humanity-centered instead. In other words: *their focus is shifted from their selfish concern about their own personal development towards selfless service in fulfilling the needs of humanity.*

HINDRANCES ON THE PROBATIONARY PATH (LOS, Book 2-3)

The Hindrances on the Probationary Path result from wrong habits of thought, which over time have resulted in five major ways of perceiving oneself and the world. These ways of perceiving are wrong ideas, which have led us, human beings, on the wrong path and prevented us from realizing that we are in reality sons of God. This resulted in our false identification with the lower, material world.

These five Hindrances are:

1. Ignorance
2. Egoism
3. Attachment (or desire)
4. Hate (or aversion of life)
5. Clinging to life

1. Ignorance

Ignorance is the root, or the cause of all other hindrances and obstructions. As long as we are ignorant, which means that we lack knowledge of reality, our human soul identifies with its vehicles, its bodies, and with the thoughts and desires they create, because it doesn't know any better. In an ignorant state our soul is not aware of the fact that he is *not* his physical body (and its pains), *nor* his emotional body (or its emotions) and *neither* his mental body (or its thoughts). Ignorance is the root cause of our lack of spiritual progress and the pain we suffer. Through our ignorance we confuse the permanent, pure and blissful Higher or True Self with the impermanent, impure, painful lower or personal self. We think

we are this lower self while in reality we are the Higher Self. This is the root cause for the existence of evil, selfishness and personal desires of any kind.

2. *Egoism*

The ego (with a small e), or personality, developed since we, human beings, were equipped with a mind and started to use this mind to gather information about the external world. We needed something to define or separate ourselves from other human beings and things in the external world, in other words: to become an identity. With this the ego, or personality, was born and we've clung since then to a personal self or a social self. We believe in this social identity, and as long as we do this and keep being stuck in a solid self, fabricated by interpersonal relationships, we will fear the loss of this self. We do everything to feed and defend this concept of the self, believing we are defending life itself!

We may enjoy the idea of freedom from interpersonal and social suffering but refuse to let go of our hard-won social identities. We say: 'who am I if I am not the parent, child, teacher, friend, manager, hard worker, Christian, Buddhist, spiritual seeker, occult student, vegetarian, nature lover?' Our personal self clings to life and refuses to die, is very much afraid of it. We think that by giving up our personal or social identity we will die and we do everything to prevent this. While on the other hand we yearn for fusion with God and long to be taken in his heavenly realms. We are ignorant (which is, as been said, the root cause of egoism and all other hindrances) about the fact that we can't have it both ways. *Our personality has to die, as a separate identity, before we can be lifted and make real progress on our Stairway to 'Heaven'.*

That's the trap we are in. As long as we are not aware of the fundamental choice we have to make for our much larger real Self (with capital S), and keep clinging stubbornly on our little personal self (with a small s), we will not make the progress we desire.

3. *Attachment (or Desire)*

We are attached when we dwell on pleasure, regardless of the object. This stretches from the first infant state of humanity as savages, to the emotional or intellectual behavior of the average human beings, to the ecstasy of the mystic, up to advanced degrees of discipleship. Desire is a general term for the outgoing tendency of spirit towards form life. Life is all attachment in some degree or another. The progress of the soul seems to be a gradual progression from one object to another, from the grossest to the finest, until *all* objects of attachment are exhausted.

4. *Hate (or Aversion to life)*

Hate is the same as aversion to any object of the senses. Hate is aversion to life. So, hate has a much broader, or subtler, meaning than our common use of this word. Hate causes separation, whereas love reveals the unity underlying all forms. Hate is the result of concentration upon form and of a forgetfulness of *that* which every form (in more or less degree) reveals: the soul, spirit, life. Hate is there when we feel repulsion, and this leads to a withdrawal from the hated object. It is the reverse of brotherhood, and therefore when we hate we break one of the basic laws of the solar system: *the Law of Unity*. Hate negates unity and causes us to build barriers that separate us from others and from life. Hate or aversion in some degree is present in every human heart. Only when we entirely overcome it by love, or the sense of unity, will death, danger and fear vanish from our human consciousness.

5. *Clinging to life*

This is the intense desire for form life and for sentient existence, which means the capacity to feel. This desire is inherent in every form and self-perpetuating. The clinging to life is a form of attachment, which is generic and a result of the fact that our Solar Logos is in incarnation. As long as He is in existence, this trait is inevitable and remains, though naturally much more limiting in ignorant human beings than in the wise ones. The majority of humanity is clinging to a personal and/or social self that is just a temporary form being used by the soul for this incarnation. *Instead we have to learn to 'identify' ourselves with the real life of the indwelling soul/spirit that lives on after the form has served its purpose.*

WAYS OF OVERCOMING THE HINDRANCES

Thinking an Opposite Thought

In general the Hindrances are to be eliminated by the technique of "*Thinking an Opposite Thought*". This sounds simple, but the proof of the pudding is in the practice, in the consequent application. Anytime one of the above summoned Hindrances arise, which are powerful negative thoughtforms, they have to be counterbalanced, and thereby in the end destroyed, by the intelligent application of positive thoughts, or the right habit of thought. For intelligent application knowledge is required as ignorance can lead to the naïve believe that anything can be achieved, including selfish material things, by only repeating positive thoughts to oneself. We have to expand our knowledge and learn to comprehend the selfless nature of the soul. Then the illusion of the form world is lessened, the delusion becomes weakened, and the application of positive thoughts will be more intelligently directed towards liberating the soul of humanity.

Action follows thought

This means that we move in the direction of our thoughts. Thoughts can be negative or positive. In the first case they limit our soul and in the second case they free our soul. It's up to us which case we choose. We have freedom of choice, although most of us are limited by our emotional state. When thoughts are negative, negative actions will follow, negativity in our environment will be attracted, and pain and ignorance will always be the result. Every time we use negative thoughts, our lower self submerges more deeply in illusion and ignorance. To counterbalance this we have to overcome negativity by an opposing mental attitude, which means: by intelligent application of counter currents of positive thoughtforms.

If for example our thoughts are greedy, we will become greedier. To exterminate this we have to oppose these thoughts with generous ones, which will lead, when applied persistently, to a more generous attitude. This will in its turn attract generosity in our environment. When our mind is impure, impure things will surround us. When we want to surround ourselves with pure things, we have to apply pure thoughts.

It is as simple as this, but again, the proof is in the pudding. A very important prerequisite is that we purify our emotions (or our astral body) because these are in the way of thinking clearly.

Consistent practice

We have to practice consistently and apply this technique of Opposite Thinking over and over, with sound endurance and discipline. 'Luckily' we have enough opportunities to practice, living in a dual world full of conflicting and opposing forces. On one side we have the forces of materialism, on the other the forces of divinity. Other examples are the opposites of dark and light, evil and good, pain and pleasure. This last opposite dominates humanity at this period in our evolution. This is the area that causes most stress and pain.

The pull of these opposing forces creates a lot of turmoil in our lives. The average person is experiencing this quite unconsciously and is not aware of his own part in this matter. But when we step onto the Probationary Path of commencement to more conscious spiritual development, the conflicting opposing forces really make their presence felt. We wish to change, to overcome our old habits and dysfunctional desires, thoughts and actions. But without proper esoteric training we find we cannot, no matter how hard we try.

The use of the discriminating mind

To free itself from the lower worlds the soul uses the discriminating mind as an instrument. The mind enables us to discern the difference between the things of

our ego and our spirit. The technique we have to use to overcome the negativity of the lower worlds can be summarized in three steps:

1. Identify the negative thought.
2. Find an opposing positive thought.
3. Continuously offset the energy of the old thought by using the new one. Take time to 'feel' the new effects in your astral field. Feel good about it!

Counterbalancing the Hindrance by the Opposite

1. From ignorance to true knowledge

Ignorance is the result of an unawakened consciousness and must be supplanted by true knowledge. More specific this means: become educated in people and in the culture of other races and nations; study yourself and esoteric writings; join an esoteric group.

2. From egoism to soul consciousness

Ponder the thought that you are one spiritual spark amongst billions, all equal before God. In consciousness, you may be somewhat ahead of some younger brother-sister souls, but in truth you are way behind other more evolved beings. Practice humility!

Also it is most important that you, as an aspirant, regard the development and full use of your mind (the sixth sense) as your immediate objective, and understand clearly the *three purposes of the mind*:

1. The gathering of information about the external world, which created the ego (with a small e) or personality.
2. Developing the power to transmit to the brain the thoughts, wishes and will of the Ego (with a capital E) or the Soul. This is to be achieved by practicing the first five means of yoga: the Commandments, Rules, Posture, right control of life force (Pranayama) and Abstraction (Note II). As the Ego develops, the sense of identification with the little lower self becomes steadily less.
3. Functioning as an organ of vision whereby the realm of the soul is contacted and known. The final three means of yoga (Attention, Meditation and Contemplation (Note II)) bring this about.

If you succeed in developing the second and third purpose you will make rapid progress, the sense of personality (or ego with a small e) will fade away and identification with the Soul (or Ego with a capital E) will follow.

3. *From attachment to detachment*

Attachment is overcome by practicing detachment towards pleasurable objects. Hold the thought that in reality you are a spiritual Divine ray, and that you are here on earth for learning and service, but that this earth is not your true home.

Imagine what your destiny would be if you stayed stuck in this body, or with that object or relationship, for *ever*, while every other soul moved on (as they will). *Would you want that? I don't think so.* See yourself letting go, as a free spirit returning to your spiritual Father, your real home!

The test of money

I want to give special attention on a very common and widespread object of attachment: *money*. On our Probationary Path we are tested frequently and the tests are most of the time hard. One of the most important tests is the test of money. Our attitude towards money is mostly selfish, and based on greed and fear. That's why in The New Testament is said: "*the love of money is the root of all evil*". (Externalization of the Hierarchy, p. 645). It is largely money, greed, hunger for power and selfishness, which lie behind the present disastrous economic situation.

Our attitude towards money has to change!

Firstly our selfish and personal interest has to shift to general and group interest, and exactly this change is the most important thing on the Probationary Path.

Secondly our belief and conviction that money is absolutely necessary for our survival, which creates a lot of fear around shortage of money, has to change. We have to learn to trust that money is energy, which is always there in abundance when needed and when provoked by our righteous actions. This means actions that contribute to the common good of humanity rather than any selfish motive.

Thirdly we have to learn, understand and fully integrate that need, love and magnetic power are the three things that, consciously or unconsciously, attract money. But they must all manifest at once! The need in the past has not always been real, though it has been felt as real (such is the world glamour and illusion). The love has been selfish or unreal; the demand for material things has been for that which is not necessary to health or happiness. The magnetic force utilized has been, therefore, wrongly motivated and this process – carried forward over a long time – *has led to the present dire financial situation in the world*. This motivation has to change to really needed demands for health and happiness for all!

4. From hate to love and wisdom

Hate is, just as attachment, overcome by practicing detachment, in this case towards the hated objects, and by the practice of love and trust. Ponder the thought that God is unconditional love and that you are a child of God. Although you have been wronged and wounded, it is unnatural to your true nature that you should feel hate, and it is damaging to your spirit. Remember that hate is much broader than its common use! *It is aversion to all objects, to life.* When you are back in your soul consciousness, and see the other person as a soul as well, all those hateful thoughts will disappear. Hold the thought of God radiating love to you, and you pass it on. To nature, to those in need, to those you love, and when you are able, to the one you hate! Feel your heart chakra open up as you do this.

Hate is also caused by misunderstanding the object of aversion. Therefore it is not only countered by love, but also by wisdom and understanding the true nature of the person as a Soul somewhere along the path like you. This is again the transition from ignorance (the root cause of all hindrances) to knowledge.

5. From clinging to life to growth in consciousness

The generic condition of clinging to life will last as long as the Logos is in manifestation. Not much can be done about it. Just be aware of it, don't judge it, and accept it as it is. Study the Wisdom Teachings and become more and more aware that life is much more than life on earth alone. It can be of help to be aware, and repeat to yourself frequently, that this life on earth is only a temporary form. *The real life is the life of the soul!*

Negative acts (samskaras)

Be also aware that the technique of holding an opposing thought must be accompanied by a concerted effort to stop the physical body from acting out samskaras (negative acts), on the physical plane. Much that we do is automatic and the result of long continued emotional and mental habits. But every time we indulge a samskara, and allow it to take over our minds and emotions, and then act this out on the physical plane, it is strengthened. These external 'acting-outs' must also be suppressed. The two techniques – thinking an opposite thought and suppressing negative acts – must be applied simultaneously, otherwise theory will not become intelligent practice.

CONCLUSION

It will be clear from the above that we, human beings, are on a long journey towards higher and more complete consciousness, which I metaphorically called our *Stairway to 'Heaven'*. When we become a more conscious traveler on this journey we are treading the Probationary Path.

In the early stages of this path we are *Mystical Aspirants*, working in the Astral world (with our emotions) on the very important step of engaging our heart. On the later stages we become *Probationary Disciples*, working in the Mental field on the development of our higher mental capacities, and on the building of our Egoic Lotus, or Causal Body. In this stage we endeavor to transcend from the selfish preoccupation of our lower self (or ego with a small e) on its many illusions and glamorous feelings to the selfless service towards humanity of our Higher Self, or Soul (or Ego with a capital E).

On the Probationary Path we are tested and confronted with many Hindrances, which can be divided in five groups: ignorance (which is the root cause of all the other ones), egoism, attachment, hate and clinging to life. In general we must overcome these hindrances by the dual technique of *Thinking Opposite Thoughts* and *Suppressing Negative Acts* (samskaras). We have to do this work *ourselves!* No one can do this for us. This work can be hard and requires endurance and discipline, but the rewards are an adequate compensation for this. And...sooner or later in our long evolutionary journey we will have to do this work anyhow. So why wait...?

Eric Huysmans, September 19, 2013
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NOTES

I: The *six stages of discipleship* (from DINA I, Section Three, p 671) are:

1. *Little chelaship/Practical Mystic/Probationer*: this stage of the Probationary Path is further described in this essay.
2. *Chela in the light*: in this stage the consciousness of the probationer is occupied with the overcoming of glamour and the curing of the distorted, myopic vision of the man who has been immersed in the life of matter or form. He is now attempting to see the new vision, to control the world of emotional reactions and to work in a new medium, that of Light.
3. *Accepted discipleship*: probationers become accepted disciples when they have covered the 1st and 2nd initiation. The keynote of this stage is the establishing of direct contact with the Master in meditation.
4. *Chela on the thread*: the stage wherein the disciple is taught how (in emergencies) to attract the Master's attention. The whole question of psychic sensitivity of the higher kind is involved at this stage.
5. *Chela within the aura*: the stage wherein the disciple is permitted to know the method whereby he may set up a call, which will entitle him to an interview with the Master. This stage is far in advance of that attained by most disciples, because it connotes almost complete at-one-ment between the disciple and the Master's group.

6. *Chela within the Master's Heart*: the stage where the disciple is in close touch always; he is being definitely prepared for immediate initiation or having taken initiation; he is given specialised work.

II. The *eight means of yoga* (from *The Light of the Soul*, Book II, p178) are:

1. Commandments (Yama): abstention from avarice, incontinence and theft and practicing of harmlessness and truth.
2. Rules (Nijama): aspiration, contentment, purification, devotion and spiritual reading.
3. Posture (Asana): a steady immovable physical position, an unwavering emotional condition and an unfluctuating steady mind.
4. Right control of life force (Pranayama): the regulation, right control of prana or life breath.
5. Abstraction (Pratyahara): the subjugating of the five senses by the thinking principle of the mind (the sixth sense).
6. Attention (Dharana): one pointed focus on an object.
7. Meditation (Dhyana): thinking through of the deeper meaning of the object and discovering its relation with other things.
8. Contemplation (Samadhi): melting together with the object, become at-one with it.

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