

MYSTICAL INITIATION

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EChristian Bernard serves as Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC worldwide. In this essay from [So More it Be!](#) he discusses the definition of *Mystical Initiation* as it manifests today in continuity with ancient initiatory practices.

Whether people are aware of it or not, their ultimate purpose is to evolve toward Perfection and to prepare their soul for receiving knowledge of the mysteries. How? By pursuing the path of Initiation, for this is the only path that leads one to “Know Thyself.” But what is mystical initiation? Where does it begin? Where does it end? What is its purpose? And what is its nature?

First of all, we must understand clearly that initiation is not something that is exact, nor is it an event fixed in time. It is a process continuing from incarnation to incarnation that must lead us to self-realization, but only at the end of a very long inward development. This means therefore that each of our thoughts, words, and deeds is an initiation in itself, because each contributes to the Great Work that has been going on within us since the dawn of time. From the moment we believe that the soul exists and that it evolves through the medium of the physical body, we are obliged to admit that every physical or mental activity we perform on this earthly plane is included in this evolution.

As I have just mentioned, the evolution of consciousness is in itself an initiatory process which continues life after life. Consequently, we initiate ourselves daily into the purpose of existence through the medium of everything we think, say, or do. Nonetheless, it is true that when we speak of initiation, we generally refer to something other than the purely objective state of consciousness that we experience over a period of hours.

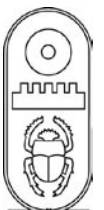
When the term *initiation* is used in the Rosicrucian teachings, it designates most often the exceptional experience which every mystic hopes to have eventually upon the path of Knowledge. One of the most beautiful definitions of this mystical experience is expressed as follows on the cover of each monograph which symbolically marks the passage from one degree to another in the studies of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis:

“Initiation brings into the realm of reason the purpose, and into the realm of emotion the spirit of one’s introduction into the mysteries.”

This phrase contains the keywords which enable us to meditate deeply upon the meaning to be ascribed to the initiatory process taking place within us. According to this definition, the process involves both the realm of reason and the realm of emotion. This clearly shows that initiation as a whole is not limited to just one aspect of our being. We often have a tendency to think that mysticism applies solely to that which is metaphysical—in other words, to that which lies beyond the physical. However, it is important to have a clear understanding that mystical evolution operates within both the material world and the spiritual world.

Moreover, this is the reason why human beings cannot experience true happiness if they orient their life towards one of these two worlds to the exclusion of the other. But, first and foremost, Rosicrucian mysticism must lead us to the state of happiness, for this very state provides proof that we have understood the profound meaning of life.

When the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis states that our purpose is to become aware of our spirituality gradually through initiation, it does not mean that we must set aside materiality. If we accept the principle that one of our goals is to prove to



ourselves that mind has mastery over matter, it stands to reason that this mastery must apply to the material world.

Since the Cosmic has made earthly incarnation a condition indispensable to human evolution, it seems logical to think that the physical and objective aspect of our existence is a reality necessary for the realization of the Divine. Of course, the most important thing is to understand clearly that the earthly world is only a means and not an end, and that it is only the finite material out of which we build towards the Infinite.

At our present level of spiritual evolution, we cannot function effectively on the earthly plane without feeling and satisfying certain desires based upon the material aspects of existence. This is the reason why asceticism is not a valid initiatory path in the realm of mysticism. Only the great adepts have attained a state of consciousness that enables them to transcend effortlessly the dependency we all have upon this world.

When individuals are nearing the state of Perfection, their conscious activity is directed so much towards the higher planes of Cosmic Consciousness that they actually feel detached from all earthly desires. But we must fully realize that we have not reached this point as yet and that such a detachment is the result of a natural evolution of the soul. As for most human beings, it is absolutely impossible for them, from one day to another, to live on this material plane while denying all legitimate needs that must be satisfied.

The Goal Which Initiation Enables us to Reach

This leads me now to define the goal which initiation must enable us to reach, and which is the basic experience that makes the definitive realization of such a goal possible. Rosicrucian Tradition has always taught that this goal is to achieve the state of Perfection which the Christs of the greatest religions of the world have achieved upon Earth and which Rosicrucians call the *Rose-Croix state*.

Although this is a true goal, it takes a long time for, as I just mentioned, we are still too far removed from this state to hope to attain it in this incarnation. Consequently, we must not pretend through our behavior that we are very near to this state. Also, let us be modest and set for ourselves an initiatory goal that is truly in keeping with our abilities. It is the most effective way to evolve and avoid the snare of illusion.

Too many disciples of religious, philosophical, or pseudomystical denominations have a tendency to pattern their behavior after the lives of the great avatars of the past, as understood by them. Among other ideas they strongly believe that physical or mental crucifixion is a necessity upon the path to mystical regeneration. I am convinced that all those who think this way and try to make others believe it also are mistaken. Only the Great Initiates have been granted the right and the strength to bear the karmic cross of humanity upon their shoulders. At our present level of evolution, the weight of our own cross is ample and it is our duty to lighten the burden as much as possible.

A wrong interpretation of some religious texts could lead us to suppose that it is only out of suffering that the Light may burst forth. Nothing seems to me further from the truth, for then the God of Love spoken of by the adepts of these texts does not exist. We know that Universal Love is a reality that many mystics have experienced through the process of initiation. Therefore, we are essentially right when we declare that suffering, even if it is true that it has an initiatory purpose, has never been and will never be a cosmic requirement for evolution. In fact, I firmly believe that the day will come when humans, freed from ignorance, will experience more happiness than unhappiness.

Although suffering is a means of evolution, it is not compulsory in the process of initiation. It is true that the experiences that ensue are initiatory in nature, but the reason they are so is because of the increased

awareness they create within us, and not because of the fact that we experience them as suffering. To think otherwise would be tantamount to saying that people must necessarily experience war so as to learn that they are happiest when they live in peace.

It is easy to understand that if the Cosmic had decreed that we should experience every possible kind of suffering to become initiated into the great truths of existence, it would have thereby decided to make self-destruction the fundamental principle of evolution. Such an idea is absurd, for it is contrary to the basically constructive nature of natural and universal laws. We see, therefore, that those who make physical and mental crucifixion the basis of initiation are in complete contradiction with the overall plan of Creation. Their error lies in the fact that they try to apply a mystical state (on an objective plane) which can only be experienced on the spiritual plane and solely by those who have attained Christ Consciousness.

The State of Consciousness Through Mystical Initiation

It remains now to define the state of consciousness which we must seek to experience from this moment on, through mystical initiation. As previously stated, our goal is not to achieve the Rose-Croix state, because we are still too far removed from it in our present incarnation. Rather, the desired state consists in having a conscious awareness of our soul—in other words, of our spiritual identity.

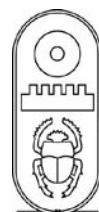
We all know that a soul essence permeates all of our cells and makes us into living and conscious entities. Yet simply knowing this is not enough for us to reach the heights of mystical fulfillment. We must experience it and be able to live consciously in this essence, independent of our objective faculties. Therefore, I believe that the first mystical initiation Rosicrucians must prepare themselves to receive is the one which enables them to see and feel themselves no longer as a body animated with a soul, but as a soul animating a body.

What is emphasized throughout the Rosicrucian teachings is the importance of practicing exercises geared to developing psychic centers. However, this is not done strictly with the goal of acquiring certain mystical powers, even though it is true that they contribute much to it. First of all, such exercises enable each of us to experience our own conscious duality and to prove to ourselves that we are definitely body and soul, matter and anti-matter, substance and essence.

In connection with this, psychic projection, as presented by the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, is primarily intended to reveal the state of consciousness which we experience when our psychic body is separated from our physical body. Such a state of consciousness enables the individual experiencing it to contemplate the realms of the soul without having to endure the limitations of the body. This does not mean that the psychic self and the spiritual self are entirely the same and that when we experience one we necessarily experience the other. This means that any projection experiment initiates us into the existence of the soul, for the psychic body is an emanation of our soul essence, whether it is inside or outside the physical body. Therefore, it is impossible to experience consciously a separation between the physical and psychic selves without being initiated into the cosmic reality of the spiritual self.

Ancient Egyptian Initiation Culminates in Initiatory Projection

The ancient Egyptians understood this, and that is why the initiations enacted in their temples included a culminating phase when candidates experienced initiatory death—that is, projection. Such an experience caused these candidates to experience a conscious separation between their physical body and their psychic body, thus enabling them to acquire the intellectual and emotional certainty that they were truly a spiritual entity incarnated into a material individuality. Everything was planned so that this initiatory death and the ensuing symbolical rebirth



would remain forever engraved in their mind and emotions.

Here we see the origin of mystical initiation, inspired by the Rosicrucian definition, as was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Once the Initiates had regained awareness of their mortal body, forever marked by what they had seen in the kingdom of immortality, they felt impelled by a desire to objectify to the fullest degree the state of consciousness they had experienced. From that day forward, their initiation became the anchor of their life, and secretly, deep within their soul, they knew that mysticism would bring to them the revelation of the mystery of mysteries.

The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis is the traditional repository of the Egyptian mysteries and the initiatory path we must follow to have access to them. This path has been set forth by all the Initiates who, with the passing of the centuries, have bequeathed to the Order the fruit of all the efforts they have put forth so as to make mystical initiation something tangible and transmissible. These Initiates were not all perfect and did not pretend to be so, but some among them have become perfect, for we cannot spend lifetimes in sowing seeds of Light for others without one day picking the rose of our own Illumination.

Those Initiates are similar to the Rose-Croix and are now an integral part of what is traditionally called the Great White Lodge. In addition to the great work they are doing in serving the collective soul of humanity, they are also the custodians of the Rosicrucian Tradition. This cosmic mission was not imposed upon them. They voluntarily chose it, for, by having made the Rosicrucian ideal the foundation of most of their earthly incarnations, they are the most qualified to ensure that this ideal remains in all its pristine purity and is accessible to all seekers of goodwill.

As I stated earlier, the first great initiation that Rosicrucians must prepare themselves

to receive is the one that will enable them to experience their soul, with a clear conscience and full knowledge of the facts, in the silence of their sanctum or any other place conducive to cosmic attunement. Nevertheless, it is obvious that such an experience, however significant it may be, does not constitute the summum bonum of the initiatory process which we are following under the auspices of our Order. We must acquire mastery over it afterwards and be able to repeat it as often as we wish, for it is impossible to someday achieve the Rose-Croix state if we have not learned how to act as easily on the spiritual plane as on the material plane. The perfect Initiates I have just described have attained this mastery and thereafter work on the level of cosmic causes, whereas when it comes to us, we only act upon the earthly effects.

Some will say that such beings do not exist, that they have never seen them, that they are only the product of an imagination that draws from the unreal the strength to support an overly weighty reality. To those people, I shall simply answer: There are none so blind as those who do not want to see and none so deaf as those who do not want to hear.

The Rose-Croix Bequeath Knowledge Through Illumination

Rosicrucians are convinced of the existence of these Rose-Croix, for they have bequeathed to us all the knowledge they have gained through Illumination. From the intellectual standpoint, we rediscover in the teachings of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis all the knowledge they have accumulated on how cosmic and natural laws work within all of Creation. From an emotional standpoint, they have bequeathed to us the splendor of our convocation and initiation rituals. Lastly, they have bestowed upon us the right, the power, and the duty to attune with the cosmic planes where they are situated.

The preceding remarks now lead me to define what the Supreme Initiation is, towards

which each Rosicrucian is heading. As adepts of the Rose-Croix, we all belong to an Order that, since the day that our Earth was initiated into the Primordial Tradition, constitutes one of the visible organizations to which the Invisible Masters of the Great White Lodge constantly lend their support and inspiration. The Supreme Initiation which we can and must receive during one of our incarnations will elevate us from the status of a Rosicrucian to that of a Master of the Great White Lodge.

Having reached this state of consciousness, we shall understand that all traditional movements are indeed only different crosses upon which the same rose must unfold. We shall become one with Cosmic Harmony and from the plane of consciousness that shall be ours, we will receive the power to express it upon Earth. The overall plan of Creation will be revealed to us and we shall know the ecstasy of those who think, speak, and act in the name of God and for the welfare of humanity as a whole.

The Temple in the Depth of our Being

The Temple in which we shall one day receive this Supreme Initiation does not belong to this world. It lies within the very depths of our being, for it is within this Human Temple that the Ark of the Covenant, which has never ceased to unite humanity with our Creator, rests forever. As for the one

who will make us a Rose-Croix, this is none other than our Inner Master, and the Supreme Officers who will serve this Inner Master will wear upon their hearts the symbol of all the virtues that we shall have demonstrated in the world of humans. However, prior to receiving this wondrous Initiation, each of us must understand and realize that Rosicrucians, throughout the incarnations they devote to their mystical ideal, are at once the neophyte, the initiator, and the initiate within the triangle of their own birth, life, and death.

I shall close this chapter with a translation of the inscription on the tomb of Amenhotep, High Priest of Amon during the reign of Thutmose III, a pharaoh who played an essential role in our Order's traditional origins. I hope with all of my heart and soul that the day will come when each of you will rediscover yourself as you read these words of wisdom:

“I was named second Prophet and I was able to contemplate the Holiness of the Master of the Gods; with my initiation, I have known all mysteries because every portal has opened before me. The Guardians have guided my steps to allow me to catch a glimpse of God, for sincere was my mouth and skillful were my fingers until the time came for me to lie down in the tomb.”

So Mote It Be!



Mural in the Grand Temple, [Rosicrucian Park](#), San Jose, CA.

