

The Limits of Initiatory Regularity

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As is well-known, the main divergence between René Guénon and Julius Evola concerns the question of the dependence (or not) of the Kshatriya upon the Brahmana, and, thus, the supremacy (or not) of spiritual authority over temporal power, and the superiority (or not) of contemplation over action. This divergence finds expression both in the doctrinal field and in the practical, realisatory field. Divergences exist also in relation to Freemasonry, and, finally, to initiation. Evola remarks, in “René Guénon e la ‘scolastica’ guenoniana” (‘René Guénon and guenonian scholasticism’) that “In the initiatic field, precise reservations (...) expressed a long time ago in the essay ‘Limiti della regolarità iniziatica’ (‘The Limits of Initiatory Regularity’), must be made concerning the almost bureaucratic conception of initiation generally put forward by Guénon, i.e., attachment, often completely ineffective, to ‘regular’ organisations, which, in the current world, have either ceased to exist altogether, are almost unreachable, or exist only in exhausted or even inverted forms, as in the case of Freemasonry (...)” We may suggest, in passing, that, according to some Guénonians, Guénon could well have developed this conception from the Sufi notion of initiation, or bayat.

Let us then consider the reservations he made on Guénon’s views on initiation in the essay to which he refers. It was published in ‘Kruur’ in 1929, and, since then, has been reprinted in all the Italian editions of the writings of Ur and Kruur.

René Guénon occupies a position of great importance among the few in the West who have made a contribution of orientation and clarification to the study of esoteric sciences and traditional spirituality, not on the basis of erudition, but on that of actual, initiatory-based, knowledge. We normally advise those of our readers who do not know the works of Guénon to study them, because they are one of a kind and unique in their value, and in addition they can be used as an integrative counterpart to much of what we expound ourselves – at least as far as the essentials are concerned. However, in regard to particular points, we must make reservations, because, often, the orientation of Guénon shows the effects of a mode of thought which differs from that which is at the root of our own formulations, and also because, while the orientation of Guénon is essentially theoretical, ours is instead essentially practical. It will be useful, therefore, to consider briefly the respects in which we find this to be the case, so that those who follow us can establish a means of adequately using what Guénon sets out, with the aforementioned integration in mind.

First we will simply indicate our divergences as far as the doctrine is concerned, without dwelling on them. We disagree with Guénon regarding the relationship between royal initiation and sacerdotal initiation ; regarding his outline of the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries ; and finally with his reduction of the concept of 'magic' to its lower and pejorative meaning. These three points, in fact, are to a certain extent connected to one another, and we have had occasion to mention this before (cf. 'Action, Contemplation and the Western Tradition'). But what we would now like to tackle is the problem of initiation in general. (1)

Guénon's view, briefly, is this: initiation consists of an overcoming of the human condition and of an active joining with higher states of being ; something which would be impossible if the individual had to achieve it all by himself. This could still have occurred in the time of the origins, in a human type quite different from the current one ; today, instead, an outer intervention, that is to say the transmission of a "spiritual influence" to the recipient, is necessary. This transmission is made ritually, through joining a regular initiatory organisation. This is the fundamental requirement, failing which, for Guénon, there is no actual initiation, but only a vain parody of it ("pseudo-initiation"). The "regularity" of an organisation lies in its being itself connected, directly or through other centres, to a supreme and unique centre ; this connection, moreover, referring back to an uninterrupted chain of transmission which continues in time through true representatives, going back to the "primordial tradition". It is sufficient, for the transmission of the spiritual influences which condition the initiatory development to be real, that the required rites are exactly performed by one who is appointed in a regular manner to this function ; whether he understands the rites or not, believes in their effectiveness or not, has no importance. Even when he fails to understand or to believe, the chain is not interrupted, and an initiatory organisation does not cease to be "regular", and remains able to give initiation, even if it comprises only the "virtually initiated", deprived of a true knowledge. As is well-known, the church has similar views on sacerdotal ordination and on the effectiveness of rites regularly performed.

As far as the recipient is concerned, he also requires a qualification, in order to receive the transmission of the "spiritual influences". This qualification lies both in the physical plane, in the sense of the absence of certain physical defects, which are considered to be signs of related negative inner dispositions, and in a certain mental ("speculative") preparation, the presence of a precise aspiration – or, as we would say, vocation. More generally, a state of disharmony and disequilibrium is a disqualification for initiation. With the transmission of the "spiritual influences" one becomes a "virtual initiate" ; an inner change takes place, which, just like one's membership of the organisation to which one has thus become connected, will be indelible, will subsist for all time ; however, actual initiation requires an active, "operative" work of actualisation, which one must perform for oneself and which no master can accomplish in one's stead (given that various degrees of initiation exist, this is true, in all likelihood, for each degree). The representatives of an initiatory organisation can only orient, control and support this development and ward off possible deviations. The connection with higher states of being which is

established with the transmission of the spiritual influences does not need, in all cases, to be conscious in order to be real.

Several particular points may be noted. First, Guénon distinguishes clearly between mysticism and initiation, on the grounds that the mystic is not “active” in his experiences, and often does not even have the means to interpret them adequately – and especially because he is isolated and the fundamental requirement for initiation, that is the joining with a “centre” and with a “chain”, is not met. Second, Guénon denies any possibility of – as he calls it – an “ideal” connection to a tradition, that is, a connection which is not made in the aforementioned ritual way, by means of contact with living, existing, present and authorised representatives of this tradition. Finally, “spontaneous” initiation is likewise excluded, because it would in a way amount to a birth without the help of the one who makes birth possible, to the development of a plant without there first being a seed, which, in its turn, refers to other plants, born of one another.

This, in short, is the Guénonian schema of “initiatory regularity”. Let us decide how we should evaluate it.

There may not be much to object to the schema per se ; it is just that, with respect to the actual situation existing for the great majority of those to whom the writings of Guénon are directed, it appears as a mere abstract schema ; it can be agreed with, but when, after that, one asks oneself how to get to the point where one will receive initiation, not much light would be received from Guénon, far from it. As a matter of fact, he states that he only wants to explain the concept of true initiation ; as for dealing with the practical problem, that is, saying where to go and giving, in short, concrete orientations, this is something – he affirms – which is not his business and which cannot be in any way part of his tasks.

Thus, for the individual, while he hears Guénon speaking all the time of “initiatory organisations” as if there were any number of them and on every street corner, just as he wants to take action and not to have mere doctrinal clarifications, he finds himself in effect in front of a closed path, at least insofar as the schema of “regular initiation” is taken to be really absolute and exclusive.

We are thinking, naturally, of the Western man. In the East – from Arabia to China – there are still certainly some centres which keep enough of the characteristics indicated by Guénon. But they cannot really be counted on, to any great extent, even if one decided to travel there to receive a regular and authentic initiation. To do so, one would have to be lucky enough to get in touch with centres of a, so to

speak, absolutely supertraditional purity, because, otherwise, one would be dealing with initiations whose jurisdiction (as acknowledged by Guénon) is within the context of a given positive religion, which is not ours. And this would not be a matter which could be resolved by “conversion” ; a complex of psychic, subtle, racial, and atavistic factors, of specific forms of cult and of divinity, and even the factor represented by the mentality and the very language, comes into play. It would be a matter of transplanting oneself into a different psychic and spiritual environment. This is something which is certainly not for most people, nor can it be achieved by mere travel.

If, instead, one turned to the tradition which has come to prevail in the West, it would not lead to anything, because Christianity is a tradition severed of its higher, esoteric, and initiatory part. ‘Christian initiation’ is, as a matter of fact, a pure figment of imagination. Within traditional Christianity – one may as well say Catholicism – there is no initiatory hierarchy ; here, the prospects are limited to mystical developments on the initiative of the individual, on a charismatic basis. It has only ever occurred occasionally that some mystic went beyond this and elevated himself to the metaphysical plane, in an absolutely individual manner.

If, after having recognised this, one seeks still further, what he learns from Guénon is not very comforting. He recognises, as a matter of fact, that the only initiatory organisations that exist nowadays in the Western world are those which have reached a state of degeneration, certain “vestiges not understood by those which have custody of them”. What he adds by way of information is such as to perplex us even more, and to make even clearer, in addition, the perils which derive from assuming unconditionally the abstract schema of “initiatory regularity”.

Here we cannot but express our precise disagreement on two points. One is that, even through debased organisations, something similar to a real initiation could be obtained. The continuity of “spiritual influences” is, according to us and contrarily to the view of Guénon, at its most illusory if worthy and conscious representatives in a given chain no longer exist and transmission has almost become mechanical. The possibility that the truly spiritual influences in such cases ‘withdraw’ actually exists, so that what remains and is transmitted is only something debased, a mere ‘psychism’, possibly even open to dark forces, so that joining with the related organisation, for those who really aspire to transcendence, often becomes more a peril than a help. Guénon does not seem to think in this way : he believes that, if the external ritual continuity is maintained, what he calls “virtual initiation” can still be obtained.

Our disagreement is graver yet when Guénon says that the result of investigations made by him, in times already distant, is the “formal and indubitable conclusion” that “if one leaves aside the case of

possible survivals of certain rare groups of medieval Christian Hermeticists, it is a fact that among all the organizations with initiatic claims that exist in the Western world today, there are only two that can claim an authentically traditional origin and a real initiatic transmission, however degenerate they both may be: the Compagnonnage and Masonry. All the rest is only fantasy or charlatanism, when it does not conceal something worse”.

Now, here, we shall not bring in personal considerations, by saying that things appear differently to each of us, and there are enough sure signs of persons in the West who are, or were, in possession of actual initiatory knowledge without having joined either Compagnonnage or Masonry. Leaving this aside, we will say, as regards Compagnonnage, that it is a residual initiatory organisation, of corporative origin, of rather limited significance, and whose name, outside France, is even unknown. We do not have enough data to reach a decision on these matters, nor do we think that it is worth it. But, as for Masonry, things are different. Guénon may have had in view some surviving cores of ancient ‘operative’ Masonry, without any link to what modern Masonry is concretely, but as for the latter, or for at least four fifths of it, it contains absolutely nothing initiatory, it is a fanciful system of degrees built on the basis of an inorganic syncretism, and represents a typical case of what Guénon calls pseudo-initiation. Beyond this artificial structure, what can be found of a ‘non-human’ character in modern Masonry has a more than suspect character: many things make it legitimate to assume that here we see precisely one of those cases of ‘influences’ from which the truly spiritual element has withdrawn, and in which the ‘psychism’ which has remained has been used as the instrument of dark forces. Those who follow the principle which consists in judging from the fruits, in recognising the precise “direction of effectiveness” of Masonry in the modern world, its constant revolutionary action, its ideology, its fight against any positive form of authority from above, and so on, cannot have doubts about the nature of the occult background of this organisation, wherever it is not reduced to a pure aping of initiation and of initiatory hierarchy. Guénon is not willing to adhere to an interpretation of this kind. But things do not change for all that. The responsibility which he – who, however, does not intend to “manoeuvre anyone either toward or away from any organisation whatsoever” – takes on himself indirectly, with those affirmations, is all his, and we cannot share it with him in the slightest degree, either. (2)

Thus, having to weigh up our results, the practical problem in the context of pure “initiatory regularity” is not looking too good at all for Western man. It is necessary to see what other views, just as legitimate and grounded, can be taken into account to put it in a better light.

The merits in Guénon’s conception, which we recognise, are the importance he gives to the difficulty of initiatory achievement in the current conditions, and the limit he puts to some views on “individual initiation” and “self-initiation”, which is represented quite frankly by some (for instance, by Steiner) as the only way to be followed by the Western man. But it is not necessary to fall from one excess into the other. It is most true that, because of the process of involution to which humanity has been subjected,

some possibilities of direct achievement, present in the origins, have become extremely rare, if not completely lost. But one must not fall into an equivalent of the Christian conception, according to which man, irremediably perverted by original sin, cannot do anything on his own in the specifically supernatural field – the obligatory intervention of those who can transmit ritually the “spiritual influences”, as equivalent for Guénon to ‘grace’ and to ‘sacraments’, appears here. Another important consideration is the following one: Guénon himself expressed the idea, in another book, that one of the aspects of what he calls involution is a solidification, meaning either, that owing to which reality today appears in the rigid forms of a soulless materiality or – we would add – that which determines an inner closure of the human being. Now, we believe that, in such conditions, the power and the external basis of the “subtle influences” in the domain of rites – not only initiatory, but also religious ones – is extremely limited and, in the cases we are discussing here, absolutely nil. As a matter of fact, we cannot help but wonder, finally, what the nature of those “spiritual influences” is, whether they can be distributed on all sides, and whether those who, as “virtual initiates”, have them, very often, are protected in any way against any kind of doctrinal errors and deviations. In fact, we know far too many cases of persons – and not only Western men – who are in order when it comes to “initiatory regularity” in the Guénonian sense, but who show such incomprehension, confusion or indifference towards everything which is really initiatory and spiritual that it makes them appear far below persons who do not have this gift but have a right intuition and whose spirit is adequately open. Once again, the criterion “I will judge them according to their fruits” cannot but be taken into account and, therefore, we do not have to delude ourselves about what fruits, in the current state of affairs, the “influences” in question can bear on their own. This being said, as a general and decisive consideration, let us bear this in mind: the man who is born in this day and age is a man who has accepted what theosophists would call a collective karma :and yet this very man, who is linked to a ‘race’, has chosen to “act on his own”, breaking even from the bounds which had once supported his race and effectively guided it. The extent to which this man, who has wanted to “act on his own”, and who has been allowed to do so, has been heading for ruin, is known to anyone who manages to penetrate the face of modern civilisation. But the fact remains: today in the West, we are in a context from which spiritual forces have withdrawn and in which the individual cannot count too much on them, unless, by a fortunate combination of circumstances, he manages to open his way, to a certain extent, on his own. We cannot alter this state of affairs.

Since we are in a situation which is anomalous in this respect, we therefore must as a practical matter consider those initiatory paths which have themselves a character of exception, rather than the regular paths.

Guénon admits to a certain extent that there are some such paths. The spiritual centres – he says – can intervene beyond the forms of regular transmission, even if only by means of modalities extremely difficult to define, “either in favour of especially ‘qualified’ individuals who find themselves isolated within environments whose obscuration has reached such a point that virtually nothing traditional

survives and initiation has become unobtainable, or, even more exceptionally, in pursuit of a more general goal such as the restoration of an accidentally broken initiatory 'chain'." ["Des Centres initiatiques", fifth paragraph]. Thus, there are certain abnormal possibilities of direct 'contact'. But Guénon adds: "what we must nevertheless insist upon is that, even if it so happens that an apparently isolated individual arrives at a real initiation, this initiation of his only appears to be spontaneous, and derives necessarily in reality from an attachment, by some means or other, to a centre which really and effectively exists." [ibidem]. Now, in this precise respect it is necessary to agree with him, and to ascertain from what quarters the initiative which determines the contact may come. We say 'contact', because the main thing is not a joining 'horizontally', that is to say, the joining of a given organisation which has persisted historically, but rather the joining 'vertically', that is to say, the inner participation in the principles and supra-individual states of which any particular organisation of men is only a tangible manifestation, and, therefore, in a way, only a contingent externalisation. (3, 4) Thus, in the cases in question, it can always be wondered: is it really the intervention of a centre which has determined initiation, or, on the contrary, is it the active initiative of the individual, albeit encouraged to a certain extent, which has brought about this intervention? In this respect, we may speak of a qualification which is not in any respect similar to those indicated by Guénon, but is an active self-qualification created by a special discipline, by a special individual preparation, which makes the subject capable of not only being 'chosen', but, in some cases, of imposing his own selection and initiation. The symbol of Jacob, who wrestles with the angel until he forces it to bless him, or of many others, such as that of Parsifal (in Wolfram von Eschenbach), who opens the way to the Graal on his own, 'weapons in hands', something 'never heard of until then', corresponds to this possibility. In Guénon's books, unfortunately, nothing is found regarding the question of what an active discipline of preparation, which, in some cases, could lead, in the absence of any apparent continuity, to illumination itself, might be (5): likewise, Guénon does not suggest any concrete disciplines helpful to the work of actualisation which might make the "virtual initiate" a true initiate and, finally, an adept. As we have said, the domain of Guénon is that of mere doctrine, whereas ours is essentially that of practice.

But, even in this domain, Guénon, on another occasion, has written something which can cause disorientation. He refers to an Islamic teaching according to which "he who appears at a certain 'door' without having reached it by a normal and legitimate way sees this door closing before him, and is forced to turn back, not as a mere profane – something which has become impossible to him – but as a *sâhar* (sorcerer or magician in the lower sense)". Precise reservations have to be made about this, by stating, firstly, that, if the one who has reached this 'door' by an abnormal way has an upright and pure intention, this intention will certainly be acknowledged by the proper authority and the door will open, according to the principle "knock and it will be opened unto you", and, secondly, that if the door did not open, this – still in the indicated case – will only mean that the recipient finds himself confronted by the challenge of opening it himself, using violence, according to the principle that "the kingdom of heaven can be taken by storm" ; because, as a rule, what Eliphas Levi says – that initiatory knowledge is not given, but it is taken – is most true. It is in this, besides, that the essence of the active quality

acknowledged, to a certain extent, by Guénon (6) lies. Whether or not one welcomes this fact, a certain well understood 'Promethean' feature will always belong to the higher type of initiate.

Guénon is right not to take "astral initiation" seriously, if what he has in mind is what is referred to by this name in some circles of rambling 'occultists'. But, once again, one does not have to consider certain other views, of which views of this kind can only be a distortion, as being of the same value. (7) Leaving this aside, in any case, true initiation is achieved in a condition which is not simply that of ordinary waking consciousness ; it is possible to rise actively to states in which the essential contacts for supra-individual development are favoured. Islamic esotericism, itself, speaks of the possibility of achieving the shath, a special inner state which, among other things, makes it possible to connect to al-Khidr, an enigmatic being in whom there lies the principle of a direct initiation, that is, an initiation without the intermediary of a tariqa (organisation) and of a sîlsila (chain). (8) Even if it is conceived of as exceptional, this possibility is admitted. The main thing, here, is the niyyah, that is, the right intention, not be understood in an abstract and subjective sense, but as a magic direction of effectiveness.

Let us consider another point. As we have seen, Guénon excludes the "ideal self-attachment" to a tradition, since "one cannot in reality attach oneself to anything which does not have an actual existence ("existence actuelle")" ["De la Régularité initiatique" ; end of the 7th paragraph], meaning a chain of which living representatives in a regular filiation still exist. Failing this, initiation would be impossible and inexistent. Once again, there is a curious confusion between the essential element and the contingent and organisational one. What, briefly, does "existence actuelle" mean? Any esotericist knows well that, if a metaphysical principle ceases to have a tangible manifestation in a given sphere or period, this does not mean that it is less "actuelle" and existent on another plane (something which, elsewhere, Guénon more or less acknowledges). Now, if "ideal self-attachment" means a mere mental aspiration, we can agree with Guénon ; however, this is not the way things appear with respect to the possibilities of an actual and direct evocation, on the basis of the magical principle, of analogical and syntonik correspondences. In short, Guénon himself admits – maybe more than he should – that "spiritual influences" have also their laws. Does not this amount, basically, to admitting in principle the possibility of a determining action on them? This can be conceived of even on the collective plane, since a psychic chain can be formed and it can be so arranged that it is used as a body which, on the basis of 'syntony', or more precisely, 'sympathetic correspondence', would attract a spiritual influence in the sense of a 'descent' from a plane on which the conditions of time and space do not have absolute value. This thing may succeed or it may not. But it is not to be excluded, nor is it to be mistaken for a mere, insubstantial "ideal self-attachment".

Finally, Guénon denies that an initiation can be achieved on the basis of what has already taken place in previous lives. Now, since we do not admit, any more than Guénon, the reincarnationist theory, then, if it is that to which he refers, we agree. But this does not mean that what could be called a special

transcendental heredity in given individuals, likely to give them a particular 'dignity' in regard to the possibility of achieving initiatory awakening in a direct way, is excluded. In Buddhism, this is explicitly recognised. The image used by Guénon, of a plant or a human being who is not born if there is no seed (which would be the 'beginning', determined by the ritual initiation from outside) is valid only to a certain extent. If absolutised, it would contradict the fundamental metaphysical view of non-duality and, in the end, would bring all beings uniformly back to a common denominator. Some can already bear within themselves the 'seed' of awakening.

We have indicated the essential elements of the unilateral schema of "regular initiation". In a way, we would bring discredit on ourselves if we did not acknowledge the value due to it. But one does not have to exaggerate and lose sight of the special conditions, let us even say abnormal, in which even those who have the best intention and qualification find themselves in the West. Who would not be happy to find initiatory organisations such as those of which Guénon speaks, even if not to the respects in which they almost recall a bureaucratic system of formal 'legality'? Who would not seek them, asking simply to be judged and 'tested'? But this is not the way things are, and the reader of Guénon is rather in the situation of one who hears that it is a beautiful thing to have some attractive young girl but, when he excitedly asks where she can be found, gets as an answer silence or: "That is not our business". For, given what Guénon indirectly tells us regarding what regular initiatory organisations should exist in the West, the precise reservations which are necessary have already been explained.

Then, there is a criticism which, in actual fact, we should have put at the beginning, namely that the very idea of ritual initiation as expounded by Guénon seems to us most weakened and domesticated. As a matter of fact, a transmission of badly individuated "spiritual influences", which one can even not realise, which makes one a mere "virtual initiate", who, concretely, as we have said, is exposed to as much error and deviation as the absolute 'profane', is inadequate. To our own knowledge, and from what can be inferred from precise traditions, including those of the ancient Mysteries, ritual initiation might instead be compared to a sort of surgical operation, having as a counterpart an experience particularly intense, leaving – as is said in one text – "the eternal trace of a split".

To meet a living person who is capable of giving an initiation in these terms is not an easy thing, nor does it depend on qualification only (for the reason already mentioned, various restrictions must be put, today, in the West, on the principle: "when the disciple is ready, the master will come"). For us it is more a matter of, so to speak, 'detached elements' (in the military sense), which, in life, one simply may or may not happen to encounter. One should not think that one will be able to find a 'school', with all that is needed for a regular development, with a satisfactory system of 'safety guarantees' and controls. The schools which, in the West, claim to be of this nature, all the more certainly the more emphatically they make this claim, who almost put this qualification of theirs on their visiting cards and in the phone book,

are common hoaxes, and one of the merits of Guénon is to have exercised, with respect to many of them, a justly destructive criticism.

Therefore, those who, once they have assumed the karma of this civilisation, in which they wanted to be born, being most certain of their vocation, want to move forward, by means of their own power, to seek to reach metaphysical contacts, instead of making mere horizontal attachments to organisations which claim to offer them support in their search – those are naturally on a dangerous road, something which we want to underline explicitly here : they will be travelling in wild country without ‘credentials’ nor an exact geographic map. But, basically, if, in the profane world, one considers that it is natural that a person of noble origin risks his own life when the goal is worthwhile, there are no grounds for thinking differently with respect to the one who, given the circumstances, has no other choice when it comes to the conquest of initiation and of liberation from human bounds. Allah Akbar! – we could say with the Arabs, meaning : “God is great” – while Plato already said: “any great thing is dangerous.” (9)

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1) We refer essentially to ‘Aperçus sur l’initiation’ (Paris, 1945).

(2) That Freemasonry is a “purely Western initiatory form” is questionable: one would have to ignore the whole of the rôle of the Jewish element in its ritual and its ‘legends’.

(3) 30 years later, in *Ride the Tiger*, J. Evola went further than merely expressing doubts about the possibility of initiation, as understood by Guénon, in this day and age: “Well then, if initiation is taken in its highest metaphysical sense, one must assume a priori that it is not even a hypothetical possibility in an epoch like the present, in an environment like the one we live in, and also given the general inner formation of individuals (now feeling the fatal effect of a collective heredity that for centuries has been completely unfavourable). Anyone who puts forward a different view on the matter either does not understand it, or else is deceiving himself and others.” (para. 15 of Chapter 29, ‘The “Second Religiosity”’, in *Ride the Tiger*) He reasserted this point of view in an interview he gave in December 1973, which was published as “L’iniziazione nel mondo moderno” in the appendix to *Testimonianze su Evola*, Edizioni Mediterranee, Rome, 1985 (Ed.)

(4) Besides, in connection with the Rosicrucians, Guénon speaks of the collectivity of those who have reached a given degree, all of whom have achieved this same initiatory degree, higher than that of

ordinary humanity. This is why, logically, one should not speak of 'societies', nor of 'organisations' either. In another connection, Guénon has recalled that initiatory hierarchies are simply those of the degrees of being. All this can be understood in a spiritual and metaphysical, rather than in a personal or organisational sense.

(5) This is typically the case in the asceticism of the original form of Buddhism. Buddhism has even a technical term to designate precisely those who "awoke on their own".

(6) It is on this basis that one aspect of the principle of 'incommunicability' must be understood. True metaphysical knowledge is always an 'act', and what has the character of 'act' cannot come from anything else ; according to the Greek expression, it can be reached only *kat auto*.

(7) The extremely relevant part which initiation received in the dream state has among savage peoples can also be recalled ; cf., for instance, M. Eliade, *Shamanism and Techniques of Ecstasy*.

(8) Cf. the essay of Abdul Hadi in *Etudes traditionnelles*, August 1946, p.318. He speaks of two chains, of which only one is historical, within which initiation is imparted by a living, authorised, master (sheikh), having the key to the mystery: this is *at-talîmurrijâl*, i.e. leaning on men, as distinct from *at-talîmur-rabbâni*, in which there is no living man as master, but an 'absent' master, unknown or even 'dead' for centuries. It is to this latter path that the figure of al-Khidr (Sayyidina al-Khidr), from whom initiation can be received directly, is linked. Among Rosicrucians, the mysterious figure of 'Elias the artist' is in a way the equivalent of al-Khidr.

(9) Here it seems that Evola has exceeded himself and become "plus guénonien que Guénon". We fail to see what the god of a creationist religion, such as Islam, has to do with the idea of liberation, that is, the overcoming of the limits of the individual condition, since, like any personal god, Allah is a conditioned aspect of the undifferentiated principle, whose worship may lead, as Guénon would agree, to 'salvation', but not to 'deliverance'. "Paradise is a prison" (Ed.)