

Pekka Ervast

The School of Temptations



Foreword by Tim Wyatt

Literary Society of the Finnish Rosy Cross 2025

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THE SCHOOL OF TEMPTATIONS

HELSINKI LECTURES IN AUTUMN 1927



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*Translated by Antti Savinainen
and edited by Tim Wyatt*



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Foreword

What is the source of real wisdom? Does it lie way out there in the great beyond somewhere? Or is it concealed deep within us waiting to be liberated? Many esoteric thinkers have asserted that wisdom and enlightenment are slumbering in each and every one of us. Many, including the Finnish writer Pekka Ervast (1875-1934), broadly concur with this view.

Ervast was a towering and influential figure in the theosophical movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He joined the Swedish Theosophical Society in 1895 and founded the Finnish Theosophical Society *Suomen Teosofinen Seura* in 1907.

Ervast also held the role of chief secretary from 1907 until 1917 and edited the journals *Omatunto* between 1905 and 1907 and *Tietäjä* from 1908 until 1920. When the Finnish society split up 1920 he founded Ruusu-Risti society and the journal *Ruusu-Risti*.

Remarkably, the works themselves and their clarity of language and expression remain as fresh and vibrant today as they did a century ago, presented in an easy-to-understand style and offering practical solutions to the thorny problems of life.

The School of Temptations is based on a series of lectures given by Ervast in Helsinki in the autumn of 1927. It is effectively a manual for self-initiation – initiation being elevation into higher states of consciousness and deeper levels of spiritual understanding.

However, as all spiritual aspirants are well aware, initiation only comes after prolonged struggles, bitter disappointments and what the co-founder of the Theosophical Society Helena Blavatsky called ‘self-devised efforts’. In this book Ervast portrays this difficult process as a series of trials by earth, by fire, by air and by water.

He explains how these trials are accompanied by their own series of temptations and offers a route-map to negotiate a way through these mighty challenges.

With a strong background in esoteric Christianity Ervast was one of a long and illustrious line of spiritual pioneers whose role was to re-interpret the timeless truths of the Perennial Philosophy down the ages. His key messages continue to reverberate a century after they were first imparted because wisdom itself always continues to reverberate and illuminate even in times of peril, lies and darkness.

The differences in location and era never fully mask the stupendous power and inestimable value of these eternal cosmic laws which govern ourselves and everything else in the infinity and eternity of the universe. These laws transcend both time, space and the material world we occupy. They are the eternal dynamics of life.

Tim Wyatt, Bingley, West Yorkshire, England. 21st May 2025.

Tim Wyatt is a journalist, writer, broadcaster, musician and actor with more than four decades' experience in all sections of the media. A keen esotericist, he has been researching the Ageless Wisdom since the 1960s. He is a regular lecturer at Theosophical Society lodges throughout England and also runs the School of Applied Wisdom at Leeds Lodge.

I

Introduction

It is said that when the Buddha had attained all wisdom and knowledge he looked at the earth and became sad. He had thought that having found the truth he would tell others about it, but as he looked at the world he found that it did not need his truth. Then the Buddha hesitated and thought, 'Shall I withdraw from the world of men into some dark forest, even darker than where I have been, or shall I leave this life altogether? After all, I have gained power over life and death and I may die out of this world altogether.' But the legend goes on to say that the Most High God from heaven came to him and prayed that he would not cast off humankind but would remain with people because there were always those who sought the truth: 'Go out and speak to them, for although the world as a whole is not ripe to receive the message of truth, there are still living and longing souls out there.'

Then the Buddha cast aside his doubts and hesitations and entered the world. Over several decades, as he wandered around India preaching his great message, he found tens of thousands of people listening to him and gratefully accepting his revelation of the great purpose of existence.

When one looks at life around, one can observe that people are wholly and exclusively caught up in their business, work and tasks. All this is necessary because life has placed the tasks before people and everyone must perform their duties. However, life would become too heavy for them in this way if they did not have something to do in their leisure time to refresh their minds. That's why people in big cities amuse themselves a lot. They go to amusements

that enhance the mind, soul and spirit, as well as lighter concerts, theatres, circuses, night-café's, etc. People seem to get something out of such amusements, but they seem to be more forgetful than refreshed by their souls. The amusements do not elevate their spirits, but they forget their daily troubles and are better able to endure their labours and duties. There is a feeling or aura in the big cities that our physical life is the great reality. How about time for thinking, for philosophy? For someone involved in real life, philosophy is a waste of time. If by nature one doesn't long for amusements, or if one is old and doesn't long for them anymore, there's religion, masses and services. Even there, you can forget about the troubles and sorrows of life. People don't have much time for thinking. They don't care much for 'truth'.

That is the impression one can get in big cities. Then one feels insignificant and useless in this life because a person who has sought and is seeking the truth with all his soul and with all his mind would like every person to say to themselves: 'Now I want to look at life from eye to eye, now I want to see what life is, now I want to know why there are sorrows and worries and why even joy and amusement seem empty!' But since people don't ask themselves this, it seems pointless to the seeker of truth to offer them solutions and answers they have neither sought nor longed for.

That's the kind of hesitation a thinker can get into. However, a moment's reflection brings another side of the issue to his mind. Reality is not only the everyday world in which we live at the moment but also something else. A little over ten years ago [in 1914], the reality here in Europe was quite different. Back then, life did not call to amuse people; it invited them to make the ultimate sacrifices: self-forgetfulness, suffering and pain. Then the world war raged and the existence was dark for everyone. It was then that many people felt that life was not an everyday existence, but was so hard, mysterious and absurd that they were forced to ask themselves what it was all for. At such moments in human and individual history, one can become a seeker of truth. One can become one

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