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## MONTHLY LETTER

*Devoted to Spiritual and Philosophical Problems -- by Manly P. Hall*

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Dear Friend:

In our last letter we examined the subject of Ethics in an effort to discover the nature of good. This month we must seek that cause in man, which was defined by the ancients as the "fountain of ever-flowing good." Psychology is the fourth department of philosophy, and comprehends the entire field of what is now called mental phenomena. The word psychology actually means: the voice, language, or science of the soul. But this original meaning is now for the most part disregarded, and a new definition has been formulated which limits psychology to the consideration and analysis of the mind and its reflexes.

When a department of learning passes from a theoretical to a so-called practical state, it is said to cease to be an art and becomes a science. The modern psychologist, therefore, regards himself as a scientist rather than a philosopher. It is very questionable, however, whether psychology will ever be as useful as a science as it would be if it were perfected as a philosophy. The virtue of science lies in the intensity of its penetration. The virtue of philosophy lies in the breadth of its viewpoint.

Mystical and metaphysical psychology was developed in India and Egypt and finds its most perfect expression in the transcendentalism of Plato and Proclus. After the decadence of Classical learning, mystical psychology continued as an aspect of Christian metaphysics. During the Middle Ages it dominated Christian viewpoint. This branch

of learning was particularly cultivated by the medieval Rosicrucians. Among its ablest exponents were Paracelsus, Jacob Bohme and Robert Fludd. By the beginning of the 18th century metaphysical speculations were declining in the face of the scientific viewpoint. The "physical" universe was discovered. The ancients viewed the material world as impermanent and comparatively unimportant. They took the attitude that man's spiritual existence was eternal and his material existence only a matter of three or fourscore years. Consequently, they wasted little time on man's temporal state.

In the beginning of the 19th century all this was changed. Man's spiritual perpetuation was turned over to the tender keeping of a static theology, and his physical life became the sole object of so-called exact learning. This eclipse of mysticism produced an unbalanced viewpoint which deprived a great part of humanity of a balanced concept of life. By the middle of the 19th century metaphysical organizations began to appear. The memberships of these groups were largely made up of conscientious objectors revolting against the insufficiency of material science as a substitute for philosophy and mysticism.

By the beginning of the 20th century metaphysicians had become more or less a class apart. The majority of nominally educated and civilized people were hopelessly enmeshed in efficiency and prosperity complexes. Since the economic collapse of 1929 the interest in philosophy in all of its



branches has greatly increased, and before the end of the present century we may expect a renaissance of metaphysical psychology.

We may therefore formulate two definitions of psychology to distinguish the two methods of approach—ancient and modern. Ancient psychology sought to examine soul as the medium between spirit and body. Modern psychology, accepting the mind as the origin of man's rational and reasonable existence, seeks to analyse and classify its processes and consequences.

Ancient psychology derives its authority directly from metaphysics; modern psychology from physics.

Mystical psychology may be outlined as follows:

The universe in its three parts manifests the triune nature of that Divine Essence from which all beings have their origin; by which they are sustained; and into which they are finally merged. According to Aristotle, all intelligent men honor God after the number of 3, by natural instinct. The three qualifications of the Divine constitution are termed "worlds," and together make up the Macrocosm or universal wholeness. According to the Rosicrucians, the three parts of the World are as follows:

1. The Imperial Heaven, the eternal and unchanging spiritual essence, the source and support of all life.
2. The Starry or Ethereal Region, which is emanated from the Imperial Heaven and was termed by the Chaldeans the Second or Administering Cause.
3. The Elementary Region; the sphere of effects, the formal world which receives into itself the impulses of the Ethereal diffusion.

Robert Fludd declares the number 3 to represent the Imperial Root; the square of this number, the 9, the Ethereal diffusion; and the cube of 3, 27 the Elementary essences. These numbers, if added together: 27 plus 9 plus 3: equal 39; which, if cabalistically again added, equal 12. Twelve represents the Zodiac of celestial causes. The 1 and the 2 is again added, revealing Aristotle's Divine Root, the 3, and the cycle returns to its own source.

The three regions or conditions of Divinity—

divine, ethereal and elementary—are equivalent to the familiar terms; spirit, soul and body. Thus SOUL corresponds to the Ethereal diffusion or sphere of secondary causes. As in the universe, so in man. The soul represents the medium binding man as a spiritual essence to man as a material body.

The Platonists called the soul "that general virtue which engenders and preserves all things," and in this definition Virgil also concurs. The alchemists referred to it as the "bond of the elements." The spirit supports the soul, and the soul supports the body. The soul is always regarded as a vast organism, containing within itself the source of all productiveness. Hermes infers this thought in his celebrated definition: "The world (soul) is the son of God, and man is the son of the world."

Ancient psychology, in consequence of this background, regarded the soul as a sensitive mirror in which the whole universe is reflected. The soul binds the individual personality to the heavens, the stars and the planets. Disposition and temperament have their origin in the patterns which are set up in the soul by action and interaction of celestial and sidereal forces. The soul impinges itself upon the body through seven vital centers and seven essential processes. Some of the ancients went so far as to consider the soul of the individual as a complete super-human entity. This is the Anthropos, the over-soul of Emerson, the god or daemon of Socrates, and the one-eyed Cyclops of Homer. The Alexandrian mystics, accepting the soul as a Messianic individuality, considered union of the personality with its soul as the philosophical marriage. The same thought is contained in the Apocalypse of St. John, a writing undoubtedly inspired by Gnostic and Hermetic speculation. Here the soul is referred to as the bridegroom; and again as the lamb; the Holy City, Jerusalem, which symbolizes the material body, is lifted up by regeneration to become the bride of the lamb, or to be reunited forever with its own over-soul.

Pythagoras represented the soul by the ogdoad, or the number 8. According to him, it possessed eight powers or attributes of which seven pertain to sense and cognition, and the eighth to generation or reproduction. These eight represent the seven



planets and the earth. A secret is contained within this arrangement, for by it the physical body of man is viewed as the last or eighth extension of the soul.

In the Mithraic rites of the Persians, the soul is represented by a ladder of seven rungs, its upper end resting upon the spiritual nature and its lower end supported by the material world.

The mental processes, which are now sole concern of psychology, were only one of the numerous manifestations of soul-power in the ancient system of psychology. The soul was not only the origin of thought but was the source of all manifestations of consciousness, from contemplation to imagination. The body itself, physically considered, was merely a mechanical instrument, possessing neither perceptive nor reflective power. It is true that the body impulse which motivates and enlightens it originates in the soul. The experience which arises from action is recorded, not in the body, but in the soul itself. Evolution should therefore be regarded not as the growing of bodies, or the unfoldment and development of bodies, but rather as soul growing up through bodies. It is the soul which knows and remembers; it is the soul which bestows wisdom upon the body, out of experiences. At death the soul deserts the body, carrying away to its own essence all of the records of physical action.

The purpose of ancient psychology was, therefore, to attempt by philosophical processes to distinguish the proper constitution of the soul itself and to view it with the mind's eye in its separate aspects. The differentiation of the soul-entity and its culture by philosophic discipline was the true and original field of psychology. Wise men, realizing that the flesh is weak and impermanent, invested as little as possible in the corporeal fabric. They sought rather to strengthen the soul's dominion over the body. They desired to so simplify bodily processes and mortal concerns that the soul had a maximum of freedom. Socrates believed that in the unregenerate man the soul was mixed with the bodily principles. A Socratic illustration may be used:

Considering the body as earth and the soul as water, the confusion of them results in mud or slime. Thus the constitution of the unenlightened

or uninitiated person was said to be murky or muddy. If, however, these elements are allowed to remain quiet for a certain length of time they will separate. The mud and heavier particles will sink to the bottom, leaving the water upon the top comparatively clear. If, however, you agitate these elements they will again become confused. The irrational impulses of the animal man are consequently constantly riling and confusing the soul and body, but peace and tranquility of the wise allows the lower or bodily elements to settle to their own estate and the soul become clear.

Let us now compare this older concept of psychology with modern opinions on the subject. The term "mind" is now used to designate man's subjective, rational part. All processes not admittedly physical are presumed to be mental. The psychologist of the modern school does acknowledge a mental nature, not necessarily identical with the brain structure, nor resulting merely from the automatic activities of the brain. As to the exact nature of "mind," definitions are hazy. In fact, modern psychology is better equipped to classify mental activities than it is to define the nature of the mind itself. Following the natural impulse described by Aristotle, the mind is psychologically considered as a threefold structure even by the moderns.

Where facts are lacking, opinions are usually numerous and contradictory. The several schools of modern psychology and psychological philosophy can scarcely be regarded as in agreement, and it would be almost impossible to find a common denominator for their conclusions. There is some agreement, however, upon the division of the mind into conscious, subconscious and unconscious parts. Professor James of Harvard, probably the most famous psychologist of the modern school, was once asked for a definition of the subconscious mind. He declined to give a definition on the ground that he had not yet discovered a satisfactory definition for the conscious mind.

The opinion seems to be that the conscious mind is a term applicable to that department of mental processes which is direct and evident. The surface of the intellect includes the field of phenomena in which the thoughts are consistent with evident facts and arise from adequate and evident causes. For



example: Mr. A. has a mental antipathy to Mr. B. Some time ago Mr. B. cheated Mr. A. in business, therefore there is an evident, natural and reasonable origin for Mr. A's attitude. Another example: a young person spends twenty years in school; later in life he demonstrates certain knowledge which is traceable to his schooling; Thus in the thinking process, the cause is equal to the effect, and there is no particular mystery in the relationship of ideas.

The second department of the mind is termed the subconscious. The subconscious mind is a field of obscure mental processes. The relationship between mental cause and effect is either distorted or obscured. Psychology acknowledges that there must be a cause for every effect, but mental refraction of ideas may disarrange the process of mental patterns. The factor of intensity appears. Two persons respond to a similar thought with differing degrees of intensity, according to the chemistry of temperament. Mental complexes are "scars" in the subconscious mind. Complexes distort and disproportionate the values of ideas and are the most common causes of personal idiosyncrasies. The field of the subconscious mind lies behind the sphere of the conscious mental processes, contributing attitudes. For example: Mr. A. does not like Mr. B. Mr. B. has never injured Mr. A. therefore the attitude is unexplainable without recourse to psychoanalysis. Or again, a person suffers throughout life from an inferiority complex, which renders him incapable of normal social intercourse with others. The cause for such a condition may be traced to some comparatively insignificant incident in childhood which has been distorted out of all proportion by the subconscious processes of the mind.

The third department of the mind, which is termed the unconscious, is regarded as the abstract causal sphere of the mind. It contains no thoughts, but is rather the reservoir of mental energies from which an active mental energy or virtue is constantly flowing into the subconscious and conscious parts of the mind. This sphere of pure mind defies anything that even approaches analysis, but is acknowledged as a hypothetical necessity in that all energies must have a source and all complexity must arise from essentially simple elements.

Upon the principles of psychology as now form-

ulated, two more or less practical sciences have been established: psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Psychoanalysis, which in turn includes several more specialized fields, seeks to discover the keynote of individual consciousness by analyzing the conscious processes and the subconscious complexes of the individual. The theory is pragmatic. Pragmatism assumes that the intrinsic nature of any force may be discovered by the consequences emanating from that force. This is modern cabalism. The ancient Jewish mystics declared that the substance of Divinity could never be examined, but that God could be discovered through his works. In the same way, the rational man may never be examined by scientific processes, but its qualities may be approximated by an analysis of impulses, emotions, thoughts and attitudes.

Human beings group themselves into two general classes: introverts and extroverts. In the extrovert, impulse and action are closely related and inhibitions and complexes are few. With the introvert, repression is the dominant keynote. Repression is closely allied to complexes; the introvert is generally a victim of tangled and distorted impulses which have found no outlet or expression through the conscious mental processes.

Psychotherapy is based upon the evident and undeniable premise that disorders in the mental life are bound to produce disastrous physical reflexes. Grief will break down cell structure; anger will decrease vitality; worry will prevent the knitting of bones; and a life which is victimized by mental irascibilities is bound to be physically inefficient. Many diseases are at least perpetuated by wrong thinking. In nearly all forms of sickness recovery is retarded by psychological inhibitions. Normalcy of thinking is a virtue greatly to be desired. The average person is less able to diagnose his mental ailments than he is to diagnose physical infirmities which may afflict him. We live with our own thoughts so long that we grow accustomed to them no matter how bad they may be. Psychotherapy seeks to extend the life of man and enlarge his sphere of usefulness by putting the mind in order, and freeing the intellect of its biases and its false viewpoints.

Very truly yours,

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