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MONTHLY LETTER

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

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Dear Friend:

In last month's letter we began a consideration of the fourteen requisites of the philosophic life. The seven requisites of the inner life, termed character, have already been outlined, so we shall now examine the seven requisites of the outer life which we term Attainments.

It is often difficult for students to realize that the perfection of Self is the real life work of each individual. The building of character, the unfolding of consciousness, the development of understanding—all these are processes which operate only under the direction of consecrated and enlightened will. Perfection is not a gift from the gods. Each person must work out his own salvation with diligence.

It was during those morbid centuries which we now term the "dark ages" that beauty and joy were excluded from the religious life. The doctrine that the material universe is a place of evil from which we should attempt a precipitous exit belongs to the same period of religious psychology. It is true philosophically that the material universe is impermanent and that it is wrong for the human soul to invest its hope of glory in material things. The wise of every generation have recognized the impermanence and insufficiency of temporal achievement. Yet this has not caused them to overlook the important lessons which physical life has to teach.

The most imminent of man's spiritual duties is the mastery of the physical environment wherein

he has been placed by the lords of Karma. To evade the physical issues of life is to evade moral responsibility. The old teachings are very definite on this point. The ancient Mystery Schools permitted none to receive the esoteric tradition who had not perfected to at least a reasonable degree the conduct of the outer life. No reputable metaphysical system has ever encouraged individuals to pray, meditate, concentrate, visualize or affirm themselves out of those duties and obligations which form the motivating principle in material existence. This does not mean that metaphysical exercises do not have a place in the spiritual plan of life, but they are never to be regarded as substitutes for right action and intelligent thinking. It is quite evident that the initiates of the ancient world would not have demanded a high standard of excellence and ability from their disciples had not this standard been necessary to the understanding and application of the Wisdom Teachings.

It is therefore wise for every truth seeker to perfect himself in all useful lines of knowledge. We term the seven branches of essential knowledge Attainments because they are accomplished out of the effort and integrity of the individual. The purpose of all knowledge is the perfection of the soul—the soul being that part of man which transmutes experience into spiritual power. The experiences of the outer life feed the soul even as the impulses of the inner life nourish and sustain the objective

personality. Olympiodorus in his BANQUET describes the feast of the soul, explaining that man very often feeds the body well but permits the soul to starve. From starvation the soul dies or at least loses its power to influence the mind and heart. Now the food men eat does not retain its individuality but rather passes through certain chemical changes so that only a certain energy resident in it is finally assimilated into the human system. In the same way knowledge which man acquires does not retain its individuality in every case but, passing through an assimilative process in the consciousness, is transmuted into an energy which nourishes and perpetuates the soul. Thus when men study music, art, literature, philosophy, or even the crafts it does not mean that the soul receives into itself a heterogeneous mass of ill-digested experiences, or that the soul merely becomes the image of the art or science that has been attained. A divine alchemy transmutes all experience and knowledge into an Hermetic medicine, the fabled panacea of the alchemists, that medicine which alone can cure ignorance—the disease of the uninformed.

It is not reasonable to expect each man to be master of all seven of the ancient sciences. In fact at this stage of evolution it is a life work to achieve a reasonable degree of efficiency in one or two branches. Life is short and art is long, but the law of Reincarnation assures us that centuries of opportunity for accomplishment extend before us and that each life, if intelligently lived, contributes its part to the greater perfection which lies ahead of us.

Through the seven requisites of the inner life termed Character we become capable of estimating deity as quality. Through the seven requisites of the outer life, Attainments, we gain the capacity to appreciate divinity as wisdom and activity. Of course at the present time in our educational system the metaphysical implications in the arts and sciences are denied or ignored. But this in no way detracts from the fact that these spiritual values exist. The arts and sciences, like most of theologies of man, have been reduced to elements of an economic program, their esthetic factors sacrificed to the selfish institutions of man. Yet behind each art and science is a universal law and those who

would discover the divine agent should not ignore the God who lives in His own works.

The seven requisites which constitute the ancient outline of knowledge, the links of Homer's Golden Chain, are as follows:

1. MATHEMATICS. Under this heading are included the several departments of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, etc. Mathematics was cultivated by the earliest of civilized peoples. An exact knowledge of it is evidenced by architectural remains dating back to prehistoric times. Arithmetic is the science of exactness and bears witness to the consistency and immutability of law. The philosophical geometry of the Egyptians was the basis of Pythagorean philosophy. Plato was learned in the wisdom of Pythagoras and derived from this earlier teacher his celebrated axiom; "God geometrizes." It is evident to the scientist that mathematics is not a man-made science but rather a discovery which man has made of a science which exists in the universe. A human being may possess a conscious knowledge of mathematical principles yet he shares this knowledge with the most minute creatures. The cell of the bee, the shell of the radiolaria, and the geometrical form of the snowflake all bear witness to the universal arithmetic, a cosmic geometry.

Among mortals mathematics is one of the driest of the sciences, but this is because an ignorant generation has divorced calculation from the drama of life. Most of the beauty that we see about us in nature is due to some aspect of cosmic arithmetic. We live in the midst of universal equations. Strangely enough the study of mathematics is closely associated with the stimulation of intuition. Certainly no person who has read the COMMENTARIES OF PROCLUS ON EUCLID can fail to appreciate the sublimities of the numeral theory. Thousands of students seeking God in numerous metaphysical ways, by failing to master mathematics, have lost the opportunity of perceiving divinity manifesting itself through the glorious geometry of form.

2. ASTRONOMY. In olden times what we term astronomy was embraced within the all inclusive subject—astrology. No classical philosopher could have been interested in the arrangement of

the sidereal bodies without instinctively desiring to understand the effect which these bodies produce upon man. Astrology is moral astronomy, and astronomy is astrology divorced from all practical purposes.

What use is it to know the number of the stars or to discover the elements of which they are composed, to measure their orbits and calculate the intensity of their light, if in the end we deny that any of these factors was in any way applicable to human existence? The first astronomers, from their high towers, established systems of time from the sidereal motions. From these have resulted calendars, most of which were originally devised for horoscopal purposes.

Under the heading of astronomy is to be included the whole anatomy of the universe, the theories of history, the mysteries of climate and weather, the mutations of seasons which brings us naturally to agriculture and husbandry. In other words, astronomy was the orderer of life, one of the most civilizing of the sciences. To the mystic, astronomy is the key to magnitude values. Astronomy enlarges the universe, revealing a world too large for smallness, too glorious for meanness, too beautiful for hate, too honest for deceit. Astronomy reveals man's place in the plan. It shows him to be part of an infinity of incalculable life, and reveals the whole sidereal diffusion bound together by an all-ensouling wholeness. Man's kinship with the stars and the grain of sand is established.

3. BIOLOGY AND PHYSICS. *These branches of learning gradually emerged from the alchemical researches of the ancient Chinese, Brahmins and Egyptians. The first practical laboratory was that part of the temple set aside for research in chemistry and medicine. The various branches of research in the chemical factors of life were not originally divided into numerous departments as now. Priests were the first scientists, the first physicians and the first students of anatomy and physiology.*

We have listed these several science under one heading because they all directly or indirectly relate to structure and function. From these sciences certain laws of nature become immediately evident.

Man's exploration of nature and its processes gave rise to the theory of what we now call science. But in olden times these researches were not carried on by scoffing materialists but by enlightened philosophers who discovered beneath the superficial aspects of form divine chemical and mechanical processes. Science is therefore the study of the anatomy of the body of God. The laboratory reveals not only the infinite mystery of life but also the infinite complexity of function. Man's veneration for the universal wisdom that supports this supreme order, sustaining all things in their proper relationships to all other things, grew with the increase of knowledge. Knowledge brings with it appreciation and appreciation is one of the most beautiful forms of religion. Man is never far from a truth which he has learned to appreciate.

4. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE. *This department of learning arose from man's contemplation of the motions and courses which are apparent in those social aggregates which we call nations and races. Included under the heading of social science was that vast body of tradition and research which has given rise to the laws governing relationships of individuals. The social sciences gave rise to the doctrines of morality and the various codes of convenience and compromise necessary to the survival of individuals under a social order. Therefore we may consider with Cicero that civilization arises from the speculations of ancient wise men directed towards the improvement of community existence.*

Under the political sciences must be included government, leadership, and all regulation of community affairs by which the general motion and trend of empire is preserved towards those consistent ends for which empire was devised. Political science in the western worlds had its origin with Solon and received the refining influence of Plato and Aristotle. Statesmanship and political organization reached its highth under the Romans with whom it also deteriorated into tyranny. Most modern governments are revivals of ancient policies, and the failure of the theory of government in the modern world is largely due to the increasing interval between natural law and political purpose. The

statesmen of old were philosophers deriving their inspirations for government from astronomy, mathematics and physics. When political science divorced religion and philosophy it lost the name of action. Governments since that time have never survived their own inherent weaknesses.

To the mystic the study of social and political science reveals both the strength and weakness of existing institutions, and prevents the earnest thinker from falling under the influence of traditional evils which have remained uncorrected since the decay of the religio-political institutions of antiquity.

5. MUSIC AND ART. Under this heading are included the numerous esthetic and cultural impulses which exist eternally in nature and have given rise to artistic institutions among men. Included with music and art are of course poetry, drama and the dance. The esthetic arts were all of religious origin, their development paralleling the unfolding of beauty in the human soul. To perfect oneself in an art is to feel a small part of that creative impulse by which the whole universe was brought out of chaos.

Beauty has always adorned truth. First because truth moving through nature is eternally producing beautiful effects. Second because men propitiating the universal good were inspired to perform their rites and rituals through beautiful institutions, symbolic of a divine beneficence. With the decline of classical civilization man turned gradually from a religion of beauty to creeds of severity and melancholy. Several great nations completely destroyed their esthetic impulses by the experience of Puritanism which established vicious precedents which have impoverished national culture. In England for example Puritanism practically destroyed music.

The purity of religious arts has been perverted among nearly all modern peoples. From the esthetic arts men learn to live beautifully and when these arts are explored to their divine origin they inspire the human mind to nobler standards of action and relationship, bringing dignity and purpose to all the finest of human relationships. The arts feed the soul and soul starvation is responsible for much of the degeneracy and decadency which have perverted

the esthetics of the present generation. The loss of art results in the loss of soul and the loss of soul in the end brings about the fall of empire.

6. LANGUAGE. Under the heading of language are included grammar and rhetoric, literature and the whole theory of the communication of ideas. The most ancient languages of the earth were mere sounds derived from nature by man seeking to express such primitive emotions as hope, despair, love, hate and fear. The history of language is a record of the gradual objectification of the subjective impulses of the human mind. Oral language gave rise gradually to hieroglyphics and written characters. Alphabets are conventionalized pictures devised by the progenitors of present races.

Language is the science of expression. He who expresses well shares himself with others. With our eyes we may all perceive together some outer phenomenon of nature but with our ears we may listen to the thoughts of other men. We can hear their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations, and we can share with them the fruits of our own experiences. The significance of language depends largely upon the meanings of words. Many of the greatest evils that have afflicted man have arisen from the misinterpretation of terms. This is particularly true in religion where numerous conflicting creeds have risen up to interpret in various ways the simple words of a single sentence. It is the purpose of words to communicate knowledge, thus increasing man's common share of truth, and enriching the life of each by the experience of others.

Beautiful language has a ministry to perform and those who desire to serve truth and become part of the philosophers hierarchy should equip themselves with the power of right expression. To study language is to find the universe in sounds, and the laws of life in the combinations of small symbolic figures called letters. The whole unity and diversity of existence is revealed in the mystery of alphabets. The evolution of language is as glorious a pageantry as the evolution of life.

7. PHILOSOPHY. The seventh place we have allotted to philosophy itself. Under this general heading we include all man's groping for knowledge, by the laws of mind. The term philosophy

was first used by Pythagoras to designate the science of the love of wisdom. Man, living in the midst of an infinite existence, reaches out from himself by intellectual extensions and seeks to grasp the whole of infinity within the narrow confines of his own intellect. Hence Philosophy. The mind being incapable of receiving and interpreting the infinities of the knowable, men of wisdom realized the necessity of exercising and developing the intellect itself that its capacity to know and to retain knowledge might be increased.

Philosophy is more than merely thinking and arguing. It is the science of building up the capacity to know. Most people do not realize the limitations of their own thinking equipment. They do not appreciate the years of preparation which must precede the capacity to understand. This preparation the old masters termed discipline. By discipline they developed the numerous faculties of the thinking equipment until at last they gained the power to think God. By accomplishing this they liberated themselves forever from the superstitions of those who could not think God. Superstition brings truth down to the level of ignorance, clothing it in innumerable falsehoods. Philosophy elevates man to the level of truth, creating within him the capacity to sense and to realize, to visualize and to comprehend. For this reason philosophers are termed the noblest race of men for they alone perceive correctly the adequate reasons for the virtues of the race.

To think is to wonder. To wonder is to discover. To discover is to know, and to know is to be a philosopher.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION—Can the average individual control to any extent the length of time between incarnations or determine in advance what his next incarnation shall be?

ANSWER—Until an entity reaches a very high degree of spiritual development it does not have the power to control the intervals between incarnations.

These intervals, like all other occurrences, arise from Karma. Normally speaking, the only way in which these intervals can be influenced is by intensity of action, particularly mental action. We do not mean a mental effort to influence the time and condition of rebirth, but rather the general intensity of mental awareness. The more highly evolved the intellectual nature, the more profound and philosophic the thought, and the greater the scope of judgment, the longer will be the intervals between lives. This arises from the time required by the ego to assimilate into the soul nature the panorama of mental experience while on earth. Thus, the average individual can transmute the fruits of his mental activity into soul powers in a few hundred years of after-death consciousness, but it is estimated that it will require ten thousand years for Plato to accomplish this, so great was his intellect. Therefore unless Plato, being a very highly evolved soul, exercises his privilege as an adept to return sooner in the capacity of a teacher, he will normally remain out of incarnation for that length of time.

As to the conditions of a future life, these cannot be directly influenced by the average person for the reason that the next incarnation may be devoted to working out the Karma of the present life or it may be dedicated to the transmutation of Karma brought forward from earlier incarnations but not included in the program of the present life. Of course the whole future depends upon the increasing intelligence and integrity of present action.

QUESTION—If we do not develop spiritually in this life sufficiently to remember our past lives, do we automatically come into possession of this remembrance when we reach the astral world after death?

ANSWER—The transition between the material state and the after death condition does not bring with it any major improvement in the degree of our knowledge or understanding. The astral body, in which we function after the decease of the physical organism, is not the depository of the records of past Karma. These records are preserved in the ego itself. The transition termed death, while it demonstrates to the individual himself the fact of immor-

talities, it does not necessarily bring any broadened viewpoint on the fact of reincarnation and karma. Thus, spirit mediums seldom receive any instruction concerning rebirth from the decarnate entities that speak through them. The memory of past lives only comes to the individual when he has reached a state of development by which the secrets which are locked in the consciousness itself are released into the sphere of objective thinking and knowing. The memory of past lives is locked within the super-conscious Self. This Self is not released merely by dying but only by the philosophical mystery, commonly termed illumination.

QUESTION—Do parents give their children only physical bodies?

ANSWER—The old Wisdom Teachings reject what is commonly known as the law of heredity, explaining that the phenomena generally ascribed to heredity has its real source in reincarnation and Karma. By the law of attraction the ego at birth is drawn into an environment similar to itself and suitable for the working out of its Karma. Thus an entity whose Karma it is to suffer the experience of tuberculosis will be drawn into a tubercular family where it will receive a body susceptible to this disease. Science says that we do not inherit disease but tendency to disease. Thus parental environment and physical heredity are the instruments of the universal justice. Children resemble their parents in temperament because entities of similar temperaments incarnate in similar families and environments by the natural law that like attracts like.

QUESTION—Please differentiate between body, mind, soul and spirit.

ANSWER—The term body should properly be applied to any one of the several vehicles of manifestation which the ego or Self emanates from its own being to serve as mediums of expression or function. The most generally recognized bodies in the case of man are the physical, vital, emotional and mental. Bodies are not necessarily visible nor are they always tangible to any physical sense perception. To use Plato's simple definition: A body is

any structure or form to which energy is communicated.

MIND is variously defined in different schools of metaphysics. It is most generally accepted as the coordinated sublimation of bodily impulses. In other words, it represents the sum of the numerous instincts and impulses enlivened or quickened by a ray of rational energy from what the ancients termed the Self or the spiritual Over-Being from which personality is suspended. Mind is the mediator between spirit and body, referred to as the common ground. The position which the mind occupies in man—half way between invisible cause and visible effect—has given rise to nearly all the Messianic religious doctrines of the world. In several schools of philosophy, the Messiah is enlightened mind which finally lifts the personality to truth through its own nature.

SOUL is a very loosely used term and the indiscriminate misapplication of terms causes endless confusion among the schools of metaphysics. Soul is generally regarded as synonymous with spirit, but the ancients regarded soul as an intuitional body built up in man by the assimilation of experience. All men perform good and evil deeds. These actions give rise to experience, and experience justifies action. No matter how much a man may suffer, if this suffering results in experience, it is always worth all it costs. Soul is the spiritual gold arising from the transmutation of the baser instincts and emotions. In the ancient Mysteries the soul is termed the "robe of glory." It is the spotless, seamless garment of transmuted emotion, thought and action which each disciple of truth must wear when he seeks admission to the Hidden House.

SPIRIT to the ancients meant life. Not life in its physical aspect of vitality but rather that universal life principle which pervades, animates and sustains existence. Specifically the term is applied to the causal substance in man, the abstract life energy, the abiding reality in the midst of ever-changing appearances. To the eastern philosopher spirit is never regarded as individualized. One man does not have one spirit and another man another spirit. Spirit is universal. All diversity ends in spirit, and spirit is never divided. Thus, men are an innumer-

able race of personalities divided in form, indivisible in spirit.

QUESTION—Is a balance between introversion and extroversion better than introversion even though the latter is associated with serious thought but no social contact?

ANSWER—This is a psychological question involving factors little understood by even the most advanced psychologist. Introversion or the subjectification of action is a retiring from the circumference to the center of action. Except in rare cases introversion results in inhibition and inhibitions lead to most of the evils which afflict the metaphysically minded. On the other hand, extroversion—the complete objectification of self—is the phenomenon of energies rushing constantly from a center to the circumference. In introversion there is not enough expression and in extroversion there is not enough control. It is the constant duty of the wise man to preserve a balance between expression and control. Introversion is one of the most common diseases of the learned, and extroversion is the plague of the uninformed. Men who think much do little, and with much action there is usually small thought. To bind each action to an adequate reason and to visualize each thought as manifesting in an appropriate consequence is to keep open and well regulated the courses of energy in the human consciousness. A serious thinker must think seriously concerning the application of his thoughts to their reasonable ends in action. To think constantly and do nothing is not the way to become wise. To weary the faculties with constant strain and never rest them through proper relaxation from mental effort is to endanger the reason and impair the health. A well balanced thinker always has a proper relaxation and strives to prevent a narrowness of viewpoint by keeping in reasonably close contact at all times with other persons of different thoughts and ideas. Such a procedure will in the long run contribute more to the philosophy itself than constant application to abstractions.

QUESTION—What is the most useful thing in this world?

ANSWER—Many people will differ in answering this question. Some might say electricity, others printing, others the telephone. Probably no better answer to this question can be found than that which Thales gave to the Pharaoh of Egypt. The great Greek sophist said: Virtue is the most useful thing in the world, for by the presence of it all other things are made beautiful and good, and without it even the most spectacular accomplishment is hurtful and incomplete.

QUESTION—Will the finality of life ever be known?

ANSWER—It is difficult for a person who is part of a forever growing universe to even think in terms of finality. Ultimates are dangerous thoughts. They are intellectual barriers to those realizations of infinity which are natural to the inner life of man. Man reaches finality by becoming finality, for all ultimates are God. Man is as far from ultimates as he is from absolute divinity. The philosophers conceive no static states beyond action. To the Buddhist that Nirvana which is the end of finites is merely the beginning of infinites. When men grow too wise to be men, they become ever-growing wisdom. Occasionally we meet metaphysicians who suffer from the delusion that they will speedily achieve to the end of all human seeking and will repose individually in the perfection of ultimate accomplishment. These poor souls have been deluded either by themselves or by others. In the words of the old teaching, "life is ever becoming but it never becomes."

QUESTION—If we are to do good, does it matter if we hurt people's feelings doing it?

ANSWER—This question reminds me of an old friend, a Methodist minister, whose motto was, "If I don't hurt somebody's feelings I'm not preaching the gospel." Seriously speaking, the whole answer to this question depends upon the interpretation of the word good. There are two kinds of illusionary good—my good and the other fellow's good. Both of these are often at direct variance with that universal good which alone is real. To do good is a

fine art and those who dabble in reform without a depth of wisdom, of vast tolerance, and great experience in life, often do more harm than good. It is true that we are to do good, but it is also true that we are to become wise, and it is proven by experience that only those who are wise can really do good. When action is dominated by opinions or selfishness or sympathy or any emotion or thought that is not grounded in actual fact, our efforts to do good usually lose the name of action. It is well to bear in mind in our efforts to do good the Socratic definition of this virtue: "That which is true, necessary and beautiful is good." Our most common mistake in attempting to do good is to overlook the factor of beauty in action. That is why we are likely to hurt people's feelings. Others often are not as offended by what is said as by the way it is said. There are beautiful ways to do everything and they are usually acceptable. But when beauty fails in the deed, the deed itself usually misses its mark. Beauty is not weakness or sentiment, it is the divinity in the deed. Nowhere is beauty more needed in action than in reforms and corrections, and there is nowhere where it is less likely to appear. It is true we are all here to do good, but if we do not wish our ministrations to inadvertently contribute to the world's evils, our labors must reflect the beauty and understanding which we have developed within ourselves.

QUESTION—*In what way does Rosicrucianism differ from other Wisdom Religions and when did it have its beginning?*

ANSWER—*Rosicrucianism as it is now popularly taught is an interpretation of the old Mystery*

Teachings in the light of Christianity. It therefore differs from all pre-Christian movements and from the occult schools of non-Christian peoples, principally in its interpretation of the significance of Christ. To the ancient pagans and to the non-Christians of the modern world, Christ is either a universal principle independent of time and place, or else the Messianic attributes are bestowed upon the prophets or leaders of other faiths.

The Rosicrucianism of the seventeenth century was a philosophical rather than a religious movement. Its members were Cabalists, Alchemists, Hermetists, astrologers, and disciples of the transcendental arts, but when called upon to make a declaration of their faith the members of the original Society acknowledged allegiance to the Lutheran Church in Germany or the Reformed Church of England. The Rosicrucian Society is popularly supposed to have been founded about the year 1610 by a German Lutheran theologian, Johann Valentin Andrea. Our researches incline us to believe that the Society was actually founded about 1604, probably by Lord Bacon, and was composed of such disciples and initiates of the old Hermetic mysteries as had survived the Inquisition in Europe. The story of Christian Rosenkreutz is probably allegorical, as he is not even mentioned by several of the earliest historians of the Order.

Yours sincerely,

Manly P. Hall