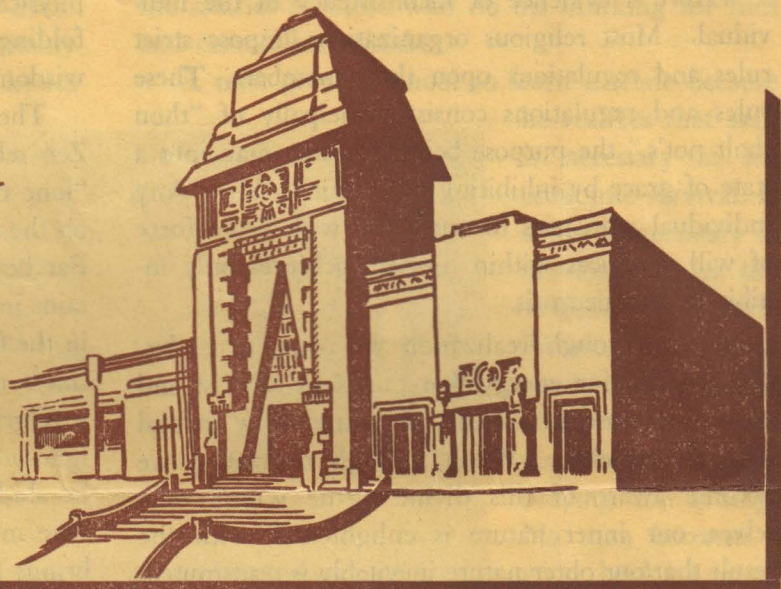


Agosto 1940

A MONTHLY LETTER

BY MANLY P. HALL



First Letter

DISCIPLINES OF MEDITATION AND REALIZATION

Dear Student:

THEORY OF METAPHYSICAL DISCIPLINES

The consideration of metaphysical disciplines begins with a definition of terms. Having established the meaning of certain words, we then may proceed safely with this extremely abstract study. We have to use words in an attempt to reveal to you something that can not be put into words. Hence the success of your study requires that you develop an intuitive grasp of metaphysical implications.

The particular subjects of this course of lessons are meditation and realization. *Meditation* is an inward contemplation of divine realities. The subjects of meditation are the aspects of Truth. Truth may be cognized only when the student is in a tranquil state. There must be no tension or effort.

Realization is the simultaneous understanding and acceptance of the divinity and the divine purpose in all things. Even more, it is the acceptance of things as they *are*, and the *rightness* of things as they are.

Illumination is a state of conscious at-one-ment with the Universal Principle—man's participation in Truth. The methods by which illumination may be achieved are called disciplines.

Discipline is the specific directing and controlling of personal action. Discipline results in complete self-mastery. All discipline must be effortless—yet actual. Spiritual development is not the result of a desperate effort to be good. It is rather an inward realization of right which transmutes the whole nature into the likeness of Truth. In Zen Buddhism the way of illumination is called the "gateless gate." The Taoists of China describe it as the "effortless effort."

Growth is natural to man. No one thinks of a flower trying to bloom, or of a tree trying to grow. The blossoming of the flower is a manifestation of universal law flowing through the plant; it is the will of the Infinite made manifest in the finite. Illumination is the blossoming of the soul in man; it is just as natural, simple, and inevitable as the flowering of the rose. The wise man does not try to be wise; wisdom is as natural to him as folly is common to ordinary mortals. Man does not have to try to be himself.

Effort is evidence of inconsistency in the individual. Most religious organizations impose strict rules and regulations upon their members. These rules and regulations consist principally of "thou shalt not's," the purpose being to force man into a state of grace by inhibiting and limiting him. Any individual who tries to crush out with brute force of will the vices within himself, achieves only inhibition and neurosis.

When through realization we come to understand the divine energy that causes us to exist and grow, we cease to impede its natural flow in and through ourselves. When through realization we become aware of this divine virtue within ourselves, our inner nature is enlightened, with the result that our outer nature inevitably is transmuted.

Metaphysical disciplines should not be directed toward material ends. The true mystic does not meditate or concentrate in an effort to attract to himself the things of the material world; nor does he attempt to find in meditation an escape from the responsibilities or problems of his objective life. This does not mean, however, that metaphysical disciplines produce *no* physical result. When a man puts his inner life in order, through meditation and realization, the result is a happier and better physical existence.

If we can teach you the philosophical life, that is, the effortless way to grow, we shall have established you in the foundations of wisdom. If we can reveal in some way through the insufficient medium of words the wordless truth that being wise is the most simple and natural state of the evolved man, a great and permanent good will be yours.

The Chinese goddess, Kwan Yin, the "Lady of Mercy," is depicted robed in flowing garments which are, to the Buddhist mind, symbolical of the cosmic pattern of life. Existence is really a patterned flowing towards the real, a motion in space, a flowing of all life towards wisdom and truth.

Metaphysical disciplines are not to be regarded as competitive exercises in which one vies with another in the magnitude of his imaginings, or yearns toward some metaphysical aristocracy. All meta-

physical exercises worthy of the name are an unfolding of self into the light of virtue, beauty, and wisdom.

The illustration for this lesson is taken from the Zen school of Chinese art. We have called it the "lone traveler." It depicts a solitary monk standing on the edge of a great cliff gazing out into the mist. Far beyond rise dimly the shadows of high mountains in strange contrast to gnarled and broken trees in the foreground. Much has been said of the loneliness of wisdom, how the truth seeker becomes a pilgrim wandering from star to star. To the ignorant, the wise man is lonely, indeed, because he abides in distant heights of the mind. But the wise man himself does not feel lonely, for wisdom brings him nearer to life, closer to the heart of the world than the foolish man ever can be. Bookishness may lead to loneliness, and scholarship may end in a battle of beliefs, but the wise man gazing off into space sees not an empty void, but a space full of life, truth, and law.

A metaphysical student who tries to be more than he is can be very lonely. Only a part of him has gone forward. He has renounced old attachments, but he has not grown up to new ideals. He has renounced material things, but he has not outgrown them. He clings to a little of ignorance and strives for a little of truth. Such a man is lonely and miserable. Space around him is still an empty void for he has not realized the imminence of truth.

In terms of realization, Truth is the cosmic *fact*, and that *fact* is the most beautiful, the most noble, the most gentle, the most wise, the most desirable of all things. This truth is not merely a word that can be defined, but it is a sufficiency towards which man grows. It is the absolute law that abides in the farthest and the innermost. It is all-sufficient to the wise man. Only the real can perceive or value the real.

The ancient masters have told us that illumination, the final reward of discipline, comes suddenly—when "no man knoweth." At the end of the path is that state "desired of all men." It is impossible to say when illumination will come to any in-

dividual. It may come tomorrow, or it may come after ten thousand lives; but discipline inevitably will bring closer this day of liberation. Metaphysics promises man freedom, security, and wisdom only when he has elevated his own nature to the appreciation and realization of the Divine Plan.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

It is our desire that you develop a practical philosophy of life that will assist in the solution of your personal problems and result in a greater usefulness to yourself and others. The lessons of this series are intended to acquaint you with the general subject of spiritual development and outline a practical metaphysical program you can adapt to your own particular needs.

All humanity is subject to discipline in some form. In the material world discipline results in skill and efficiency. Lack of this discipline must result in diminished earning power. Elbert Hubbard once said that the average untrained working man earns a hundred dollars a day, but ninety-five dollars must be deducted to pay

the salaries of those who do his thinking for him and correct his mistakes.

A man goes to school to learn a trade because he realizes that skill is necessary to his economic survival. It is just as necessary to develop skill in the metaphysical sciences. Religion is the most exact of the sciences and is not to be mastered merely through praying and fasting. No man becomes a good book keeper through hoping, nor can he become a great philosopher by the mere desire. He must subject himself to philosophic disciplines and work toward proficiency in the sacred sciences.

The aspiring few envision a larger purpose behind the visible world and its activities. They are rewarded for their increased efforts by a fuller realization of spiritual truths.

Peace and security are not to be found by merely informing the mind or increasing the intellect. Regardless of how deeply a man

feels, how broadly he studies and improves himself outwardly, he is not complete until he has perfected his inner disposition. Until spiritual consciousness has tintured and brought to perfec-



(Chinese painting showing a strong Zen influence. In the author's collection.)

The pilgrim, staff in hand, stands on the brink of the sensory sphere. He faces out towards the shadowy forms of the distant mountains, symbols of the great spiritual truths which always lie beyond. Between lies the sea, the gulf of Maya.

tion all the efforts of the intellect, man is not secure and not sufficient.

Material education is directed towards increasing the skill of mind and hand. Education gives man a working knowledge in the arts, crafts, and sciences. But modern education does not give the student any knowledge of his own inner self. The spirit, the soul, and the metaphysical parts of man find no place in scholasticism. The result is evident. Material knowledge does not bestow happiness. It has not resulted in honesty. It has failed to inspire integrity. Only spiritual knowledge can complete education by conferring security, moral courage, and spiritual enlightenment.

The end of metaphysical education is not the memorizing of the facts in a textbook, but the expression of the convictions of the inner spiritual life through trained and developed faculties. All the great systems of metaphysical philosophy have included disciplines intended to release and perfect the higher ideals of the individual.

All things being equal, the individual with the best education will gain the most through metaphysical discipline. Metaphysics is not to be regarded as a substitute for education, but these disciplines mean the most to the individual who is already informed on a large variety of subjects. But if a man thinks he can gain a technical knowledge of Latin through meditation, he will be very disappointed.

Metaphysical disciplines had their origin in the oldest of religious systems. Schools of metaphysical thought have flourished in India for thousands of years. Similar schools existed also in most of the great nations of the ancient world. The difference between metaphysics and theology is principally in the matter of discipline. Julian, the Apostate, the wisest and the most virtuous of the Roman Emperors declared that only the noblest and most learned men were worthy to participate in religion. Plato taught that purity and self-discipline were the first essentials of the philosophic life. After Nero murdered his mother he was afraid to enter the temples of the Mysteries, although by right he was the high priest of Rome.

The old rules and disciplines which Plato, Pythagoras, and Aristotle obeyed, have not been lost. For centuries they have been ignored by Western thinkers who emphasized only the objective values of life. The Buddhist monks of China, Siam, and Burma, and the Brahman priests of India still know and live the old disciplines. Strangely enough, these disciplines are really very simple. It is the application of them that is difficult. The purpose of these secret teachings is to release into manifestation the spiritual values in man. The great initiates of the ancient world bear witness to the efficacy of the disciplines.

We no longer live in the time of Plato or Aristotle. The race is confronted with a new social experience. Economics and industrialism have arisen to plague the souls of men. The old exercises must be adapted to modern life if they really are to accomplish their original purpose. Many efforts have been made to adapt metaphysical exercises to the tempo of modern thinking. For the most part these adaptations have failed. The failure is usually due to over-optimism on the part of both teacher and pupil. Oriental teachers coming to this country usually assume that their students are already well advanced when in reality the student has accomplished practically nothing in himself. The problem has been to work out a program which can not cause difficulty, misunderstanding, or abuse. We seriously believe that it is impossible for the student to get himself into difficulty through the study of this course, and at the same time he can make genuine progress towards a fuller understanding of the old mystery teachings.

The practice of metaphysical discipline will not immunize any individual against the experiences that are necessary to him in life. Metaphysics has no power over the laws of reincarnation and karma, but it helps the student to understand and appreciate these laws as they work out in his own life. The law of cause and effect is inviolate in nature. Metaphysics will give you the courage to start right causes in motion, and patience to work out the effects of causes already set in motion. Metaphysics will not remove obstacles, suffering, poverty,

relatives, or debt, but it will give you the intelligence to face these assorted ills with a good hope, a high integrity, and a sound conviction. Metaphysics strengthens character; thus, it does help the individual directly to gain mastery over any group of circumstances by facing them fairly, and solving them honestly.

The law of karma, or cause and effect, applied to the actions of man is the *raison d'être* of all metaphysical disciplines. The student earns a better fate through discipline, hence it is inevitable that he will enjoy a better destiny. All causes produce effects consistent with themselves. If the life is put in order through philosophy and realization, the result is not only greater security at the present time, but a better future in lives to come.

In ancient times those who desired to devote their lives to the sacred sciences traveled into distant countries to study with great and learned masters. Pythagoras received candidates behind a curtain, and it was only after years of discipleship that his pupils were permitted to behold his face. The Pythagorean disciplines are typical of the old methods of development. Candidates for admission to his school brought a report of their character and conduct from leading citizens in their communities. They had to have achieved a high proficiency in mathematics, astronomy, and music, or they were not eligible. Pythagoras determined by metaphysical means the disciplines necessary for each of his disciples. These disciplines were rigidly enforced for varying periods of time, the maximum being twenty years. Under the personal supervision of the master and his more advanced students, the beginner progressed safely, protected from all of the dangers which arise from an incorrect interpretation of metaphysical truths.

Nearly twenty-five centuries have passed since the burning of the Pythagorean institute at Krotona. One by one the old Mystery Schools have disappeared. The truth seeker of today may no longer beg admission at the temple gates. The disciple must discipline himself. Apollonius of Tyana who lived centuries after the death of Pythagoras imposed all of the Pythagorean disciplines upon him-

self, even the vow of five years of silence. He assumed these disciplines voluntarily because he knew that they were essential to the spiritual development of himself. This must be the attitude of the modern student. Evolution has brought to the average man the power to analyze and estimate his own character. It is no longer necessary for the priestcraft to show him the forces of right and wrong. Each man is now his own high priest, his own initiator, the master of his own metaphysical life. Having realized this, your own integrity must strengthen you for the path of discipleship.

ADAPTATION

Among my friends is a charming gentleman of pure Anglo-Saxon ancestry. His forefathers probably died on the field of Hastings, but this man looks like and thinks like a Chinese. Today, he is an elderly gentleman with slanting, Oriental eyes, and a scraggly white mustache of Confucian cut. He has devoted his entire life to the study of Chinese and frequently is called upon by Chinese scholars to interpret for them the intricacies of their own language. This learned and kindly man is a geographical misfit. From the viewpoint of reincarnation, this is probably his first embodiment in an Occidental form.

Biographers of Ralph Waldo Emerson have referred to him as the "New England Brahman." His library included most of the Eastern classics, and his whole approach to philosophy is Hindu. These are outstanding examples, but each one of us has come to this present life from some other national or racial background. If you will study the faces and temperaments of people around you, you will observe how the law of reincarnation has brought together the ends of the earth.

Because each one of us has a different spiritual background, because reincarnation has given each of us a different evolutionary experience, and because karma has confronted each of us with different forms of compensation, we must each study and learn and grow in a different way. Philosophy is largely a matter of interpretation, and interpretation depends upon viewpoint. If, therefore, two

people of different spiritual experiences attempt to interpret a certain metaphysical idea, each will arrive at a different conclusion.

This line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that each student must interpret metaphysics according to his own character and his own needs. It is truly as St. Paul said that one man's meat is another man's poison. It is because of this individuality in all men that any specific method of metaphysical development must be adapted carefully to each student. It is impossible to make such an adaptation without considerable personal study of the student himself and his reaction to different forms of knowledge. That is why in the present course we are carefully avoiding any form of metaphysical discipline which might lead to injury or disappointment.

There are two great divisions of metaphysics, one Eastern and the other Western. The Western branch had its beginnings in Egypt and Chaldea. The Eastern branch had its origin in the pre-Vedic cults of Trans-Himalaya.

The Western school developed along objective lines and found its greatest exponent in Plato, the most perfect of the Greek philosophers. The Eastern school, essentially subjective in its psychology, achieved its highest proficiency in the teachings of Gautama Buddha.

The Western world essentially is objective in its psychology of life. The Occidental believes what he sees. He values physical things and physical life, and strives after position and power. Modern industrialism with its high measure of efficiency and its entire lack of idealism is the inevitable product of an objective philosophy perpetuated by a comparatively unphilosophical people.

To the Hindu, the invisible is real, and the visible is an illusion. The Oriental mind perceives clearly the hierarchies of celestial power. The goal of Eastern idealism is complete renunciation of all physical attachments and all physical possessions. The Eastern sage exists for the sole purpose of achieving detachment. He dreams of the day when he will have nothing, while the Occidental dreams of the day when he will have everything. In the

East, wisdom is wealth; in the West, physical and visible accumulations are most desired.

We know that all extremes are imperfect, and that in moderation lies the greatest virtue. Therefore, the wise man of today is trying to blend Eastern and Western thought and achieve a balance between attachment and detachment, between possession and renunciation.

In our modern educational system, millions of young people are taught the same thing. Knowledge becomes for them a mimeographed education in which spiritual values are entirely ignored. The emphasis on sports and social events blinds them to the more serious values of study.

In the East, the foundations for a metaphysical life are laid in childhood. The average Hindu boy of twelve knows more about religion than the average American clergyman of sixty. Mysticism is a birthright in the East. In the West it must be arduously achieved, often at the expense of economic security. I have seen a Brahman mendicant sitting beside the burning ghats along the Ganges, who neither could read nor write, but could recite the entire Veda from memory. The recitation was exceedingly rapid and yet it took about fourteen days, as the Veda is considerably longer than the Old Testament of the Bible.

We may ask: "Did this holy man understand what he was reciting?" For the most part, the answer is in the affirmative, for this beggar is one of four million Hindus who have renounced all worldly possessions, home, and security, to wander from one sacred shrine to another. This is called the religious life in the East. No one would recommend that a Western truth seeker follow such a course, but as a Hindu Pundit once told me: "*A man who gives his all for what he believes, can give no more.*"

We are fundamentally a materialistic people and there are few Occidentals who are not in some measure bound by material values, attachments, and ambitions. To the Westerner, metaphysics is an avocation, a hobby, a luxury, a passing experience. We must accept the materiality of our race as part of the divine plan. Like the prodigal son,

we must go down into Egypt and herd swine. In the end, we shall be richer for all the experiences that we shall have gained; we shall be wiser and nobler for our journey into the land of darkness and error. The reward for our experience is wisdom, courage, vision, and truth. We shall be truly greater than the angels.

Because we are very different from Easterners, and because we are different from the ancients, we must adapt their mystical philosophies to our present condition. We must be practical idealists with a clear understanding of our own limitations. All men naturally desire to be wise, but various individuals and various races must approach the problem of wisdom according to their own understanding and their own experience.

Metaphysically speaking, our materiality results in a condition of isolation. As long as we deny the reality of the superphysical worlds, so long they will remain closed to us. As long as we live by a material standard in a divine world, we isolate ourselves from those innumerable divine energies which fill all being and sustain all life. To the Easterner God is indwelling, the very heart and substance of all things. To the Westerner God is very distant, something which must be approached with fear and trembling as we might enter into the presence of a great monarch, prostrating ourselves before the splendor of the divine presence. In the quest for Truth these differences must be taken into consideration and spiritual disciplines adapted skilfully to various needs.

The tempo of Western living has unfitted us for the peculiar sedentary, meditative life of the East. A great Indian saint once was asked to come to America and teach. He raised his hands in horror, explaining that the confusion of Western life would be fatal to his highly sensitive nervous system. In a way, this same confusion is exceedingly detrimental to any Western student who attempts the contemplative life. The vibrations of a large Occidental city are discordant and react violently on the sensitive centers of the soul ganglia or sympathetic nervous system.

The physical body of the Western person has

increased its resistance to external impulses and developed a shock-proof mechanism. The result is that the Westerner is more blunt, obvious, and less imaginative than the Oriental. It is necessary to his survival that he live constantly in the evident, that he build philosophies to justify this course of procedure, and that he depreciate any other system of living. It is all part of an escape mechanism. It is not surprising, therefore, that the more sensitive type of Westerner accepts gladly the fragments of Oriental philosophy that come to the West. Eastern mysticism appeals to the soul starved by Western materialism. Unfortunately, exploitation often follows.

Several sincere Eastern teachers have come to America in the last fifty years as missionaries of Eastern philosophies. They have attracted wide attention and their doctrines have found great favor. But these teachers discovered that for some inexplicable reason the most serious of their Western students suffered, sickened, and died. The difficulty was that the Oriental had over-estimated the spiritual understanding of his Western pupils. He was interested in great systems of philosophy, but his pupils were interested in his *personality*. They believed in him and not in what he said. They brought all of their spiritual blindness to bear on the subject with tragic results.

Various forms of yoga, breathing exercises, and kundalini stimulation are among the dangerous teachings which have come from the East. These teachings are perfectly reasonable and normal to the East Indian who devotes his life to the purification of his body and the unfoldment of the spiritual perceptions, but as a plaything for Occidental people who hope that they can breathe themselves into a state of grace, such systems are entirely inappropriate. When the typical American business man takes up yoga, he has neither the appreciation to understand it, nor the integrity to apply it. For him it is a dangerous experiment fully as unfortunate as introducing high-pressure economics into India.

When a student of metaphysics attempts to develop his super-physical faculties without proper

instruction, psychism is ever present. Accounts of psychic phenomena excite the imagination of the uninformed. Ouiji boards, visions, trances, table-tippings, and crystal-gazing possess an insidious fascination. Phenomena become the proof of spiritual power, which fact is reminiscent of one of the yesterday yogis who proved his cosmic consciousness by driving an automobile down a business street without any gasoline. This exploit won him a veneration that wisdom can never expect. It is most important that any student of metaphysics who expects to make any true progress in the development of his inner life should refrain from all forms of psychism and avoid psychic phenomena.

The best schools in both the East and the West warn their disciples against psychism and mediumship. In India, psychic phenomena are practiced by members of the lower grades of Yoga, never by students of Raja Yoga. We have had the problem of psychism in mind throughout the preparation of this course, and this has influenced us in the selection of certain disciplines of a positive and non-psychic quality. The sensitiveness to superphysical forces that the student of mysticism develops must be under the control of his personal will at all times, and must, under no condition, lead into mediumistic vagaries.

REALIZATION

The Wisdom Religion teaches us that while in personality we are many, in principle we are one. There is one spirit in all men. Though innumerable artificial barriers made by man divide and isolate us, we are truly of one substance and one purpose. We are more than similar; we are identical. We are manifestations of the One and we bear witness in our own parts to the One. This kinship of life, this identity of purpose and end, makes us truly universal.

As surely as all plants grow out of the same earth, so all lives come out of the one life. We are all plants with roots in space, nourished by one energy, and growing up to reveal one intelligence. To the degree that man can perceive this unity, to that degree he is wise. As long as he can think always of this impersonal unity, he can avoid division and discord.

An understanding of philosophy reawakens the spirit in man and restores to him the realization of the One. Our keynote from now on will be *THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL*, that is the development of universal values in each student.

Begin your philosophic life by gaining an imperturbable realization of the life and of the Law, upon which you will build your meditation. We sincerely recommend that you attempt in your own daily life the chemistry of vision, that you bring the best and highest ideals of yourself to bear upon situations that arise. Live up to the best that you know, and observe how quickly problems will disappear. Everything that is difficult becomes easy when it is done with truth as the criterion of action.

If you gain only a little understanding of life upon which you may build a positive and helpful philosophy, you will have accomplished much. You can not achieve perfection in a day or even in one lifetime. But if you work towards it, you will come closer and closer to understanding. This realization is your first step. Ponder well upon it, for upon the rock foundation of individual integrity you will build the House of Universal Understanding.

To attempt to live beyond what we know is dangerous. Not to live up to what we know, is equally fatal.

Sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall