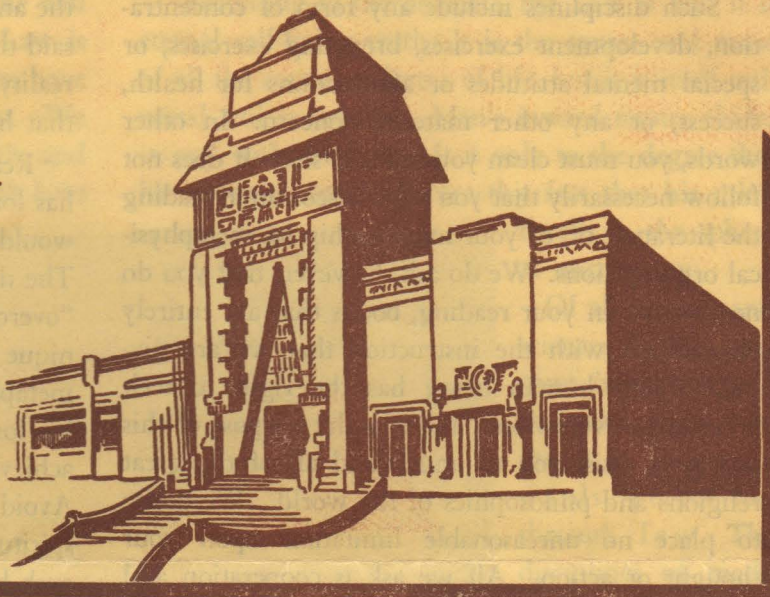


September 1940

A MONTHLY LETTER

BY MANLY P. HALL



Second Letter

DISCIPLINES OF MEDITATION AND REALIZATION

Dear Student:

The principal sources of our metaphysical doctrines are Oriental, but we have supplemented these with certain teachings from the Pythagorean and Platonic schools. These last were added to make certain that the Western viewpoint was preserved and the subject matter balanced and complemented. The three principal systems from which we have derived our material are:

(1) *Taoism*, the deepest and most subjective of the Chinese metaphysical schools. Taoism was founded in the sixth century before the Christian Era by the obscure philosopher Lao-tze. The teachings of Taoism are founded upon the realization and understanding of the word *Tao*. This word has several translations which include: the *Way*, the *Truth*, the *Means*, and the *End*. According to the Taoists, the word *Tao* may be studied forever, and still it will remain only a word. But if the inner nature be illumined, the word suddenly becomes the key to all knowledge, all mysteries, and all the aspects of Truth.

(2) *Lamaism*, the strange teachings of the Buddhist monks who live in the highlands of

central Tibet. The order was founded by a Hindu monk, Padma Sambhava, who journeyed from central India over the Himalaya passes, driving oxen loaded with books. The deepest metaphysics of Lamaism is found in the writings of the sage Milarepa who revealed a profound and beautiful philosophy concerning the secrets of the transcendental nature.

(3) *Zen* is the most metaphysical and mystical sect of Buddhism. The word *zen* means realization, and the monks of this school are devoted to the inward perception of Buddhist truth. The order of Zen was founded more than a thousand years ago by a Hindu Buddhist monk named Daruma, or Bodhi-dharma. The sect was founded in China and spread through Korea and Japan. Daruma was the thirty-third patriarch of Indian Buddhism.

In order that this course may succeed, we must assume that the student is willing to begin with fundamentals. If you already have practiced occult exercises given out by schools, movements, or individuals, we must ask you to discontinue these during the course of the present instruction. It is impossible successfully to mix systems of metaphysical disciplines.

Such disciplines include any form of concentration, development exercises, breathing exercises, or special mental attitudes or affirmations for health, success, or any other material concern. In other words, you must clean your mental slate. It does not follow necessarily that you must discontinue reading the literature of, or your membership in, metaphysical organizations. We do ask, however, that you do not include in your reading, books that are entirely inconsistent with the instruction that we are giving. Every human being has the right to seek knowledge everywhere, and it is the purpose of this course to assist you to understand all of the great religions and philosophies of the world. We desire to place no unreasonable limitation upon your thought or action. All we ask is cooperation and sincere effort during the time in which you actually are studying these lessons.

If you have been a student of the occult sciences for a number of years and have received already a groundwork from a reputable organization, we do not wish to turn you from that group. It is our desire that through this course you may come to a fuller appreciation of the work that you already have accomplished, and gain a new facility in applying principles to the problems of life.

As a student of metaphysics you can expect very little encouragement from those about you. For this reason you must be prepared to resist the encroachment of circumstances. The true mystic is sustained by his own spiritual understanding. The source of all truth and inspiration is within. When you have developed this realization within yourself, you will have gained a strength and peace which the material world never can take from you. Spiritual knowledge bestows security under any and all conditions.

The disciplines of meditation and realization require a new function of the consciousness. The mental processes must give place to an inward mystical perception that is not thinking but knowing. The result is realization, an indefinable state of consciousness closely associated with what psychologists term the "mystical experience." This super-mental condition of awareness is described by

the ancient philosophers as a "divine state." Proclus said that he was "lifted up into a participation with reality," that he "perceived all things clearly," and that he was "possessed by Truth."

Realization results from discipline. Discipline has long been interpreted as self-control, or as some would say, "the overcoming of the lower nature." The difficulty is that such words as "conquest" and "overcoming" suggest an aggressiveness of technique entirely inconsistent with fact. The true metaphysician is not a wearied man wrestling with his lower nature; rather he is poised and relaxed, achieving through realization instead of conflict. Avoid the process of suffering your way into a spiritual state. A student who constantly must curb his animal nature by various types of vicarious flagellation will have to learn personal detachment.

Metaphysics acknowledges the fundamental fact that all human beings are imperfect. It demands effort, not perfection, at this stage of evolution. In each human being there is a conflict between ideals and actions. We each know better than we do. The fact that we are not perfect should not lead to discouragement, but to a conscientious desire to improve by an intelligent process. Many people have ruined their lives by contemplating their mistakes and ignoring their opportunities. It is the goal of philosophy to order the lives of men. In a properly ordered existence the superior part in man controls and directs the inferior part, that is, the spirit controls the mind, and the mind controls the body.

Do not browbeat your faults. The moment the tension of effort arises, failure is inevitable. Those who try desperately to live up to certain moral virtues are constantly failing. All self-improvement arises from inner realization which automatically overcomes the resistance of the outer personality and accomplishes reform. In metaphysical disciplines, you do not kill out faults, you change the focus of the mind. That upon which we focus our attention is real, and that from which we remove our attention, ceases to exist. Do not try to destroy evil; posit good. Do not destroy the body; posit the consciousness. Do not attempt to destroy vices; posit virtues.

Metaphysics is based upon law. Law is the will of the universe for itself and its creations. Law is absolute and immutable. Many metaphysicians have an erroneous concept of the meaning of law. We hear about laws of abundance, laws of health, and others. Most of these people are invoking such laws for something they want. This concept is unreasonable and not to be entertained. The Law is the unchanging fact of existence; it is the Law that makes the practice of metaphysical disciplines possible. The Law serves no individual; all life serves Law.

The Law, according to the esotericists, is the inevitable, complete, and sufficient Truth by which all things were created, by which all things are sustained, and by which all things ultimately achieve their purposes. The Law is ever-flowing reality, the ever-flowing truth, the rightness in everything which enfolds everything. If you walk down the street surrounded by

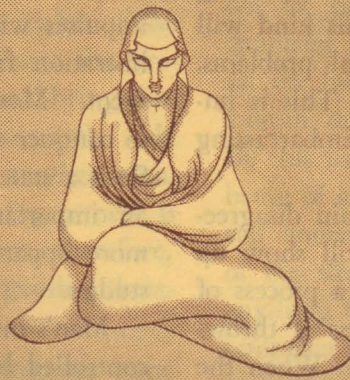
a seething mass of humanity, all appears to be chaos; but to the inward perception it is evident that each human being in the mass is fulfilling his own destiny according to Law. Whatever we do is judged by Law. Wherever we go, we abide in the Law. To the metaphysician, Law is eternal right, absolute truth, and complete sufficiency.

According to the ancients, the Law is life; it is eternal self-living truth; it is the source and cause of all the countless forms of life, but it is itself universal and indivisible. Man's inward nature abides in and with the Law. It is only to the degree that his outward senses obscure this fact that his mind dwells in the sphere of uncertainty.

Of all the arts and sciences, living is the most important and the most exact. Living is a motion towards perfection through law. The disciplines of meditation and realization enrich and perfect living by developing the understanding. By understanding we gain reason, and reason in turn bestows the courage and integrity necessary to high accomplishment.

Many modern schools place their disciplines on a time basis, but time has little place in the matter of growth. One may practice certain disciplines for ten years and still not be ready for any further enlightenment;

or one may practice only a few weeks and be prepared for further instruction. The time that it requires to release the inner faculties depends upon the amount of spiritual enlightenment that has been brought forward from the previous life. It may be necessary to practice the disciplines for a number of years before the maxi-



POSTURE is establishment in the LAW. The student seats himself in the disciplines and becomes immovable. The physical patterns assumed during meditation are symbolic of the relations which are caused to exist between the disciple and the external world.

imum results are achieved. If you are discouraged easily, or inconstant in your devotion to the subject, the benefits will be proportionately diminished.

These disciplines will not bring about miraculous changes overnight. But if they are applied conscientiously over a long period of time, they will enrich the character and make you more capable of perceiving and understanding the mysteries of life.

KARMIC CULMINATION

Improvement sets in motion the law of karma. To the degree that you improve, to that degree you will find increased opportunity.

One word of warning at this point is important. When you begin metaphysical exercises, a certain definite change takes place within yourself. We believe we have protected you from any physiological disturbances, but we cannot protect you from the law of karma. This law has a way of speeding up, with the result that a course of this kind will almost certainly increase your personal problems. You start paying karmic debts faster. This is important eventually, but is sometimes embarrassing at the moment.

You must be prepared to face certain disagreeable and difficult situations. They will show up the minute you begin to study. It is a process of purification in which the consciousness is throwing off certain negative parts of itself. When the body throws off poisons physically, we have sickness; when the soul starts throwing off poisons, we also have disturbances. These frequently take the form of difficulties with persons around us, financial problems, and temperamental difficulties. The thing to be remembered under such circumstances is that the paying of these debts by speeding up karma cleanses the subjective nature and prepares it to receive metaphysical instruction. Therefore do not be surprised if some of your difficulties multiply themselves.

It is encouraging to remember that the wisdom of nature never permits any individual to be confronted with insurmountable obstacles. Many fail in their problems, but this failure is not due to

the fact that they do not possess the potential power to succeed. Generally, the problems which confront the metaphysician are adjusted to his increasing consciousness, and if he will live what he believes, he will find the obstacles rather quickly dissipated, leaving behind only a wealth of experience and a deeper appreciation of values.

PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENT

There are two kinds of environment, external and internal. External environment is made up of the outside world with its problems and attachments. Internal environment consists of the personality itself which is a compound of impulses, desires, emotions, thoughts, and ideals. Man's physical life is an interplay of these internal and external factors, frequently in conflict and seldom brought under the discipline of the will.

It is obviously impossible for the average man to dominate his world. But he can master the impulses within himself, and by so doing achieve liberation from the pressure of external environment. Most great world philosophies teach that to conquer self is more than to conquer the world. Such a statement may seem platitudinous, but it is an important spiritual truth which will become more apparent to you as you proceed with your studies.

Man's internal environment is as yet imperfectly controlled by will and consciousness. It is, therefore, erratic and inconstant. The imperfections of this lower self impede the flow of energy from the spiritual nature. The purpose of self-discipline is to order and reform the lower self, that it may no longer be an obstacle to the purposes of the spirit.

In the terms of Taoism, man stands in his own light—that is, between himself and that which he most desires. What we are prevents us from being what we desire to be. Discipline applied to thought and action enables the student to get out of his own way.

Next to what we are, our great problem is what we have. Possessions result in possessiveness or fear. Both of these emotions cause worry. A man worried is full of his own problems and there

is little place in his nature for the contemplation of the divine realities. There is an old Chinese picture of a man who has great wealth which he is carrying on his back in a huge sack. The bag is so large that he can not see either where he is going or where he has come from, and smugly contented with his possessions he is stepping off the edge of a cliff.

A rich man has external wealth of a fragile and impermanent nature. A proud or egotistic man has the internal equivalent of physical wealth. He is weighed down with the sense of his own importance. Anything that we have, even if it be only a high estimation of ourselves, is an impediment to progress. The greatest of all burdens is self-pride. A man can give away what he has, but only years of discipline can release him from the vanity of his own importance.

A wise man living in the physical world does not desire wealth. He desires peace and security, regarding contentment as more than riches. The sincere student, likewise, does not desire the gratification of his ego, but an internal well-being that is more than all the treasures of the earth. He does not desire to be greater than another man. He has come to the realization that greatness is relative and illusionary. The student, therefore, seeks first the Law and its workings, gaining therefrom the treasures of wisdom.

Do not feel discouraged if you encounter some small difficulties in establishing the philosophic life within yourself. One of the great problems of Western living is interruption. The truth seeker is beset constantly with interruptions that tend to divert him from his spiritual ideals. These unexpected happenings are a constant testing of his one-pointedness. They are external interruptions and will continue as long as man's internal life is negative to his external environment. However, when discipline makes the inner life positive and renders the environment negative, such interruptions can not occur.

Tibetan monks are taught to meditate beside a great clanging bell. In time they reach a condition of detachment from the material life which

enables them to be entirely oblivious of the sound. The distractions of life are appropriate parts of metaphysical training. They demand a concentration which greatly strengthens the will power of the student. For this reason it is inadvisable to hide in some secluded spot or retire from the world. Such a process negates the character and makes the student weaker when later confronted with stress.

Socrates once was asked by a disciple where the best place was to begin the study of the sacred sciences. Socrates answered instantly, "Where you are." I have known many truth seekers who constantly talk about their plans to "get away from it all" with the hope of roosting on the top of some distant peak where nothing is to be heard but the soft, timid voices of nature. As far as I have been able to observe, none of these sensitive folk ever accomplishes anything physically or metaphysically.

No doubt it is helpful on occasion to leave civilization for a short time to recuperate our forces, but if such a vacation becomes too extended, character and integrity suffer. St. Simeon Stylites sat for forty years on the top of a column in the Libyan desert, drawing up his food in a bucket. By this useless austerity he prevented himself from being of any use to anyone, including himself. We can understand easily why many people get tired of the stress of living, but no man ever achieved anything by running away. Western bodies are so built that it is perfectly possible to develop spiritually and at the same time fulfill our part in the social plan. To repeat the words of Socrates: "*The place to study is where you are.*" Incidentally, "*now is the appointed time.*" If you wait until you can get away from the world and until you have time, you will never live to achieve the goal you seek.

Even if you remain in civilization it is quite possible to develop a wrong attitude which will destroy any good that experience might give you. There are many metaphysicians who can look a fact in the face and then deny it with a series of affirmations. We have seen an individual sneezing violently whose philosophy of life taught that bodily ills were an illusion; but he had not learned not to sit in a draft. Also, we remember the elderly

lady suffering from caffeine poisoning who persisted in trying to "deny" the caffeine right out of the several cups of coffee that she drank for breakfast every morning. There was also "God's perfect child" who had been brought up in an environment of platitudes, and yet was the pest of the neighborhood.

A philosophy of evasion is just as bad as running away yourself. There are many pseudo-metaphysicians who could live a thousand years without experiencing anything because their philosophy has taken away the privilege of experience. When metaphysics teaches you that divine law pervades all things, you must be extremely careful not to resolve this fact into a platitude. Do not start affirming that everything is all right when it evidently is not. Such a process is auto-hypnosis. When a small mind takes hold of a big idea, chaos is inevitable. Philosophy does not make wrong right, but it helps you to see the universal reality that circumscribes and orders all existence.

Realization must be built upon a sufficient knowledge. When knowledge is sufficient, there is no need for affirmations.

PURIFICATION

The cleansing of the life through discipline is called purification. The early disciplines are properly described as "cathartic" because they really purge the life of negative or useless qualities. *The discipline must be effortless*, that is with a gentle motion toward virtue by outgrowing useless attitudes and opinions which are detrimental to the harmony of life. The cathartic disciplines were advocated by the Platonic school as the most normal, most gentle, and most effective method of eliminating vices and faults.

Bodily purification is the first step. However, over-emphasis on diet as a factor has frequently caused many difficulties. The body harmony usually is corrupted more by the thoughts and emotions than by food. Hence, while purity of body is necessary, we can not diet ourselves into a state of realization.

DIET

Moderation is the greatest of the virtues and diet should be moderated to the peculiar needs of the individual. If you are now studying metaphysics for the first time, we should advise you not to take an extreme attitude towards diet. If you have long studied the spiritual sciences you may already have developed a diet suitable to your own needs. A sudden fanatical change in any habit is very likely to cause unnecessary suffering, even tragedy. The metaphysician refines diet by eating less of very heavy foods, but he does not starve himself to death. It is important also not to view a meal as a lapse into sin and apologize to yourself or others for the fact that you still need food. A meal to be useful to the body should be pleasant, tasteful, and enjoyable. It is not a disgrace to eat, but is a disgrace to eat too much, unwisely, and uncomfortably.

The problem of vegetarianism is ever-present. If you are already a vegetarian and find that such a diet is suitable to you, the problem is well in hand. If you are not a vegetarian, I would not advise that you stop meat eating at the first lesson, but rather that you eat somewhat more lightly of meat foods until you are satisfied that such a diet would be suitable. Theoretically vegetarianism is a great success, but my experience has shown conclusively that like nearly all virtues, it can lead to serious trouble. This is particularly true for persons suffering from certain chronic diseases who would find their condition seriously impaired by any sudden change.

To vegetarians a special word of warning: Do not use starches as a substitute for meat or you will be worse off than you were before. A balanced vegetarian diet requires considerable time and thought. No one should try to live exclusively on raw fruit and vegetables unless he has personally experimented in this matter over a number of years. Remember this, the East Indian mendicant does not have to contend with the strain and tension of Western living. Sitting quietly under a tree, he performs no heavy exertion as he medi-

tates the greater part of the time. A diet suitable for him is not suitable for you.

To quote Socrates again: "In all things, not too much." That means not too much food, and not too much enthusiasm in the matter of trying to get along without food. Fasting or extended periods of special eating should be undertaken only under the supervision of a trained and qualified dietitian. Experiments in starvation are usually unfortunate for amateurs.

EXERCISE

Violent or unaccustomed exercise is a dangerous intemperance. It shortens life, exhausts energy resources, and leaves the individual unfit for the responsibilities of daily living and thinking. It is not our purpose to discourage the man who wants to do his five minute setting-up exercise in the morning. We desire only to remind the enthusiastic that physical exercise should be approached with moderation.

Exercise should be closely related to the daily life. It is very seldom necessary for a housewife to exercise. She walks many miles each day fulfilling her household duties. This is exactly what the Zen monks teach, namely, that no man should walk unless he is going somewhere. As our understanding of esoteric traditions increases, we shall realize that a moderate amount of exercise will come naturally to the student; beyond this point it is unnecessary for him to go, unless he is confronted with some particular problem.

Students of philosophy can not be expected to excel in competitive athletics. Solon was asked to go to the games to see a great Greek athlete who could swim like a fish, jump like a deer, and run like a hare. He declined with thanks, declaring that it was not seemly that a human being should imitate animals. He added that if they could find a man who thought like the gods he would be glad to go.

Philosophers in their exercises seek to gain esthetic expression. They cultivate particularly the dance which they regard as the perfect esthetic

expression. It imparts something of the cosmic motion to the movements of the body, developing grace and rhythm.

FADS

The philosopher is attempting to attain an eternal existence. He is striving for release from impermanent attitudes, beliefs, and habits. It is very necessary, therefore, that he achieve a detachment from all transitory matters such as politics, customs, and most of all, fads. This does not mean that he takes no interest in social progress, for all great philosophers have been sociologists. He must, however, stop fuming and fussing over this candidate and that party, and get to the place where he can perceive that all the varied and often contradictory procedures of mankind are contributing to an eternal pattern. Growth, integrity, and ultimate perfection are inevitable. There is nothing more disheartening to see than a group of old students fretting themselves into a frenzy determining whether a certain political party is going to overthrow civilization.

That which is real can never be destroyed, and that which is unreal can never be preserved. The wise man detaches himself from inconsequential controversies.

Fads are very much like politics. They arise in religion periodically, and truly are the bane of philosophy. Just when a student gets nicely started in a system of discipline, some brand new notion comes along and off he goes on a tangent. Health fads are notorious—first, it is walnuts, then it is Bulgarian bacillus, then it is orange juice. Metaphysical students who expect to get somewhere are uninfluenced by fads that have their roots in propaganda, and resist the temptation to try the so-called panaceas.

As in foods, so in clothing, and all the affairs of your life. Do not allow your attention to wander off into styles and fashions. Keeping detached from all such matters, live normally, eat normally,

dress simply, and save your energy for the things in which you believe. You will save money and be far happier in the end.

ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations are a habit in religion. For centuries religiously minded people have belonged to something, and in consequence have decided that "belonging" is necessary. Metaphysical organizations have accumulated a rather unsavory reputation. Most of them are entirely static, and the few that remain dynamic are definitely reactionary.

The principal function of metaphysical organizations is to bolster up the mutual courage of the members. They do not give individual consideration, all members getting the same teaching regardless of their fitness.

The wise person is not a "joiner". He is an individual thinking his own thoughts and building his own life through increase of knowledge and personal consecration. It may be harder to accomplish by yourself, but the results of personal accomplishment are the most satisfactory.

REALIZATION

Our realization for the second letter is derived from the teachings of Taoism regarding universal motion. According to the teachings of Lao-tze, all growth toward the real must be achieved through meditating upon the word *Tao* as interpreted in terms of rhythmic motion. Life must flow harmoniously from experience to experience, from incident to incident, and from condition to condition, without the consciousness of interruption.

The mind with its thoughts, the emotional nature with its feelings and impulses, and the physical body with its movements and patterns, must proceed harmoniously from one phase of activity to another. There must be no breaks in the patterns, no interruptions in the tempo or temper of living.

The contrast of viewpoints may be realized from a comparison of oriental and occidental music. To the Eastern ear, Western musical composition, because of the numerous breaks and changes in rhythm and accentuated pauses, is said to be full of holes, brief interludes of silence cutting in and breaking up the sound patterns. To Eastern ears these pauses and breaks are distinctly unpleasant. On the other hand, the old sacred music of Asia sounds monotonous to Western ears because it lacks these mathematically broken patterns.

Practice the realization of uninterrupted motion. Perceive the relationship between the incidents of daily action and attempt to flow from one mode of experience to another without any appreciable interval of adjustment. For example, if the telephone rings while you are engaged in the contemplation of some abstract truth, do not permit this incident to be regarded, even for a moment, as an interruption. Include it in the meditation itself as a phase or part of soul-experience. Remember that all action is necessary, useful, expedient, or pleasant—is part of a definite order. If the incident be essentially of a disagreeable nature and the interruption is of an unpleasant kind, accept it as a phase of universal discipline. Refuse within yourself to be moved from your inward foundation of right. On the other hand, do not ignore the so-called interruption. Accept it. Perform the duties which it may entail, but include it within your realization of *Tao*. That is an ordered motion.

The keynote of your realization should be: *Flowing through life with the Law*. Do not permit yourself the extravagance of any useless expenditure of energy. Adjust to unexpected conditions. Let the expected and the unexpected be accepted with equal placidity.

Sincerely yours,

