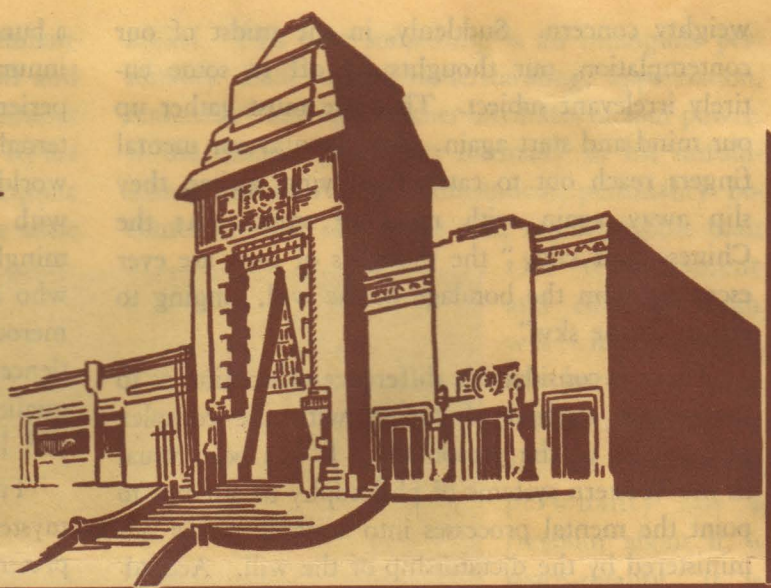


A MONTHLY LETTER

BY MANLY P. HALL



Eighth Letter

DISCIPLINES OF MEDITATION AND REALIZATION

March 1944.

Dear Student:

EXTENSION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In the Taoist system of philosophy, the *genii*, that is the intermediary spirits, frequently are depicted as flying through the air riding on strange, brightly plumaged birds. Such pictures convey a profound philosophic meaning and are part of the meditation symbolism.

In the old Mysteries, *genii* represent the intellectual extensions of the personality. For example, in the course of numerous rebirths, the Self or Over-soul gathers in the harvest of experiences. Each life with its sequence of incidents enriches some part of the composite spiritual nature. In one incarnation the emphasis may be upon observation, whereas another life may be confronted especially with problems of discrimination. When the sattva or Self emanates a new composite personality at the beginning of each physical incarnation, that personality is composed of the substances of previous experiences. Thus the personality may be regarded either as a single entity or as a compound made up of numerous separate and distinct expe-

rience sequences. When considered as a single entity, the incarnating ego is called the personality; but when considered as a composite structure, it is made up of numerous separate experience cycles which have been named the *genii*.

These diverse experience principles riding on the brilliant plumage of the thought-bird soar about through space, flying up and down the world, each living out its smaller cycle within the larger cycle of the complete life. The *genii* are usually depicted as grotesque little creatures somewhat human in appearance huddled up in voluminous cloaks and robes, carrying or accompanied by the particular symbols of the qualities which they represent. To the Eastern mind, the *genii* convey by the manner in which they are drawn, a definite airy or unearthly quality. Their robes flow about them in whorls of color. They ride amidst the clouds. Frequently there is a humorous, mischievous look on their little faces, and nearly always they convey the impression of traveling with great haste toward some strange, undefined destination.

The *genii* may be likened to vagrant thoughts. We sit down quietly to think about some serious or

weighty concern. Suddenly, in the midst of our contemplation, our thoughts fly off to some entirely irrelevant subject. Then we must gather up our mind and start again. And even as our mental fingers reach out to catch the flying sprites, they slip away again with mocking smiles. As the Chinese poet said, "the thoughts of men are ever escaping from the bondage of the will, longing to return to the sky."

There is considerable difference of opinion as to the proper method of coping with the complex phenomena of the personality. It has been usual in the Western systems of philosophy to attempt to point the mental processes into a single power administered by the dictatorship of the will. According to this interpretation, all of the faculties of the intellect must become one-pointed and one-purposed, having no freedom of their own. The result is a constant struggle in the self to reconcile the contradictions which arise among the senses and perceptions. The Oriental mystic does not favor this technic of development. Rather he prefers to permit the consciousness to flow outward along the magic airways of the mind.

In the imperial collection of paintings on exhibition in Peking is one which illustrates the Oriental viewpoint. In the background of the painting is a dim blue haze of distant mountains symbolizing the unknown elements toward which all life ever is seeking to escape. In the foreground is a thought *genii* seated astride a heron. Beside the *genii*, holding on to the flowing robes of the little spirit is the figure of a philosopher riding off to the mountains. The whole painting is one of joy and adventure—the reason is flying away on the wings of its own fancies.

To examine the subject more critically is to explore into one of the deepest mysteries of the contemplative life. Philosophically speaking, the personality is not one being, one entity, one principle, or one force. Each new personality that comes into birth is a gathering up of other lives of distant times and of diversified impulses. As the woodchopper comes home with the bundle of faggots on his back, so the body brings into birth

a bundle of twigs which it has gathered up through innumerable incarnations. One of the great experiences of living is adjusting to the fact of internal diversity. Man, looking about him in the world, realizes that he is personally confronted with problems of adjustment. He must learn to mingle with the multitude of other human beings who make up his world. He must adjust to numerous temperaments and he must develop patience, sympathy, understanding, and all those qualities by which contact with others becomes just and harmonious.

Turning inwardly to contemplate the subtle mystery of himself, man again finds himself in the presence of diversity. His inner nature is not one, but many; or if it were not so, there would be no richness to living. It is the "manyness" within himself which makes it possible for him to mingle constructively and reasonably with the "manyness" that makes up his outer world. There is a universality within each of us and this universality makes it possible for us to sense or to be aware of the universality of Space. The parts of man's consciousness bear witness to the parts of world consciousness.

The egocentric philosopher dreams of the time when he shall be all-knowing. He is conceited enough to believe that from his mortality can be fashioned a vessel which can contain all the knowledge of the world. He always is trying to find truth within himself and to bind it there. But he has not yet adventured into the mystery of finding himself within Truth. As surely as all of the laws and truths of life are represented within man, so man himself is part of all the laws and principles of life wherever they may be and however they may be manifesting.

This brings us to the place in our series of lessons where we must consider the extensions of the personality along the lines of conscious impulse.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRANSCENDENT PERSONALITY

The transcendent personality is related to spiritual alchemy. Paracelsus, among others, refers to

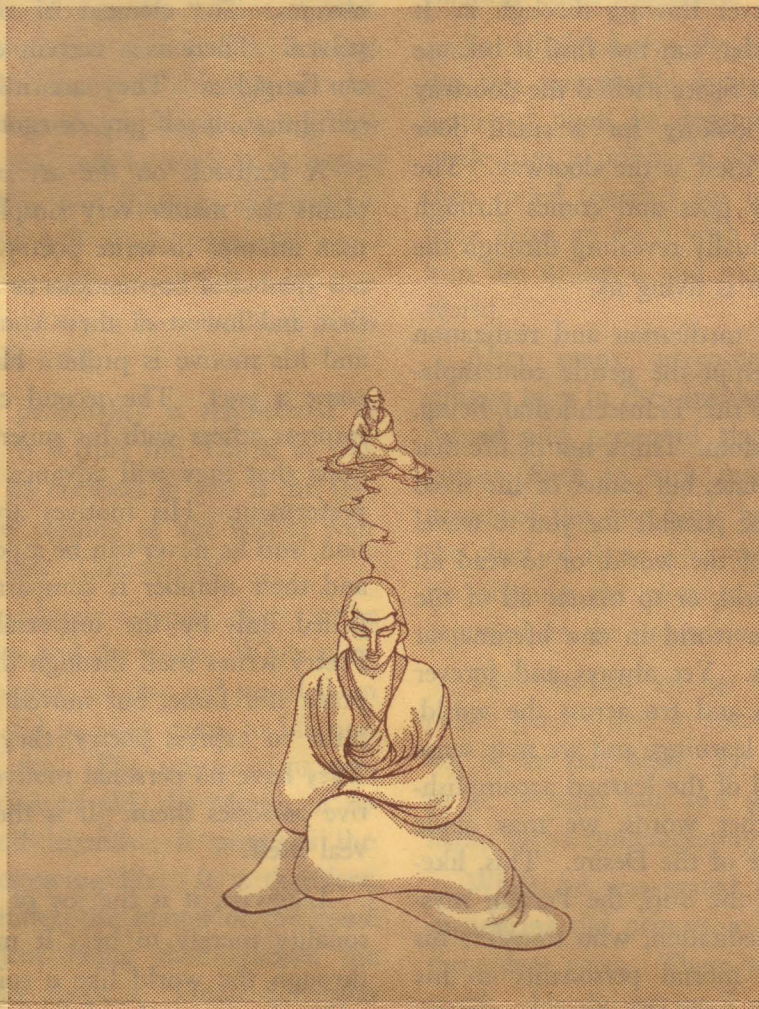
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the mystery of the creation of artificial human beings. Such creatures were called *homunculi* and usually are described as crystal-like in appearance and as produced by art rather than by nature. By art is always to be understood philosophical discipline as contrasted to nature which accomplishes the same ends more slowly by the gradual process of evolution. The homunculi were said to be born within eggs of glass. Their food was the universal medicine. They might not be shown to anyone who was not initiated, and they continued to exist as long as they received proper nourishment. They grew like human beings, but never became old. Although the homunculus is referred to often in alchemical writings, no tract containing any complete discussion of the subject is known to exist. As a result, this entire cycle of symbolism and the meaning which it conceals have for the most part been ignored.

It is extremely difficult to explain the subtle process taking place within the unfolding consciousness of the developing mystic. It is evident that as realization increases, the personality undergoes definite change and modification. Through growth, each becomes a new or different person, yet the old personality still is present. Nothing is lost, but something is

added. This new something is an intangible personality made up of understanding, appreciation, realization, and many other attributes of soul power. If the disciple progresses normally in his unfolding, this new and transcendent personality becomes his true self, more real, more tangible than the temperament and character with which the disciple was born.

Most important of all, this transcendent personality has a freedom about it, a space-quality. It is not limited by the habits, attitudes, tendencies, and characteristics which afflict and limit the mortal personality. This is the secret of the second birth. The transcendent personality is born within the consciousness of the mortal personality and grows up within the mind and body until it reaches a condition wherein it is capable of independent existence. Having achieved its maturity, the transcendent personality, though still connected with the nature



THE EMERGENCE OF THE TRANSCENDENT PERSONALITY DURING THE PRACTICE OF REALIZATION. *The vehicle of free consciousness is depicted as escaping through the parietal foramina, connected to the body by a cloud of magnetic vapor.*

which is the source of itself, becomes capable of independent existence and may go and come as it pleases through the numberless gateways of consciousness.

For the transcendent personality all walls are doors, and the whole world is a gate. This is a secret of Zen which reveals how differently the

East and the West view the mystery of life. The Occidental seeking for salvation has been taught that the gate that leads to eternal life is small and narrow, and therefore difficult to find. The Zen priest believes that the gate which leads to eternal life is so broad that it is no gate at all. It is everywhere. All life is forever flowing through it. It is the "gateless gate." Men can not find it because they can not realize that Space itself is the doorway to eternity. We are looking for a small door through life when life itself is the doorway. The transcendent personality goes and comes through the "gateless gate," gradually revealing through the life we live, the life that is living us.

For the purposes of meditation and realization the disciple should attempt the gentle contemplation of the structure of the Transcendental Being. Realize in terms of freedom. Think not of life that is limited by state or estate, but rather of life lived in Space. It may not be possible for you to travel physically to all parts of the world, or to read all of the books in the world, or to master all of the arts and sciences of the world in one lifetime, or even in many lifetimes. Yet always and forever we can move freely to and fro across the world. We may abide with all learning, and we may sense through appreciation all of the learned accomplishments of man. In other words, we may abide eternally in the presence of the Desire. This, likewise, is the mystery of the Sufi, the Persian mystic, seated quietly in meditation, who transfers his consciousness from his mortal personality to his transcendent personality, and by this means releases himself into the greater sphere of the mystic world.

MOTIVE

Now comes a very vital and important consideration—motive. If man seeks release for motives of escape, he fails utterly. The rose garden of Sadi is not for those who merely are tired and weary and discouraged, rebels against the four walls of their little rooms. *The rose garden is for the one who loves the roses.* It is fulfillment and

not escape. It is opportunity, not evasion. The transcendental sphere is not for those who would run away from living, but rather for those who would hasten forth toward life.

It is hard to describe the difference in motives, but once they are experienced, the differences are obvious. The element of ulterior motive is involved. There is a certain deceit about many of our impulses. They are inspired by a phase of selfishness, or self-pity, or egotism, or even ambition.

A textbook on the art of Chinese poetry explains the matter very simply. Three manner of men attempt to write poetry. (In Taoism, poetry is a symbol of harmonious or rhythmic living.) The first and lowest of these composes rhymes to sell, and his motive is profit. He never can truly become a poet. The second composes his lyrics to impress others with his superior abilities, or in the hope that they will advance him in reputation or preferment. His motives are egotism and ambition, and he never can be a poet. The third class—and their number is comparatively small—are impelled only by the universal impulse of beauty. Poetry writes itself through them. Desiring neither profit nor fame, but moved by an irresistible impulse to express poetry, they alone are the poets. They have no personal motive, but a universal motive possesses them. It is the joy of beauty to reveal itself.

Likewise, it is the joy of the transcendent personality merely to be. It moves back and forth through the world like a spinning shuttle, drawn where beauty and nobility abide, rejoicing in the contemplation of that which is noble and good. In the words of Jami "It is enough to be close to the beloved." The transcendent personality finds the beloved in Space.

The realization of these mysteries brings with it a very gentle mood, one still and peaceful, but not sad or solemn. There is nothing grave or somber about the real. It is just that in the presence of true joy, as in the presence of deep sorrow, the Self is silent. It is that which feels little and lives superficially which reacts boisterously.

In your meditation, if you have understood correctly, you may meet your own transcendent personality as one you have long known. You will discover a very simple, gentle creature, slightly humorous, very human, childlike in simplicity, but old as the world in wisdom. As you open the gates which lead outward into the spheres of your realization, this transcendent personality, bearing yourself with it, will move out through all the gateways, exploring, examining, experiencing, enjoying. Most of all, you will be with it in everything that it does. You will share its experiences. As time goes on, you will realize that this transcendent personality actually is yourself. All that it does, you will do. As you have builded it, so now it builds you into itself.

The transcendent personality is symbolized in Christian mysticism. It is truly the "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Its creation in you is the Second Advent. And its coming of age within your consciousness is the true "Christening."

In one of the apocalyptic Gospels, there is the story of the child Jesus and the birds. While playing, Jesus fashioned pigeons of clay and tossed them into the air. As he did so, they came to life and flew away into the sky. The transcendent personality is the magician of old, the Merlin of innumerable myths and legends. It possesses the magical power of bestowing life. It is therefore, the creator, the controller, the master of the *genii*. It is this transcendent being that releases the thought-spirits that fly about it. Omar Khayyam pictures them as "shadow shapes that come and go."

THE FABLE OF THE BIRDS

In ancient times there lived in China a great and powerful emperor who richly patronized the arts and crafts. He surrounded himself with painters and sculptors, and many ingenious artisans who competed with each other to provide the emperor with extraordinary examples of their talents and skill. One of these craftsmen designed a

golden cage so intricate in its design and so perfect in its workmanship that the equal of it could not be found among all the treasures of the earth. The cage was fashioned in the likeness of a temple, its many roofs encrusted with jewels and its interior divided into numerous rooms with mechanical doors and gates.

So delighted was the Son of Heaven at receiving this remarkable treasure that he immediately bestowed upon its designer the jade button and made him a prince of the empire. The emperor then called together his hunters and fowlers and bade them go forth with their nets to capture for him the strangest and most beautiful birds in the world.

After many adventures which rivaled the strange tales in the *Arabian Nights*, the fowlers returned and presented themselves before the emperor. Each in turn recounted his exploits and presented the rare birds he had captured. At last the chief of those who had gone forth brought as his offering the phoenix bird itself which he had captured on the mountain of the moon.

The emperor set up his golden cage in the palace garden and in each of its rooms he placed one of the rare birds. He then ordered the throne to be brought out and seating himself he spent many hours contemplating the beautiful spectacle.

While he was seated thus, surrounded by his mandarins and princes, a Taoist monk knocked at the palace gates. There was a mystery about this monk. He did not walk down the road; he came from the sky in a cloud. He was a spirit. Entering into the presence of the emperor, the monk seated himself with dignity and inquired about the golden cage. The emperor explained what had occurred.

The old man sadly shook his head and discoursed in this manner: "O Great Majesty, set not this example for your people. Release the birds and destroy the cage."

The emperor was displeased and astonished. He ordered the sage to explain himself.

The monk then continued: "You, O Son of Heaven, are the symbol of righteousness to all that live within your domain. You are the model man. Your actions are the laws of your empire. Your conduct in itself is right and wrong. Great is your responsibility because all must look to you as to the source of common good.

"This cage built in the form of a temple is a threefold mystery. First of all, it is the world with its many rooms within which all life is imprisoned. In the second place this cage is China, the middle kingdom of the world. And you, O Emperor, and all your glittering court are the imprisoned birds. Their bright plumes are your robes of state. And the phoenix is your very self. Your palaces are prisons; your temples are cages; your powers are nets which catch yourself. In the third place, this golden cage is your mortal nature. And these little feathered things are the dreams and hopes which are imprisoned within the very bondage of yourself. All that you have learned of poetry and music and art, all the beauties which you have come to understand and appreciate and comprehend, are held prisoners within the cage of your mortal consciousness.

"O Emperor, release them all, and in releasing them, release yourself. Hold nothing captive. If you keep these birds in their gilded cage, they will cease to sing. Each, in turn, will pine away and die. It was not the purpose of life that it should be imprisoned or bound, and the one who keeps these birds in the cage will destroy them, and in the end destroy himself.

"You have found joy in capturing the birds. Now find the greater joy, the truly imperial privilege, of releasing them again."

As he finished speaking, the old monk drew his robes about himself and disappeared in the very presence of the emperor. The emperor, himself a scholar, realized that the being who had appeared in the robes of the monk was no ordinary mortal, but a celestial creature, the heavenly guardian of the birds. And as heaven had dictated, so the

Son of Heaven obeyed. He ordered all of the doors of the cage to be opened so that the imprisoned birds might fly back to the sky. Then he took the cage itself to the mountains and left it with all of the doors open, setting aside the place as a sanctuary for the birds.

As the years passed, many of the birds returned to the cage and built their nests in it. And when the emperor was tired with problems of state, he would go out and climb the mountains to stand for hours watching the birds that flew in and out through the open doors of the cage. At the end of his life he wrote a poem describing the understanding that had come to him from the contemplation of this mystery.

The story explains itself, yet it tells much more than might first be understood. We live in a world which each of us in his own way has the impulse to dominate. We desire to capture life within the nets of will and thought. We measure success in terms of dominion. We feel that we are great in the measure that we possess. These reactions and impulses are entirely contrary to the contemplative life. Yet the attitudes involved are so subtle and insidious in their operation that we learn our mistakes only after lifetimes of error.

The difficulty with so-called spiritual ambition is the limitation which it inevitably imposes upon the free motion of life. Let us make use of a concrete illustration. Assume that all honest and sincere persons desire Truth. Each in his own way seeks to capture the Real, yet each seeker consciously or unconsciously thwarts his own ends. He does this by imposing the limitations of his own ignorance upon the very Reality which he seeks to discover.

Student Number One destroys Truth by declaring that one must practice yoga to discover it. Student Number Two destroys Truth by affirming that he can discover the Real through the intensive study of chemistry. Student Number Three destroys Truth by taking mathematics as the key to universal knowledge. Student Number Four destroys Truth by maintaining that it can be dis-

covered by the practice of austerities. Student Number Five destroys Truth by insisting that Reality can be achieved through pilgrimage. Student Number Six destroys Truth by declaring that understanding can be won through contact with holy relics. Student Number Seven destroys Truth by maintaining that it can be discovered in books. And Student Number Eight destroys Truth by denying that it can be discovered in books.

Each in his own way follows along the lines of his own endeavors and tries to capture eternity with the instruments of his own opinions, demanding that Truth be what he expects it to be. Unconsciously we set ourselves up as judges over the unknown, while in our ignorance we take attitudes that could be reasonable only if we were all-knowing.

It does not follow that Reality is not to be achieved through meditation, or through study, or through mathematics, or through the practice of austerities. Each grows according to his own understanding. But as theology has corrupted religion, so formulas have corrupted philosophy.

The doctrine of the transcendent personality assumes that the quest of Reality is not a formularized attempt, but a spontaneous adventure in consciousness. There is no need for prodding the consciousness toward the quest for the Overself. Man's spiritual nature is not a lazy schoolboy who must be browbeaten into a state of learning. It is the impulse of the Self to flow toward the Real. There is no need to stimulate this impulse. All that is necessary is to remove the artificial impediments and obstacles set up by the chemistry of the physical personality.

As the bird flies from the cage when the door is opened because the bird belongs to the air, so consciousness flies to the Real when the cage of material limitation is opened.

TRANSCENDENTAL BEING

In meditation the transcendent personality is visualized first as born in the aura of the heart. Here it remains seated in contemplation of the Law.

As realization increases, the transcendent personality ascends along the course of the vagus nerve to the brain. Here it seats itself upon the thousand-petalled-lotus—the aura of the pineal gland. As the disciple proceeds, his personal consciousness mingles with that of the transcendent personality, with the result that the center of awareness ascends likewise to the brain and mingles with the transcendent personality to form the *Transcendental Being*.

A simple example of this power of consciousness to localize or to directionalize is the mystery of pain. Pain is a process of becoming acutely aware of some one part of the body. Thus a pain in the hand causes one to become hand-conscious—the center of consciousness moves into the hand and creates an acute sensitivity. When the center of consciousness moves into the transcendent personality, it ceases to activate the material sense perceptions, but hovers over them, nourished and sustained by their testimony.

In Taoist paintings, the Transcendental Being, which is the union of the consciousness and its projected image, ascends through the crown of the head and is represented as standing or sitting upon a little cloud rising upon a thread of incense smoke. The door of the cage is now open. The Transcendental Being has escaped from the personality complex.

Next arises the mystery of the multiplication of the Transcendental Being. Having established itself as a center or pole of consciousness outside of the personality, the Transcendental Being casts off the shadows or reflections of itself—six from the one, making the sacred septenary. The Transcendental Being thus becomes sevenfold in its manifestation, but remains unified in its essential substance. As planets are within the body of the sun, though cast from it, so the extensions of the Transcendental Being are part of its own essential unity although emanated by it. The six extensions assume their positions as lords of the six directions of qualitative space. The Transcendental Being itself remains as the center or axis of the wheel.

By their meditations, the lords of the six directions create the hierarchies of further emanations. These are the *genii*. The whole pattern together is Ezekiel's wheel filled with winged creatures and many eyes. In the midst of this Mercavah or chariot rides the Transcendental Being.

When this mystery has been achieved in the consciousness through realization, the disciple is ready for his adventure with the Real. The Transcendental Being can move up and down through time, back and forth through space, moved by one of life's most beautiful impulses, pure and unconditioned appreciation.

REALIZATION

Let the realization be the magic of appreciation. We are enriched and vitalized, strengthened and ordained by the baptism of appreciation. To appreciate,

we must understand. To understand, we must know. To know, we must seek. To seek, we must desire. To desire, we must experience. To experience, we must feel.

Thus step by step we move from the temporal to the eternal along a sequence of normal impulses. Attempt the experience of appreciation. Observe, ponder, and wonder a little at the exquisite integrity which is present in everything everywhere in life. To appreciate is to enrich the Self. Yet appreciation demands nothing but the right to be silent and a little humble in the presence of a great good or a great beauty.

Sincerely Yours,

Manly P. Hall