

On 'Personal' & 'Impersonal' by Dane Rudhyar

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By the late-1920s, Rudhyar had shifted the focus of his philosophical and metaphysical activities and writings away from the narrow audience and specialized language and symbols of theosophy. His work took on a broader scope, and his writings began appearing in "new thought" magazines, such as Will Levington Comfort's ***The Glass Hive***.

There were a number of factors involved in Rudhyar's shift of focus and audience. In a highly controversial and much publicized move, **B. P. Wadia**, Rudhyar's special spiritual friend and exemplar, resigned from so-called Adyar camp of the Movement to become the prime-mover of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Dedicated to preserving and disseminating the original teachings of the Movement – those of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge – there was little room in the ULT for Rudhyar's creative vision and new formulations. Soon Wadia set out touring the world, opening new lodges wherever he went. Although throughout his life Rudhyar would have close friends in the various theosophical societies, after 1928 he began to distance himself from formal connections with any group, dedicating himself to formulating "a new message for the new century."

Doors, which were never opened fully, in the musical world were also closing for Rudhyar. With the rapid rise of Neo-Classicism, the loosely knit avant-garde and **ultra-modern composers** – which included Rudhyar and his friends and associates, such as **Edgar Verese, Henry Cowell, Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles** and others – found themselves out of favor. Rudhyar, it seems, might have had more difficulty in this regard than others, because he was the most articulate and musical journals had published some of his compelling and convincing articles showing the correspondence between the rise of Neo-Classicism and the rise of Fascism. The **Rudhyar Archival Project** plans to publish these articles during 2004.

On 'Personal' and 'Impersonal' was one of the first articles of Rudhyar's published in **The Glass Hive**, a precursor to the "new age" magazines of the 1960s. The article deals with a topic as pertinent and recognizable today as in 1929, and it will be appreciated by everyone who has had any experience with spiritual groups. The article is also of special interest because in it Rudhyar coins the neologism **transpersonal**, a word often used today, yet very rarely credited to Rudhyar.

Later in life, Rudhyar greatly developed his formulation of **transpersonal activity** in the books such as **Occult Preparations for a New Age, Rhythm of Wholeness, and The Fullness of Human Experience**.

Most people interested, however remotely, in theosophy, oriental philosophy, new thought and similar trends of thought, make as a rule a very generous use – over-generous and most of the time unjustifiable, in fact – of the terms "personal" and "impersonal." Anyone whose actions or feelings have seemed displeasing is told harshly that his or her attitude has been "**personal**." Of the hero of the day it is said on the contrary: "He or she is so impersonal." Some elucidation of the meaning of the terms, from as spiritual a point of view as we may attain, will therefore not be unnecessary.

First, what is really the meaning of the word "**personality**"? A personality is an organic form which embodies a certain set of biological characteristics. It is a life-form; in the usual limited sense of the term, it is a human form. This form, however, is not a series of abstract relationships. It is a form on which matter has precipitated. It is a body of organized, integrated earth-matter. Its source of vitality is the earth; its materials are from the earth; it obeys the laws of earth-development. It grows, matures and in the process manifests characteristics activities.

The human form hungers, thirsts, loves, builds houses and families, hates, envies – i. e., projects characteristic emotions which are solely the outcome of its nature as a special life-form. The **life-principle** which built the form contacts the outer world through it by means of its senses. Sense-impressions added to inner feelings of organic harmony or disharmony constitute the life substratum of the human personality.

Intelligence of the usual type today is merely a sorting and associating of sense-impressions and organic feelings. It belongs strictly to the earth-born material form; it is an epiphenomenon, or by-product, of life-activities. In other words, man as personality, is the man behaviorism studies and explains at times well. Behaviorism, however, fails to explain real abstract thinking because abstract thinking is not a by-product of the life-form's activities. Because it does not belong to the realm of material form, but to the world of pure relationship which is rooted in Spirit.

Spirit manifests unconditioned universal relationships – which in turn produces Energy and Power. The spiritual soul of a universal relationship; universal in the sense that a triangle or circle are universal. Only as a triangular frame of wood is built does the triangle become particularized. It becomes a "personality"; because it is then a substantial triangular object conditioned by certain space-time measurements. It is one object and no other. Likewise when the Soul becomes particularized by an earth-body, when it becomes "my soul and thy soul," then the **incarnation of the Universal into the Particular** has taken place. Above and Below have met for the Great Work.

Spirit in manifestation presents itself necessarily as a personality. Impersonalized spirit is spirit in a state of non-manifestation, of pure abstraction. There is no triangle unless it is at least drawn on paper as three solid black bars; there is otherwise nothing but triangularity, a formula of abstract relationship. A Soul, however, spiritual and divine, can manifest only through a personality.

Thus there can be no fully "impersonal" human being. For being personality-less would mean to have reached nirvana. Is that a desirable state from a spiritual standpoint? Decidedly not. The man who reaches nirvana and does not renounce it is the acme of **spiritual selfishness**. (To renounce nirvana means to keep on a personality, to keep on acting in the world of men, though not necessarily in a body of gross matter.) What is it, then, to be "Impersonal?" For if a Soul speaks through a body, must not his words always be personal in the sense that they must pass through and be colored by this personality or

earth-form?

Looking at it from the subjective angle, if I say: "I am loving this person in a personal way," what do I mean? I mean that this personality or life-form which I falsely call "I" is moved lovingly by the other person, and no other. This love is strictly for that particular life-form, because of certain responses (sexual, emotional, intellectual). If the form is destroyed, the love ceases or becomes an automatic memory-process of my organism.

A personal love is a love that has its roots in the early human form and is directed to an earthly human form, more or less exclusive of all other human beings. The same is true of all other feelings, thoughts, etc. An impersonal love thus would seem to be one which is not rooted in and conditioned by the personal form and directed toward but one other personal form. This is true save for one very important point. Imagine that a man is so "impersonal" that he aspires all his life to nirvana, indifferent to all men claiming relationship with him, in need of him, asking him for help and guidance. This man is a "selfish devotee," as Krishna says. He indeed is no spiritual being.

This may be an extreme case; but how many so-called "impersonal" beings are merely beings so self-secured in their dream-life of some spiritual or mental heaven that their "universal love" is but a glamour, the moon-glow of a deluded self afraid to face relationships and the self-sacrifice of true love? Instead of impersonal, let us use another word more telling – **transpersonal**. A personal behavior (or feeling or thought) is one rooted in the substance and conditioned form of the personality. A transpersonal behavior is one starting from the universal unconditioned self in Man and using merely the **personality as an instrument**. Such a behavior will be colored obviously by the personality – but not so much the personality of the actor as the one toward whom the act is directed. It will be colored by the race, time and locality.

The keynote of the spiritual life is: transpersonal adaptability. **Transpersonal love** is protean. It shines upon all; but is concentrated upon each according to each need. In some cases it may seem to all most personal, most like ordinary human love. And what of it? Who can recognize what is or is not super-personal, save one whose level of being is established beyond the realm of substantial form; who is free from clinging to form and name, from vanity; whose consciousness deals fundamentally with tides of Energy; the same through multitudes of forms?

We are most of us, in spite of all our wonderful yearnings and psychic visions, crude earth shapes with little of inner design, and therefore we are no tools for the Master Builders. Some, however, have had their edges refined and cut into nearly perfect alignment with the **Abstract Form** – our Higher Self – through incarnations of experience, learning and self-sacrifice. They have become good working tools: triangles, rulers, compasses.

They can serve the Work everywhere, even if life-needs gave them a crude wooden substance to manifest triangularity or circularity into. The material does not count. A wooden worm-eaten square is just as good in certain cases as a clean polished steel one, provided the angles are correct enough; a string, a nail and a pencil may draw just as good circumference as a platinum compass. A rotten old body may carry a vast spiritual message just as well as an Apollo-like form; nay it may do it much better to a decaying culture which could not stand the power of the Perfect Body of a Master in the flesh.

For after all only one thing matters: lucid and timely Work. All the rest is selfishness – even if it seems to us "impersonal." For **Spirit is unceasing motion**, unceasing incarnation into the heart of all life forms, good or bad, low or high. It is timeless and therefore enacted

Destiny. And he who hesitates to "fall" into flesh when the call of Destiny has come, he who discriminates against Destiny with self-made, form-intoxicated standards, is but a coward.