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The Phoenix
Press



Los Angeles
Calif.

MONTHLY LETTER

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

Los Angeles, Nov. 1, 1935

Dear Friend:

To borrow from the terminology of the Neo-Platonists, the purpose of mystical philosophy is participation in divine truths. The material universe is the outer court of wisdom's temple. The courses of life were termed by the initiates sacred processions—the pageantry of being.

Theon of Smyrna, an initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries, in his celebrated treatise on mathematics, compared philosophy to the rites of the sacred mysteries. He explains that there are five parts to initiation, and likewise five parts to philosophy, through the perfection of which mortals elevate their reason to the "Heroic" state.

Fifteen hundred years have passed since the decadence of the pagan mysteries, but the laws which bound the neophytes of the Eleusinian Mysteries still bind seekers after spiritual knowledge. Theon describes the five steps of self-unfoldment as: PURIFICATION, TRADITION, INSPECTION, INSTRUCTION and ILLUMINATION. It may be well to explain the use of these terms when applied to the steps of human development.

By drawing upon fragments in the writings of Theon, Empedocles, Plato, Proclus and Olympiodorus, we can prepare an authentic commentary upon the rules of sacred orders.

According to Proclus the perfective part of philosophy must precede initiation. The PERFECTIVE part includes two distinct processes. The first is called purgation and signifies the cleansing of the whole nature of its accumulated evil, both bodily

and temperamental, for, as Theon says, "the mysteries are not communicated to all who are willing to receive them but only such as possess a purity of life and purpose resulting from certain disciplines of purification." In the sacred schools morality is the beginning of wisdom and all discipleship begins with self-discipline. The second process involves the positive aspect of integrity. Having cleansed the nature of its terrestrial evils and emancipated it from bondage to appetites and instincts, it is then necessary to perfect within the nature a positive standard of right knowledge and right action. Thus purification is more than merely emptying a life of its old vices, it is the filling of the life with new virtues and the perfecting of an acceptable standard of personal integrity.

After the processes of the perfective part of philosophy have been achieved, the second step of self-unfoldment confronts the disciple. This is called TRADITION and is defined in the old writings as becoming acquainted with the sacred fables, legends, myths and rites. We could define it today as intellectual philosophy. The public schools of the present generation teach traditional education, for knowledge passed on from generation to generation is tradition. Tradition is stored in the memory but is not self-motivated. A man may remember all the traditional knowledge of the race and still be unable to think. The memory is only a small part of the mind. Memory stores up tradition but cannot use or vitalize it. Tradition becomes valuable to the

individual only when it is vitalized by the reason.

This involves another problem. A child in school who has great difficulty in learning is often referred to as lacking capacity. No individual can be educated beyond his capacity for there is an inward measure governing all outward things—knowledge with the rest. Traditional knowledge is in itself dead, literal, and often uninspiring. But all tradition locks vital truths within itself. These can be liberated by thought and meditation.

Neophytes preparing to enter the temple of ancient wisdom received the traditions of their order as part of their preparatory rites. Thus they became aware of the dignity and the import of the institution with which they desired to associate themselves. In addition to a general historical outline, the neophytes received elaborate discourses on cosmogony, the story of the universe, anthropology, the story of man, and psychology, the story of the soul. Disciples finished this period of training in tradition with a reasonably complete knowledge of the laws governing heaven, earth and man. The traditional teachings of the old mysteries are now to be found in the sacred books of the world.

These Scriptures remain locked however until memory is vitalized by personal experience.

The third part of initiation is that which is denominated INSPECTION. The neophyte entered the temple at this stage and beheld the initiatory dramas and partook of them. As Plutarch describes in his *ISIS AND OSIRIS* and Apuleius in his *METAMORPHOSIS*, inspection included participation in certain divine mysteries. No complete record has descended among exoteric writings as to the initiatory rituals. The historian Pausanius in his *HISTORY OF GREECE* declared that it had been his intention to describe in that work the divine dramas. Even, however, while he was writing the account one of the gods appeared to him and forbade the recording of the rites. From the brief statement by Apuleius one fact can be restored: initiation was consummated by the similitude of death. By their occult arts the priests induced a trance-like state, suspending all the physical functions of the neophyte. While in this condition the soul of the candidate, released by magical formulas from its house of clay, experienced temporarily

the sublime reality of conscious immortality.

As Virgil led Dante through the tortuous passageways of the *Inferno*, so the Hierophant of the Mysteries led the consciousness of the neophyte through the mysteries of the mundane sphere. This was called INSPECTION because the neophyte viewed as a stranger the universe of wisdom. This same spiritual truth is set forth in the *Apocalypse* where the angel or the guide lifts St. John the Seer to the high place and shows him the mysterious City of God.

By INSPECTION, then, Theon inferred the development of those clairvoyant powers by which the sage perceives the workings of the superphysical worlds in the same way that the ordinary person perceives the workings of the material world.

The fourth step is termed INSTRUCTION. Theon thus describes the end and design of this part of initiation: "And the fourth * * * is the binding of the head and the fixing of crowns; so that the initiated may, by this means, be enabled to communicate to others the sacred rites in which he has been instructed; whether after this he becomes a torch-bearer, or an interpreter of the Mysteries, or sustain some other part of the sacerdotal office." This part of the ancient initiation was also divisible into two processes, the first of which is signified by the "binding of the head and the fixing of the crown." The Hierophant of the Mysteries was regarded as higher than any material ruler and of all men he alone did not bow in the presence of the king. "The fixing of the crown" in the rituals of the Egyptians represented the achievement of mastery and the consummation of the initiatory processes. Coronation brought the term of candidacy to an end. The stage of adeptship had been reached. Having mastered the lesser thing—himself—the new adept is made master over greater things, becoming a spiritual prince of the universe. "The binding of the head" represents the encircling of the reasoning faculties with a limiting circumference, a symbol of control or direction. The mind is bound to the purpose of the will.

The second process of INSTRUCTION is that by which the new initiate himself becomes a teacher of others, thus paying the debt which he incurred

during the periods of his own instruction. In ancient times only those who had achieved to the fourth degree of wisdom were permitted to be teachers of occult philosophy or founders of sacred schools. Such celebrated initiates as Pythagoras and Plato had successfully passed the grade of INSTRUCTION before their right to establish communities and colleges was recognized by the philosophical hierarchies. It therefore follows that these great philosophers were trained clairvoyants and had actually explored those mysteries of nature of which they spoke and wrote.

Theon then adds that those who had successfully passed the grade of INSPECTION could become torchbearers by which he arcanelly signified perpetuators of the ancient truths, or interpreters by which he means teachers who might initiate disciples as they had been initiated. Or if they chose, these new initiates might attach themselves to some temple or shrine, holding sacerdotal office as the priests of Delphi who served Apollo, or the Æsculapiads who performed healing through magnetism and occult arts in honor of the god Æsculapius. An initiate of the fourth degree received the credentials by which he might enter the inner sanctuary of Mystery Schools of other nations and peoples than his own. One of the last to receive the fourth rite in the Classical civilization was Apollonius of Tyana who was received with the greatest of dignity by the Brahmin priests of India.

The fifth and last part of initiation is ILLUMINATION. Of this Theon writes: "But the fifth, which is produced from all these (the four preceding steps) is friendship with divinity, and the enjoyment of that felicity which arises from intimate converse with the gods."

To the initiate the gods were not personalities but states of consciousness—exalted forces moving in space. By intimate converse with the gods the initiate means the elevation of consciousness to a realization of universal and divine reality. Only the highest of the initiates attained to this most exalted consciousness. Nor can any human being at this stage of his development remain permanently in so transcendent a mood. One of the noblest of all philosophers, Plotinus, whose wisdom was second only to Plato's in its sublimity, was permitted on

only a few occasions to achieve identity with Universal good. The last words of Plotinus are suitable to one who has gone as far on earth as philosophy can lead a mortal man: "Now I endeavor that my divine part may return to that Divine Nature which flourishes throughout the universe."

The modern application of Theon's outline of initiation may not be at first apparent, but a little thought will reveal its pertinence. The five parts of initiation are the five natural steps in human improvement which follow sequentially when the student has set up within himself a wisely directed effort towards the perfection of his life and being.

The steps of initiation were not arbitrarily decreed by ancient priests. They are levels of consciousness arising from the disciplines of philosophy. The unfoldment of the human soul must conform with certain universal laws inherent to the elements of existence. Growth is progressive obedience. If we would know the secret doctrine we must set up a certain chemistry within our own natures by the living of the philosophic life. It is because of this fact that we have inherited from the past rules and regulations concerning the conduct and deportment of truth seekers. These rules are "points of entrance" and anyone attempting to come in to the temple by any other way, "the same is a thief and a robber."

Cerberus the three-headed dog keeps the gates of the invisible world. Only the one who conquers the three excesses of the animal soul can enter the precincts of the inner life. The Golden Bough of the Mysteries is the symbol of this conquest and is borne by all who set forth upon the great adventure.

The Greeks also symbolized the initiatory procedure under the figure of the Argonautic expedition. The adventures of the fifty heroes led by Jason, like the Odyssey of Homer, arcanelly set forth the soul's quest for light. He who would possess the Golden Fleece, the luminous soul-body of the adept, must slay the many-coiled dragon who guards the sacred tree. According to Plato, the blessed theurgist who accomplishes initiation is assimilated to divinity insofar as such assimilation is possible to mankind.

Truth-seekers of the modern world are divided

into five grades according to the same order as their prototypes in antiquity. The two lower parts of the sacred order—PURIFICATION and TRADITION—are generally termed probationary. The two higher parts—INSTRUCTION and ILLUMINATION—are termed culminative or perfected. And the fifth part which is in the middle dividing the two groups which the ancients termed INSPECTION is modernly designated initiation or acceptance into a bona fide school of the Mysteries.

For all practical purposes, average truth seekers of the modern world belong to the probationary parts of the Great Work. No one seeking enlightenment can achieve his purpose without first satisfying the law through the purification of his life and the enlightenment and perfection of his reason.

It is a great mistake for students of occult philosophy to believe that they can achieve to proficiency in the spiritual sciences without ordering and disciplining thought and action. It is useless for us to regret the disappearance from society of the Mystery Schools of antiquity. Even were these institutions still flourishing in our midst, our present standards of thought and action would deny us any right to participate in their benefits. Not one modern student of metaphysics out of a thousand could hope to be admitted to even the lowest grades of the ancient Mystery Temples.

The real problem that concerns the modern student is not how rapidly he will achieve illumination but rather how long a time will yet transpire before he puts his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder of preparation. Many students who believe that twenty years of aimless rambling in metaphysics has fitted them for deification must sometime make the sad discovery that there is no haphazard way to truth. It is also sad but true that—to correct an old adage—all roads do not lead to Rome. Only such roads lead to Rome as actually go in that direction, popular belief notwithstanding.

No disciple of sacred doctrines, no matter how genial or willing or optimistic or generally kind-hearted, can expect any result whatsoever from his efforts until he overcomes intemperance and ignorance within himself. Self-discipline is the beginning of philosophy and no one who has not given

years to the exact science of self-discipline has any right to claim for himself any distinction in metaphysical matters. It is useless to attempt the development of spiritual faculties while the mind, emotions and the body are without coordination or intelligent and sufficient direction.

All of the great philosophical religions of the world are in complete accord on this point. There is not one exception to this rule. In any nation, among any people, at any time, admission to sacred orders was only possible to those who had first accomplished the mastery of self. It is a sad, yes tragic, state of affairs which confronts the modern truth-seeker. He has been deceived into the erroneous belief that the kingdom of heaven will open its gates to persons who bring no gifts but their own moral and intellectual deformities.

The first duty of those who would be wise is to render temperate all of the intemperances of the mortal nature. We are creatures of excesses, the tranquillity of the soul constantly destroyed by the inconstancies of the attitudes. Philosophy is moderation and all philosophers must be moderate. If we would achieve to truth, we must sacrifice our intemperances upon the altar of our high resolve. Imminent spiritual achievement is impossible to those millions of human beings whose inner tranquillity is constantly shattered by the warring of their notions, opinions and attitudes. As Cicero has so beautifully observed, the wise man is modest in success, patient in adversity, and at peace with all things.

At the present rate of progress it will be about fifty incarnations before many enthusiastic metaphysicians are at peace with anything, yet this is only the first half of the first step towards enlightenment. A man ascends to the heights of wisdom not upon the broad pinions of enthusiasm but by the slow and arduous course of merit.

Having rescued the nature from the harpies of intemperance, it is next necessary to rescue the soul from that general ignorance which limits all action and denies direction to effort. To overcome ignorance in even the most ordinary matters is by no means an easy task, for man is but a small area of capacity immersed in an infinite expanse of the

unknown. Plato recommended mastery in five sciences as reformatory. He suggested arithmetic, geometry, stereometry, music and astronomy as good remedies for that stupidity which is a falling sickness of the soul. I fear that such a program will prove discouraging to many people who, knowing little if anything about anything, feel themselves on the verge of cosmic consciousness.

The purpose of the disciplines set forth by Plato is not that man shall accomplish knowledge through them but rather that by the exercising of disciplines man is capable of interpreting the knowledge which is locked within his own spiritual nature. If knowledge is to be released in action then the vehicle or personality of man must be trained to interpret the light of god within himself. Inward truth can only reveal itself when the outward nature is balanced and informed. The first part of initiation is therefore accomplished when the individual becomes of sound judgment and in all matters pertaining to material life is well rounded in mental attitude and well disciplined in emotional and physical action.

Having accomplished this, the disciple is then ready for the second step or that part which the ancients termed tradition. The modern truth-seeker accomplishes the traditional end of his instruction best by acquainting himself, through reading and thinking, with the whole theory of philosophical institutions. In an earlier letter of this series we listed a number of books suitable for such reading. Study follows purification because through the balancing and perfecting of the nature an inner relaxation is achieved which increases the merit and integrity of mental effort. It will generally take about five years of intelligent and well planned study to become reasonably well acquainted with the fundamental premises of the ancient Wisdom Teaching. When this course of study is well rounded out and is built into a disposition already refined through consecrated effort, a spiritual chemistry results in the system. The two parts of initiation—purification and instruction—then work together, and out of the combination arises a high degree of inspiration. The student becomes more and more spiritually conscious. It will usually require several lives to exhaust the opportunities of these first two steps in

spiritual progress. It is only after this foundation has been thoroughly established and conscientiously perfected that an intelligent truth-seeker permits himself to contemplate initiation into the Great School.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION—Is not a physical demonstration of prosperity an evidence that the person has accomplished an inner illumination and is able to control the law of Supply and Demand?

ANSWER—This subject is larger than might first appear, involving several factors which must be considered separately. Persons possessing wealth must derive it from one of three sources: they either inherit it, acquire it through effort, or receive it through circumstances such as the accidents of gift or Providence. In other words they are born wealthy, achieve wealth, or have wealth thrust upon them. In any case possession is an aspect of karma. If we believe philosophy we must acknowledge that no one can possess a great measure of anything except by the decrees of universal compensation. Anyone whose action causes wealth will have wealth or its equivalent in this or a future life. This is only the beginning of the matter however. Wealth is not an end but an incident in the unfolding of human consciousness. Furthermore wealth is one of the heaviest burdens that a man must bear, for by its very nature it is a constant temptation to abuse and misuse. Wealth is not as difficult to achieve as many people believe. Nearly anyone can become wealthy who is willing to sacrifice enough of other qualities to achieve wealth. It is a thousand times easier to be rich than it is to be wise, for shrewdness will accumulate money but only an inner illumination, resulting from hundreds of lives devoted to truth and integrity can result in wisdom. I cannot see that wealth is any evidence of spiritual superiority. I would say rather that it is a great opportunity for the accomplishment of good. If this good is accomplished it is termed in India a virtue, and out of the virtue of many lives comes wisdom

and illumination. Soul power is not measured by possession but by the enlightened use of possession. A life devoted to accumulation is not one to pattern after. Wealth at best is a material thing beset with material uncertainties and subject to all of the vicissitudes of the physical state. He who possesses it is limited and narrowed by its responsibilities and worries. If wealth descends upon an individual from his karma it should be accepted with humility and resignation by the spiritually minded person. But to make wealth the goal of living and to spend a lifetime in the accumulation of it can scarcely be regarded as an enlightened course of action. Spirituality infers detachment, or rather, more correctly, an attachment to values. Each person prizes much that which is the measure of his own consciousness. When unfolding reason reveals the beauty and desirability of spiritual things the intellect inevitably turns from low values which no longer satisfy and are therefore no longer proper ends of effort. To say that the demonstration of material prosperity is an evidence of inner enlightenment is to confuse two irreconcilable standards of value. We may as well say that wisdom is worth a dollar and a quarter, or that illumination is worth so much an hour. Spiritual values have no material equivalents, nor are they justified or manifested upon the physical plane. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's but do not try to confuse the law of the spirit with the ambitions of matter.

QUESTION—In what way does an Initiate or Adept differ from an ordinary person?

ANSWER—First we must define our terms. Although the words are often used interchangeably, initiate and adept have different meanings. Technically an initiate is any person who has been accepted into a body of secret knowledge by some special ritual or ceremony. In ancient times the term initiate signified a man or woman who had passed through the ordeals of the state Mysteries or religio-philosophical institutions of spiritual education. In modern occultism an initiate is a person who has been accepted into one of the secret schools of natural occultism. In this sense of the word

initiation follows years of probationship and preparation. All true initiation is an inner mystical experience and should never be confused with the ritualism of any physical institution, no matter how metaphysical the ritual itself may be in its implications. The word adept signifies one who is proficient in the use of the occult forces of nature, and many years or even lives are required after initiation before this proficiency is acquired. In antiquity the term adept was reserved for those who had received the Greater Mysteries. They were a small group within the body of the initiates themselves. An adept is one proficient in the most highly advanced sciences of the Mystery School. There are many initiates to one adept. It should be distinctly remembered that both initiates and adepts are human beings, part of our own life wave and differing from ordinary mortals only in the unfoldment of their subjective spiritual nature. The initiate is wiser than the average person and the adept is wiser than the initiate. But this wisdom should not be regarded as superhuman but rather as a type of enlightened condition towards which the whole race is being moved by the law of evolution. An initiate is subject to the same laws that govern the average man. He is born, he must eat and sleep, and he will pass out of his body in the same way that others do. He is simply equipped to live more constructively and more usefully because he possesses a truer vision of the workings of universal law. The initiate is usually clairvoyant to some degree as this was necessary to his initiation. He may or may not possess the ability to function consciously outside of the physical body. He can read part of the etheric record of the earth and has a considerable understanding of the invisible worlds. He is able to commune with others of similar degree of development as himself by subjective methods, and he is part of that great Brotherhood of initiates which is being built up in the world as the foundation for the philosophical era that is to come.

All that we have here noted is also true of the adept, but his powers are considerably amplified. He has become part of the mechanism of the great School itself, and unlike the initiate he is not apt to mingle commonly in society but will live apart in some center of the brethren. If he appears among

men it is incognito except to other members of his Order. He is a conscious instrument of the Great Plan and perpetuates his body without the phenomena of birth and death. He does not have disciples other than initiates and it is exceedingly unlikely that he will make his appearance to any person not already highly proficient in occult matters. There is no way in which the average layman can detect an initiate or an adept. But those who have developed a spiritual sensitivity can feel the vibrations of these advanced people. There are also peculiarities in the aura by which they can be detected by those capable of perceiving these super-physical emanations from the body. It should particularly be borne in mind that the state of initiation or adeptship does not release man from the laws governing human life, nor will any adept of the white path ever break natural laws or encourage others to do so. Nor will any initiate or adept use occult power to avoid physical responsibility or pain. It is a law of the Schools that the supernatural powers which man develops must never be used personally or selfishly. It was said of the adept of Galilee: "Others he could help but himself he could not save."

QUESTION—Please tell us something about the antiquity of the Rosicrucian Order.

ANSWER—The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross is one of the most important occult movements of the Western World, for it most certainly perpetuates the ancient arcana which is the soul and substance of the Mystery Teachings. Like nearly all metaphysical movements, its history is obscure and where facts are few fables are never wanting.

Modern writers upon the subject of the Rosicrucians have fallen into extravagant statements concerning the antiquity of the Order. These statements are for the most part founded upon the highly allegorical account of the antiquity of the Rosicrucian masters published by John Heydon in the last half of the 17th century. History however fails to justify Heydon's flights, and his fantastic story

can never be accepted as literally true, though, symbolically speaking, it contains much of vital interest.

No bona fide records of the Rosicrucian Society have been discovered that can be dated earlier than the year 1600. In fact prior to 1610 little of tangible definition has been discovered. The Society itself most certainly came into actual existence about the beginning of the 17th century. Its first publications may have been circulated in manuscript between 1600 and 1610, but the earliest published evidence of the Order did not appear until 1612 to 1614, when several editions of the *FAME AND CONFESSION OF THE ROSE CROSS* were in circulation.

It is my opinion, based on considerable examination, that Rosicrucianism, like Christianity, was not a spontaneous revelation but an outgrowth of a chain of adequate causes. Mystical societies in Europe can be traced back through the Dark Ages and finally mingle themselves with the pagan Mysteries of the early centuries of the Christian era. If we speak of Rosicrucianism as a mystical tradition we can trace it back to Egypt and Atlantis, but when we speak of it as a society of men functioning under the laws and regulations of a physical society, organized under the name Rosicrucian, we must then limit ourselves to the opening years of the 17th century.

From about 1610 down to the closing years of the 18th century the history of the Rosicrucians is rather well established, and we have the names and titles of most of the officers of the Order and an account fairly complete of their rituals and grades and the various reorganizations through which the Society passed.

By the beginning of the 19th century the legitimate history is obscured by so involved a complex of spurious accounts that we may say that the history of the Society vanishes in a general confusion.

Yours very sincerely,

Manly P. Hall



If we admire and venerate those sublime metaphysical teachings which have brought comfort and inspiration to ourselves, we shall accept joyously the meritorious task of disseminating these truths and sharing our inspiration with millions of others whose need is as great as our own.

Among the greatest men who have lived upon this earth are Zoroaster, Confucius, Hermes, Lao Tse, Plotinus, Plato, Pythagoras and Buddha. Individually they brought the light of wisdom into the lives of millions of human beings, and collectively they are the dynamic force behind all civilization and progress.

I believe it is within our power—if we work together—to change the present course of thought in this country and render available and workable those ancient truths which can be the impetus to a new standard of civilization.

It is my firm conviction, founded upon a considerable experience, that the most important work to which we can devote ourselves at the present time is the establishment in the modern world of an institution dedicated to the perpetuation and promulgation of that Ageless Wisdom without which no individual or empire can survive.

The influence of such an institution would be two-fold. It will both instruct and inspire. It will instruct through a constant dissemination of ancient knowledge; and it will inspire by standing forth as a proof to all men that the sacred philosophies of the world still live; that sincere men and women are still dedicated to the perpetuation of truth and out of their love and sincerity have erected this physical symbol to their spiritual conviction.

The picture at the top of this page shows the beginning of our building program. On the 18th of October the work of clearing the land in preparation for the construction of the first unit of the PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY was officially started. We need your support in this important and significant undertaking. Gifts or loans in any amount will be gratefully accepted.

Will you serve the future as the past has served you? Noble thinkers have struggled, suffered and died that you might have knowledge. Will you realize that the perpetuation of this Ancient Wisdom is the most glorious work which a human being can accomplish? Let us build a Temple of Truth in a desert of waiting.

Gratefully and faithfully yours.
MANLY P. HALL