

# A MONTHLY LETTER

BY MANLY P. HALL



Third Letter  
*October 1940*

## DISCIPLINES OF MEDITATION AND REALIZATION

Dear Student:

### COMMUNITIES

Religious communities have failed consistently ever since a disgruntled disciple burned the Pythagorean institute at Krotona over the heads of Pythagoras and his followers. The Pythagorean community was the first religious community in history, and its fate has been reflected in the fate of all those that have followed it. It is very difficult for spiritually minded people to live together. Community life introverts the thoughts of the members until their own particular organization becomes the axis of the universe. There is no question as to the sincerity of some religious communities, but there is a grave question as to the amount of actual good accomplished by them.

The present social system is part of the plan for human perfection. It is generally acknowledged that infinite wisdom guides all natural activity. If that be true, this heartless, material world is here for a reason. Those who segregate themselves and refuse to face the problems of social existence are simply trying to evade the law. But such evasion is ultimately impossible, and the man is thrown back again into society weakened by his years of

isolation and rendered unfit for the duties of citizenship.

A retreat to which an individual may go at certain times, like the rest houses of India, may be useful in this troubled world, but to live for many years in a religious community weakens the individual for a return to active life among men. Prejudices result from an impractical attitude towards life. We seriously recommend that you determine not to run away to practice your virtues, but that you apply them *where you are* and under the conditions where they will accomplish the greatest good.

### CONTINENCE

In the early centuries of the Christian Church, some of the fathers got together and decided that this material world belonged to Satan, and if they could depopulate the earth by preventing marriage, the souls of men would thus escape from the grip of the Adversary. The idea failed, however, owing to the vast number of gentiles who refused to be converted. This concept has not been allowed to die, however, but reappears under various metaphysical guises to complicate the issues of life.

Various irrational attitudes on the subject of continence have contributed greatly to the scientific disapproval of metaphysical teachings. Cults teaching a wide gamut of notions ranging from chastity to free love have seriously misrepresented a noble ideal. Most metaphysical organizations impose obligations upon their members with little or no regard for the consequences that frequently follow. It is a fact which can be substantiated by many physicians that the county hospitals and asylums all too often have the problem of trying to reclaim the metaphysical wreckage occasioned by unnatural modes of living.

We do not believe in taking vows and oaths, or making promises which involve unborn tomorrow. Nor do we believe that individuals should obligate themselves to a method of living entirely beyond their comprehension and far too advanced for their physiological structure. In fact, we believe so firmly that growth is a gradual and natural unfoldment into Truth that it is unnecessary to impose any regulations upon the individual in metaphysical matters. The disciplines which I advocate result in an emergence into virtue. There is no forcing, no struggling, no trying to be what we are not, but rather an awakening into values and realization.

In connection with the present course of lessons, we do not expect any student to change suddenly his entire method of living. Such an action could only be detrimental. What we ask is that each student refine and ennoble all of his relationships, and attempt to understand more perfectly the laws of life. If you will study the metaphysical doctrines set forth in the present course, you will gain a realization which in time will lift you to a high standard of living and thinking. Instead of limiting your external life, unfold your inner life. By so doing, your physical nature will gradually refine itself and you will find the qualities which you desire unfolding naturally within you.

### BLACK MAGIC

Certain central African witch-doctors develop temporary clairvoyance by the use of intoxicating herbs. The sect of the Assassins in Irak uses hashish

to dominate its members. It is written that even some of the heretical sects of Christianity produced a pseudo-clairvoyance by drugging the communion cup. In short, there are a number of ways of giving a false illumination to the unwary.

The Yogis of India, by mental exercises, create a self-hypnosis which enables them to permit themselves to be buried alive for a number of days and later be resuscitated. The natives of the Fiji Islands walk safely over beds of hot coals, and Indian tribes of California still preserve a fire-eating ceremony. These apparently impossible feats are accomplished by the devotees first throwing their minds into a state of ecstasis. The practical value of these various demonstrations may be questioned, but the sincerity of those who practice them is unquestioned. There are many primitive methods of working magic. The proofs of this are abundant in all parts of the world, from the Haitian papalays to the Islamic dervishes and fakirs.

The Western occultist attempting to perfect his spiritual nature does not want to fall back into the negative practices of primitive sorcery. There is a definite similarity between an evangelical revival and a congregation of the leopard men in the Belgian Congo. There is also something reminiscent of the miraculous mango tree in the modern habit of blessing empty pocketbooks and trying to produce something out of nothing. Metaphysics is intended to produce philosophers, not fakirs.

Many modern metaphysical organizations are practicing sorcery and do not know it. A sorcerer is a person who attempts by some special art to divert the forces of nature to his own personal ends. All forced growth is sorcery. An individual trying to dominate his environment without rising above it is a sorcerer. People who attempt to use religious exercises for monetary gain, to lift mortgages, or get rid of undesired relatives, are sorcerers. The true purpose of metaphysics is to perfect the inner self in wisdom, virtue, and understanding, and any other use of metaphysical power is likely to result in black magic. The black magician may enjoy a temporary material success, but

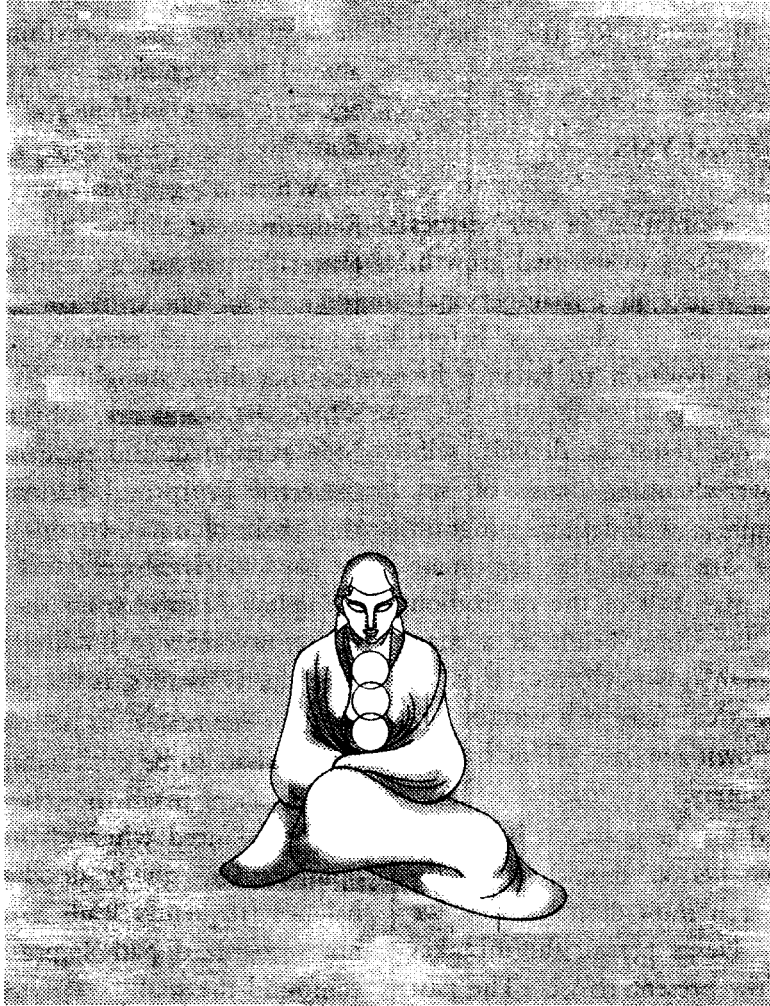
he is making a heavy karma that will have to be paid in future lives in terms of misery and suffering.

### METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT

There are positive metaphysical exercises which purify the body, normalize function, and protect health. These exercises are devised to regulate circulation and nerve function, and result in greater relaxation and a greater attunement between all the parts of the physical fabric. The object of these exercises, however, is not the perfection of the body for its own end, but that the body may become a better instrument of enlightened purpose. Once the student can control his body, he can control the innumerable emotions and impulses which arise in the body and interfere with the natural flow of consciousness.

The Eastern schools are extremely strict. They demand a complete control of the body, emotion, and thought. It is not unusual to find an Eastern holy man who can control the beating of his own heart or stop the circulation of the blood in any part of his body. At the same time, the quality of harmlessness is posited in the mind, completely overcoming any destructive impulses or

critical thoughts. There is a well-attested account of a holy man seen asleep in the jungle with the body of a lion for a pillow. It is widely believed throughout Asia that no animal, reptile, or insect will injure a holy man because of the constructive vibrations which he has set up in his own nature.



*MULTIPLICATION of the PATTERNS. The student realizes division within himself but is not divided. The ONE is realized in ITS three basic modes or qualities. These are the roots of the EXTENSIONS of consciousness within the SELF.*

The Eastern disciplines are intended to transfer the rulership of life from the animal soul to the divine consciousness. Breathing exercises, postures, and various forms of discipline are aimed at the creation in the mind, emotions, and body of channels for the release of inner integrity. As we mentioned in the first letter, Eastern disciplines are not suited for Western minds or Western bodies. Therefore, we do not advocate their use. The ends to be achieved, however, are the same by both Eastern and Western methods. We know that there are gentler and less strenuous ways of bringing about the desired condition. This has been

proved in the Pythagorean and Platonic schools which accomplished illumination without the use of Oriental disciplines.

For the elaborate mechanism of Eastern spiritual culture, we substitute two simple disciplines, *meditation* and *realization*. By meditation the student will gain a new sense of values by which he may

perceive clearly the relative worth of all knowledge. By realization he will make knowledge part of his own life and consciousness. Through the practice of meditation and realization he gradually and normally will bring about the same results achieved by Eastern students through more violent exercises. We believe that natural growth rather than forced growth is the pattern to follow for the achievement of Truth.

### SELF-ANALYSIS

A frank and honest estimation of our virtues and vices is absolutely necessary to spiritual growth. This inventory must be thorough but impersonal. With the debits and credits of character before him, the student is in a position to balance his spiritual budget.

This analysis must not result in despair, self-depreciation, or an overwhelming sense of sin. Shortcomings may require a well-defined program of correction, but they are never the legitimate subjects of despair. A man full of the realization of his own sins is as far from Truth as a man full of the realization of his own virtues. It is an old theological tradition that there is a certain virtue in stewing in one's own remorse. This has no place in mystical philosophy.

Perfection is reserved for the gods. It is not expected that the average person should live without fault or error, but it is most desirable that we profit by our mistakes. Never permit the mistakes of the past to overshadow present effort. The past must be transmuted into soul power through understanding. We do not bring forward separate incidents to plague our present purposes. Rather we bring forward the sum of experience and understanding in the form of tolerance, patience, and virtue.

From the past we too often inherit a body of prejudices and inhibitions. Habits of thinking and living are not quickly changed, nor are prejudices of a lifetime easily dispelled. There is no use trying to go forward towards light and truth as long as we cherish destructive attitudes in our per-

sonal lives. Nearly everyone nurses some grievance or delinquency with loving care. Other faults are quickly remedied, other virtues are assiduously cultivated, but this one soft, sore spot is a sacred privilege which the gods must overlook. As one student said: "I am trying awful hard. Surely God won't mind if I continue disliking Henry. Didn't he steal from me everything I had? Hasn't he abused me ever since we were boys? He just can't ask me to forgive Henry after all the things he has done."

When we get our faults and failings all classified, and our virtues all arranged in their most flattering pattern, we must examine each of these products of our own consciousness with discriminating care and perceive wherein our own mind does not think straight. We must observe carefully where the biases are, why the intemperances have been permitted, and most of all how these can be corrected justly and permanently. In examining this chart of our own ups and downs, we should be particularly observant of extremes. One virtue rising majestically from the midst of numberless faults, or one vice holding forth tyrannically over many petty virtues, is the usual pattern.

It is far better to be moderately good in all things than to be outstandingly good in one thing and deficient in all the other virtues. Man is most nearly balanced when all his attitudes, ideals, and opinions are equally developed. An extreme unbalance frequently leads to mild forms of insanity not recognized pathologically, but still present to confound the soul.

Man has forty-three brain faculties. When one or two of these faculties are developed out of proportion to the rest, a form of vampirism results. The highly developed faculty draws to itself the blood and energy which should be evenly distributed. Thus as any one faculty increases, the power of surrounding faculties are proportionately depleted. The one faculty is vampirizing the others.

A case is known of religious mania in which the brain faculty of veneration increased so greatly during years of fanaticism that the rest of the brain became comparatively inactive. An autopsy re-

vealed that the bones of the skull over this highly developed area had become so thin that the surgeon punched through the skull with the point of a lead pencil. While one-pointedness is now called genius, and the narrow-minded have inherited the earth, it still remains philosophically true that narrow-mindedness is a disease, one-pointedness a menace to normalcy, and one exaggerated virtue the worst vice that a person can possess.

The practice of self-analysis consists of sitting down quietly with a paper and pencil and making a personal inventory of the strength and weakness of each of the parts of your mental and emotional nature. Ten should be regarded as well-developed in grading any faculty or emotional reflex; nothing the complete absence; five would represent a half-developed faculty. Seven in any faculty is normal for an intelligent person. In most cases, there are one or two classifications to which you might give nine or ten; many will be comparatively undeveloped. Having completed your grading, which must be done with absolute honesty or it is worthless, you will then have a graph of yourself, that is you will see yourself as the world knows you to be as the result of the things you think, feel, and do. The following list is to be used in making this analysis:

Estimate your mental sufficiency by grading yourself according to these ten classifications:			
1. Continuity	—	—	—
2. Perseverance	—	—	—
3. Thoroughness	—	—	—
4. Tranquility	—	—	—
5. Discrimination	—	—	—
6. Inclusiveness	—	—	—
7. Poise	—	—	—
8. Moderation	—	—	—
9. Detachment from results	—	—	—
10. Sense of humor	—	—	—

Estimate emotional balance from these ten classifications:			
1. Personal harmony	—	—	—
2. Control of appetites	—	—	—
3. Control of affections	—	—	—
4. Control of fear	—	—	—
5. Control of worry	—	—	—
6. Control of enthusiasm	—	—	—
7. Development of artistic impulses	—	—	—
8. Friendliness	—	—	—
9. Temperance	—	—	—
10. Control of the tendency to venerate	—	—	—

Consider bodily equilibrium under these ten classifications:			
1. Proper distribution of time, the assignment of appropriate periods for all physical action	—	—	—
2. Bodily health	—	—	—
3. Control of destructive bodily habits	—	—	—
4. Diet	—	—	—
5. Control of ornamentation and ostentation	—	—	—
6. Capitalization of bodily assets, by proper thoughtfulness for appearance and overcoming physical neglect	—	—	—
7. Exercise	—	—	—
8. Ventilation	—	—	—
9. Control of lost motion and confused action	—	—	—
10. Discipline of the body to obey the purposes of the will	—	—	—

## SELF-CORRECTION

We cannot urge you too strongly to be thorough, honest, and impersonal in your self-analysis. When you realize fully your own faults, these faults are half-corrected. So few people ever have analyzed themselves, or been brought face to face with their own idiosyncrasies. Once we are confronted with a problem and accept that problem as a personal responsibility, solution is imminent. Self-analysis and self-correction will in themselves reward you for conscientious effort even if you should go no further in metaphysical disciplines. After all, only self-mastery through discipline can bring you temporal security and those good things of life which everyone desires.

After you have concluded your self-analysis, examine carefully the graph which results. Consider your strongest points, that is the virtues and abilities which dominate. Your problem now is to bring the rest of your mental and emotional attributes up to the same level, for it would be most detrimental to continue elevating your strong points. Next look at the graph and observe the weakest of your characteristics. It is this characteristic which is binding you to a level far below that of normalcy. It is here that your self-improvement must begin.

We told you in the last lesson that aggressiveness must be taken out of self-discipline. It is possible to overcome any undesirable characteristic by what the Taoists call "effortless effort." For example, if you should have a bad temper, there is only one way to overcome it and that is to *stop having a bad temper*. An even temper is not accomplished by a magnificent gesture of the will nor by a series of platitudinous affirmations, but by *realization*.

As the student reviews his own life he may attempt to excuse his faults on the grounds of circumstances. He may feel that conditions beyond his control are the true causes of the mistakes he has made. He would have accomplished much more in life had fortune smiled upon him. Success

and integrity are not matters of opportunity but of character. The noblest, wisest, and most virtuous of human beings are not those who have had the greatest opportunities. Those whose difficulties are numerous frequently develop the best philosophies of life; those whose problems are petty bewail their fate the loudest.

Taoist monks are not happy because the world has been good to them. They are happy because they have been good to the world. These old philosophers live moderate and virtuous lives, not for elaborate moral reasons, but because it is easier and more pleasant to live well than it is to live any other way. Anger, fear, worry—these emotions are uncomfortable and the Taoist is dedicated to comfort. Why should he make himself miserable when it is just as easy to be happy? Nor are these aged priests sitting around on rocks with clenched teeth and high blood pressure trying to be good. They do not try to control their tempers. They are so well-tempered that temper is forgotten. They are not trying to overcome selfishness. They have discovered the futility of the desire to possess. They are not trying to develop dominant personalities because they have not the slightest interest in what other people think of them. With this complete detachment and impersonality, the Taoist monks frequently live to extreme old age. Their *realization* has so perfectly freed them from the irritations of physical existence that they are immune to most of the ailments which shorten the lives of Occidental people.

The accomplishment of the greatest good is the fundamental purpose of life. This accomplishment is hindered and frustrated by attachment to personalities and things. The moment we overestimate the value of material things we become incapable of a philosophical administration of the affairs of physical life. The moment that we develop an undue attachment to persons, we become incapable of serving them intelligently. It is a common, almost universal, fault to develop undue attachments based upon the conceit that we are capable of possessing anything. The Taoist monk has made the pleasant discovery that he owns nothing, hence, there is

nothing about which he must worry or fear. Buddha taught that possession was one of the cardinal sins, and fatal to spiritual growth. The wise man is attached only to Principle, Universal Truth behind all things, and he possesses only the desire for Truth. This does not mean that he is selfish or inconsiderate of others. He serves all men impersonally, however, because to him there is no distinction of family, nation, or race.

According to Pythagoras, all relationships are based upon wisdom. On one occasion Pythagoras is credited with saying: "He who is wiser than I is my father. He whose wisdom is equal to my own is my brother. And he who is of wisdom less than myself is my son." The universalizing of attachments and the impersonalizing of the sense of possession frees man from the great body of common sorrow.

### POSITIVE FOUNDATIONS

Having clarified certain misconceptions common to many schools of popular metaphysics, we must now consider some of the positive virtues. The cultivation of these virtues will prepare the student for the life of wisdom, that is, a life dominated by reason and purpose. It is impossible for any person to profit from metaphysical disciplines until he has created within himself a capacity for them. This capacity must result from organization of faculties, stabilizing of emotions, and purposing of actions.

There must be a certain adequate foundation upon which to build the house of wisdom. When the King of Israel determined to build the Everlasting House he purchased the rock Moriah which was the threshing floor of the Jebusites. This rock was an outcropping of azoic stone, a firm foundation that should endure forever.

A house can be no stronger than its foundations, nor a philosopher any wiser than the fundamentals of his doctrines. It has been taught by all schools of ancient religion that the spiritual development of the individual must be derived from a suitable foundation in virtue and integrity. A man is not necessarily virtuous merely because he possesses

virtues. He is only virtuous when he administers these virtues wisely, with his mind free from conceits, prejudices, and errors. Integrity is not simply honesty, it is intelligent honesty. Wisdom is not only learning, it is enlightened learning. Mysticism not only investigates the subjective phenomena of life, but it develops an understanding and use of secret and sacred learning.

### CONTINUITY

The faculty of continuity is not highly developed in the average individual. The Western world as a whole is distinguished for its disconnectedness of effort and general lack of thoroughness. Every student of the sacred sciences must realize that continuity and patience are absolutely necessary. Personal development requires years of conscientious, connected discipline. No person lacking patience should ever attempt the study of the sacred sciences.

Metaphysical impatience takes the form of wandering from one teacher to another and from one metaphysical system to another. Each new cult appears to promise a more speedy illumination, and the inconsistent neophyte finally degenerates into a roving cultist. Such a would-be truth seeker has lost the capacity for continuity. He hastens about from one infallible revelation to another, while his mental processes gradually deteriorate until he becomes incapable of intelligent thought.

Continuity is prosaically known as "stick-at-iveness." In the economic world, intelligent continuity of purpose is the greatest assurance of success. Our scintillating geniuses of finance, science, and industry, are nearly always men who have dedicated themselves to one purpose and have continued in that purpose until the desired end has been accomplished. The principal problem of the metaphysician is to develop a continuity that does not represent mental narrow-mindedness. To be tolerant in all things, to search for truth in all things, to recognize the good in all things, and at the same time to preserve perfect continuity of effort towards the development of self. This is a program which insures success.

Continuity does not arise from ignorance or lack of appreciation. The greater one's knowledge, the more diversified one's accomplishments, the more significant continuity becomes. A student not willing to devote a minimum of ten years to any well authenticated system of development, has no right to begin in the first place. He is certain to be disappointed and probably will drift from one "ism" to another until death ends his drifting in this sphere.

Metaphysical development begins with continuity of discipline and the struggle between continuity and interruption makes up our ordinary living. Continuity demands a sufficient will power to overcome interruption and a certain tenacity of purpose which will continue on unswervingly in the presence of what appears to be failure. No person who is true to the highest of his ideals can ultimately lose. Devotion to discipline and unswerving loyalty to truth and ideal will inevitably result in illumination. Only a mind and heart utterly devoted to the Real can finally be united with the Real.

### REALIZATION

On one occasion Buddha discoursing to his disciples said: "I preach two doctrines—suffering and the Law." The realization to be gained from this statement will assist the disciple in the important matter of self-orientation.

Living as we do in a world dominated largely by consequences of previous action, it is impossible to escape entirely from the complexities of karma.

It is necessary, therefore, to accept the doctrine of suffering as an inevitable part of growth. It is equally important however, that each incident of life should be meaningful and should contribute something to the liberation of the Self.

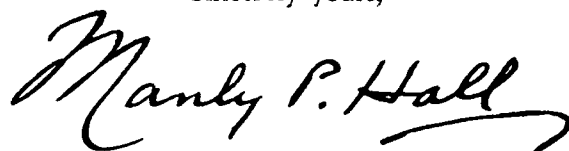
Therefore, the disciple must be thoughtful in small things, especially in the inconsequential happenings which make up the day. He must be observant in all that he does and must seek to find the Law at work in all the diversified phases of living.

The keynote for this realization should be: *Find the Law!* Seek for it in everything, everywhere, always. Become aware of the operations of universal causes in even the apparently trivial incidents. Remember the words of Michael Angelo: "Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle."

Observe the dignity of small matters. Learn the lessons to be derived from the contemplation of every useful and necessary action. Find the Law in work and in play, waking and sleeping; observe its functioning in the arts and crafts, sciences and professions. Realize that true education is to find the Law. Experience is only useful when the individual finds the true reason for the incident. Objects seen, customs practiced, and books studied result in merit only to the degree that through these experiences we find the Law.

Law everywhere manifesting through everything, perfecting all things in and through itself—meditate upon this mystery; unite your own mind with the purposed thinking of Space. In all your comings and goings, in your joys and sorrows, in your gains and losses, *find the Law!*

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Manly P. Hall". The signature is written in dark ink and has a fluid, connected style. The first letter 'M' is large and prominent, and the signature ends with a long, sweeping underline.