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MONTHLY LETTER

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

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Dear Friend:

In the preceding letter I think we have fairly well established the causes for the general lack of consistency evident in the thoughts and actions of the great majority of metaphysicians. We must next consider some of the less obvious factors which contribute to the general disorder in the sphere of the occult sciences.

Poise is the outward expression of inward equilibrium. Poise cannot manifest where there is inward inconsistency. The average person suffers from psychic stress, that is there is distinct inharmony between code and conduct, between impulse and action. For the most part religious movements ignore the factor of psychic stress. This is because psychology is not generally included in the theological or metaphysical curriculum. Of course the word psychology is a comparatively recent invention, but the system of facts which the term psychology has been coined to cover has existed since the beginning of human consciousness.

Stress and strain in the bodily economy result in nerve tension and this in turn contributes a powerful impulse to erratic thought and action. Most modern religious movements, whether orthodox or heterodox, are of the "listen and accept" type. The followers think what they are told to think, read what they are told to read, and attempt to act as they are told to act, usually failing miserably in the sphere of action. Religious hysteria is due to psy-

chic stress and metaphysical hysteria has the same cause. Until this problem of internal maladjustment is solved, reasonableness and poise will be lacking in the material sphere.

There are two primary causes of psychic stress— inconsistency and contradiction. Inconsistency is an interruption in the flow of energy from cause to effect, and contradiction is a confliction of several dissonant factors which set up irritation in the subjective nature. Both inconsistency and contradiction are very frequently found in the make-up of the modern metaphysician. Inconsistency arises from inward causes; contradiction usually arises from outward factors. A person who does not act in accordance with his belief or his knowledge is guilty of inconsistency, and a person who wanders from one belief to another without properly digesting any of these beliefs is guilty of contradiction.

As contradiction is the simplest and most obvious of the causes of psychic stress we shall consider that first. Contradiction is most apt to arise from an effort to be broad-minded or liberal, tolerant or generous in religious attitudes. While it is a virtue to respect the opinions of others, it is not always a virtue to try to live or accept these contradictory opinions in your own life. While it is a philosophical truism that all religions are divinely inspired and all great systems of philosophy are established in spiritual truths, the modern disciple must remem-

ber that all institutionalized religions have suffered numerous corruptions of belief. The result is that while all the great world religions may arise from the same truth and be utterly united in principle, they are now hopelessly divided from one another by dogmas, bigotries and misunderstandings. When the average person, therefore, attempts the study of a religion he is probably not studying a religion at all but merely interpretations, often narrow and conceited, which have crept into the religion during its centuries of function. Conflicting dogmas have resulted in a war of faiths. Institutionalized religions are organized on competitive standards and the sublime mystical truths upon which the religion was built are relegated to obscurity. It is for this reason that the attempt to live all beliefs leads not to illumination but to contradiction and psychic stress.

If this is true of the great world religions, it is even more true of the thousands of little sects which make up metaphysics. Many of these sects are founded on nothing but deceit or fraud and the effort to live several of them at the same time is entirely disastrous to poise. Few students of occultism realize what it means to change beliefs in the middle of life. To be guilty of the indiscretion of monthly or annual religious turn-about is hazardous to life and sanity. Every belief has a vibration of its own and the acceptance and living of that belief builds this vibration into the life and consciousness of the disciple. If, a few months later, he changes his belief he not only changes his mind but causes a complete vibratory readjustment in his superphysical parts. This adjustment is not made quickly. There is always psychic stress and the whole system is put under a heavy strain.

The cultist, always looking for something new and following every itinerant metaphysician, is inwardly a conglomeration of discords. Sets of vibrations are superimposed upon each other so rapidly that his psychic serenity is entirely shattered. Outwardly he may only feel a little confused, but inwardly he is a wreck. As poise and discrimination come from within, he rapidly loses his ability to assert these virtuous temperances. Inwardly he is

a tumbling ground for notions, and outwardly he is a nervous wreck.

The more sincerely a student has studied a line of thought the more of a shock a change of religious foundation will be to him. This is especially true if the new belief is of a lower rate of vibration than the one he previously held. I personally know a number of people who have affiliated themselves with a dozen or more religious, metaphysical or new thought organizations in as many years. With them "joining" is a sort of experiment. They figure that if they like it they will stay. Then along comes another belief a little more fantastic, and they flock to that. These people regard themselves as "old souls." The soul however is not old, it is merely decrepit from psychic stress. In religious matters the student is better off if he will attach himself to a sincere, unostentatious and reasonable system of belief and remain with it. He may make a mistake by so doing, but if he remains personally honest, it will not be a serious mistake. On the other hand if he joins a number of sects he will make several mistakes and they will all be serious.

There is a point here which is a little difficult to make, but is very important. Religious broad-mindedness arises not from much joining but from much understanding. When the disciple becomes inwardly aware of the spiritual truths which underlie religion, he will then discover that he is one with all faiths, not because he has joined them all but because he has inwardly perceived the truth which sustains them all. In the East there is a fable concerning this. The story is of a man who tried to understand a tree by counting its leaves. He finally discovered that all the leaves grew upon a single trunk and that if he understood the trunk or the tree as a whole he was instantly able to sense the proper significance of each of the leaves. Religion is like a tree. The sects and creeds are like the branches and leaves of the tree. We discover the nature of the tree not by studying the leaves and branches alone but by becoming rationally aware of the significance of the whole tree. The moment we become truly religious there is a place in our appreciation for all cults and all sects, but we do

not rush in a frantic effort to join them all. Religion is one, creeds are many, but he who possesses religion is master of all creeds.

In every large community there is a division of metaphysicians, the less rational type who constitute the guild of the "joiners." They flow instinctively into every new cult which comes along. They are the flotsam and jetsam of occultism, always in the front row, but so scattered and disorganized mentally that they are incapable of learning and incapable of sensing their own stupidity. Of all people studying metaphysics, these most of all need help, but they are the hardest to help. They are a discredit to the whole field of metaphysics and are the distinct product of avid incapacity. The sincere student must avoid assiduously any contamination from contact with the chronic joiner. The end of the trail is psychic demoralization. The metaphysical addict may be as much of a problem as the drug addict or the alcoholic. The moral is, when in doubt about an organization, do not join. When uncertain, do not fly to some cult to be fleeced, but retire into your own self and ponder deeply upon an intelligent course of action. Apply the ounce of prevention and escape a host of disillusionments.

The other cause of psychic stress is inconsistency and this is an entirely personal problem which each truth-seeker must work out for himself. It is the strict harmonizing of belief and action and offers the most difficult task that confronts the would-be disciple of esoteric teachings. Man fails to be spiritually honest because of the interval between knowledge and works. There is an old saying that we all know better than we do. The man who desires to be superior to other men can only truly achieve this end by being nobler than other men in thought and action. There is no other superiority acceptable to bona fide metaphysics. Psychic stress due to inconsistency must be overcome by a twofold correction. The inward standards must be put in order first and the outward life must then be brought into perfect harmony with these standards. This may sound like hard work and it is, the most difficult work in the world. But when a man asks for wisdom he asks for the greatest treasure that the universe possesses and he must be

prepared to pay for it with a high and noble intensity of purpose.

Our first problem then will be: putting the inner standard in order. Of course, in particular this adjustment is an individual matter but in general it follows certain universal laws which can be accepted without modification in the majority of cases. There is a very confused code of spiritual values in the Western world. The average metaphysician's inner conviction is a sort of potpourri of theological, scientific and metaphysical notions. A little of hell-fire and damnation theology clings to the subconscious mind of the majority of people who have grown up through a theological generation. This fundamental premise is modified by other opinions based upon reading, thinking and experience. In very few lives, however, is the spiritual standard clear, clean-cut and reasonable. In many it is a hazy mass of hopes, wishes and other weak ingredients. In many metaphysicians it is a conflict of several standards due to dabbling in divergent philosophic or religious systems. The worst fault however arises from over-estimation of personal virtue and integrity. Good, well-meaning folk who are just gradually coming to a state where they are reasonable human beings suffer from the delusion that they are on the verge of divinity, and establish standards for themselves so entirely beyond their capacity that life becomes a painful span of struggle and failure.

Regarding the follies of life, Socrates is attributed with the very sage remark: "For the foolish excess, for the informed moderation, and for the gods abstinence." One of our troubles seems to be a general over-estimation of our own importance. We dream that we are gods but we are men and the result is that our earthy part rebels against our mental temper and there is chaos in our world.

A spiritual standard, to be practical for the average person, must be within the sphere of possibility, in fact it should be well within. Of course we should strive to be better than we are. That is taken for granted. In striving however the goal should not be so remote that despair alone will crown the effort. Before great virtues come little virtues, and it has been our observation that most

metaphysicians who are striving after great virtues are woefully lacking in the smaller ones. It is natural that man should associate religion with distant, sublime and unapproachable realities. But it is also prudent that the intelligent man should associate the thought of religion with gradual, constant improvement in small matters. Only those who are faithful in the little things shall be made master over greater things. The psychical conflict between spiritual standard and material action will be greatly mitigated by reforming the inward standard to a code of moderation. Man, a naturally immoderate animal, will find enough work for the present life trying to bridle the beast within. Moderation of standard must arise finally from the individual himself, wisely estimating a standard of moderation suitable for himself. I have observed many sincere people brought to misery, sickness and even death because they had never intelligently moderated their standards of action.

The first work of moderation is of course to avoid extremes. One of the simplest forms of extremism is fad. Fad-minded people have one of the most serious diseases in the world because they are gradually rendered incapable of moderation. A good approach to moderation is to moderate extremes of feeling so that tranquillity gradually dominates the emotional excess. If this is accomplished a serious cause of emotional unbalance is removed. Tranquillity takes a normal attitude towards everything. One by one the vice must be tempered. Not killed out at first, but moderated. Once the temperament is brought to moderation, the excesses gradually die out of themselves and do not require any desperate effort to destroy them. As the Gita has wisely observed: "Only the man who is balanced in pain and pleasure is fitted for immortality." Look about you among people whom you know to be interested in metaphysical subjects, look within yourself, and then frankly ask the question: are these others and myself balanced in pain and pleasure, unmoved by the excesses that destroy the tranquillity of the unenlightened? If you perceive, as you most certainly will, a general lack of balance and tranquillity, then the life work is clearly indicated, for there is no accomplishment in great

things until these lesser problems have been met and mastered.

As you look among truth seekers you will find generally a rather admirable, well-meaning and sincere group of people. But one is a gossip, another is jealous, a third has a bad temper, a fourth has "psychic experiences" and the fifth cannot stop talking. It is probable that most new thoughtists are law-abiding citizens, not guilty of major crimes, but nearly all of them guilty of dispositions, some of them rather nasty. Yet, completely oblivious of these dispositions, these "disciples" continue in their quest for illumination, making little if any effort to put themselves right with themselves. Of course the result of searching without first mastering self is to come up against a blank wall. No person is capable of achieving inward illumination while the disposition remains unconquered. Many know this but have solaced themselves with the fond illusion that they will find truth in spite of their temperaments and in spite of their vices. This is a sort of psychical hang-over from the doctrine of eleventh-hour conversions and vicarious atonements that is constantly getting in the way of honesty.

Having established a code of moderate purpose in the inner life, attention should next be turned to the body or the outer life, the other polarity of the problem. Of course the body of itself does nothing except digest, assimilate and excrete. All other functions are bestowed upon it by the super-physical disposition. Any evil which the body apparently performs is really to be attributed to emotional or intellectual excess within the body. On the other hand, through the body man contacts the outer world, and the external sphere is truly man's testing place. Here he must live outwardly his inner convictions against what seems to be an organized opposition. The proof of man's sufficiency however is not that he conquers the world but rather that the world does not conquer him. He cannot remake the universe but he can prevent outward conditions from destroying his inner character. This is his problem. Right must survive in the presence of a material adversary. Only where man has reached a high degree of personal development is he immune from the evils of organized society.

This is his initiation. He no longer descends into the crypts under the temples to fight wild beasts and master specters. Rather his test is that he shall live well in the presence of infinite opportunity to live badly, that he shall practise the virtues in the presence of the temptation to exploit the vices, that he shall achieve moderation while part of an in-temperate social order. He shall not become a god among men; rather he shall become a man among beasts.

Having thus established the facts, which is not a difficult matter, for the factors are evident, we are confronted with what is truly called The Great Work—the living of the truth we know.

To define religion we can say: religion is the living of the highest practical spiritual standard. Actually religion has little if anything to do with creeds or beliefs. It is the living of principle, and this one fact alone is the corner stone of the house of spiritual science. In theory we all agree on this; in practice there is a wide divergence. Selfishness, narrowness, intolerance—these are the things that we perceive even while men talk of their spiritual aspirations. Whenever we find a man talking of charity and brotherhood and at the same time living a mean standard of exploitation, we know that that life is filled with psychic stress. To believe one thing and to do another is to contradict oneself, and this is a serious matter in the subjective life of the individual. Again friction and dissonance are set up. Vibrations clash and conflict. Sickness and suffering are the inevitable result. No man can live outwardly on a level lower than his inward conviction and be happy. Karma sees to that. The interval of harmony becomes an avenging force, engendering a thousand reactionary ills. These reactions destroy poise and discrimination, producing the familiar scattered effect and numerous ailments of the nervous system. Inconsistency and contradiction, then, are important factors in the failure of integrity.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION—Please explain the Mystery of Omens.

ANSWER—Nearly all of the important events of

history have been preceded by prophetic circumstances. Visions have appeared in the sky like the mysterious sword of flame that hung over Jerusalem before its fall. Curious accidents have occurred presaging evil, and coming events have presented themselves as dreams and visions. Nearly all the great changes of human affairs have followed appropriate warnings, and whole books have been written describing and proving the general occurrence of omens. Occultism explains the appearance of strange portents of approaching fate in a very simple way. All major changes in the physical life of man or his world are the effects of causes which exist not in the physical world but in the super-physical planes of the universe. An earthquake, for example, exists as an archetype or pattern in the invisible world long before the physical phenomenon takes place. Seismic cataclysms which will not occur in the material world for centuries already exist as archetypes in the superphysical body of the planet. These archetypes are established by the law of Karma and the force of them is built up by the repetition of the causes which originally precipitated the pattern. Let us say, for example, that Karma decrees that a continent and its inhabitants shall be submerged by volcanic forces. This fact having been metaphysically established is intensified by the destructive tendencies in the life and action of the doomed people. At last, after centuries of crystallization, the archetypal pattern reaches such definite proportions that this psychological pattern moves the physical elements into agreement with the metaphysical design or shape. It follows that archetypes in the process of crystallization become more and more tangible or physical. The result is that mediums, psychics and other supersensitive persons may sense or see the archetype before the physical phenomenon is precipitated. Also the increasing force building up in the archetype occasionally produces curious, unaccountable happenings. These happenings are not unlike the pranks played by electricity under certain conditions, for the force behind all archetypes is basically electrical, but a far more subtle form of electricity than can be recognized by material science. Premonitions are truly coming events casting their shadows before them, because

these events occur in the invisible world long before they can be felt in dense material forms. The archetypal ethers of the earth already carried locked within them the forms or patterns of all of the important changes that will take place geologically or socially for the next several thousands of years. The mind of man not only remembers the past but plans the future, and the intellectual substances of the earth already bear the thought patterns of a wide variety of changes and achievements. All of the inventions and as yet undiscovered secrets of nature are plainly existent in the archetypal sphere and it is from this world of patterns that men draw their discoveries, creations and compositions. Mozart once observed that every piece of music that he composed he actually heard as though played in the air by an invisible orchestra before he wrote it down. Many great inventions have come as visions and dreams, for under certain circumstances the creative type of mind can contact the sphere of archetypes where all things yet to be known exist as living pictures composed of vibrant ether.

QUESTION—Please have something to say on the subject of Diet.

ANSWER—From the earliest times religious institutions have regarded diet as an important aspect of spiritual culture. The systems of eating recommended by these various groups differ in some parts but for the most part agree on the essential principles. All religious and philosophical schools have warned against over-eating as the worst of dietetic evils. Too much food and elaborate and complicated menus receive the weight of general censure. The Pythagoreans advised moderation and simplicity, and the followers of the school enjoyed extraordinary health and longevity. According to the tradition Pythagoras himself, when nearly 100 years of age, had the strength and endurance of a youth in his twenties. Apollonius of Tyana, who followed the Pythagorean disciplines, was in his prime physically and mentally at the age of 100.

A reasonable viewpoint on this subject for modern consideration would emphasize the evil of excess, with one reservation. Diets for the philoso-

phically minded should not be imposed upon growing children who require much more of food than persons of mature years. Over-feeding after middle life is particularly unfortunate and it has been scientifically proven that the body survives longer on hunger than it does on satiety. The wise course is to discover the minimum upon which the body flourishes and adhere to it.

As to the nature of that which is to be eaten, there is less uniformity of belief. Various races have food staples which are accepted as indispensable, but again there is agreement that foods which undergo elaborate processes of refinement or cooking are to be avoided. Most religious diets work for energy-building foods with low starch content. Pythagoras advised grain, cheese, fruit and vegetables which mature above the ground, nor does he seem to have condemned the eating of meat. But he advised magistrates to refrain from eating meat for twenty-four hours previous to decisions in court, etc. for the sake of mental clarity.

Generally speaking a moderate, well-balanced meal of natural foods is suitable for general use, but no elaborate departure should be made from eating habits without the assistance of a skilled dietitian. The various abnormalities of body chemistry present in nearly every person living in our peculiar social system should never be overlooked when planning a diet. Extensive fasting was discouraged among the more philosophic sects, although the entirely devout frequently starved themselves to death. If the amount of food necessary to the bodily economy is skillfully gauged, there is no need of fasting to clean out the system. Some of the old schools taught that the clarity of the reason was improved by abstaining from food one day each week and eating a normal amount the rest of the time. The Mohammedan fast of Ramadan was instituted as a physical aid to the spiritual life due to the rather intemperate eating of the Moslem world. There is no food panacea for the evils of the soul. No man shall reach heaven by dieting alone. The ability of the human being to function at a maximum of efficiency demands the proper fueling for his physical engine.

It has generally been observed that if a person

interested in metaphysical matters uses a general moderation in his eating, the law of natural selection will gradually assert itself. A person doing intensive mental work will naturally rebel against the sluggishness caused by the over-eating of coarse low vibration foods. The diet will be corrected by the inward tendencies of the mind and life. Occasionally we meet a person who regards himself as a very advanced metaphysician who at the same time is wrestling with the diet demon. The fact is that no one highly advanced in metaphysical matters will have any such conflict. The diet will be determined not by the appetites but by the chemistry which philosophy has set up in the bodily organisms. Do not steel yourself against eating things which you believe are inconsistent with philosophy. Rather perfect the philosophy and you will find that natural selection will cause you to finally eat that which is useful to you. In the average person, unfortunately, the law of natural selection is obscured by the artificiality of the conditions under which we live. As Socrates so wisely observed: "Moderation is the cornerstone of the virtues." Nor should we forget the entirely significant words of the Nazarene teacher: "It is not that which goeth in at the mouth that defileth a man; it is that which cometh out of the mouth that defileth a man."

QUESTION—Is there any virtue in sleeping with the head to the north, south, east or west?

ANSWER—As all the occult mysteries have written, man is a miniature world and the magnetic currents of his body correspond with the vaster currents moving about and through the earth. It would naturally follow that if man harmonizes the direction of the flow of his own energies with the flow of the energies of the earth he will avoid conflict between his own life and the life of the world. In the Northern hemisphere it is proper to sleep with the head to the North so that the magnetic currents flow parallel with the spine. In the Southern hemisphere the head should be to the South, and in the equatorial zone the head should be to the East. Experimentation has proven that by following this rule rest is more perfect and in some cases relief

has been found for restless sleeping, confused dreams and insomnia. It would be wrong to say that failure to follow this rule would prevent sleep or endanger the individual, but there is a certain added benefit which results from cooperating with nature in every possible way. Of course to sleep with one's head in the right direction does not produce spirituality. It merely increases body normalcy, in this way giving added vitality and efficiency which, through proper direction, may contribute to spiritual improvement.

QUESTION—Is it true that men should live much longer than most do at the present time?

ANSWER—A man of letters not long ago hazarded the opinion that, considering the length of time devoted to the periods of development and growth, the human being should live about four hundred years. Strangely enough there is no historical example of a human being achieving this length of life in the last several thousands of years. Of course in the metaphysical traditions we find records of what Thomas Vaughan, the Rosicrucian initiate, called "long livers," but the occult tradition is not accepted by modern science. There are records however of men whose lives have exceeded 200 years, and a goodly number who have reached 150. China has produced an unusual number of very aged persons, and it might be well to consider some of the factors involved in the achievement of an unusual span of life.

Two factors of course immediately present themselves. In the first place some achieve great age by virtue of constitution. The body seems to be born with an unusual capacity for endurance. The second factor is cultivation and discipline. By a certain program of carefully studied action the natural span is increased and efficiency continued far beyond the generally accepted boundaries. The Chinese formula for longevity is extremely simple and has unusual merit in the light of our present uncertain generation. The Taoists of China, among whom are to be found a host of centenarians, gave as the first key to extensive living the formula: do not worry. To use an old adage, most people use

up the second half of life in the first half. Excesses of emotion, inordinate ambitions, the psychological acceptance of responsibilities, attachments, and all the vast army of concerns which bow us down, carve huge slices from our later years. Every time we become fussed and bothered we shorten life and destroy the tranquility of the years we do not destroy. In the Taoist belief, nothing is important. In their opinion the worst thing that can happen to anyone is to die and that is not important anyway. There is nothing worth fretting over or hastening after. Things you do not have are responsibilities escaped. High rank you cannot achieve is disaster avoided. Man's wants are many but his needs are few, and the Taoist makes the goal of his life to live without effort, without stress and without strain. He moves slowly and methodically, without tension and without nerves to whatever end he desires to accomplish, always careful that his ends are few. If a Taoist by some miracle finds himself in a position of responsibility, his first task is to remove the consciousness of responsibility in himself. Wherever he is, he is unconcerned. He does everything as wisely as he can and then immediately dismisses the entire matter from his mind. Rich or poor, befriended or alone, old or young, he lives in the same sense of detachment. He wastes no energy and permits nothing to irritate him. In this way he overcomes most of the causes of rapid decay.

Very few people wear out; most of them rot out. The life is corroded by acids of disposition. Strength is wasted towards ends that are not real or valuable. Most men die from the exhaustion attendant upon the effort to live. But the Chinese sage lives without effort. He seldom practices great physical exercise, in fact he avoids every type of exertion. He never wonders about what he does or fears the results of his thoughts or deeds. He lives by a formula of right. He never departs from it and he never concerns himself with evils that may come to him. With this formula he may find himself hale and hearty at 150, frequently sought for advice, regarded as a paragon of the virtues, and entirely comfortable.

Another way of stating the Taoist formula is that every individual should be like water, for this fluid fits itself into any container without discom-

fort, flows into low and simple places without despair, and in the end mingles with the universal waters without regret. Placidity is power, relaxation is length of years, detachment is health. To sum up, it is only a Taoist or one of similar accomplishment who takes the sting out of life and is fitted to endure the years.

Sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall

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