

BASIC FEARS

AND

HOW TO CORRECT THEM



LECTURES ON PERSONAL GROWTH

by Manly P. Hall

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& How to Correct Them



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ISBN-10: 0-89314-304-9

ISBN-13: 978-0-89314-304-6

Published by

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

3910 Los Feliz Boulevard

Los Angeles, CA 90027 USA

Telephone 323.663.2167

Fax 323.663.9443

Website www.prs.org

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Printed in the United States of America

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In recent decades, our fears have been continuously increasing. That this situation is due to general world conditions, we recognize, for where a large or insistent pattern presses in upon the individual from the collective—a pattern against which he feels he has no defense—then his fear may become particularly pressing.

A fear is basically a negative or painful feeling arising from anxiety about impending trouble, evil, suffering, disappointment, or loss. To have a fear, therefore, means that the individual is uncertain concerning his own ability to control the situations in which he finds himself, and a larger fear may arise from the feeling that such situations are uncontrollable and that the individual is therefore a victim of conditions he is powerless to change.

This problem has become more and more pronounced as our way of life has moved from a local to a global pattern. Earlier man had a certain confidence in his own abilities; he measured his problems in terms of his own strength. He could say to himself, "If I exercise all my resources, I have a fair chance of attaining security." He therefore could take this attitude, and

did. Trouble was related to his own unwillingness or disinclination to unite his resources toward the solution of problems.

Today there are still many problems to which this formula applies, and there are a great many emergencies that can be faced successfully if the individual makes use of his total resources. There are other and more pressing emergencies, which he can no longer hope to meet with any degree of his own effort, ingenuity, intelligence, or integrity.

This causes one of the most marked changes that we have in history, and the historical significance of this psychological change has perhaps been generally overlooked. As soon as a nation, or a people, reaches that platform in which common emergency becomes greater than individual emergency, the entire philosophy of life of that people has to change.

We have to move from the conquest concept to the adjustment concept. Man must pass from determination to overcome an obstacle to an equally important determination to exist with an obstacle. He is forced to recognize that he must adjust his own life to the obstacle, rather than attempt to overwhelm it by courage or perseverance.

The most startling example, in our modern way of life, of the collective obstacle or danger, lies in the rapid advancement of our sciences. Here the individual recognizes his own incapacity. He realizes that perhaps only a few hundred persons in the world have the knowledge and the skill to direct these scientific discoveries and developments. The individual must therefore hope that these directors will have sufficient integrity, understanding and skill, to protect him; and he becomes more and more doubtful about this, until he realizes ultimately that his security rests in the hands of creatures like himself, whose actual attainments on a moral or ethical level may very well not be adequate to direct knowledge into constructive channels.

Out of this recognition comes a series of futilities. The individual, unable to cope with such advanced forms of knowledge, must look about him for ways of seeking other securities. He must try to adjust himself to living in a world which he can no longer shape according to his own needs. He must accept the shaping of others and, at this time, he realizes that this shaping process is largely in the hands of political leaders about whom he has many reservations. This situation is, at best, highly disquieting. It causes a continuously increasing tension; a fear about the future of things.

In the past, men feared the future, but took consolation in the slow motion of human endeavor. It was quite unlikely that the average person of middle life would live long enough to be under the impact of radical change. It would require a hundred, two hundred, five hundred years for certain patterns to develop. And several generations lived and died in transitional periods. This slower motion gave greater opportunity for adjustment, and the individual did not feel the emergency of the situations around him.

Today we no longer think in terms of generations. We have the firm conviction that a great many persons now alive must face tremendous probability of emergency. Changes may be so rapid that they will occur not only in our own generation, but within a matter of one, two, five years. Against this rapid motion, we have a very slight opportunity for adjustment. Our orientation is not able to keep up with the demands upon it, and as our technical knowledge is not generally diffused, we do not have the consolation of being in a position to really understand the potentials with which we are concerned.

All these patterns, together, create a collective anxiety, which results in the building up of individual tension. While the world moves on a reasonably ordered plan, very few persons

are brought into situations in which a complete or nearly complete loss of orientation can be regarded as likely. The person living in the pattern of employment or home, may, if the stress is not too great, go through the entire life expectancy with no emergency so terrible or so immediate as to result in serious nervous illness.

On the other hand, if we have collective anxiety beating in upon the individual, this anxiety may not be so acute as immediate personal crisis, but it continually undermines resources; it exhausts vitality and depletes the resistance mechanism of our mental and emotional living. Thus everyone is a little more tired due to anxiety; everyone is a little less able to face his own problems optimistically, simply because he is gaining little if any strength from the collective.

It used to be that if the person followed in the general pattern of his time, he gained a certain strength or security, and it was the rugged individual, going against the common pattern, who exposed himself to unusual emergencies. Today there is no general security in the collective. Those around us are as anxious as ourselves, and this pattern of rising tension expresses itself in all our habits and ways. That something has to be done about this, we all realize, but we are under the grand frustration of not finding any way to correct the general pattern.

So we say to ourselves, "How can we live without fear in an environment that is becoming more frightening every day? How can we relax and conserve our resources in a general atmosphere of tension, in which our friends, our neighbors, our associates, our employers and employees are all under this kind of stress?"

Our relationships become more edgy. The tendencies for orderly living are undermined, and we come to the situation

frequently met in war, where we have general moral collapse simply because the individual no longer sees any clear pattern of integration by means of which he has a reasonable assurance of the continuance of his personal life as an individual.

All these factors may seem at first to be excuses or evasions, and there are certain individuals among us who insist that these pressures are not meaningful; that we should live nobly and magnificently in spite of them. It is probably true that we should, but the average person's breaking point is so near to the surface of his life that he cannot accomplish this, even though he might like to. The general level of man's resistance to pressure is such that he can take only a moderate degree of pressure without showing immediate personal maladjustment.

The natural tension factors have a very disturbing effect upon all our relationships, and in an effort to defend ourselves against them, the common policy is to seek freedom through escape. The animal, or any other creature, under danger, normally seeks to escape. Man, seeking to escape the problems with which he is confronted, looks around vainly for an avenue of escape. Years ago he found ways. He could move out of a community and into another one where the pressures were less. He could go out and pioneer undeveloped regions, where he could build a way of life for himself and with others of similar mind.

These opportunities are gone. Economic pressures are too heavy, and the possibility of running away from the present emergency is extremely slight. A person may choose some comparatively desolate island in the south seas, only to find, three months from now, that it is an atomic testing ground. I know one individual who went into a certain area in this country and built himself a fortified retreat. His panic was so great that he actually spent most of his means in trying to create a

totally isolated place in which to exist. This place was later taken away from him because it was in the middle of a testing field. The possibility to get away is therefore not at all what it used to be. We cannot escape situations in which the whole world is moving in a direction.

If we thought some of these problems through carefully, we would realize that they add up to a legitimate reason for a touchiness, a tenseness, a sense of frustration in our own lives. We would realize that if we are not as patient as we used to be, if we are not as generous in our thinking, if we are a little embittered or disillusioned, it may well be that these emotions arise from fear anxieties. Interpreting themselves through the available faculties of our own particular personality, these pressures make us less companionable and less able to live with ourselves. But by the time we have passed through these experiences, and they return out of our own personalities, we ourselves and those around us are inclined to simply sum this up as a bad disposition.

The idea that there is a legitimate reason for difficulty is hard to accept. When this difficulty presents itself in the form of a nagging relative, or something of that nature, we instinctively blame the person. We say that "Aunt Mamie" has developed a nasty temper. We do not realize the pressures that have gradually undermined what might otherwise have been a much better disposition. We also take the attitude that anyone should be able to control a disposition. This is true, but unless the individual makes a career of it, really settles down to an intentional recognition of his own needs and works hard with himself, there is no immediate probability of remedy.

Thus we observe in the rise of nations, and in the development of culture-patterns among human beings, that whatever these emergency points may be—and the world has always had

emergencies though not as general as ours—when they come, there is a division among people. One group simply collapses under the emergency, tries to run away, finds this more or less a fruitless endeavor under our way of life, and passes through varying degrees of discouragement and demoralization.

This is represented symbolically by a slow but inevitable decline of culture. By “decline of culture,” we mean a decline of the significance of living; the individual surviving merely because he does not consider it right to commit suicide, or does not have the courage to do so. He is not living for a reason or purpose; he is simply surviving and hoping that he will drift into oblivion with a reasonable degree of painlessness. This attitude—this fatalistic acceptance of evil—has been noted in the decline of people throughout history.

On the other hand, in emergencies of this nature there is another group, usually somewhat smaller, which retains values. Seeking immediately for stronger foundation for value, it recognizes that this change, this pressure, is a challenge, and that it is still possible to do something about it. This something that can be done invokes, very largely, the character of the person. To reach this understanding, we must begin to analyze the nature of fear itself, and to realize that, like all other emotions of man, it is a kind of intangible. The greatest and most fearful of all things, is fear itself—an emotion that destroys perspective and leaves us with the raw edges of our atavistic nature as the controlling element in our conduct.

To meet the matter of fear, then, we must begin to recognize that the world in which we live is part of a universe of law and order, and that this universe of itself and in itself is not essentially dangerous. To counteract such natural hazards as do exist, nature develops certain anesthetics. It is not nature's intention

that living things should endure a miserable existence, suffering from beginning to end. Living things, in the chemistries of their relationships, have created this situation and therefore must remain in it until the faculties which nature bestowed upon these creatures—judgment, reason, understanding—are able to gain ascendancy over the instincts and impulses of fear and anxiety. Until such time as man uses his own inner resources, he is therefore the victim of the collective pressures of his kind.

It is not profitable or useful, however, for the individual to accept the frustration of mass motion. We cannot cause betterness in ourselves by continual emphasis upon the misfortunes of our generation. We must use what faculties we possess to solve, as far as we can, the emergencies that we recognize.

While it is true that we cannot solve things for all men, it is also true that all persons have certain areas of opportunity. If it is possible, as it has been proved to be possible, that one unpleasant individual can bring sorrow upon a family for five generations; if it is possible for one highly destructive action in an individual's career to damage many lives and to bring sorrow and distress upon numerous persons; then it is also possible to contemplate the ever-increasing area of influence of proper action.

Even though we cannot become the movers of the worlds, we can, to a great degree, exercise a valid influence upon our families, our friends, and our associates. On various professional levels, we can contribute quite markedly to an improvement in human insight; and, to a measure, we can help others to regain confidence that values still exist.

It is true that the inner resources of the individual may not be able to change the course of history; nor can they immediately

change the conduct of other persons around the individual. In other words, the anxiety-pattern, as he first recognized it, may continue to exist. If such is the case, the only possible solution to his problem is to change his own relationship to that anxiety pattern. He cannot achieve this end by running away. He may sometimes find it both necessary and right to break up the pattern, but he must, with some reasonable internal leadership, direct his attention to his problem and determine how it can be most adequately solved.

In the case of phobias or fears, there are several levels of consideration. The Indian classic, *The Bhagavad Gita*, says, in one of its verses, "over the inevitable thou shalt not fear." Now man has recognized this subconsciously for a very long time, and he does not have the extraordinary anxiety over most inevitables. His greater fears, therefore, do not include some of the greater crises through which he passes, perhaps the most important of these crises being death.

The average, reasonably normal person does not fear the one disaster that is utterly unavoidable, and he has gradually philosophized himself into the realization that this so-called disaster may not be a disaster; that because it is a part of a universal plan, it must ultimately be right. Thus he has adapted himself to the acceptance of a circle of situations which he does not particularly like, and which may have certain threat for him.

In dealing with anxiety, therefore, we must differentiate between those things that are mutable, and are subject to correction by various actions of our own and others, and as such appear to be beyond correction, beyond any possibility of modification by man. The culture-pattern of the world shows that when certain terrors, certain collective policies, become unendurable, we usually have an era of religious revelation, or we have the rise of a powerful philosophic insight.

Man, attempting to restore his own equilibrium turns instinctively to the principal sources of his strength. One of these sources is his inner spiritual life—the intangible, interior part of himself, living under a strong conviction that there is a divine fact that must sustain him when the obvious or the tangible no longer secures his living. As in the case of religion, so another type of mind, essentially rational rather than devout, seeks its support through philosophy, through the creation of an idealistic concept capable of making life insignificant under pressure.

Out of these two great auto-correctives within man himself—religion and philosophy—have come our hopes, our securities, and our tranquilities in time of trouble. Man has discovered that the greatest medicine for fear is faith, but faith is difficult to bring to bear upon most of the situations of today.

Faith is our ability to recognize a sovereign rightness, and to take the attitude that if we are right, this rightness is our security and our refuge. Both religion and philosophy point out that the individual who is right is protected by his own moral integrity, and that it is therefore possible for him to attain a kind of security arising from his own acceptance of a pattern of law and order larger and stronger than emergency. The individual who lives from day to day lacking such a pattern, lack its consolation and its security.

At this point it becomes important to consider a factor which requires careful evaluation. Nearly all religions and philosophies, especially those which most attract us because of their sublimity, their nobility, or their profundity, were developed in other eras, in times when human problems were different, in many details and respects, from which they are today, even to the devout, and many particular recommendations that served another age will not suffice in ours.

Thus the individual may feel that religions and philosophies have not kept abreast of his emergencies. The principles are acceptable, but the applications have not been pointed to his immediate needs. This has always led to reformation within the structure of religions and philosophies, and we are in the face of a great need for reformation at the present time.

One of the serious limitations of our philosophies and religions, particularly our religions, is the lack of a global faith; the lack of a total spiritual unity by which we can gain the common security and strength of a moral code universally accepted and universally acceptable. Although the codes that now constitute religion are, for the most part, identical, we have failed to emphasize this identity and, by a highly competitive procedure, have destroyed the larger utility of our faith in the emergency in which we now live. This has resulted in the challenge for the reformation of our religions; for the bringing of our faith to the point where it can lead us toward the solution of these estrangements, confusions, competitions of peoples by which our ultimate security is so hazarded.

In philosophy, the general trend has been against idealism, and one of our fear problems today lies in the fact that we are not only becoming more and more involved in dangerous situations, but we are becoming less and less informed about possible remedies. Instead of becoming better equipped to carry our problems, our religious and philosophical supports are undermined, and we are gaining very little inspiration from the skepticism of materialism or from the present attitude toward philosophy.

Our idealism is also being sacrificed, and a person in a state of fear who loses his ideals is twice afraid. He has lost practically his only hope of solution. Thus the continuance of a strong program of idealistic culture is extremely vital to us, and must

come if we are to have the insight and the courage to break the vicious pattern of circumstances that lead to nowhere.

If the problem of fear comes into our own lives, therefore, our defense against it lies in convictions about value. Fear is not merely the result of a situation; it is the result of a person in a situation. The fear factor dominates to the degree that the individual in the situation is lacking internal resources. If he finds such a lack, it would be very wise and practical for him to recognize that once his life is committed to a program of fear, he is doomed and destined to non-tranquility, anxiety, pain and suffering for the rest of his years. The hope that he may survive a certain crisis and then find himself on a smoother path of incidents, is groundless.

Fear will never permit the individual to find security. Once he becomes afraid, and the fear mechanism takes over and controls his life, he can never escape from the fearful, for all the situations around him are then interpreted through his own negation. Once fear becomes a dominating obsession, the most harmless situation appears dangerous. The easiest problems and simplest circumstances become menacing obstacles, and matters that the average child faces with a good spirit, the fearful adult, though educated and cultured, is unable to face with any spirit at all.

Thus fear, once it becomes the ruling pattern in our living, is as dangerous to our security in life as gambling or acute alcoholism. Many individuals who condemn their associates for drinking too much are, by their own fears, working an equal hardship on themselves; for any negative habit that once possesses the person must either be uprooted or that person is ruined.

Fear is probably the most common negative habit of man—far more common than many habits for which we are strongly

punished, reprimanded, or disgraced. Yet fear continues to be regarded as normal; as something we must commonly expect in ourselves and others; and we try to adjust ourselves to living the best we can with fear, rather than attempting to do something about it.

It has often been pointed out, with a great deal of truth, that a hero is not a person without fear; a hero is an individual who fulfills the principal purposes to which he is dedicated without permitting fear to interfere with action. He may be afraid, but he continues to do those things which are necessary. He therefore does not succumb to fear, but gradually discovers, through the continuance of a well-balanced career in the presence of anxiety that these anxieties become less, and that in time his courage overcomes the natural tendency to be afraid.

Actually the anxiety does not protect the person from danger; it is merely a compounding of the penalties of danger. The quest that we all are engaged in, therefore, is this quest for a certain security in the presence of our own fears, and the ability to rise above them into the continuance of those procedures which are necessary for our individual and collective good. How are we going to do it?

One of the simplest and best remedies for a difficult situation that arises is always the factual survey of our own lives. We are inclined to doubt the words of others, especially some Pollyanna advice at the time of an emergency in our own affairs. We say that if the other person were going through what we are going through, he would feel just as we do; that this everything-is-all-right attitude is pure foolishness.

Therefore, we do not easily correct ourselves through the admonitions of others. We can, however, gain certain useful and factual insight through the careful and honest consideration of

our own lives. We can go back simply and directly and analyze, so far as possible, the various effects of fear in the development of our own careers.

If we are honest, we will then come inevitably to certain discoveries. One of these discoveries will be that a great deal of energy expended in fear was wasted, inasmuch as the feared event did not even transpire; and if it did, was so modified by the time it occurred that it was no longer really dangerous. The second thing we might note is that in a real emergency, the individual is bigger than himself. He suddenly discovers that strength, courage, understanding, insight, which he is hardly able to recognize as his own, are available to him.

While a person is merely rather numbly thinking about his own fears, the available solutions are not with him; but in an emergency, perhaps with the help of a little adrenaline, he suddenly finds himself able to accomplish almost the miraculous. He finds, also, that at a certain degree in the development of a crisis, fear tends to disappear; that as the emergency becomes more and more real, fear, which is very largely a negative attitude toward unknowns, is clarified by the fact that the elements of the problem are no longer unknown.

We can cope with known things better than with unknown things. The emergencies that might happen worry us to death; the emergency that does happen, and in which we find ourselves, is not nearly so frightening. Also, the emergency, as it develops, forces solution; it causes the individual to recognize that there are only certain possible things that can be done. One of these he finally decides to do; and whether he is right or wrong, he has removed the psychological uncertainty. He has raised himself from doubt to action, from the contemplation of possibilities to the actual performance of an immediate act. This has a tremendously resolutive effect upon all fear.

One rule, therefore, is that if the person facing an emergency has a natural tendency to be afraid, then the quickest, wisest course is to hasten the emergency and bring it immediately into focus. It is like the individual who makes an appointment to go to his dentist. Fear is there because he is afraid of pain, and if he makes the appointment six months from now, he will have six months of misery. Therefore, the only thing to do—and he must do it—is to pick up the telephone and make the appointment for today. He then has only a few hours in which to be anxiety-ridden. In many emergencies of this nature, also, a broad general program of neglect may result in a more serious situation than would otherwise have been the case.

On the other hand, the individual learns from experience that, in some cases, a so-called emergency, if postponed for thirty days, may never actually materialize. A situation may appear to be an emergency only because we are trying to force a premature, immediate decision. Under such conditions, for instance, a physician with a patient suffering from hypochondria will say, “Well, I have a very heavy schedule—come in in thirty days” By the end of that time, the patient has forgotten why he wanted to come, because it was only a nervous crisis. The emergency never developed, simply because it was not given energy immediately.

So the difference between the toothache that may result in a serious dental situation if neglected, and the psychological spasm that is best forgotten and allowed to die out by itself—these differences have to be estimated. Some things get better by not facing them immediately; others require immediate action, and must be brought to a head as quickly as possible. I would say that problems in which the ultimates are unchangeable are the ones that should be met immediately. Where the ultimates are as yet dim or uncertain, or where

there is considerable possibility of natural mending, emergencies can be watchfully postponed in the hope that they may work themselves out in a convenient way.

Assuming that we have decided the emergency exists, and therefore is worthy of consideration, let us try to analyze the difference between thoughtfulness and fear. Many situations require attention, and the popular idea of ignoring responsibilities that become oppressive will do very little good. This has brought countless persons to premature graves and resulted in many difficulties originating from neglect. We cannot simply forget about problems that confront us. If we do this, we also forget to make improvements in ourselves, or changes that might be solutional in problem situations.

There is, however, a vast difference between thinking a thing through—seriously, conscientiously, honestly—and being afraid. Most fears are reduced by thoughtful planning, which will enable us to act rather than fuss, so that we can prepare for a situation rather than merely wander about in a daze, waiting for it to hit us. Anxiety situations nearly always respond, at least in part, to thoughtfulness. This is one of the reasons, of course, why a counselor, who is impersonal to the situation, is usually helpful. He is able to put the parts of a pattern together without becoming involved in that pattern.

This tells us simply that one of the great dangers of fear pressures is that the very emotion of fear destroys personal perspective toward solution. The individual cannot solve the problem because he is too much involved in it himself. If this is true—and it has often been demonstrated—then another remedy for the person who is under pressure or tension is a dynamic determination to relax, to reject disorientation by a strenuous, purposeful campaign of conduct.

We know, for example, that certain avocational interests help to overcome fear factors. The individual who, finding his antagonism or his anxieties rising, turns to music, art, crafts, or goes out and works in his garden, will find that gradually he works off tension. We must recognize, however, that tension must be worked off not mechanically, but purposefully; the individual who does calisthenics or yoga simply to work off tension is really a very tiresome character at best; like the individual who walks around the block every morning as a constitutional, but is never going anywhere.

Socrates and Confucius both pointed out that any form of self-discipline or self-exercise that is without interest, without immediate goal and perspective, but is centered only upon the individual himself—such a program is futile. The individual must be moved by interest. If he is going somewhere, it must be to fulfill some mental or emotional purpose in his own life; and the purpose of merely exercising himself is not legitimate. It keeps his mind constantly on himself when he should be getting his mind off himself.

Thus in moments of tension, a certain separating or breaking up of intensities frequently gives rest and repose to the psychological structure and enables the individual to come back to his problem refreshed and with greater courage. This is one of the reasons why it is seldom an improvement to make a hasty decision on any matter of importance; a hasty decision is apt to present situations that turn upon the individual and become the causes of anxiety.

All this points in the direction of a rising interest among Westerners in what we call Eastern philosophies. This interest is associated with our concept of the stoicism, the peculiar detachment, the impersonality, the immutable foundation, which we like to think exist in the Asiatic consciousness. Let us face

the fact, however, that the East has its problems just as much as the West has problems. The Oriental philosophies with which we are concerned are just as difficult for the Easterner as they are for the Westerner, and are becoming more difficult every day for him because of the gradual westernizing of his way of life.

Conflict exists everywhere. What we are really talking about is merely a key to a system of thought that has proved useful and is necessary for both the Easterner and the Westerner, under the existing tensions of our time, if he is going to have any essential security in life.

This thinking leads us to a consideration of what constitutes the Eastern life-way, and how this differs from our life-way. One thing that we find highly intriguing about some Eastern peoples is a natural simplicity. Many of our Eastern brethren seem to have a better way of life because they live closer to the simple orderliness of natural procedure.

We observe with interest, for example, the simple, comparatively frugal home arrangements of the traditional Japanese family of quality. We note the total lack of knick-knacks; the complete emergence of the home into the garden. We see the tree and the flower taking a positive place in the personal life of the individual. We see walls breaking forth into doors everywhere, and nearly everything done so adroitly that the man-made factor is diminished as much as possible; and we seem to be living more and more in a natural kind of world.

To our Western thinking, this brings with it a breath of fresh air, so to speak. We look at this comparatively bare house, with its sliding walls and its silk windows, and we say to ourselves, "Here is freedom from the cluttered." And we begin, also, to say to ourselves, "My house is cluttered; so is my soul." Then

we observe that this cluttering goes all the way into the core of us, and it is clinging to cluttering that contributes a great deal to our tensions and our fears.

We observe the lack of clean line in our own thinking and living, and we think of the Zen artist who, with his simple brush dipped in his black pigment, makes his entire picture of an incident with one stroke of the brush. We lack this one-stroke philosophy. We are not sure where we want to put any stroke; therefore we make hundreds of little lines that bear witness to no nobility of purpose, no grand conviction; and our picture, when it is finished is a magnificent testimony to our own uncertainty.

Thus, we begin to understand perhaps, the ancient Samurai cult of the sword, the symbol of the clean stroke and the concept that nothing is partly done, or partly undone. Whatever is done, is done immediately, with direct effort and certainty of purpose. And when it is done, there is no longer fear or doubt, for whatever is done is a fact, and with a fact we can live; it is with fancies that we cannot live. If, then, we begin to find the dignity of simplicity, we also begin to wonder why and how some people are able to live sufficient, interesting, valuable lives without depending forever upon the expensive props with which we attempt to make life endurable.

These reflections cause us to wonder what is wrong. And out of this wondering and pondering, we come finally to the recognition that most of our troubles lie in the immaturity of our own inner lives. We have no ability to entertain ourselves. We have few interesting and valuable purposes by means of which we justify our own existence. We earn only to eat and survive. We sleep in order to work, and work in order that we may have a place to sleep. But these things are not enough. They leave the

individual exposed inwardly to all kinds of barbaric pressures, and fear is not only barbaric, it is primordial.

It is fear that binds us with the most primitive creatures in nature. In fear, we are one with the amoeba, the cave man, and the dinosaur. We are one with every part of the ancient primitive way of things. With faith, we are one with the future, and with those creatures who have developed self-security out of the faculties and powers that have been bestowed upon them by nature. As long as we fear, we will live barbarically, and we will regress into the clawing, hurting, hating world that we are trying so desperately to leave behind.

Recognizing that this is our situation, we have many inducements to try to do something about it. The first step in this direction is to place a moderate amount of discipline upon our own living. This discipline does not have to be a tremendous cataclysmic exertion of will-power which, after a few moments of strain, leaves us weak and helpless. It is simply a gradual recognition that fear is the final and complete proof of ignorance; that in some way, everything that fears is ignorant of value and of fact. By ignorance, we are unable to cope with situations, we create wrong situations, and we become completely overwhelmed with the significance of our own actions in a world in which these actions are comparatively trivial.

The average person is seldom tested by a circumstance that is utterly beyond his comprehension. Where this appears to be the case, it is usually a collective circumstance, in which the problem is no longer the solution of the circumstance, but the correction of the individual's own attitude toward it. This and this alone is his refuge in world situations such as we mentioned earlier.

There are people, for example, who are convinced that we will have a devastating atomic war within five or ten years, and

have simply ceased to be anything or to do anything. They are emotionally, mentally, psychologically, under a kind of fatalistic self-hypnosis. Now if by any chance they are wrong, and twenty years from now they have to look back on this policy, they will probably feel very foolish and annoyed, for they will have nothing to look back on except a totally wasted life.

There are people who say, "I don't know how long this way of life is going to continue, but while it is here, it is still possible for me to do all that I can to live a full and rich life, realizing that I'm going to be none the worse for it, regardless of what happens. And if I should happen to be wrong, and I have to live with myself for some four score years, then I have an interesting self to live with." Most people who are wise are not becoming hysterical over impending disaster. They would much rather have an emergency catch them almost too busy to notice, than have it find them sitting around telling their friends, "I told you so—it won't be long now."

We cannot live under this negative it-won't-be-long-now attitude. Recently someone came to me who was very much concerned, and did his best to convince me that I ought to go way up in the mountains somewhere and dig a hole against the impending trouble. It was impossible for this person to understand the simple fact that if there is trouble, then those who are trying to help, or trying to have some common sense, are the very ones who should be there to do something about it, instead of running away and hiding. The few people who think they know and run away and hide, assuming that by doing so they are fulfilling a destiny, are fulfilling no destiny at all.

Each individual has a perfect right to assume that his life can be lived fully, richly, wisely, and lovingly as long as he lives. I know one man who was so worried about the atomic threat, that he became a little absent-minded and was run over in the

meantime. We must face these problems very simply and directly, and with the full realization that our greatest hope of doing something about them is through example, and through gradually correcting these mass hysterics by means of which foolish speculative problems are made immediate, larger, and more inevitable.

If we have a natural tendency to be a little anxious about things, then our first duty is to survey these areas of anxiety and see what we can do about them. Some problems that cause fear, we can do something about. If we are afraid of debts, we can be more moderate in our expenditures; if we are afraid of unknown symptoms in our bodies, we can have the necessary diagnosis and find out; and we will realize that no matter how happy the diagnosis might turn out to be, we will have less fear afterwards than we have now.

We may also examine situations affecting those about us. If we see difficulties arising, we can certainly make sure that we are not contributing to those difficulties by attitudes of our own, by prejudice, or by negative or even vicious interference in the lives of other people, simply for the satisfaction of our own selfishness. We can, one by one, weed out such elements of anxiety as are within our means to correct.

As for those problems that are not within our means to correct, we must examine our own lives to determine the degree of insight with which we are capable of preparing for the various futures that might occur. We can recognize, if we are philosophically minded, the importance of our belief in the immortality of man, and in the total rulership of Good in the great universe of which we are a part. We can prepare ourselves for our citizenship in eternity with the full realization that, regardless of whether immediate things are better or worse, ultimate things remain the same.

Whether we are allowed to live eighty-five years and die in the midst of our relatives, or whether, years before this, we might be victims of atomic speculation—in the end we are going to gather our trailing robes of glory about us and depart into that beyond from which no man returns. We are going to leave here anyway; the point is to leave with dignity. And in the course of waiting for departure, we should learn all we can, do all we can, and face the future with a good hope.

This is what education is supposed to do for us, what religion is supposed to contribute, and what philosophy is intended to bestow. From these disciplines we are supposed to learn that while we live, we shall live totally in the presence of the Good, recognizing responsibilities and being thoughtful of all things, but without fear; and that we shall do everything we can as wisely and as faithfully as possible, not because we fear, but because that is the right way to do things.

It may sound as though this is a terribly difficult program, one that is going to wear us out, but the wear and tear of thinking things through is not one tenth the loss of energy that we suffer as the result of worry. Worry is a continual rotting of our lives; fear continually fills us with a negative acidity. It destroys our resources, makes us useless to ourselves and others, and destines us to miserable years of loneliness and unhappiness.

Why should we regard the correction of this as a penalty, and the simple exercise of our own right to be miserable as a true sign of liberty, individuality, and the rights of man? This idea that we have the right to be miserable should be corrected to the fact that we have the right to achieve victory over any circumstance or condition that is detrimental to our integrity.

If we begin, therefore, to do a little positive thinking, we will discover that life becomes much more valuable to us, and we,

in turn, become more valuable to others. As our lines of interest and activity increase, we will also escape one of the great causes of fear, and that is purposelessness. The individual who has nothing to do but think about himself, is a perfect candidate for fear and terror. If he is so busy that he has forgotten, so to speak, whether he is alive or not, he will probably also forget the fact that his life is transient. It is not wise or good for anyone to spend his time morbidly contemplating his own condition. Fear, because it destroys social adjustment, tends to isolation. The fearful person thinks too much about himself, and a person wrapped up in himself is the smallest package in the world.

To achieve tranquility and integrity, therefore, we have to remove these anti-social barriers. The person who exhibits the dolefulness, the negation, the lack of spontaneity, which result from fear, is not a good friend or associate, nor is he likely to be welcome among persons who are searching for amore constructive attitude. Thus he isolates himself, thereby gaining only more time in which to be afraid.

Busy people, with real purposes in life, are less likely to experience fear, particularly from two very common causes—loneliness and old age. Old age is nearly always the corrosion resulting from lack of pointed activity. Individuals who are busy are hardly conscious of age; they do not feel older. Even if in the course of time their activities are restricted, as long as they are still sufficiently active to permit themselves as part of a living situation with interests and beliefs and convictions that are purposeful, these individuals have the strongest possible defenses against unhappiness.

Actually, the penalties for fear are such that no individual in his right mind wishes to face them. He would rather recognize the importance of working out a program whereby he attains

the ability to see the right in things as they are, even though they may not be just as he would wish. It is not a matter of enduring; it is a matter of adjusting, for nearly all suffering is caused by lack of adjustment. The individual is in a state of friction with other things, and this friction, wearing out the resistances of life, inevitably subjects him to wear and tear.

If we feel, therefore, that we do have some religious or philosophic securities—some beliefs in natural law and natural purpose—we should certainly call upon them, and live so as to be consistent with them. We have a right to use strength of things around us to help us to live better.

If you have fear, look around you. If you live alone, do something to bring activity into your life, realizing that all waking time in which we are without active interest or association with other persons is time potentially used to think too much about ourselves. So make careful note of diminishing or dwindling spheres of active interest. If, as parents, your children will soon leave you, you will have an empty place in your life. If you do not fill it with something constructive, your lower psychological entity will fill it with fears, worries, or doubts. Wherever there is a lack of constructive, dynamic interest, do something about it. If you are not of a mind or in a circumstance to find employment, find avocational interests. Remember that no matter how far along you are in years, active interests are the secret of health and mental orientation.

An important step toward correcting fears, therefore, is to guard against a lack of active interests and activities. If you observe the negative phases of these tendencies, go against them by simply getting out and doing something before the negative situation takes away from you all desire to do anything. If the desire is already gone, then look at yourself as you might look upon an alcoholic, and say, "It is up to me to make the

necessary adjustments now, or I will die of my own bad adjustments.”

Stop blaming others and stop thinking of outside causes as the primary source of fear. The main source of fear is the lack of integration within ourselves. Things may be critical, even catastrophic, or in their possibilities, but fear arises not from incidents, but from morbid apprehension about incidents. Whatever happens, we must face it as wisely as we can, remembering the words of the Shakespearean play, “Brave men die but once, but cowards many times.”

So wherever there is an emergency, it is our own internal conviction that carries us through. Therefore, it is up to us to educate ourselves in suitable philosophic systems, religious, institutions, and cultural activities. These will sustain our natural conviction that we live in a kindly world, and that a minority of unpleasant people cannot destroy the essential humanity of man.

Humanity will survive, and if, by our own foolishness, we destroy the world we live in, then as Emerson said, we will have to get along without it. But we will go on. We will live through time until we learn. The only problem is—how soon do we want to learn? The sooner we do, the more strength we will have, and the less fear.

Wherever these problems arise, we must sit down quietly with ourselves and work them out, finding law, truth, and honor, and acting accordingly. Then, instead of worrying about the unknown, we have only to watch that which is inevitably true assert itself. We also have the simple internal satisfaction of knowing that whatever happens, we have done, truly and honorably, the best that we knew, as wisely, unselfishly, impersonally, and lovingly as we could. Therefore, we need have no

regrets, for we have done our best not to contribute common trouble. We have done everything possible to improve the situation.

This consolation in ourselves is a wonderful thing. Most persons suffering from guilt and fear mechanisms, are also internally aware of their own mistakes and misdeeds, and many of our fears are involved with a feeling that punishment is due and disaster deserved. Therefore, if, in our own consciousness, we cease to deserve punishment, by living better and more wisely, we are strengthened in all our parts, and those around us will find us great mountains of strength, rather than shaky, uncertain collaborators in confusion. It is perfectly possible to work on ourselves to correct fears. We have been given the power to do it, and by grace of God, and our own effort, we can rise above fear and live constructive lives.

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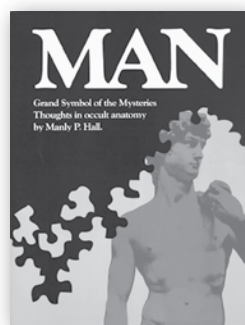
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