

ESOTERIC WISDOM FOR MODERN LIVING



Manly P. Hall

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by Manly P. Hall

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CONTENTS

Page

PART I

The Adept Tradition in Modern Living 5

PART II

Pythagorean Disciplines for Modern Living 29



PART I

THE ADEPT TRADITION IN MODERN LIVING

There has been a strong and important revival of interest in the esoteric teachings of the past in recent years, and among the various emphases that have come back into focus is the story of the adept tradition. I have studied that rather carefully for close to fifty years and have written extensively on it so that my general position, I suspect, is fairly well-known. However, a new dimension has been introduced into the problem, involving an adjustment with contemporary thinking important enough to devote some time and consideration to exploring it.

The adept tradition, as we know it today, came from the past and probably from the ancient Indo/Aryan civilizations of Asia. The earliest accounts bearing upon the subject certainly originated in India, and the Indian situation is somewhat different from anything in the West, so it takes a little orientation. The Vedas and the great Puranas of India discussed the mystery of days gone by when the gods walked with men.

The same myths and legends exist in other parts of the world, but in India there is a situation that has not been repeated anywhere else, of a natural, indigenous structure. The adept tradition in India unfolds through a series of mystics, esotericists, yogis, Vedantans, and many other schools of thought represented in the world by gurus or teachers. These teachers were part of a hierarchy. They were not tied tightly to any worldly organization, but to a spiritual descent from antiquity. The gurus accepted disciples on various levels of attainment and subjected them to extraordinary disciplines.

East Indian religion in its primitive form was a highly disciplined system. Those who followed it gave their lives to the conquest of their own individual weaknesses. They began with all types of physical austerity, restricting and limiting all negative or detrimental propensities of temperament. They worked to gain complete inward placidity. Only an overwhelming faith and a strength and courage enabled them to overcome any delinquencies of moral or ethical character which they might have brought with them into this world. Their continual disciplines ascended from one level of teacher to another toward a mysterious spiritual structure, the mysterious world of the adepts and initiates, the invisible government of the earth.

These people believed firmly that there was an administrative body composed of highly perfected human beings and, in some instances, teachers from other life waves who contributed to the protection and advancement of mankind. They recognized an institution, invisible to the average person, unknown to a great many, but necessary to the construction and unfoldment of humanity. These teachers, invisible rishis and Arhats, were actually elder brothers contributing to the protection of young souls growing up in nature. They were very much like the ancestors in a family, the elders. As such, they were known in a great many nations and among many tribes and peoples.

The disciple had as his final goal that he might become worthy to be an instrument in the fulfillment of the Divine Plan. This Divine Plan, originated by Deity, administered by hierarchy, and finally disseminated throughout the world through spiritualized teachers—this was the mysterious structure upon which the future and destiny of the whole plan of life depended.

When we realize that in Asia there was this tremendous dedication, we can begin to understand why it is difficult to transfer that dedication from the highlands of the Himalayas to the condominiums of America. There is a tremendous interval here between the spiritual way of life and the highly economic and industrial type of existence with which we are generally familiar. Almost all the sacred books

of the world, regardless of their nationality or dating, include the factor of an invisible government, the hierarchy principle. Theology has generally overlooked this in the West, but it is indispensable to an understanding of nature and life, and a great many philosophers have given a great deal of thought to it.

In the first place, if we wish to assume the presence of Deity and the Godhead and believe that this power controls, directs, and judges the existence of all living things, it becomes inevitable that there must be something in the interval between Deity and humanity. It is inconceivable that Deity could administer the whole universal procedure either by itself or by means of a small group of divine beings. It is much easier to believe that this administrative structure, highly conditioned, highly developed, represents a complete technical structure of over-government of divine administration. Like a large corporation such as Standard Oil or General Foods, consisting of a president, a board of directors, and then the office boys, there has to be something between. There must be managers, department heads, and specialists in many different fields to administer a large corporation. The universe is the greatest of all corporations for its very structure is the basis of all integration, all organization and all distribution of authority in nature.

It did not seem unreasonable to the Oriental mind that there had to be this invisible hierarchy, that there had to be a tremendous invisible machinery administering the visible phenomena of life, that this machinery had to take care of everything—from the motion of the cosmos to the sparrow's fall. There had to be a tremendous over-something, greater than anything we can even imagine as we look out into space and see a magnificent distribution of light in the sky, stars, galaxies, nebulae, all kinds of structures out there. Something must be running, ruling, and administering it. The sages of Asia were convinced that the visible world as we see it is merely an appendage to a great invisible process that we do not see, but which we can learn to appreciate or understand. The first step, therefore, in the training of the *chelas* or disciples was to become aware of the importance and

existence of a great process behind the obvious, something more to know than could be found in school texts, and reasons for causes and effects that transcend the common economic impulses with which we are familiar today.

It was evident to these ancient sages that man was not here simply to build a material world, to advance personal fortune or dignity or estate, nor to conquer; there was something much more important in life. He was here to be a servant of the tremendous plan which sustained him and of which he was a part. It did not seem at all unreasonable, therefore, to these elders that the disciple should become aware of the need for this procedure, that having discovered there was a purpose in life greater than the ordinary human purpose the disciple should prepare himself for this purpose and that he should dedicate himself to whatever improvement would make him valuable to the advancement of the grand purpose or the eternal principle of progress. In this concept, therefore, he went through disciplines that not only purified the body but also relieved the mind of prejudices and conceits and opinions. Gradually he unfolded what the ancients believed to be the most important part of man—the extrasensory and spiritual basis of human existence. Ultimately, then, the idea was that each faithful disciple would in turn be promoted into a more important capacity—not to gratify his personal ambitions but to give opportunity to the expression of improvements which he had attained within himself. It was not that these improvements should make him proud or more worldly or that he should use them to advance his personal fortunes; it was that these improvements made him more useful in the great purpose for which all life is basically intended.

From this highland belief came the doctrine that in the heart of Asia what was originally the north polar cap moved, due to other motions of the planet, until it is now in the Desert of Gobi. Here was a mysterious center, the spiritual core from which the invisible government of the world functioned in the material existence. This

government impressed itself by means of enlightened, dedicated, illumined persons. Perhaps we would call them gods, but the Greeks liked to think of them as heroes, a heroic order of life between divinity and humanity. In the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* of Homer and the *Aeneid* of Virgil we find references to these heroes, those who had transcended mortal limitations and at death were listed to become planets and constellation. These were symbolic terms to indicate the advancement of those who had appropriate dedications and lived to achieve victory over the worldliness and ignorance in themselves.

If we consider this Oriental point of view, we can see how it drifted into Buddhism from its ancient Hindu foundation. Buddhism contains the entire concept of the Arhats and the simple and direct way in which the universal laws were administered by dedicated human beings who had become worthy to receive instruction. The *Lotus Sutra* of Buddha, the great apocalyptic *sutra*, describes the procedure in which the divine beings from ten galaxies assembled to hear the revelation of the lotus of the perfect law. The whole of Buddhism is a visible shadow cast by an invisible structure of integrities, insights, and dedications. It also was made up not only of the higher orders of life, the hierarchies descending into material existence, but also mortals ascending gradually out of materiality and towards a divine state. In a middle ground the Divine and the human met in a solid dedication to principles and truth.

These same teachings are found in Taoism in China, in the dervish philosophies and mysticisms of Islam. There are the prophets and the sacred teachers of the Old Testament and the mystics and esotericists that arose in Christianity all of these systems essentially had a dedication, a reason why human beings should strive to be better than they might normally be.

The idea of self-improvement in the esoteric tradition is very different from our concept of self-improvement in the mortal world. Today we think of self-improvement as improvement of a state. Our concept of self-improvement is to be richer, more fortunate, more

glamorous, to hold public office, to achieve distinction among others. Knowledge to us is simply a method of organizing and reorganizing the structure of our material existence. Therefore, we spend many years training to be computer operators, diplomats, scientists, or doctors. We become involved in great professional dedications. We become artists, architects, poets, writers, and musicians, but some way for the most part all of our efforts are directed towards the enhancement of our material estate. We seek fame, distinction, recognition, and honor in this world.

The esoteric tradition approaches this matter a little differently. The question it has always asked and which has been difficult for most people to answer is: when we leave here, of what we have here what can we take with us? Will a good education in accounting work for our favor in a universe in which accounting as we know it has no existence? Does wealth go beyond the grave? Is fame and distinction something that has significance outside of this world? For the most part, if we think clearly and carefully, we have to answer in the negative. There is very little we specialize in here that is good for us any where else. It is important simply because of the world we live in and the condition of society—the degree of advancement of learning in arts and sciences here. Beyond this, most of the attainments we give our lives to can have no enduring significance.

Recognizing this, it was easy for some of the ancient peoples to rise above the lure and temptation of material existence. This was one of the reasons for which the ancient scriptures were dedicated. There is another reason also—assuming it is possible for the individual to know more about the grand structure of existence, then it is also possible for him to do better here and now in his material state. The more understanding he possesses, the more secure he can become, not only in spiritual values but in his relation to the material environment in which he lives.

In different countries there are various names for these mysterious higher personalities, various stories of where they came from and

why they are here, and how they function and operate; but essentially we recognize them mostly through symbolism, a language of pictures or word patterns which we must interpret in terms of inner insight. Instead of a world simply filled with space and dark holes, we recognize that behind a veil (called by the ancient Mayas "*the azure veil of sky*") is a tremendous structure—a structure so meaningful that it brings the individual down in absolute abject humility.

This type of experience was awarded to Jakob Boehme, the German mystic, who in his meditations and mystical contemplations was given a vision of the way the universe opened up—the way that Dante saw space cosmos as a tremendous open rose with hierarchies upon each of the petals. Somewhere behind this blank wall which seems to surround us is a greater world than we have ever known, a world of purposes, of meaning, a world not bound to material or economic structures, but a world belonging to infinite life and its continuing manifestation for the purpose of the unfoldment of the spiritual content in all things that live.

About the beginning of the Christian era, perhaps a little earlier, there was a traffic between Asia and Europe which centered in a few great cities like Ephesus, Antioch, and Alexandria, and we find the adept tradition beginning to emerge in contact with western peoples, particularly through Egypt. In this particular area, the Neoplatonists, the Gnostics, and several other groups of mystics began to teach more openly in the West the belief in this grand plan of things—the belief that everything in the universe was lawful, that there was no such a thing as an accident or a mistake; that all the unfoldments of life, evolution and all its manifestations, were part of one tremendous pattern, a pattern invisible to the common perception, but to be glimpsed or aperceived in meditation or mystical experiences.

From this also came another elaborate Egyptianized form—ritual. Dramatic presentations were given to aspirants, disciples, and students that they might behold symbolically the great order of the world, that they might also experience within themselves symbolically their own place in this plan and how it assisted them in the

dedication of life to significant purpose. This is perhaps the key to the whole thing—the dedication of life to significant purpose, The hermetic philosophies originated in the Alexandrian time. The mysterious adept Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, a strange phantom-like figure, was perhaps the first important western concept of the adept—a mysterious power, the mind of God made flesh, the wisdom of the Eternal brought into a communicable form in the great teacher. Hermes was considered to be the author of all the books that were ever written in the world. No one ever saw him, no one ever discovered who he really was, no authentic history of him is known. Yet we are forced to assume that a tremendous motion in society does not arise from nothing. It has to have a core, a motivating principle. This motivating principle as Hermes was invisible but the source of a tremendous visible transformation in the life of humanity.

There was gradually the rise of systems in the West. The cabalists gave us the *Zohar*, the *Book of the Splendors*—the story of the great face and the lesser face, the story of the eternal throne forever surrounded by hierarchy, by tremendous emanations of beings who gave purpose to the life and improvement of mankind.

In Central America, among the American Indian groups, and in North America there was the mysterious lodge in the sky, the mysterious abode of the wise. In this mysterious lodge where they sat in council forever, these wise ones, the *olds* and the *truees*, administered the fortunes of mankind. The medicine priests were able to leave their material forms and go to the great lodge in the sky for instruction, and sometimes the priest took with him a disciple whom he taught also to depart from the material form and attend the great council of the sachems in the lodge in heaven. These are Indian beliefs of tribes widely separated, with no language in common, scattered over a great continent, and the three parts of that continent—North, Central, and South America—all with the same intuitive understanding which probably arose from the medicine priests—those who from birth were dedicated to the service of truth, who could have no assignment in life except to serve the needs of the tribe.

All these experiences have brought many legends, myths, and stories into existence. The mythologies of nearly all races and nations involved this mysterious circumstance. Around the year 1614 a mysterious proclamation appeared in Europe called "*The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross*." It was signed presumably by the members of an esoteric order, an order that was not to be found anywhere in the mortal world, an order which never received candidates but selected for itself those whom it regarded as worthy. This particular documentation, followed by the *Chemical Marriage* of Christian Rosencreutz, caused a tremendous furor for it was really nothing more nor less than to introduce into Europe the concept of the over-government of the adepts. It met, as might be expected, tremendous resistance. It also met a great deal of hope and anxiety for its success in the hearts and minds of those who were seeking greater enlightenment.

For nearly twenty years this particular group remained a phantom structure in the philosophy, science, and political life of Europe. During this time many tracts were written, several hundred little publications were made, in which persons who felt they were worthy to be contacted tried to make some contact with the brothers of the Rosy Cross. Not knowing where to write or who to turn to, they published little tracts, hoping that they would come into the hands of the proper person. This went on for years, but so far as is known, no one ever received an answer nor had any direct contact in the sense of being allowed to enter in or share in this mystery.

In Europe probably the most important of the mysterious adepts was called Elias the Artist. He was the great patron saint of the alchemists, and alchemy became perhaps the front door to open the gate to the shut palace of the king, as reported in some of the ancient rites. The alchemists were the ones who sought to establish a legitimate contact through self-discipline. The alchemists were following the Yoga and Vedanta and Buddhist principles of Asia; namely, that the only way to contact the hierarchy was through self-improvement. In some mysterious way the individual had to do what Fitzgerald

describes in *The Rubaiyat* where he writes: "And from my base metal must be made the key to unlock the door the dervish howls without." Somehow the individual himself had to become the thing before he could discover it.

Almost all alchemy, as Basil Valentine, Raymond Lilly, and most of the great masters of the art admitted, was not a transmutation of base metals but a transmutation of man, a complete reorganization of his own nature, the gradual release of the spiritual powers of the inner life and the power to control this way the functions of the outer life. The mortal structure of alchemy became its most fascinating aspect, but still we have only legends. These legends, however, like the ones of the East, have persisted and continued to intrigue for centuries past and will probably do so for centuries to come.

Among those who achieved various degrees of enlightenment in these matters, the church boasted of Albertus Magnus, the mysterious priest chemist who achieved the transmutation. Then there was Paracelsus von Hohenheim, the mysterious chemist mystic, who gave to the world a tremendous amount of medical skill, knowledge, and has been regarded as the father of pharmacopoeia. There were others equally mysterious, such as Ripley, the old abbot whose scroll described the whole growth of the human soul. Little by little these mysterious persons contributed something to knowledge in a way that is a little difficult for us to even appreciate. Yet all of them, although writing at this time, said in their writings as apologists that they were not members of this mysterious society Michael Maier published an edition of the laws of the Rosy Cross, but denied that he was a member. One after another these people tried to reach the order and it gradually all faded out, not because it did not exist or the people did not have faith in it. It had already taken over in Islam, it was a powerful part of the life of Persia; everywhere it went it dominated, but it was always mysterious. The dervishes had their adepts, but the dervish too had to wait. He could not hunt out and find these teachers himself.

Around 1660 another voice was heard from this mystery of the adept tradition. This voice was John Heydon, a young man who was peculiarly adapted to be a transmitter of knowledge. He more or less directly involved Bacon in the story and probably was empowered to do so. Heydon described the brothers of the Rosy Cross as a mysterious fraternity inhabiting the suburbs of heaven and as servants of the Generalissimo of the world. This is a very nice definition which has influenced most of the thinking along these lines since.

The problem was very obvious and it sums down to what we have now come to believe to be the contemporary focus; namely, that there is a mysterious integrity behind life—forces working for the improvement of mankind. Every great teacher of the world has admitted this. Most of them have declared that they were commissioned to bring their message by this mysterious group who did not appear but labored for the good of mankind.

At the present time, with the world confused, disturbed, and in great tragedy of personal and collective existence, we are beginning to go back again to the old idea—is there a power beyond our own, by means of which all things move together by law? If there is a tremendous, invisible government of the earth, if the future of humanity and all other species is already established in an archetype, where are these mysterious powers? How can we contact them? How can we know more about them? And if we cannot know these things, how can we at least have a basis for a constructive faith in the power of this mysterious government to regulate the destinies of empires?

I think the Bible and most other scriptures do give us a key. We are, I think, unable to study them without coming to the conclusion that there is something beyond our ordinary problems and efforts working to control and direct the destiny of mankind. That there is a spiritual purpose, a spiritual integrity, seems to be an inevitable necessity. It does not mean that we have to believe something fantastic. Rather, it seems as though if we did not believe this we would fall into fantasy. There has to be a plan, and this plan has to have resulted from a planner. This planner, in turn, must unfold the plan to its

proper organization of processes and beings capable of administering the divine purpose.

A gradually increasing belief is coming back to us out of the past, that there is a destiny that shapes our ends, rough hew them though we may. We are not floating on the surface of something that has no substance; birth is not a beginning nor death an end. We are not simply shipwrecks on a battered planet in space where we must continue until we destroy the planet with our own ingenuity. We cannot live unless somewhere in our nature we believe that life is significant and we look around us and find very little evidence on the material plane of a significant life. We have to go behind the azure veil. We have to try to imagine, at least, the tremendous machinery by which visible things are maintained. We have to realize that the universal construction, like the human body, the macrocosm which is the same as the microcosm, according to Hermes— that these two structures are symbolic of each other, that both are involved in the mystery of creation.

If we want to find the hierarchy in the material world, the most simple possible way of approaching this is to look around us. In London, Christopher Wren built the great cathedral of St. Paul. They put a tablet in the wall, saying: "If you want to know Wren, look around you." In other words, the building itself. If we wish to know the builder, look around us at the world as it is, not just political and structural but that world which man does not control—the mysterious world of light and light processes, the mysterious relationships of living things.

We are becoming ecology conscious, and more and more are studying the various forms of life that inhabit the planet. We are becoming consistently more concerned with man's relationship to the rest and deciding gradually that man must give more attention to his relationship with the divine life plan than with merely the advancement of material fortunes. How are we going to administer this problem? How are we going to take something we cannot see, dealing with persons and beings we cannot actually visualize and also dealing with

principles with which we are not equipped to handle constructively? We have to go back to the same thing that was true in India: there is only one protection to the human being who begins to investigate the unseen and the unknown, and that protection is his own integrity. There is no possible way in which he can protect himself except by the constant protection of his own honor. He must rise above all personal considerations.

The first thing the gurus of India taught their disciples was that the individual was not to keep his mind on the possibility of his own spiritual perfection, that he was not to be concerned with being greater than anybody else, that those in the spiritual hierarchy who would become the greatest must be the servants of all, as Jesus also told his disciples. Self ambition, the desire for the fulfillment of some desire in our own daily living can be fatal to our integrity, lead into a great deal of self deceit, and open us to the deceptive processes of others.

Where we are living for something we cannot see, we have to try to recognize that the real answer to this mystery lies for us in the gradual unfoldment of our own insights concerning life. There are in existence a great many valuable landmarks and works that can be of assistance to us. The ancients, both of the East and West, have left us a fairly good description of what we are looking for. They have left us an understanding of the plan and pattern by which the world is directed, We have the right in the beginning simply to accept or reject. At this point there is no way of becoming certain. Certainty comes at the end of effort; not at the beginning of it—moving from hope to certainty, from faith to fact. The facts cannot come first because they must result from the effect of faith upon our own conduct.

We can study the Vedas, the great Buddhist scriptures, the mandalas and the meditation symbols, and read the ancient writings concerning the esoteric orders. These things may give us a certain sensitivity and may help us to prepare ourselves for the first active participation on our own part. They explain values which we are all seeking but which are not to be found in the common daily living of mankind.

There seems to be a reason why virtue should triumph, why effort should be rewarded according to its kind. There seems to be a reason why somewhere lurking in the background of things is justice. Without some faith in these integrities we are completely lost and we are more or less in that condition of being completely lost now.

We are very largely committed to trivia and infected with the idea that where there are no certainties there is no reason for integrity—to try to be better than we are if it is all going to end in oblivion. If there is no consciousness after death, no survival of some part of the inner life of man, then all morality on the material plane is undermined. Some will answer that it is possible to be ethical without being a believer in a Divine Plan. This is potentially true. An individual can be honest because he believes in honesty, but the price of honesty on that basis of belief is very high. The individual who believes that he must try to be honest but has no concept of an honest universe is at a disadvantage. He will be constantly struck by the pressures of external circumstances and tempted and tempted again, almost beyond his human strength to resist. He will have no basis for inner strength to support what might be his ethical conviction. It is far better, therefore, to realize that ethics is a solid fact, inviolable and supported by the whole universe.

Somewhere in this problem of cause and effect, of reward and punishment, of growth through effort and disintegration through neglect of effort, are the factors that somehow must come into focus. We have to believe in a life bigger than this, or we cannot live well here. We have to believe in a power greater than our own, or our own small strength will fail.

It does not seem to be very necessary to have a tremendous imagination in order to believe in values. Every day in our material way of life we are accepting without question and without proof attitudes which we allow to take over our lives for no good reason. We are constantly believing that which is not true simply because it is popular, because everybody thinks that way, or because it seems more profitable. If we gain a certain satisfaction from believing that which is

not true, how much greater satisfaction awaits the individual who believes that which is true? Wherever there is truth, there is improvement; wherever there is truth, there is progress. All truth and progress lead to peace and the integration of the human personality.

With the present state of world affairs, a great many people are looking for spiritual strength. They are looking for help with their problems and concerns, and many of them are beginning to think in terms of hierarchy and the strengthening power of a more constructive belief. However, the individual does not know how to determine what constitutes the true expression of hierarchy and that which in one way or another is itself a fantasy. The skill is not available, for the most part, of determining the qualities of the values which are communicated to us in the terms of an esoteric tradition. We are not able to tell for certain what is the source of a certain idea, a certain doctrine, the validity of a certain organization, or the integrity of a basic conviction about life that may arise in our environment.

How can we evaluate these things? How can we avoid illusion and delusion? How can we be sure that the particular belief we have is founded in enlightenment, in true esotericism, or perhaps like too many problems of today is being dominated by an exploitation concept. In other words, are we going to find the true thing we seek or are we going to be imposed upon again? This is always a grave question. The ancients faced it and those today who believe in esoteric things will have to face it again. The answer lies, of course, in one thing: integrities.

The individual will have to use his own faculties to determine the validity and integrity of the things he believes. He is going to have to judge his own conduct and consider his own relationship with life. 'Why is he seeking?' is the first problem. Why is he trying to know more than he knows now? Why does he want to get in contact with these mysterious invisibles? Well, there is a big question. Most people who believe that they want this contact, believe that they are looking for it in a sincere manner, but in a great many instances even an ordinary family psychologist can point to their shortcomings.

Most people looking for more enlightenment cannot escape from the concept of self advancement. People who come frequently for advice want to be enlightened because they are sick and they want to get well, because of family problems, or because of their romantic interests. Some want to get further financial support. Others wish to escape the hatreds and unpleasantness that have burdened them all their lives. Some want to escape from the world and to find in philosophy an illumined form of death—a transition into another sphere where they will no longer be burdened with the problems that are here.

Many different motives are found and most of the time these people have to restate their own motives before a discussion is over. They start in by saying that they want this or they want that, or they believe this. After a little discussion they begin to amend their own previous statements, because it dawns upon them that their statement of motives is not right. The search for truth depends almost completely upon the problem of motive. The motive is the all important thing and motive to most people is consolation. They want to rest in peace in a world of confusion. They wish to have the kind of insight which will enable them to face the problems of the outer life more successfully and do not recognize that there is a motive higher than this.

The esoteric system is all based upon the ultimate motive. Ultimate motive is the service of truth itself, a complete dedication to the service of the realities of existence. It is only through this type of dedication that there is any possibility, as the Neoplatonists pointed out, of that mysterious inward moment in which the individual without any real intention or without any real desire for it, is suddenly in the presence of the reality—simply because he has come to deserve it, and the moment it is deserved it is there. According to the Hermetic tradition of the adept doctrine, when the disciple is ready, the teacher appears.

This was part of the alchemical theory. The old alchemists worked a life time in their laboratories with their bottles, chemicals, retorts, and furnaces. They struggled and gave everything they had to it. Then

one night, for no reason whatever, the mysterious stranger appeared. He was supposed, of course, always to be a projection or a manifestation of the supreme artist of all, Elias Artista, and he would come into the laboratory without giving his name, he came in sometimes through the walls without opening a door, he said a few words to the alchemist, gave him the answer to his question, and then disappeared and was never seen again by that alchemist. The whole theory is that alchemy was the science of regeneration. If the disciple is dedicated to self discipline, the correction of personal weaknesses, the gradual improvement of his own life, and never compromises this improvement, he may in due time have that moment's visit from Elias Artista, the one who will give him the answer.

In the actual life of the human being we have to realize, as was true of St. Francis of Assisi, Raymond Lilly, and many others, that the human being is not perfect, is not going to easily become perfect, and furthermore, that the experiences of imperfection are very important. The individual who has never made a mistake has seldom done anything well, because it is necessary to grow through mistakes. As we become more and more dedicated to the realities, we begin to reinterpret our own mistakes. We find that these mistakes become proof of the very truths we are seeking. We begin to realize how we did it not so well and how we can do it better. Little by little the past with its mistakes is transmuted, like the base metals of alchemy, into a realization of the disciplines that are necessary to our own good.

I have not in writing ever discussed the merits or demerits of contemporary organizations. I do not want to do this because it can only lead to endless difficulties inasmuch as evidences that are acceptable are difficult to find. It becomes a battle of conviction in which people are hurt and discouraged, and it all ends in nothing constructive.

I would like to put the emphasis where it seems to me it really belongs. The only way that the individual can surely and truly attain the contacts with the hermetic mystery, as it is described by Mrs. Atwood in her work on alchemy, is through the transmutation of self. It is something that arises from gradual control of the factors of

life. No one is going to contact these esoteric systems by desperation, verbal dedication, nor by a contribution, no matter how generous. The answer is that it can only be reached through the development of the faculties within themselves, by means of which they are able to attain contact with these esoteric schools.

One Oriental system pointed out that the magnetic field of the human body is like the furnace of the alchemist. This magnetic field is varicolored and its hues are continuously changing. Every major trend in the disposition results in a major change in the colors, tones, and qualities of the light emanating from the human body. Therefore, thought forms become very important and the radiance coming from these thought forms is believed to be the basis of the recognition of the spiritual development of an individual.

If these radiances are sufficiently powerful and clear, then anyone who knows can interpret them. If there is a light by which the individual can be seen, it is through these radiances changing within his own constitution—these things cannot be faked. The radiance cannot be hidden nor can any mistaken interpretation modify its coloration or its intensity. Everything that has to do with the divine chemistry in man has to be completely honest and every effect of this type of regeneration is completely evident in the life of the person in the development of his magnetic field.

Truth must be earned. It must be earned by the individual realizing that he is in a sense an exile, a condition natural and proper to the lack of perfection of his own vehicles. Evolution has been a constant description and revelation of the unfoldment of instruments. The body unfolds, the faculties become stronger, the propensities are intensified. Evolution produces higher and higher species like the chambered story of the Nautilus in which the Nautilus is always building more beautiful mansions for its soul. The individual must also build these mansions for his soul, and there must be the constant improvement of the inner life. The effort to conceal the weakness of the internal by strengthening the external is a dismal failure.

No doctrine can grow for another person. No individual can grow because of another person helping him to grow. The other person may give him certain instruction or may inspire him, but every action of life that is a growth must be motivated by the person who is seeking to grow. His friends, his teachers, all those around him can help, but no one can grow for someone else anymore than one person can digest food for another. It is absolutely necessary that growth be the result of personal improvement.

In Christendom there is an interesting parallel to the adept tradition in the story of the saints. The western world has gradually substituted the saint concept for the ancient Arhats and rishis of the East. The saints become again intercessors between man and divinity. These saints are miniature saviors. They possess something of the power of the sacrifice they have made for the good of the world, and from this sacrifice a certain sanctity has been bestowed upon themselves. The saint, therefore, is in a sense another example of the esoteric tradition in the hierarchy. The saints become an order of intermediaries between Deity and mankind. If this has any foundation in validity, and it is held as sacred by hundreds of millions of people, it is because of this very fact: that the individual who loses his life or gives his life for a principle greater than himself should have life everlasting. The saint is most commonly canonized because of martyrdom and this martyrdom is the giving of all of self unselfishly to the glory of God and the service of each other.

This constitutes, then, what to the ancient esoteric orders would be the qualification necessary for participation in the esoteric circle of illumination. The saint becomes the symbol of the person who has achieved the complete renunciation of himself in the service of others and becomes capable, therefore, of interceding. He becomes an intercessor, as all the world teachers have, by means of which the eternal power of things is refreshed and restored in confidence by the proof that among its creatures there are those who are moving definitely and dedicatedly toward union with itself. Those who become dedicated have certain virtues, powers, and authorities vested

in them, and this concept leads of course to the concept finally that these together become the interpreters of the law. They are interpreters not on our level but on the level of absolute unselfishness, impersonality, and obedience. These things are a little hard for western man to accept. We have become more and more convinced of our own importance. We have more or less felt that some way we were going to change the world. But the more effort we put in that direction, the more we endanger the world because that which attempts to solve problems by force, strength, wealth, or authority ultimately fails.

There were times in the early history of mankind when there were shepherd kings guarding the destiny of mortals, where according to Homer and others of the ancient world the gods walked with men. They descended as teachers, guardians, and guides, and they spoke through the prophets of old, as we find in the Old Testament, but gradually something else happened. As the individual grows up he is no longer dependent upon elders entirely. He cannot be trained by being forced to perform certain virtuous acts. He cannot be made honest by being whipped if he is dishonest. He cannot become virtuous because he is punished as a criminal. The individual must make these changes in himself, of himself, and by himself. He must build up these values which he knows to be right.

Gradually, therefore, the shepherd kings vanished from the world and the individual became a self-reliant individual, possessing what St. Thomas Aquinas called "a limited determinism," the right to choose to do right. This choice to do right voluntarily meant the individual actually choosing to supply his inner life with greater integrity, an important personal step. It is very much more important to make one small step in one's own way than to be pushed into something that appears to be much greater. In the evolution of the great mystery school, which is the world, the individual has had to make decisions. These decisions are the basis of his spiritual development and the maturity of his soul. He must choose these things in the presence of temptation. He must recognize that when it appears

most likely that he might succeed materially, it is also possible that he might fail in the great purposes of life. Consequently, there must be always this continuous stress upon personal integrities, personal dedications, and personal purifications.

We honor most the great teachers of our race. We honor those who have sacrificed life and time and have also brought us the deepest and most wonderful revelations the world has ever received. We respect these people and build temples, churches, synagogues, and mosques in their honor. We create priesthoods to serve them. We support their material needs with generous contributions. We respect them in every way. Yet, for some strange reason, we cannot live according to the teachings that they give us. We continue to make the common mistakes that our ancestors made ten thousand years ago. We still cannot escape the power of Abel, the power of self will coming into conflict with Divine Will.

If we really want to understand the esoteric tradition and hope that sometime we might be worthy to have direct contact with it through reputable and proper instruments, we need to carefully explore the teachings to which we are attracted that are now circulating under those terms. We have to look at the revelations attributed to prophets and teachers to make sure these revelations are a challenge to our integrities and not a justification of our weaknesses. We have to be sure that we are going to be disciplined, not that we are going to be relieved of discipline; that we are going to have to live better—not just finding ways to gain the ends we want without the correction of our own faults.

No amount of believing will protect us if we do not live according to the beliefs we hold, and a great believing is sometimes too much for us. We have an idea of some very great, wonderful thing that might happen and in the presence of it we are unable to face the small problems of the day. Beliefs should be simple—within our comprehension, and as our comprehension increases, our believing will be enriched. We need to begin with simple and gentle convictions.

If we can work with these rules, we will then probably find as we have in the past that there will be powerful restorations of esoteric knowledge. There will be reformations in our system of schooling. Little by little these changes are taking place now. Opinions of twenty years ago that were considered heresy from a scientific standpoint are now regarded with considerable interest and attention. Slowly the secret way of life is coming through. It is coming through because we are in desperate need of it. It is also coming through because all physical or mortal knowledge leads finally in the direction of metaphysical and immortal knowledge. It is only that we have to allow it to unfold.

If, however, we lock our material knowledge in prejudiced attitudes, continuing to bind our spirits and our souls to the millstone of the philistines, enlightenment will be precluded. Each person has the consolation to bear in mind that if the integrity is what it ought to be, no condition of society can stand between the individual and the enlightenment which he deserves. No amount of corruption can destroy the just person. No amount of prejudice, circumstance, or tragedy can take away the integrity of the person who is really dedicated to the principles of truth and light. He can go on. He does not have to be supported by his society or his family or his friends or his nation, or his world. It is his privilege to live his beliefs. It is his privilege to continue to grow because actually his growth is not a public event. This is where many get in trouble. When we try to proclaim our growth, it is questioned. But if we grow quietly so that people do not question our growth because they see it, then we are in a much more secure position. No one can stop us, even the greatest tyrant, cannot prevent us from our growing, if our growth is turned toward our inner life and not in conflict with outward circumstances. By releasing themselves from the worldliness within themselves, individuals transcend the power of worldly authority to destroy them. They keep on growing in their own proper and natural way.

To begin to think seriously about the invisible government of the world is our only hope; we know perfectly well that our own politicians are not going to get us there. We know definitely that unless

there is an integrity in space, there is little hope for us; if there is an integrity in space, then integrity is indestructible. We will achieve that which we deserve, and the universe has this vast mechanism, referred to as hierarchy, to make sure that the just person is given the enlightenment that he deserves, that all injustice is finally corrected, and that in the end we shall live to become part of the Universal Plan and not in a desperate effort to create some kind of an economic empire in a material world.

While we live in this world we have to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but we also have to render unto God the things that are His. Our eternal destiny, our souls, our hearts, our labors, and our integrities all must be rendered unto God because Deity is the source of all good in ourselves and that good we must bring as an offering to the world, to our neighbors, and to the Divine Power which fashioned us.

We can gain some little support from the realization that out there somewhere is a plan that will not fail. It has been served for countless ages by dedicated beings of this world or some other who have transcended all human limitations, have outgrown all human ambitions and desires, and live only that the will of Heaven be done. They have become the instruments of that will, and as we become even in a small way little instruments of that will, we too will begin to share in its Eternity. In our own lives we will have a growth that will give us peace of soul even under the pressure of present world conditions.

The world has not been left without hope—man has not been left without the key to unlock his own destiny, but the individual must use the integrities he has to perfect those qualities needed to be developed within his own nature. When he is capable of doing this, he will fulfill the law and will live for the glory of God and the well-being of all creatures that exist.



"Pythagoras of Crotona" (by J. A. Knapp, from "THE SECRET TEACHINGS OF ALL AGES")

PART II

PYTHAGOREAN DISCIPLINES FOR MODERN LIVING

Pythagoras, the great Greek philosopher and scientist, was a man of many and diversified abilities, whose contributions to history, science, philosophy, and religion have been recognized for thousands of years. His school at Crotona was a very strict and well-integrated institution, and was probably the first university. The Pythagorean school system spread throughout Europe and finally reached the Western hemisphere as our university system. The differences between the Pythagorean school and the modern university, however, are worth noting. Primarily, the first and greatest difference lay in the definition of knowledge. To the Pythagoreans, knowledge was a way of life, conditioning the individual to live well; whereas in modern times, education is too often merely an indoctrination with ideas, concepts, and opinions, without sufficient emphasis on the importance of turning out a well-integrated human being capable of administering self-discipline in his own life.

The Pythagoreans emphasized discipline, and many of the things which they taught might therefore seem impractical to us. But let us remember that the purpose of the instruction was not the production of a practical result in terms of wealth or social position, but the attainment of a self-controlled power to administer life. The individual was taught to use his own resources, to become an independent thinker, an independent creative idealist. In this way, he would not only preserve himself, but contribute to the descent of culture, so that he might leave the world a better place than he found it. This concept is perhaps more idealistic and mystical than that of modern

education, but perhaps it is no less practical, for we are still somewhat at a loss to know the full implications of the term practical, as this applies to conduct.

The disciplines of the Pythagoreans began with a series of controls which the individual imposed upon himself. They believed only that the person who can govern himself is greater than the one who can capture a city. Considering self-government as the basis of democratic collective security, it followed that a democracy, in order to function politically, economically, and industrially, must be composed of self-governing individuals whose natures and inclinations are such that they can never pervert, profane, or abuse the privileges with which society invests them.

The Pythagorean disciplines, then, were intended primarily to contribute to the creating of character, the building of an adequate internal reserve against the pressures of circumstance. On this ground, these disciplines are of the greatest value and practical importance today. We are living in a time of great individual and collective insecurity. The average person often feels within himself an instinct toward panic, and he participates, at least to a degree, in the prevailing hysteria. He is not secure; he is not happy; he is not safe; and under these conditions, he naturally turns to a larger pattern of enlightenment for guidance and encouragement.

The rules used at Crotona were, of course, devised for a special group of persons, because the Pythagoreans were very strict in the matter of selecting candidates for their instruction. Their entry examinations were far more difficult than those which we must pass today. It is interesting that a general requirement in this academy at Crotona was that the disciple or student seeking admission, had to display outstanding proficiency in three branches of learning: mathematics, astronomy, and music. The Pythagoreans had a very definite explanation for the selection of these three fields.

By mathematics, the mind is inclined to exactitude; the truly trained mathematician cannot be a sloppy thinker. He is trained to observe and to consider, and he is also required, by this discipline of

mathematics, to live in an orderly way, causing all of his actions to stem from adequate causes, being thoughtful before action. Through mathematics, he comes gradually to recognize the inevitability of universal law, and the lawfulness of the universe. The Pythagorean accepted the fact that he lived within a pattern of cosmic principles which cannot be violated. He not only respected and admired them, but he worshiped them as the positive foundation of his security. To him, God geometrizes, and the whole universe bears witness to the mathematical wisdom of the Creating Power.

From mathematics, the individual passes sequentially to astronomy, and the Pythagoreans regarded this science as necessary and basic because it oriented the individual in the vast space diffusion in which he existed. No true and well-grounded astronomer can be an egotist, because he cannot remain untouched and unmoved by the immensity of which he is only a small and infinitesimal part. Thus the individual learns to recognize that he is not the center of any universe except his own; that he is part of a great moving order of life—vast beyond calculation, and eternal. Through this science, also, he learns to recognize the immensity of the challenge of knowledge. He no longer thinks in terms of his own planet, or in terms of his own pride; he is no longer satisfied to be a great man in a small world. He comes to understand that he is always a citizen of space, suspended between two extremes—an extreme below him, from which he has risen by great and painful endeavor through incalculable periods of time, and the vastness above and beyond him toward which he is moving. It is this expanse toward which he is ultimately to direct his destiny. It is a universe, or space, so infinite, so magnificent, that in the presence of it he can only be reverent and humble. Thus, astronomy was the great orienter of thinking; it gave the individual freedom from the small tyranny of his own selfhood. It helped him to see how his own nature, combined with innumerable other natures, was moving toward ultimate fulfillment, not of his own purposes, but of the vast purposes of which he was a part.

Music was given as a third discipline, because, as the Pythagoreans said, it is the softener of the soul, the nourisher of the principle of beauty in man. It helped him to combine knowledge with the noblest and most serene of emotions. It fed his instinctive and appetitive nature as rationality and reason fed his mind. Thus, by music, he learned the gentle, sensitive reflections and reactions to the mystery of life. He recognized life not only as a magnificent and wonderful immensity, but also as something infinitely immanent and eternally tender. He found in music a sharing of his own feelings with the world, the ability to pour out harmonically that which he appreciated and understood. From music, man gains the concept of harmony, as it relates not only to tones and notes and intervals of music, but also to the natural composition of his own nature. To the Pythagoreans, music was the great source of the instinct to worship and of the natural ability of the individual to pour out from his own soul his deepest and most beautiful chords of harmony and melody.

These three disciplines constituted the basic requirements of the philosophic life, as Pythagoras defined it. To him, only those who had achieved an understanding of these subjects were prepared and qualified to go on to those greater and deeper forms of learning which man may hope, through diligence, to comprehend. This basic testing can be applied, in a measure at least, to our modern way of life. Perhaps, in the course of years, whatever we have learned about these great sciences and arts in school has well nigh come to be forgotten. But there is always the possibility, on the level of adult education, and with the leisure which the modern way of life provides for so many, that we can refresh ourselves on these subjects, in order that we may feel the benefit and beauty which they can give to us. The person who has long left school can still study. In fact, it was a Pythagorean axiom that no man ever graduates from the school of life. He is a student to the end, and in his last breath he may still learn.

In the development of a well-integrated personal life, therefore, it might be good for the average person, on the level of his own interests, to take one of the now popular and available handbooks on such

subjects as mathematics, astronomy, and music, and devote some time to them. By studying them, we come to understand a little more of the world in which we live and the impulses and instincts by which we are motivated to our various levels of action. If we take such works and merely read them on a scholastic level, we will gain very little except tables and figures, rules and laws; but if we meditate upon them, we gradually feel the emergence of the great patterns of space and time, and through the experience of mathematics, astronomy, and music, we gain an introduction to a wonderful vista toward life which can affect us religiously, culturally, intellectually, and psychologically, and be a beneficial form of therapy.

While we are thinking about these things, some will probably say to themselves, "I will do it," but the next day, it is completely forgotten. They might do it if something else did not come along, but they will make no real effort to carry out their resolution. It is for this reason that the term discipline was introduced by the Pythagoreans. Discipline is that gradually attained power of man's self over his circumstances, so that when he resolves to do that which is important, he does it. He acts without regret or doubt, and never has the feeling that what he is doing under discipline interferes with something else that he wants to do, because discipline causes him to choose that which is most important. It becomes an instinctive decision, but before this decision can become instinctive, the individual must learn values, so that he can determine basically what he really desires to do. Pythagoras, and all the philosophers who followed him, have pointed out that the individual can always do what he wants to do, and when he wants truth to that degree of intensity, he becomes capable of making the decisions that are necessary for the attainment of his own philosophic and spiritual immortality. He cannot do this, however, until the desire is stronger than the desire to permit interference.

The discipline of Pythagoras was based upon a strong certainty within. Obviously, ignorant persons, or those emotionally unstable,

cannot have certainty, or the degree of basic impulse or integrity sufficient to impel them to important decisions. This kind of internal strength must gradually be attained, and Pythagoras believed that the first and most important step is to desire discipline, to recognize the need for it, and to realize that it is more important than those other worldly things with which we are apt to be overly concerned. Thus the desire for discipline was a prerequisite for application to the school.

Another prerequisite for the Pythagorean discipline was aimed at a very interesting point in human nature, which, unfortunately, has not changed a great deal since the passing of the ages. Pythagoras said that no individual has a real desire for knowledge until he is willing to make a practical statement of this major aim in his life. Thus, all who came to the Pythagorean school first of all presented their goods to the school. The individual who did not desire knowledge greatly enough to give forth all other things that he might possess, would never have it. The Pythagoreans lived with complete frugality. They had very little if anything, for their system did not permit wealth for anyone. The various goods that were bestowed upon the school were ultimately distributed to the poor. It was therefore not the use of the goods that the school desired, but the full and complete statement of the integration and consecration of the disciple. If he was willing to give everything except his worldly goods, his discipline was so weak that he could not be expected to sustain himself under temptation. If his worldly ambitions were still stronger than his search for truth, he would ultimately use truth or pervert truth for the further fulfillment of his ambition. Thus it was the belief of the Pythagoreans that unless worldly ambition was sacrificed to truth, the individual need never hope to be free from the insecurities which come from attachment to worldly things.

Pythagoras taught that as long as the individual must be concerned constantly with his worldly problems and possessions, he could approach truth only with a divided consciousness, an uncertain mind. He would always be vulnerable because someone could always buy

him as long as material possessions were important to him. Every man has a price except that individual who is completely consecrated to principle. And even Pythagoras, 2500 years ago, taught that there was nothing more dangerous to the world than an advancement of knowledge without dedication to principle, and that the individual who became learned but was still bound by human ambitions and desires, would ultimately lead his world into disaster. He might be strong enough to control, but he would not be wise enough to control virtuously. On the other hand, if a disciple departed from the school, for any reason, all of his goods were returned to him; nothing was kept. If a member was expelled from the school for conduct improper to such an academy, a headstone was placed in the community graveyard to indicate that he was dead to the world of truth.

These very strict attitudes might not be fully applicable today, and we certainly could not advise the average person, living in the 20th century, under the economic and industrial pressures of this generation, to advance himself philosophically by initially bestowing upon others all his possessions. The primary intent of the discipline is not that we give away possessions, but that we renounce the neurosis of possessiveness. Today we are required to carry our part of the world's burden, to support and sustain those who are dependent upon us, and to meet all the obligations of natural and normal living. The danger is not in meeting our material responsibilities; it is in the peculiar sense of possessiveness, with its attendant sense of power, and the gradual permission which we bestow upon our goods to dominate our lives and overwhelm our characters.

We can give thought to this in the modern world. We can begin to recognize that the things we have are both opportunities and responsibilities. It is not necessary that we renounce them, but it is necessary that we gradually gain dominion over them, so that they do not possess or control us. Buddha taught the same essential doctrine, and in ancient times it was a very physical and outward expression. You must fulfill exactly; bestow all you have. Today it is a symbolic problem which involves the individual's freeing himself from the

sense of importance, superiority, and power bestowed only by his material possessions. As long as he holds such an attitude, he cannot be happy. Loss will destroy him; gain will pervert him. It is when he is free from the dominance of possessions that he can use them well, and therefore it is also his privilege and opportunity to bestow thoughtfully that part of what he has that he can spare for purposes other than his own. He must recognize the tremendous significance to his own spiritual security of not being bound in the sense that his possessions are his strength, remembering always that it is his use of them that determines his standing as a human being and as a wise person.

The next point in connection with the Pythagoreans was the discipline of silence. This, also, was very soundly and firmly imposed by the school. Those who passed from the lesser grades to the higher part of the school were required to take an obligation of complete silence for five years. It is recorded that nearly two hundred of the disciples of Pythagoras underwent the five-year discipline of silence, and among these were nearly sixty women. Later, after the gradual decline of the school, and the murder of Pythagoras, this discipline was voluntarily assumed by the great scholar, philosopher, and mystic, Apollonius of Tyana. In the midst of this five-year period, he came to a community where there was a riot. There was great unrest and difficulty among the people, and the magistrates implored him to break his silence long enough to put the community in order. Apollonius declined. He simply stood in front of the rioters and, without speaking, looked quietly at them for several moments. They went home and restored order themselves.

The discipline of silence, again, is something that, in our busy everyday world, we cannot indulge without tremendous complications. We would have to retire from the world to some place of reclusive living, or do vigil, or something of that nature. These things are not required. Yet the basic principle under the law of silence was a very simple and sound one; namely, that of all parts of man, the most difficult to control is the tongue, which is perhaps the greatest cause of

tragedy and the greatest danger and difficulty for the individual himself. Therefore, there must be an exercise of discipline upon speech, and in this case, discipline is the ability to control the tongue under all moods and conditions, whether in peace or in anger, happiness or misfortune.

In one of his aphorisms, Pythagoras said, "Speak not ill of anyone," and one of the disciples looked rather sheepishly at the master and said, "Master, that admonition is practically a decree of silence for most of us." It is certainly true that many of the difficulties that come to us in life are due to words too quickly spoken, statements made without due consideration, judgments passed without thoughtfulness and meditation. Now we need not impose upon ourselves a strict regime of silence, but it might well be that we should begin to place certain restrictions upon our speech, making it a point of discipline to actually practice them. From such practice, the individual gradually gains increasing strength to control himself. The particular things he does may not be especially important in themselves, but it is important that he can and will follow certain restrictions, even under pressure. This indicates self-control and a strength of character that is greater than impulse or inclination.

By placing certain restrictions upon ourselves, we may learn to listen rather than to speak, becoming more and more satisfied to let others have their say rather than attempting to dominate all conversation. Pythagoras pointed out that the five-year silence freed the individual to receive knowledge, by sparing him the constant hypnotic influence of his own pretensions. We often speak before thinking carefully, and later we may repent our words. But words spoken are cast to the air, and become like little immortal birds that fly out and we know not where they go, nor can we ever bring them back. So the discipline of silence can be approached in modern living by increasing thoughtfulness, whereby the individual gains control of his tongue and causes it to be moved only by his wisdom and his understanding. Once we forbid ourselves an immature expression of judgment, we will be less likely to have an immature level of judgment.

The next thing that the Pythagoreans advocated was diet. This, again, related primarily to self-control. As the tongue is difficult to control, so is the stomach. The appetites of man are forever pressing in upon him, demanding his attention and his time. Pythagoras was among the first to recognize that about one third of what we eat sustains us, and the other two thirds destroys us. By diet he meant a very simple and natural fare, suitable to the economy of the body, to the preservation of health, and the maintenance of efficiency. The purpose was to liberate the individual as far as possible, not only from the appetites of the flesh, but from the inclemencies of the flesh—those spells of sickness and disorder which should not interfere with the life of the wise and dedicated person. In order to preserve the inner life and the soul in their most natural and harmonious condition, it was necessary to protect the body against the inconsistencies and excesses of the passions and desires. The Pythagoreans engaged in extensive fasting, and Pythagoras himself is supposed to have fasted for as long as forty days. At that time, of course, it was considered a religious obligation, and actually, the gradual decrease of sugar content due to fasting, frequently resulted in mystical experiences or psychical manifestations. These have always been associated with fasting and vigil.

Today, again, we cannot necessarily follow this rule completely. Perhaps the best example of the discipline of fasting in the life of the average person has been given to us, in modern times, by Mohandas Gandhi, the great religious leader. Gandhi never ate on Friday. This was his fast day, and he practiced it not only as a religious observance, but as a philosophical discipline. He recognized the importance of a day of rest for the body. In our Christian world, we set aside the Sabbath as a day of rest, but we rest everything except the stomach. On that day, we make it work double time, for that is our day of feasting and rejoicing. We give thanks to God, as one of the Greeks said, by overloading our system and destroying our bodies.

The Pythagorean discipline of diet, therefore, could well be instituted among us, either through one day of fasting or through a

moderation in the intake of food at all times; a moderation contrary to desire, but in conformity with reason. By such action, we are again exercising control; we are proving internal mastership over external things. Here, again, moderation can be used instead of abstinence, and each individual can bring certain disciplines into his life by refusing to cater to himself in everything. He will learn a little of that Spartan life which is so necessary to freeing the consciousness for its own essential labors. The reward of discipline is not frustration, but release from unreasonable intensities which might otherwise destroy peace of mind and security.

Of course, anyone who contemplates a moderation, or any major change, in his dietetic program, should do so with practical consideration of value. A person suffering from peculiar or unusual ailments, or whose mood patterns, if broken, might interfere with his well being, should not attempt an excessive program of any kind, and no change should be undertaken without expert advice from a qualified dietician. But in many ways, we already know our mistakes; we simply do not have the strength to correct them. Every time we use strength, we become stronger. Every time we evade the challenge of required strength, we become weaker. In the cage of diet, it is not the food involved that is important; it is the principle of the action. It is the fact that we can control that becomes the very vital part of our lives.

The Pythagorean community always opened its day with religious ceremonies. And this, in many ways, is a very useful thing. In the Western world, we are more inclined to observe whatever religious ceremonies we use before retiring at night. Thus, if we pray or read the Bible or some sacred book, we are likely to do this in the evening. This is perhaps due to the pressures that surround us in the early hours of the day, for nearly always we are challenged by responsibilities. The Pythagoreans, however, insisted that a brief period of religious reflection at the beginning of the day was of the most vital usefulness because it keyed the day. Most men sleep well, and are

least harmful while asleep. We are not making wrong decisions, annoying our associates, or doing numerous things which make our waking hours uncertain or difficult. Therefore, we do not need as much guidance during sleep as we do in our waking hours. It is the day before us about which we must be particularly and immediately thoughtful.

The Pythagorean ceremony for the dawn was one which we would do well to restore, at least in a small measure. The morning service of this society was one of thanksgiving. The individual made a simple and basic statement of his recognition that the day is a great opportunity within law; a blessed privilege given to him; a group of hours at his disposal for the improvement of himself, the service of others, and the worship of God; that these hours should be planned and purposed, and each hour, as it passed, should be met with gratitude. So it was with thankfulness that man accepted the gift of another day.

To us, another day is just another day, and therefore we are likely to waste it. We do not consider time as very important until it has nearly run out. We do not recognize that the psychological attitudes we hold toward the day can also be of profound importance. The Pythagoreans realized that the thought with which we open the day can key the entire span. If we open it regretfully, sighing and thinking of it as just another period of trouble, we have already keyed ourselves to this attitude. We are converting our own consciousness to negation.

It is quite possible that the morning consecration, as practiced by Pythagoras, would not, in a day or a month, change the life of the individual to any appreciable degree. But any pattern which is established over a period of years has tremendous importance, particularly if that pattern is discipline, because a disciplined pattern gradually accumulates. Each day it is reinforced, and in time, it has tremendous influence over the unorganized and discorded pattern that passes through our consciousness occasionally. This means that five minutes of concentration and consecration every morning may have

greater effect upon our lives than the eight or ten hours of disordered living which follow. Disordered living is without pattern or penetration, and without discipline, and therefore does not have coordinated strength. It does not have the surviving power of the few moments set aside, conscientiously followed from one year to another.

Pythagoras also advocated that his disciples meet the morning with music. Today this is easier than it was in those times, because in those days, the individual himself, or the group to which he belonged, had to supply this music. Today, the individual has the radio and phonograph available to him, so that it is not difficult to have music with his morning ceremony of dedication. A few moments of music become a medicine to the soul, preventing troubles from taking over early in the day. The Pythagoreans therefore met the day with song and prayer; they met the day as a new evidence of the divine plan, and as a wonderful opportunity to grow, to build, and to serve together. They dedicated each day, and keyed it with a positive statement of purpose, and this helped them and sustained them through the hours.

In the more advanced work of the school, there was a further morning discipline, which consisted of sitting down very quietly for a few minutes and planning the day. Nothing goes worse than unplanned time, and regardless of whether we work for ourselves or for others, there is always a possibility of some organization by advance thinking. The individual who works for others may find that his plans will not always work out because there may be interruptions, but in most routine activities, planning is of great help. It saves time, prevents mistakes, and keeps the individual in a better condition to do the things that he has to do. Thus the planning of the day provides the scheme, or the pattern, by which every action is integrated to purpose.

Some will probably say that they cannot spend ten minutes a day to do this; they will be late for work, or late for something, or they would have to get up fifteen minutes earlier to do it. It probably

would be a good discipline for them to get up fifteen minutes earlier, for during the course of a planned day, they will save 20% of their energy and an equal amount of time. Thus they will have more hours and opportunities for themselves, and will likely advance more rapidly in their professions and trades. It was a point in Pythagoras' philosophy never to waste energy. Whenever you waste energy, you waste life; and when you waste life, you profane God.

Before we go further with these disciplines, I would like to bring up one point that might arise in your mind; namely, that under the Pythagorean system of discipline, it might seem that individual initiative and vitality could be destroyed, and the person would become neurotic. This is why Pythagoras demanded interest and proficiency in mathematics, astronomy, and music before he admitted disciples. He admitted only individuals whose basic desires in life were already so integrated that they truly desired to grow. When we try to grow, but do not really have the inner desire, we merely want the benefits of growth without the effort. For the individual with this psychology, these disciplines are impractical. The person does not sincerely want them. He is merely trying to convert himself to something he does not really believe. If he does this, and imposes discipline upon himself, he will become neurotic. But if he regards discipline not as frustration, but as fulfillment, and finds the results of discipline beneficial in his daily life, then it becomes what he most naturally wishes.

These disciplines did not, in any way, bestow upon the Pythagorean a sense of weightiness. He did not accomplish discipline by a tremendous introversion of energy. He was not constantly sitting around, deeply pondering, endlessly meditating, and forever studying. Such was the furthest from the Pythagorean concept, because these brothers were required to be active. They took part in practically all the normal activities of the human being. Like the Essenes of the Holy Land, who probably descended from them, the Pythagoreans worked in the fields; they performed some physical labor; they counseled and worked with the sick; and they even sat in legislation with the leaders of the communities. They were busy people.

Pythagoras himself tells us that there is very little growth in this world without a sense of humor. The Pythagorean was not a dour person, because these disciplines did not show. I will never forget the last time I heard Kreisler play the Cradle Song; it was so beautiful and so delightful. For him it seemed so simple, and the listener would never realize for one moment the tremendous discipline that this wonderful violinist had gone through in order to be able to play this simple melody so beautifully, so effectively, and so naturally. It is the same way with the philosophic disciplines. These things do not show as disciplines, and if they are talked about, and if the individual claims distinction for practicing them, he has failed completely in their purposes .

Actually, these disciplines are very gently and lovingly held within consciousness, and the person who holds them and practices them gains distinction for a greater humanity, naturalness, simplicity, charm, and friendliness. He is also very likely to be considered humorous, happy, and a person well-adjusted to all the situations with which he is associated. Real philosophy never produces the traditional “highbrow.” It produces a person of greater understanding; one whom we all like better. We do not necessarily know why we like him better, but his balance of temperament and disposition makes him a good and an interesting human being. These disciplines were never intended to cause the appearance of great weightiness. This comes only when we burden the mind with notions; not when we enlighten the spirit. When the spirit shines through us, it lifts us and removes the sense of weight by giving us a tremendous exhilaration of consciousness within.

The Pythagoreans also ended the day with appropriate ceremony, and in these ceremonies, they included not only thanksgiving for the day. They never gave thanks for this achievement or that distinction; they gave thanks for the privilege of having lived that day. They asked nothing except the privilege of serving truth, and to them, the important thing was that they had been given another day in which to learn, to grow, and to live. If there was a request for anything, it was

simply a very humble request that the individual might understand better and appreciate more. There was never demand, nor was there ever doubt or negation of the Infinite. Astronomy had taught the Pythagoreans that all things are forever existing within the great beauty and providence of Deity and therefore man had to ask for nothing except eyes and heart with which to understand the truth and beauty everywhere present. Thus, there was merely a simple, natural expression of gratitude.

To the Pythagoreans, Deity was not an autocrat, but an elder brother, a strong and wonderful power that had gone before along the long road of life. Therefore, the individual could reach out, as a human being, and meet Deity on the level of friendship. He was not a slave of the Infinite; he was the Infinite, growing up through itself, serving with it, serving for it, and serving because of the power it gave him. The relationship between man and God was a natural human relationship, which preserved the dignity of Deity and also the honor and dignity of man.

For those who had gone further in the disciplines, the evening ceremonies also included a quiet period of meditation, lasting usually from five to ten minutes. This meditation was of a retrospective kind, dealing with the recalling of the day. In this process, the Pythagorean examined the day he had lived, and began to understand it. He was resolved never to go to rest with the belief in his own heart or soul that he had been the victim of any injustice. Whenever the occasion arose where it might seem that injustice had been done to him, he must sit down quietly by himself and solve the mystery and discover justice.

To these people it was very important that the individual should never permit the belief in an unjust universe to creep into his consciousness. Most persons today would not actually say that the universe is unjust, but they would permit in their minds the idea that their own kind can be unjust, and that things can happen which are without justice even in a world of justice. The Pythagoreans denied this. They said that injustice is not real; it is an illusion caused by the

weakness of our own understanding. Therefore, it is up to us to put this so-called injustice in order. By the discipline of retrospection, we observe also the mistakes we have made in our own daily conduct, and we can see how this costs us something in time and energy, happiness and understanding, and how it violated principles that were real and sacred and important to us.

If, then, each of us uses his own day as a textbook, we will gradually come to understand God, man, and the universe a little better. In analyzing our own conduct, we will make discoveries that will come to mind again in the future and prevent us from repeating the same mistakes. If we observe the intricate manifestations of our own instincts, appetites, and impulses, we come to know ourselves better; and the wise man must know himself. In the retrospective exercise, the individual relives the day, usually in reverse order, beginning with the last occurrence, and going back to the morning. Thus he sees all incidents in reverse relationship, the effects preceding the causes, rather than following them. This helps to revive the recognition of law, and proves conclusively to the thoughtful person that the law of cause and effect does operate. Therefore, the individual can control effects by controlling causes, but once having set causes in motion, he must abide by the effects. This becomes a more important way of learning than any book can be, if it is quietly, honestly, and honorably done, and it was assumed that by the time the Pythagorean had reached this degree of growth, he could do it honestly, and could face the implications of his own mistakes and admit them, and learn from them.

This discipline was of the greatest utility, and it is still practiced among many religious organizations, particularly in Oriental philosophy. It is a very valuable aid because it gives a person the most intimate concept of his own conduct, enabling him to see himself in perspective. This is something that would change most of us if it could happen.

Having followed through the procedure of these disciplines and exercises, the Pythagorean prepared for rest, with the full realiza-

tion that rest and relaxation are as necessary to the individual as any other activity. Even Plato and Aristotle pointed out that the individual who never plays can never work well. But the important point is that relaxation and order of life must be cultivated. When they are cultivated, rest, as Pythagoras noted, is dreamless and pleasant and peaceful, and the individual arises refreshed to meet the dawn. To have this type of rest, means that we have put our own psychic content in order. Thus Pythagoras was a wonderful psychologist, for he was very quick to recognize the vital importance of the human being's attitudes upon his health, his environment, and his family. This realization led him to integrate what he called "the philosophic life"—the life of the person who seeks truth.

This type of life can extend into every department of living. When the Pythagoreans gathered, men in many of the professions and arts were there—lawyers, doctors, politicians and diplomats, statesmen and soldiers. All these different groups can find the practice of these disciplines equally meritorious. The doctor is a better physician, the lawyer a better jurist, if he frames his career and his work with this great pattern of philosophic discipline. He finds that in everything he does, there is clarity of consciousness, simplicity and naturalness of decision; and, little by little, these disciplines liberate through him a kind of extra-awareness of things, by which he is intuitively capable of greater appreciation than ever before. The more the body, the mind, the emotions, are quieted by order, the more completely man responds to the subtle spiritual and abstract instincts and impulses of his soul.

Pythagoras also strongly recommended to his disciples that they cultivate poetry; not necessarily that they become poets, but that they gain appreciation for it. He and his disciples also practiced the classic dancing of the time because he felt that dancing was important in the introduction of rhythm and harmony into the movements of the body. He did not understand the body mechanism, as we know it today, but he had a very wonderful appreciation of it, perhaps even in excess of our present scientific knowledge. He knew

the value, though he did not know the intricate physiological elements involved.

He realized, for example, that the motion of the body is obtained only by a tremendous expenditure of energy—much more than we realize—in our daily activities. He realized also that energy is most available when its motions are uninterrupted and it flows in its own natural order and pattern.

Pythagoras therefore believed firmly that all motions of the body should be rhythmic. He should never subject the body to the stress and strain of asymmetrical forms or impulses or to sudden and excessive movements. Whatever we do—whether it be lifting a weight, or running a race, or merely functioning from *dawn til dark*—should be done with rhythm and without a sense of interruption. It is reported by one of the early writers that it was utterly impossible to interrupt Pythagoras. If someone called on him, and he was in the middle of a sentence, and the person talked on many subjects for many hours, Pythagoras would finish the sentence when the visitor departed. Nothing could interrupt the motion of his consciousness.

Pythagoras pointed out that nothing in the universe can ever be interrupted, and that the individual who has complete control of himself can change to meet the needs of the moment without the slightest sense of tension; and every time he saves himself a moment of tension, he saves himself a vast amount of energy which some day he may need. So the conservation of energy means that we shall not accept the fact of broken rhythms, but must continue quietly to flow along in the various patterns that are essential, regarding interruptions merely as a curve around a situation, never breaking it, never truly interfering with any purpose that is real or vital.

Discouragement, dislikes, antipathies—all the various problems of daily existence—interrupt our patterns of living. According to the Pythagoreans, if we analyze these things quietly, and if in the evening we recapitulate and re-order them, then gradually, in the course of time, all interruptions will be taken out of living. We will no longer feel any irritation against circumstances. Irritation, because it throws

a tremendous strain upon the body, locks the psychic nature, and the moment we are irritated, our judgment loses its integrity, our emotions lose their beauty, and our body gradually loses its energy. These things we cannot afford.

There is one other discipline that I want to bring to your attention. Before a man could enter upon the philosophic life, it was necessary for him to quietly, sincerely, and under the most sacred and solemn obligation, renounce all hatreds; all disaffections of any kind toward any man. It was necessary, before he was admitted, for him to take the oath that there was no nation or individual on earth against whom he held resentment for any reason. This in itself would probably add five years to the life of the average person today, because our resentments, our antagonisms, are forever depleting us, not only directly, but indirectly. They are the cause of numerous chronic ailments which are burdening us very heavily today. Therefore, where antagonism, criticism, dishonesty, and condemnation go uncorrected, individuals are less enlightened, families less secure, nations less prosperous, and governments less effective.

The individual must dedicate himself to justice, to principles, to truth; and he must renounce all claim upon the negative emotions of this world. As the Greeks so well pointed out, "A good life is man's constant prayer, his constant offering to the Supreme Power which he claims to recognize." These disciplines, then, adapted and modified, can give us a better perspective and help us to realize that we are here primarily to grow. This world is a school, and just as discipline in public school helps us to learn how to learn, so discipline in living helps us to learn how to live.

As a proof of the philosophic life, we know that Pythagoras attained a great age. How long he might have lived, we do not know, but it is now believed that he was somewhere in his advanced eighties when he was assassinated. Only a few months before his death, it is recorded by Iamblicus, Pythagoras could outrace any of his disciples in their twenties. Physically, he was without flaw or blemish, and he had such magnificence of appearance that those around him felt that

he was indeed the son of the god Apollo. But it was not the absence of these physical blemishes alone that distinguished his person; it was the absence of those moral and internal blemishes which profane or destroy the beauty of man as the living house of God. And just as surely as we are warned not to make our Father's house a place of merchandising, we must realize that we must not let this body, with its mind and emotions, which is the house of the God within us, simply become a place of barter and exchange. We cannot allow our lives to be dedicated and consecrated to secondary issues; to do so is to destroy peace and harmony,

According to the Greek school, the end of all discipline is that it shall become involuntary. Habits can be good as well as bad, and it is just as easy to maintain and practice a good habit as a destructive one. The reason destructive habits are stronger is that we support them with a greater amount of conscious energy. Once, however, the philosophic life becomes a habit, it is no longer a yoke or a burden; it becomes an essential part of living. These little periods of quietude and meditation, these simple experiences to make life more serene and more secure, become just as natural to us as breathing. We begin to miss them if they do not happen. We begin to feel a certain need for this peace of mind, for this peace and security of spirit. We not only feel the need, but we are aware of the fact that we can meet that need, and as a result of these disciplines, we gradually become better human beings.

All these principles, with modifications and certain adaptations, are usable now, and we do not have to go to some distant place like the island of Samos or Crotona in order to practice them. These ancient places are the site of ruins now. The old culture, the old way of life, is gone, but Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates are not buried in the ruins of ancient Greece; they live on in the life and appreciation of mankind because of their magnificent contributions to man's eternal security. These contributions are not valid because we read or hear about them; they are valid only when we apply them in our own practical way of life. If we wish to enjoy a better life, then

we must practice a better code of conduct. If we do not wish to be involved eternally in the terrors and tribulations and trials of this complicated age, we must, by our own intent and purpose, restate the life within us which is superior to all circumstances and is above all conditions, and is itself in eternal league with eternal providence.

The Pythagorean disciplines can be fitted into modern living. Some day perhaps they will again be restored as part of education, for when we learn to think on these levels, we will begin to find solutions to the great problems that we face today. Enlightenment in education must be the beginning of a better generation of human beings, who live and think and dream on the level of principles, practice these principles, and enjoy the benefits which right practice and right discipline confer.

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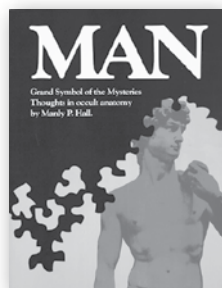
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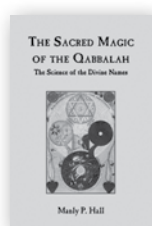
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Manly P. Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., a non-profit organization in 1934, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than seventy years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.

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