

# The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

3910 Los Feliz Blvd. - Los Angeles 27, Calif. - NOrmandy 3-2167

MANLY P. HALL  
PRESIDENT-FOUNDER



HENRY L. DRAKE  
VICE-PRESIDENT

## CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN -- AUGUST 1967

Dear Friend:

In the spirit of the summer season, we have followed a well-established Oriental custom of displaying "cool" and "breezy" subjects. This should help our friends to rise above



smog and high temperatures. Among the woodblock items will be an unusual group of delightful modern prints of birds, flowers, animals, and scenery. The birds are especially charming, and the treatment of the various subjects combines impressionism with skillful draftsmanship. Among the original sketches and small paintings are many with a slyly humorous touch. The Eastern artist always had a wonderful sense of whimsy. He can cause animals to express nearly all human attitudes and emotions. There is a most intriguing painting of a rabbit, rather in the spirit of Alice in Wonderland, and sketches of rural life capture much of the simple dignity of the peasant at work

in his field. In the more classical vein are historic themes and wonderful old landscapes of soaring mountains, or ships upon calm seas. As the exhibit will continue for two months, pictures will be changed frequently, so there will always be something new to bring pleasure to viewers.

We have two unusual collections of surimono, one belonging to the permanent collection of the P.R.S., and the other, part of my personal collection. The material selected for viewing in September is from the latter group. I have selected representative surimono with considerable care. Most of the important artists of the Ukiyo-e School will be included in this showing. These prints were never intended for commercial use, but were largely prepared for members of artistic and literary clubs. The paper is exceptionally fine, and many of the prints are heightened in gold and silver, and have a three-dimensional effect through the strong embossing. Surimono often required from twenty to twenty-five hand-cut plates, and the original editions seldom exceeded one hundred to two hundred examples. Those interested in graphic arts, woodblock printing, and the miniature designs for which these artists are famous, will find this collection outstanding.

By this time you have probably received a brochure outlining our "Space Program" for 1967. We hope you will give it your most favorable consideration, as our need for additional facilities is real and acute. We have a small staff, and overcrowding in all departments detracts from efficiency. We look forward with great expectations to additional space for exhibits of fine books and manuscripts and greater security for the stocks of our own publications. We will include regular reports of this special project in future Contributors' Bulletins.

We have recently made a photograph of an unusual item in our permanent art collection, an outstanding example of woodcarving from Benin. This region was an independent country until the closing years of the 19th century. Very little is known of its culture prior



to the explorations of the Portuguese in the late 15th century. It is established from surviving artifacts that the Beni people, although given to ritualistic sacrifice, were normally a good-natured group with a superior degree of intelligence and considerable artistic skill. From them have descended many remarkable bronze castings, and so far as is known, their attainments in this field were unique among the African tribes. There is evidence also that they derived much of their artistic background from the classical Egyptian culture, and their symbolism includes elements traceable to many early civilizations, including Near Eastern and northern European.

Of interest to us is the inherent talent of the Beni people in carving and casting images. By degrees, Western artistic standards have been taught in this region, with the result that the beauty and integrity of the older designs have been sacrificed to modern conventions. In the transition period, however, a number of interesting pieces were produced. These were made in the early years of the present century, and the one reproduced herewith belongs to this group. There is very

little indication of foreign esthetic intervention. The face and head are in the spirit of old Benin, and the high collar and peculiar arrangement of the hair is distinctive of the old style favored by the royalty of Great Benin.

The theme of this carving is said to be derived from early legends, and is suggestive of the Biblical account of the intention of the Patriarch Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord. The Benin patriarch holds in his arms the figure of a child, which he is supposed to have been willing to offer as a human sacrifice. At the critical moment, however, a divine intervention saved the life of the child by miraculous means, but because of the patriarch's sincerity and the willingness of the child to die at the command of the god, the community was spared and many benefits came to the land.

This outstanding piece of African folk art is a clear revelation of the creative skill of these people, and a good indication that in the years ahead, African art will make a valid contribution to the field of world esthetics.

As the holiday season is nearer than you think, we might call to your attention that we will have a small but carefully selected group of especially appropriate Christmas cards that you can order by mail, including two that I designed. They are simple, but unusual. May we remind you again that when you give our publications and cards for Christmas, you are helping to maintain our program of activities.

By the time this letter reaches you, I will probably be in Japan (D.V.). This time I will fly over the Aleutian Islands on what is regularly a non-stop flight -- although there are exceptions. On this visit, I expect to contact some of the more recent religious movements, most of which are of international and inter-religious interest. Several friends there are planning to cooperate in research projects, and I hope to visit a number of centers dedicated to the continuation of folk art enterprises, such as ceramics, weaving, basketry, painting, and metal working. The importance of these crafts in releasing modern man from the tensions of daily living, is everywhere recognized. I will be gone for only a few weeks, and during my absence, there will be many interesting activities at our headquarters. I will report on my adventures as soon as possible. In the meantime, with deep appreciation and kind regards, I remain

Most sincerely yours,

*Manly P. Hall*



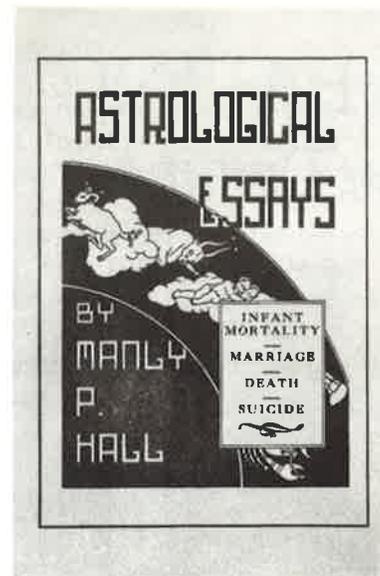
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Paracelsus has been called "the most original medical thinker of the 16th century," but has long been the subject of a heated controversy involving the theory and practice of the healing arts. The four parts of this booklet, which appeared in our journal in 1958 and 1959, deal with: Universal Energy, Sympathetic Forces Operating in Nature, Fundamentals of Metaphysical Healing, and Invisible Creatures of the Elements. The essay on "Nature Spirits," with an Introduction by Mr. Hall, was published as a booklet in 1939, and was unavailable for many years.

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