



The Beyond Within

By RUTH C. COHN

For the time being I am on a leave of absence from private practice. I have been holding training workshops in the experiential therapies for therapists and in the theme-centered interactional method for teachers, organizers, therapists, clergy, in Europe; celebrating my 60's birthday in August by helping found WILL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION CENTER in Zürich. With this basis for Training Institutes in Europe, my professional life's dream for promoting humanistic, therapy-founded, mass-education, also in German-speaking countries, has come true. I owe the tools for this enterprise to the reciprocal work with my colleagues and friends in the U.S., above all, the staff of W.I.L.L. and the inspirational workshops of A.A.P. Thank you all! I shall be back for the WILL Exchange Workshop and the AAP Convention in October. Thereafter, I'll continue my professional work with WILL, N.Y., and shall be, for one semester, Visiting Faculty Professor at Clark University in Massachusetts, under the auspices of its Center for Academic Innovations.—333 Central Park West, New York City 10025.

As I am sitting down, a straw-hat on top of my hair, sun-glasses on my nose, with paper and pen in my hands, my senses are filled with the sight of green snow-capped mountains, the soft sounds of cowbells, the pure smells of hay and the soothing strokes of cooling winds.

A few minutes ago, I was lying on my back meditating on the carpet-covered balcony outside my hotel room (I am high-up in the Alps on my workshop tournée through German speaking countries of Europe). I got up from my meditating when I received the message from within. The message was to write this paper.

I meditate my own way; a way which may be called: to pray to the Beyond Within. I use my own "mantra." My mantra is not a sound which will remove thought or feeling from consciousness in order to find the eternal sounds or waves of Transcendence Within but a challenge to center myself into consciousness of the central meaning of my specific Here-and-Now. This centering contains the experiential certainty of being in the Awareness of Transcendence. This awareness has the cosmic quality of being in partnership with the universe and may religiously be expressed as: "Hallowed be Thy Will," or:

*From the unmanifest all manifestations
Come forth at the coming of (Brahman's) day,
And dissolve at the coming of night,
In that same one, known as the unmanifest.
But higher than that is another state of being,
Unmanifest, (higher) than (that) unmanifest, eternal,
Which when all beings
Perish, perishes not.
(This) unmanifest is called the indestructible;
It they call the highest goal,
Attaining which they return not;
That is My highest station.*

The Bhagavad Gita / Chapter VIII

My mantra is "What is central in me now?" The concentration remains in these words—letting other thoughts or sensations or perceptions pass by as a matter of no concern. "What is essential?"

Then, awareness travels for a while up and down my body and the flowing breath—in and out. This awareness leads into relaxing. Then relaxing becomes automatic. The words "What is essential now?" go on for a while and may disappear into sleeping or into the conscious certainty of what the essential is—be it walking or speaking to someone or taking care of this or that or just being still.

Whenever I concentrate on this core of myself with the question "What is my center now?" I live toward clarity of sensual awareness. Then the senses fade into the background and all seems quiet, and it seems to me that in this stillness intuition, knowledge and faith do their work and come up with the totality of a right answer. This one answer then releases me out of the throes of things and demands. The essential transcends—sometimes experienced as lightness in light.

This morning I had felt scattered. I was in doubt whether I wanted to write, take care of correspondence, be with friends, pick flowers, climb up into the glory of alproses, or just rest on the balcony. (I scheduled my time too closely; my free hours are very few.) Then I meditated. The answer came clearly: "I want to write for VOICES, *Transpersonal Psychotherapy* issue," as the Transcendence Within has been my private topic for about half a year.

It happened during my stay in a German hotel where I recovered from a flu last Christmas and fought a 36 hour battle of writing a poem. It was my first poem in my native German language in twenty-five years. This poem *Entwurzelt Weihnacht* ("Uprooted Christmas") guided me via the *Kristall nacht* (Crystal night—symbol of extermination of Jews) into areas of myself which I had not known about. They were the Unfinished Business of anti-German prejudice derived from the evil of the Nazi holocaust. This poem led me to something else which was even more important than its content: I was reclaiming my own language—the language of first sounds, first loves, first songs, first writings and readings and my childhood's certainty that I would be—or even was—a poetess. I had cut this part out of my being from myself when Hitler's doors slammed shut. I had turned my ears away from German sounds around me and even more radically so, had killed them—or so I believed—within my soul.

When this poem happened to me it broke open a tunnel between my German-language-childhood and my American-English adulthood. All these years there had been two of me. One whose associations were the German child, and one whose inside connections lived as an English-American adult. Never the twain could meet. They were like two streams coming from the same center, yet running parallel to each other, cutting their strength into halves. Then my own private Berlin Wall between these two Me's, built by fear and prejudice, broke down.

It was then that I found myself entering a new phase of life. It was signified by an ease of making major practical decisions and a re-awakening interest in religious questions. I had been a pantheist when I was young. God-in-All seemed self-evident; no use to ponder about it. This faith fit my thoughts. Now, quite suddenly, God-in-relation-to-who-I-am became an important issue again. I looked for foundations of faith as a matter of living-learning and not of computed ware in dead storage.

Something else promoted my search for the Beyond Within. Several of my closest friends had died within two years. I myself approach the threshold of aging. Thoughts of being ill and in pain occurred. This seemed realistic. Yet I became aware of always having felt totally impotent when I was ill. Was this realistic, too? Was being ill or in pain really the end of all potency? Were my hands really unable to stroke in love, and was my mind obsolete with the onset of any kind of illness? Was I useless to myself and others at such times? Once, about ten years ago, when I was ill and in bed with pain I started to write poetry—my first and only poems in English. I told myself then that life-in-pain was still worth living as long as I was able to write about living-even-in-pain, and thus be meaningfully in touch with others.

My fear of being ill had to do with living alone—and being ill means living alone in one's pain even if there are others around.

How could I find support within myself if I were ill again—how could I alleviate my own suffering and my feeling of impotence? If my stomach hurt could my hands still be well enough to act toward this pain as a mother's hands would? Did not all healers rely on healing rays emanating from their hands and souls? If I could use and not only do lip-service to pantheism, would not Godliness live within me and within my hands as well? Could I not practice Awareness of my own inner Godliness, fill up my conscious Self with the healing and creative spirit of the universe? Could I turn myself against the ill and the pain and the destructive—the Unholy, the Burden? (Or practice to accept that which I could not change?)

And so I started to practice consciousness of the Beyond within me. I held still to search for and receive transcendent sensations and feelings which welled up and calmed down within me. And I sought awareness of the anti-healing forces as well as the healing ones: anguish, impatience, pain and ugly moods. I concentrated on my healing hands put upon my pain and on my healing feelings being sent to understand, live through and overcome sensations of illness and destructive thoughts. Speaking to the God within me, I could trust myself in very different ways than I could ever trust myself before.

If you were to say: "How do you know about Transcendence Within? How do you know you are not just caught up in ordinary auto-suggestion?" I would say:

I know this as I know anything else. I know with the doubt of a believer. I know that the air around me is cool and the mountains white and that the birds' wings and songs fly in and out of my heart's floating awareness. My *senses* tell me the sensuals of color, light, sound, smell, warmth, crispness. My *intuition and knowledge* weave words and concepts into patterns which make sense out of the sensuals. I would not know they are birds if I did not believe my senses and my thoughts and other people's teachings. I would not enjoy the sounds of the waterfall above me if I did not trust my senses and the "knowledge" that these sounds do not signify war planes over my head.

What I want to say is this: *only the fusing power of knowledge and intuition bring sense into sensuals; only the binding power of faith brings meaning into sensual and intellectual data.*

Is knowledge really as safe as scientists think or faith as insecure as the "knowers" assert? (Einstein knew that scientific facts are relative to the observer and that science remains senseless without faith in Sense—in Meaning.)

Many faithful people believed long ago that mankind would perish because of its sinfulness; our scientists (or were they pseudo-scientists?) laughed about such prediction. Now the "knowers" start to believe that the earth may die because of our carelessness (equalling sin). The early believers "knew" by faith—not by knowledge—that killing others means total destruction. Now we know details of final death: phosphates in oceans, feeding poisons to soil, air, water and chemicals to sun-and-earth-deprived plants and animals, and nuclear splitting of our globe. The poets and prophets in their beliefs were earlier to recognize where mankind chose to go than their scientific computing brothers who were blind to our Transcendental Bonding.

As I am writing these words my senses are filled with the beauty of a paradisiac landscape. Yet, where my heart beats I hurt: I am at the tail-end of a workshop; it was a workshop for therapists and some teachers, different from any other I have ever given. It opened up the wounds of mankind to me as under a giant microscope. Still acutely aware of this experience, the sky and mountain fresco, the colorful fields and forests, the singing and sounding of water, bees, and cow-bells pass through my senses into the cold knowledge that all this beauty is but a thin veneer, barely covering the pending doom of the earth's final collapse. It needs faith beyond the immediacy of senses to believe that the world clock is close to strike doom unless . . .

Sitting on this balcony, sensually drinking into me the blessings of these beautiful and quiet mountains, I am thinking about the furies of the past and the forecast of this earth's dying future; or is there still time for prevention?

This is my 4th year of my part-time working in Europe—mostly with German people. Never have I heard as much about the horrors of Nazidom and war as this summer. The participants were people in their forties to fifties, working for and with people as psychotherapists and educators. Almost all of them had been in previous workshops with me. Yet never, neither in their previous analyses and therapies nor in my workshops, had such eruption of the misery of the 1930's and 40's occurred—and never so much *healing* in process.

I put my arms around former Nazis and Nazi-victims. I held in my lap the head of a war-blinded man. I put my hands on the heart of a woman who had been tortured by Allied soldiers who mistook her jacket for that of a SS-man's widow. I listened to the incredible credibles of Jewish concentration camp victims. I trembled hearing in my mind the gun shots which put a little German child wantonly to death in his mother's arms—with no bullets but ridicule aimed at herself.

People spoke whose consciences had been torn apart when they passed by their Jewish friends to save their own lives (what would I have done in their steads, knowing that nodding to friends may have meant disaster for myself or my children?). Other group members' parents had sacrificed their own children's safety for their political or religious beliefs; they had hated and never forgiven their parents for endangering their own and their children's lives for their religious or ethical beliefs.

Almost all of the group members had lost part of their families by bombs, by execution (through Nazis or subsequent avenging trials), in battlefields or on long roads toward the various ways of dying or being killed in German or Allied camps. They were the surviving parents of raped and murdered children, Jewish ones and German ones, and their avengers.

In this workshop sorrow and furor of the past fused with the shame and worry about today's Vietnam, Biafra, the Bahinis, our own school systems, the neglect of the poor and the cruelty of man to man and to animals and plants and our planet.

Since 1969 I have given very many training workshops with German people. Why had there never been such revelation of horrors of the past or expressions of political concern? It could be that this fact was nothing but chance; I do believe, however, that there were discernable causes:

1. The combination of psychotherapists and politically involved teachers and theologians.
2. The fact that there were changes within me. They had occurred through writing the poem which had healed my schizo-German-American-split; and through my arriving at a new level of religious awareness.
3. And the fact that I used a new and radical way of combining Gestalt and experiential therapy with theme-centered interaction. Themes such as "Ecology—how do I want to help?" created ambivalent waves between "too little" or "too much"; it culminated in one participant's becoming the exponent of the group's concerns. I worked with him with Gestalt Therapy in depth. This intensive work based on an interactional group process touched the group members more than would have happened if I had been "available to work" with individual volunteers, ready for "the hot seat."

Such group experience then propelled us into further themes of everybody's concern. (In the above example the theme "Ecology" led the group into various expressions of wanting to help, yet fearing individually the "too much"—as everybody has so many other commitments.) After one group member had worked through the "taking on too little or too much" problem, other group members shook off the omnipotence of having to do it all as well as the impotence of doing nothing; the group as a whole came to accept the partial potency of human beings—each one of us being committed to do something. We then knew more deeply that only universal cooperation and organization can save us—each one of us being co-responsible.

I believe that it is faith beyond our senses that says that we are responsible for saving this earth which has nourished us to live; I cannot sense this with my senses nor know it with my knowledge; I *need* not *care* whether the world will be or how it will be after my death. Yet I do care (as I believe you do). I believe that it is faith in interpersonal and intercosmic transcendence when we do not flee into our own comfort, because we are creative partners of this creation. My thinking responds to my faith and says that we, mankind, must change in two ways:

1. To raise children and ourselves psychologically to be respectful of life and to divide what is needed between all people and all living

things. (This is the job of all therapies and all educational humanistic endeavors.)

2. To politically organize humanity into one global system in which such up-bringing into loving and respecting adults can and will be done. Each time someone pleads for Respect for Life the one who says it gains strength. Others who hear it may, too.

Is it then really less irrational to believe that I am a split-off chance-particle of the universe, not transcendently responsive to and responsible for what happens than to believe that I am a participant creator and creature of this universe? Is it really more rational to believe that I am nothing but a bundle of reflexes put together by senseless incidents, measurable in stimuli and responses, than to believe in Meaning? *Is believing in "No-Sense" more rational than to believe in Sense?* And is not looking down on "unscientific" faith also based on a (non-substantiated) belief that there cannot be Transcendence of Universal Partnership? This in the face of the fact that meaning is known to us people who are causing meaningful acts! Is it reasonable to believe that only people are endowed to give meaning?

I see, I hear, I smell, I sense warmth, coolness and balance. Thinking, intuiting, knowing weave from given sensual threads the fabric of meaning. I have faith that what I sense and think and know has transcendental Meaning as I believe to transcend from being a *part* to being a *partner* of the universe. I believe that the 19th and 20th centuries' science was pseudo-scientific inasmuch as it excluded subjectivity and its transcendence toward universal partnership as possibly having validity; it denied without proof the possibility of Meaning Within Beyond despite the testimonies of almost all significant as well as ordinary people in history. (With this exclusion science itself could be labeled "superstition.")

I am content to believe that I find myself with these thoughts in the good company of such rational people as Goethe, Spinoza, Siddartha Gautama and (maybe) Einstein. They all believed that suns and moons and animals and people and planets and cells and atoms and space connect and have innate meaning; and that all I's and not-yet-I's and (maybe) super-I's are in the continuous process of being created in and creating this world.

Often, when I meditate, I encounter pain or my own disbelief or overcrowding thoughts—all of which may be called evil or the devil or resistance, according to the choice of one's faith. Awareness, however, of such negatives seems to me in itself a constructive tool.

Sometimes when I am sure what I, as a personal self, want or need most, and when I am in conflict with beyond-me-tasks, I meditate around my Here-and-Now-question of "What is central now?" Making both sides progressively clearer, answers to the conflicting question seem to arise without further effort. This experience of conflict resolution was called by Perls "organismic change." Yet, in my way of meditation (which may be praying), there seems to be an added element: such organismic change to me appears to be an answer reflecting Transcendental Bonding in which organismic change speaks with the clarity of self-asserting and self-transcending Meaning which I, as a pantheist, like to call the God within. □