



WINTER/SPRING 1998

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SHAKTI GAWAIN



WINTER/SPRING 1998

If only we could live our life as if each moment were our last—opening and accepting the as-it-is-ness, the nature of reality—we would connect with that essential part of ourselves that does not die.

Ask yourself, is my life equipping me for my death?

—Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

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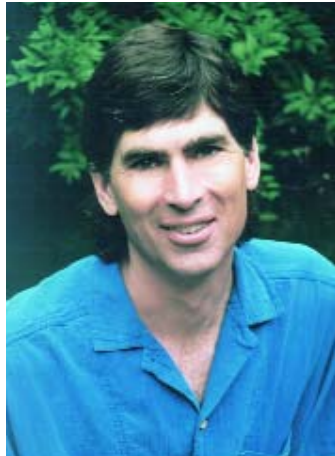
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COVER: STRANDS OF DNA/TONY STONE
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ABOVE: TONY STONE/SARA GRAY

From the Publisher



This magazine is a catalyst for my own personal growth. Its life and evolutionary pulse intertwines with Mary's and mine, evoking change in the magazine and ourselves.

As our spiritual processes deepen, we seek material and presentation that more powerfully beckons evolutionary unfolding. Change in the magazine also occurs as a result of feedback from readers. *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* continues to evolve, as this issue reflects.

Finding the right cover for the magazine is a challenge. We are always faced with the question, "How do we illustrate transformation?" In the past we experimented with different covers, in an effort to encourage magazine browsers to pick it up off the newsstand. For the last several issues, we featured pictures of joyful people, intending to reflect the joy that comes from personal and spiritual growth. Reader comments recently indicated that the covers may appear a little superficial, as if we were selling happiness and not reflecting the depth of the material or the evolutionary impulse felt by readers, so with this issue we are changing the type of cover photo we use. We have also made some changes to the way we display the title *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. We hope these changes better express the contents.

With this issue we are also restoring most of our original subtitle, "For Inner Peace and Compassionate Living," which speaks to the yearning that calls us to awakening. It also reflects how we relate in our inner and outer world as we evolve, for personal and societal transformation are the same.

As we mature, aspects of ourselves and our lifestyles that no longer serve our life are discarded. Transformation is not a linear process and at times, we circle back around, and reclaim abandoned parts of our lives, as they again fit. Such is the case with our subtitle.

The business of publishing *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* is teaching me about being "in the flow." This was a challenging business year, with several changes in our office personnel and work procedures. Through this, I realized more deeply my difficulty in experiencing life fully, particularly its intense ups and downs. My learning is that "in the flow" means embracing "whatever is," lovingly and without resistance, staying present in each moment. I will be practicing for some time.

Welcome to *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONAL*.



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From the Editor



*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love
where there is injury, pardon
where there is doubt, faith
where there is despair, hope
where there is darkness, light
and where there is sadness, joy.*
—Saint Francis of Assisi

Is there really heaven on earth? It hardly seems so when we become overwhelmed by the circumstances of our lives or the evening news. Yet, the spiritually evolved reassure us that heaven in this life is possible. If heaven is an experience of utter peace and a sense of oneness with life, then most of us have some heavenly experience. As spiritual seekers, we aspire to live more in that state of being, so that we may be instruments of the Eternal and heal ourselves and life on this planet.

Many practices open the doors of heaven and this issue outlines several. Sri Chinmoy shows us how to grow God's will in our lives. He reminds us that Divine will becomes progressively stronger in us as we dedicate our lives and commune daily with God. As "Thy Will" develops, we become intimate with something everlasting within. A simple way to know God's will is to start each day by giving heartfelt gratitude for what the Eternal has already done for us. Offering gratitude expands our hearts until we become one with Universal Reality, opening the door for "Thy works" to operate in and through us.

Thich Nhat Hanh teaches us to become more godly in our relationships through a practice he calls "Beginning Anew." At his hermitage, the residents gather weekly for this practice, where they take turns expressing regrets, hurts and difficulties. This prevents hurts from building up and shows members how they affect others, so that they may change their ways. He recommends that we conduct this ceremony weekly in our families. What a

beautiful ritual to grow compassion and to transform the thoughts, words and actions that hurt those we love.

No matter where we are on our spiritual path, we have to learn how to relax profoundly. It is when we are deeply quieted that we hear the whispers of our heart, the guidance of the eternal. It is also in silence that we find the source of strength that carries us forth to do good works. We know that doing right is not always easy, even though as we grow, it becomes the only thing possible to do. A daily practice of silencing ourselves is needed, and in Transformational Practices, a form of rhythmic breathing that induces deep relaxation is described.

Any practice which melts perceptions of inferiority or superiority, taking into our hearts the ways we have kept ourselves separate in our minds, enfolds our humanness into divineness. In my own practice, I am learning to dissolve barriers that prevent unloved aspects of myself from entering my inner kingdom. During meditation, I bring forth my old beliefs about being unworthy and inept. I invite along fear and trembling, and then I breathe compassion into them all. These old patterns have many fingers and cling dearly. Yet each time they are taken into my heart, God's home within, I experience heaven on earth.

May we transform our lives into instruments of peace.

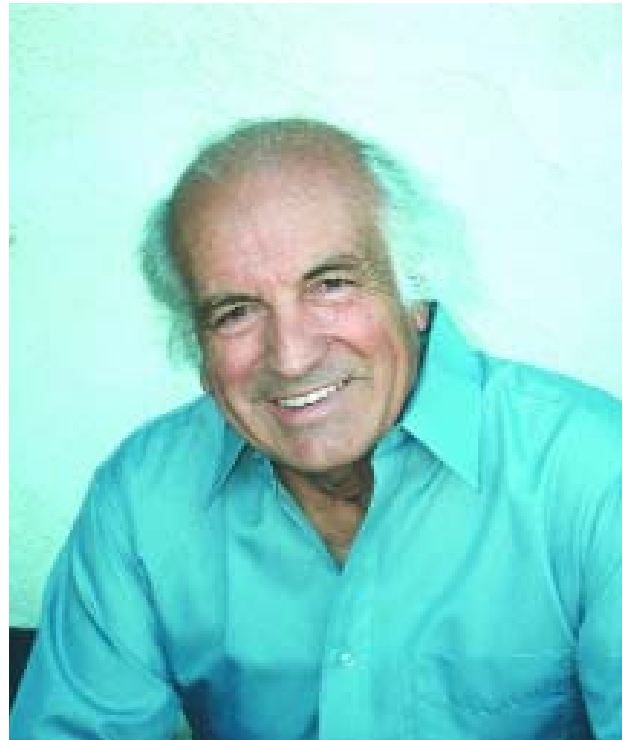
Mary NurrieStearns
Mary NurrieStearns
Editor

The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You

GEORGE JAIDAR

“The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,” a statement attributed to Jesus of Nazareth, speaks volumes to that which is central to the spiritual life, the soul, or the transpersonal. Similar sayings can be found in a variety of spiritual traditions. Lao—Tzu says “The Tao that can be named [or expressed] is not the Tao.” In the Hindu tradition, it is *tat tvam asi* (“That art Thou”). Numerous others such as Socrates, Meister Eckhart, Al—Ghazzali, William Law and Ralph Waldo Emerson, to name just a few, have expressed this truth just as eloquently and emphatically.

But what is the truth that is being expressed? Spiritual sayings, such as this one, cannot be taken at face value, that is, understood in terms of our everyday language. They are much more like veins of truth that must be deeply explored and mined in order to extract the essence within. If one settles for the face value of the saying, then much dross will be the only reward. I can’t imagine anyone intent on personal transformation taking this lazily expedient way of the fundamentalists. “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you” points at a truth of a reality that is far beyond our everyday experiences.



Yet, it must be noted that the only readily available language that can be used for such sayings is based upon our everyday world and experiences. Further, every language is culture—specific, and it is not enough to translate words to our language equivalents. The culture (as the term is used in cultural anthropology) must also be translated in order to capture what was intended. So, keeping that in mind, let us examine this saying more closely, in terms of the context in which it was used by Jesus, and then let’s attempt a cultural translation as well.

In the time of Jesus, the highest realm imaginable was a kingdom, and people were aware of the manifold kingdoms of the earth, and as well—enculturated members of their respective societies, they embraced and pursued the values and goals of their cultures. Very rarely, an individual member, seen by some as a prophet, seer or teacher, while considered by most as mad or a trouble—maker, would surface and attempt to point out that there is a realm or dimension beyond these everyday pursuits and that that realm deserved our attention. (I have come to regard such individuals as mutants or leaps of our evolving consciousness.) In Jesus’ time, such a realm was called the equivalent of

Like all spiritual sayings, “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you” is an *invitation* to explore, not “Lo here, lo there,” but rather a process, the Soul, that is inherent in you. The Soul–process beckons you to discover who you really are, why you are here, where you are, and what to do.

our term Heaven, the domain of God, the state of bliss, however conceived. Thus, since this was considered the realm that surpasses the realms of our everyday, earthly concerns and pursuits, it was referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven.

If we went beyond a simplistic word translation and performed a somewhat current cultural translation as well, we would refer to this not as a place, but rather as a state of Higher Consciousness as compared to our everyday-mind kind of consciousness. I would go even further than considering this an entity or a state, but rather an open-ended *process* that is continuous with all of reality and in which each of us is invited to participate. However, we have been impeded from doing so, due to some serious limitations, of which we are normally unaware, in how we use our language.

These limitations become more apparent when we look at the entire saying: “The Kingdom of Heaven is *within* you.” Actually, there are many other terms that are often used in describing the kingdom of heaven, such as *beyond*, *higher* and *deeper*. Literally, these words describe spatial characteristics, which shows how spatially-based our language is and how derived it is from the spatio-temporal matrix of our everyday world. These words, such as *within*, are not intended literally in such a context. Another familiar use of these words is the figurative, to describe nonspatial qualities such as importance, intensity or priority.

At this point, we might think that we are using *within* figuratively, but that would be an error. The figurative use of language, as in much of our prose and poetry, is based on experiences we have in common, which would occur in the spatio-temporal matrix of our everyday world. (For example, “He felt deeply wounded by her accusation.”) We have already said that the Kingdom of Heaven is beyond

this realm; further, it is an open-ended process that is *unique* to each person, not a common experience, the requisite of the figurative use of language. Now that we see that *within* is being used neither literally nor figuratively, what is the use of language that goes beyond either of these? Since it is trans-literal and trans-figurative, we shall name it the *transcendent* whenever we use language to point beyond our everyday experiences.

Thus, the entire statement, “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,” must be looked at as a transcendent expression. This transcendent use of language means that we must resist our usual tendencies to arrive at closures, conclusions and generalizations of meaning. These meanings are to be left quite tentative and open to further illumination, as in *Enlightenment*. This will require the openness of the true scientist or the true mystic who can embark on such a journey as the intrepid-yet-patient explorer open to whatever is encountered, knowing that it will not fit the Procrustean bed of our ordinary language and worldview.

Like all spiritual sayings, “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you” is an *invitation* to explore, not “Lo here, lo there,” but rather a process, the Soul, that is inherent in you. The Soul-process beckons you to discover who you really are, why you are here, where you are, and what to do. Don’t miss it!•

Philosopher George Jaidar, of Ojai, California, is the author of “The Soul: An Owner’s Manual,” Discovering the Life of Fullness (Paragon House 1995). A spiritual ecologist, he does a great deal of reclamation of old words. He loves rescuing terms and concepts from the misunderstandings or perversities from religious and conventional usage. This is another in a series of columns by Jaidar which shine new light on words and concepts that need to be redeemed, that can be springboards to personal transformation.



Rhythmic Breathing

ISRAEL REGARDIE

The force of life is infinite; we are saturated, permeated through and through with this force, this energy. It constitutes our higher self, it is our link with the entire universe, it is God within us. Every molecule of our physical system is permeated with the dynamic energy of this force; each cell in our body contains it in abundance.

If life is all about us, all-penetrating and all-pervasive, what is more reasonable than that the very air we breathe from one moment to the next should be highly charged with vitality? To best take advantage of this, we need to take the time periodically to regulate our breathing in a calm, simple way, and to contemplate that life is the active principle in the atmosphere.

We should practice this rhythmic breathing at fixed periods of the day, in a relaxed manner, with no strenuous forcing of the mind, no overtaxing of the will. All effort must be gentle and easy; then skill is just as easily obtained:

Sit comfortably, or lie down, flat on your back, in a perfectly relaxed state. If sitting, the hands may be folded in the lap, or they may rest comfortably on the thighs, palms upward. If lying down, your hands should rest comfortably at your

sides, palms upward.

Let the breath flow in while mentally counting very slowly, one... two... three... four... Then exhale, counting the same beat. It is fundamental and important that we should maintain the initial rhythm we have started, whether it be at a four-beat count or a ten-beat count or any other convenient one. It is the very rhythm itself that is responsible for the easy absorption of vitality from without, and the acceleration of the divine power within.

Unchanging rhythm is manifest everywhere in the universe. It is a living process whose parts move and are governed in accordance with cyclical laws. Look at the sun, the stars and the planets. All move with incomparable grace, with a steady, inexorable rhythm. It is only humankind that has wandered, in its ignorance and self-complacency, far from the divine cycles of things. We have interfered with the rhythmic process that is inherent in nature. And how sadly we have paid for it!

Through quiet, rhythmic breathing, we can attune ourselves once more to the intelligent power that functions throughout nature. Our periods of rhythmic breathing can be at any time of the day or night when

TSJ/TIM THOMPSON

In the ambient atmosphere surrounding us and pervading the structure of each one of our body's cells is a force, a field of energy. This force is omnipresent and infinite; it is as present in the most infinitesimal object as it is in the most proportion-staggering far reaches of the known and unknown universe. This force is life itself. Nothing in the vast expanse of space is dead. Everything pulsates with vibrant life; even the sub-atomic particles of the atom are alive.

New World

there is little likelihood of disturbance.

We should cultivate, above all, the art of relaxation:

Learn to address each tensed muscle from toe to head as you sit in a comfortable chair or lie flat on your back in bed. Tell it deliberately to loosen its tension and cease from its unconscious constriction. Think of your blood flowing copiously to each organ in response to your command, carrying life and nourishment everywhere, producing a state of glowing, radiant health.

Begin your rhythmic breathing; then add this preliminary exercise, slowly and without haste. Gradually, as the mind accustoms itself to the idea, the lungs spontaneously will take up the rhythm. In a few minutes, it will have become automatic.

The whole process then becomes extremely simple and pleasurable.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance or effectiveness of this simple exercise. As the lungs take up the rhythm, automatically inhaling and exhaling to a measured beat, they communicate it and gradually extend it to all the surrounding cells and tissues. Just as a stone thrown into a pond sends out widely expanding ripples and concentric circles of motion, so does the motion of the lungs. In a few minutes, the whole body is vibrating in unison with their movement. Every cell seems to vibrate sympathetically. And very soon, the whole organism comes to feel as if it were an inexhaustible storage battery of power. The sensation—and it *must* be a sensation—is unmistakable. •

From "The Art of True Healing" by Israel Regardie. Copyright 1997 by Marc Allen. Printed with permission from Publishers Group West.

Relationships: A Path to Who You Really Are

KATHLYN HENDRICKS

Many people are in deep despair in their relationships and have stopped even hoping for harmony. Others are asking: “Is there life after power struggles? Can relationships be more than places to settle in for a long snooze or a struggle for part of what I want?” Human beings haven’t considered creativity a possibility until recently in our history, and they usually haven’t considered it in the same breath with relationship. I want to suggest that the big frontier in close relationship is co-creativity, creating together more than either of you could possibly imagine on your own.

My husband Gay and I suggest a primary commitment that opens the gates to co-creativity. The master commitment is to see your close relationships as a valid spiritual path, and to practice this path by using every relationship interaction as an opportunity to learn. When you make a wholehearted commitment to learning, each moment becomes rich with opportunities to experience more of your essence, who you really are. With the energy freed from intimacy wobbles and power struggles, you can continue to discover new ways to celebrate the essence of those around you.

Here’s a meditative practice to embrace this com-



mitment. Spend some quiet time thinking of the main three to five issues you complain about in your relationships. They could be anything from who controls the checkbook to who should take out the trash. List your complaints in a sentence or two. Then take one at a time and ask:

“What can I learn about essence, who I really am, from this situation?”

The lack of a model or example for true co-creativity blocks most of us from considering that possibility in our own relationships. As I’ve studied the relationships of thousands of couples and dozens of communities, I haven’t found many co-creative partnerships. People are familiar with the solitary artist or even the musical ensemble that reproduces the composer’s work. However, when people consider the act of creating together, they usually struggle over whose creation will be birthed.

You may have seen or experienced how a great basketball team will suddenly break out of a familiar routine and create a perfect and unrepeatable pass and dunk. Business teams who have worked together for a while with trust can build reliably on each other’s communications and contributions to create something

If you come into each relationship interaction with a willingness to learn, you do take a risk by stepping out of familiar routines. You also open the gates for possibility. We suggest several soul choices that put the primary commitment into practice by shifting relationship from power struggles to possibilities for co-creating.

brand new. But in close relationships most people don't seem to expect or envision the possibility of living in co-creativity. Many people identify committed relationship with constraint, the lessening of options or compromise. Those pervasive attitudes and expectations block co-creating.

What conditions are needed to grow a co-creative relationship, one in which both people flow in combined creative waves that enhance the vitality and contribution of each? There are attitudes to avoid or drop and attitudes and practices to take up. Each time you co-create you step into the unknown consciously. If you come into each relationship interaction with a willingness to learn, you take a risk by stepping out of familiar routines. You also open the gates for possibility. We suggest several soul choices that put the primary commitment into practice by shifting relationship from power struggles to possibilities for co-creating.

Choosing generosity shifts from getting to giving. We call it leading with gratitude, letting an appreciation of life itself lead your actions. One particular area where co-creativity flourishes is in generous listening. If you listen fully and with an open heart to your partner, new depth, new ideas and new vitality often flow. Instead of asking, "What's in it for me?" the question becomes, "How can I contribute?"

Authenticity is the soul shift to transparency. Rather than conceal and pretend, you reveal and discover. Thousands of people have been thrilled to discover new aspects of themselves and their partners when they shared simple truths, said unarguable things to each other with the intention to reveal. That's one reason we say that the biggest

sex organ in your body is between your chin and your chest. The more you vibrate your voice box authentically, the more new possibilities for co-creating open. You ask, "What can I say that is authentic? How can I invite authenticity in others?"

Wondering, is a soul shift that generates enormous co-creativity. Wonder is the opposite of making yourself right and making others wrong. When we wonder, we evoke whole-body and whole-brain learning by approaching life with curiosity. Instead of blaming and finding fault, we enhance co-creating when we "wonder how I'm contributing to this issue? I wonder what I really want here? I wonder..."

Co-creativity flourishes in a playful atmosphere and withers under the sharp glare of criticism and judgment. Anytime you can shift from the conviction that this time you really are right, and furthermore, this is not at all funny, to play, co-creating blossoms. A radical question that invokes play is, "How can my learning be friendly and fun?"

Co-creating is a constantly renewable game. You can develop skill at this game even if you have had little previous training. One practice we have developed is what we call bouncing the ball. To illustrate, if one of us makes a pun, the other returns the ball by making another even if it evokes groans. Sometimes we just have a two-bounce game; sometimes a rally erupts. Another example: Gay may start singing in the kitchen. I'll do my best to add a line or do the bass do-wop chorus. Why? For the sake of play, to exercise co-creative muscles and develop a foundation to share the field of creative possibilities when the opportunity arises. Natalie Goldberg describes this training for writers in a way

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 70

Spiritual Teachers

S O P H Y B U R N H A M

Our discussion would not be complete without an acknowledgment of the dark side of mystical affairs. The path is often likened to a razor's edge, so fine and sharp that we can easily fall off. This is why everyone agrees we should not set out on the ecstatic journey without a proper guide. I do not care to spend much energy describing those unfortunates whose mystical ecstasies resulted from mental disturbances, or those others whose experiences were later distorted into satanic or destructive cults. It is possible to tell the difference. One of the curious marks of the true mystical encounter is that the recipient feels utterly humbled and utterly blessed, and yet often moves away from any formal church. She prefers the intimate, interior communion with a personal God, unmediated by a hierophant. At the same time, she becomes *more tolerant of all religions*. Any place of worship serves, for she is praying continuously in her heart, and no place is to be found where God is not.

A cult, on the other hand, demands one's loyalty, sometimes even to the point of death. If such loyalty is not given, the retribution can be cruel. The cult closes its doors against the outside world. Often it rules by terror, and this is the furthest possible removal from



the joyous, singing freedom of the mystic's life.

We humans are alike all over the world. We all want to be happy, safe. To varying degrees, we all want peace of mind and also a little excitement in our lives. We want to love someone, and also we want to be loved. We all harbor within us the possibilities for both good and bad. The mystic, during union, makes no distinction between opposites, not even good and evil. Yet we live on a physical plane, and when she returns from raptures, the mystic subjects herself again to everyday judgments. Every moment of our lives, we are choosing, good over less good. It's not an easy task. To grow into the fullest expression of ourselves takes constant attention and courageous introspection, especially because, as Carl Jung pointed out, as we grow toward enlightenment, so, too, does our dark side grow.

But although we are alike, we also differ in our tendencies. What appeals to one person may be poison to another. Spiritual experiences come to most people, I believe, mysteriously and magically. Some people as a consequence grow gentler, more vulnerable, radiant, life-affirming, yielding up their selfish desires, while others who may likewise have mystical experiences turn into monsters. They start cults, train followers. The

More than one Hindu or Buddhist guru has become a woman-chasing alcoholic, seduced by the freedom of Americans and by the spiritual junkies who came to them for a holy fix. Over the last several years, these tales of supposedly ascetic gurus betraying their wide-eyed disciples have become commonplace—almost as common as those about straying ministers or priests.

difference defines, in a nutshell, whether the ecstatic experience was “real.”

What is a cult? The word is often tossed around loosely. The early Christians were called a cult. In France, the angry mayor of a nearby town called one internationally renowned gentle Buddhist community a cult. In general, a cult is a closed organization, often with secret rules and initiations. Typically, a cult follows one authority or “perfect master” who demands total obedience. The cult requires you to give up the world and all ties of affection to your family of origin and past friends, thus isolating you. It forces you to “voluntarily” donate all your worldly goods to the community. At first, it appears benign. Almost imperceptibly, it tightens the noose of its demands until you are drawn in too deeply to withdraw.

In 1996 the French government issued a report on 172 cults and 800 “satellites” operating in France. It defined ten signs of a “cult,” the first of which is a kind of self-righteous isolation from the surrounding world. The signs are, first, a mental destabilizing of the participants, exorbitant financial demands (including giving all one’s money to the group), and a complete rupture with one’s environment and family of origin; this stage is followed by the gradual undermining of one’s physical well-being through extreme deprivation, threats or even torture, and the roping-in of children (starvation and physical abuse are often involved). Now the participants are trapped and cannot or perhaps don’t want to leave the cult, and with increasing devotion come the demands for antisocial behavior. These may include embezzlement, deliberate sabo-

tage of economic systems, or the infiltration of public authorities.

According to the French report, it is not the poor and uneducated who find themselves most susceptible to cults, but rather the most intellectual and brilliant strata of society. The victims are primarily idealistic young people, ready to change the world. They are the college graduates, the scientists and engineers. Some are married couples, steady citizens attracted to a brilliant teacher and on a conscious spiritual journey. Others are drawn to the liberation promised by fundamentalism that provides clearly delineated boundaries of how to think and act.

All are drawn to the magical charisma of the self-appointed master. And he? Did he have mystical encounters himself, get partway on the journey, and fall victim to the shadow side? Some people would say he was tempted by Satan. Others that he let his ego intervene between himself and God, “My will, not Thine, be Done!” Others that he was seduced by the siddhas, the paranormal abilities that so often seem to accompany mystical experiences. Or perhaps he had already believed that he was God.

There are a dozen explanations, but given the pitfalls, the more practical question to ask is, “How do we choose a good teacher?”

If we have the discernment to avoid openly deranged gurus, how do we spot those who once were true visionaries and may now be falling from grace? Not all are as easy to see as Bhagavan Sri Rajneesh, who when kicked out of India in the 1970s established an ashram in Oregon, where he stockpiled Rolls-Royces, as others collect glass fig-

urines, while guards, armed to the teeth, patrolled the ranch, his holy ashram, protecting against his paranoid fears. More than one Hindu or Buddhist guru has become a woman-chasing alcoholic, seduced by the freedom of Americans and by the spiritual junkies who came to them for a holy fix. Over the last several years, these tales of supposedly ascetic gurus betraying their wide-eyed disciples have become commonplace—almost as common as those about straying ministers or priests.

It's a serious problem.

The Dalai Lama is said to be "particularly worried" and deeply concerned about the issue. He advises students to get close to a teacher and to "spy" on him or her for "at least three years," to see if the teachings conform to how the guru behaves. He counsels testing the teacher at every step.

Interviewing one Tibetan lama, Demmo Loche Rinpoche, I asked what you should do if you find your teacher has misused sexual practices, alcohol or anger.

"If you have already accepted that teacher," he answered with surprising common sense, "then when you see the failing, do not take notice. It is natural that there are failings, because the teacher is a human being. Don't plant a thorn in your heart, because it will become an obstruction to your own growth." He also advised, however, that the student may gently approach the teacher, reprove his conduct, and lead him back on the Way, for are not the students also teachers to their guides?

Demmo Loche Rinpoche listed the qualities to look for in a teacher, first naming—his black eyes sparkling with laughter—what not to look for. You are not to be concerned with psychic powers. "If you think the teacher must attain levitation," he said, laughing, "then you may as well rely on a vulture. Vultures fly. Vultures see long distances..."

The good teacher is completely at peace. He has more knowledge than you. In addition, he has:

- High ethical and moral standards
- Stability of meditation
- Wisdom and gentleness
- Strong compassion for the student's welfare
- Infinite patience, allowing the student to ask all questions, anything.

The true teacher gives more importance to spiritual practice than to worldly concerns and cares more for a future life than for this one. He shows more concern for others than himself. He feels responsible for the welfare of his student.

In my experience, the good teacher is lighthearted and playful and also displays much common sense. There is a saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." At a certain point, having given yourself to God with utter abandon, having asked and prayed for a teacher, you simply wait. The teacher will appear. Then trust your intuition. The soul knows her own teacher, as the calf knows its mother. Moreover, the soul will also change teachers over time, for the task of a good teacher is to help his student graduate. The student adores the teaching, not the teacher.

How do you recognize the good teacher? The same way you know that a mystical vision is not illusion but from God.

"By its JOY!" My teacher said. "God does not give poison. God gives only Joy." So should the teaching, too.

But if the teacher falls from the path, you do not have to follow him.

We cannot finish better than by drawing on Saint Catherine of Siena, who for years battled her inner demons of temptation, doubt and fear. Finally she laughed at the devils. They vanished instantly, for doubt and anguish cannot stand up against sheer joy. Saint Catherine explained the difference between things sent from the Devil and things sent from God, and whether or not we believe in a tangible Prince of Darkness, intent on disguising himself as light, creating false teachers and tempting us with mystical insights in order to lead us astray, still her definition metaphorically holds true. Those experiences sent by demons, she said, inspire first sweetness and then in the long run pain and nausea, while those sent by God inspire awe and fear in the beginning, but are followed only by sweetness and by good. •

From "The Ecstatic Journey," by Sophy Burnham. Copyright 1997 by Sophy Burnham. Printed by permission from Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

Starting a Circle of Transformation

S U S A N G R I F F I N

Not long ago, the publisher and others at this magazine entertained a dream of bringing together people from across the country so that they could share and participate in each other's spiritual growth and individual flowering on every level. The word went out, and those who shared the excitement and the vision came forward to do the groundwork. We're now launching a forum to connect like-spirited individuals in various geographical areas who are ready to join with one another in heart-centered, soul-honoring exploration. Transformation Groups are ready, set to begin!

It's time to announce our group of highly-respected and knowledgeable leaders in the field as our Board of Advisors. Bernie Siegel, Kathlyn and Gay Hendricks, Richard Moss, Jean Shinoda Bolen, Jacquelyn Small, Gay Luce, John Welwood, Mary Manin Morrissey and Wayne Muller have all graciously accepted our invitation to act as advisors on this project. Their books and solid reputations speak for themselves, and their contributions will certainly prove invaluable to everyone who chooses to participate.

So the vision has been made manifest. A form has been created, and material has been designed and writ-



ten especially for the use of these new groups. A team of professionals has been assembled to oversee the evolution. And now you are invited to participate, along with the many others from various regions who have already contacted us to express their excitement and intention to join in our vision.

If you are intrigued by what we are setting up but have yet to make contact, perhaps you are wondering about the purpose and value of working with a group of kindred spirits. Particularly if your transformational journey thus far has been strictly a solo effort and experience, you could be feeling cautious or unsure about sharing the process. Or maybe you have been quietly yearning for an opportunity to connect with others with whom you could have much in common, but just aren't sure what to expect, and feel hesitant to step forward.

All of these concerns are natural and valid; you are certainly not alone in having them. We are placing this invitation because experience has shown that working with a group of committed and sincere individuals has the potential to enhance and accelerate self-awareness and awakening to an immeasurable degree. Deeply respecting your own innate intelligence, discernment

There is something magical about any intense, tightly knit group of people working together and playing together...

A transformative community is a nearly indispensable launching pad for transformation. Such a community can create the context and the confidence for a transforming journey.—George Leonard and Michael Murphy

and intuitive sensing, we invite you to consider whether the time is right for you to explore this new possibility for yourself.

Working as a group toward soul-growth is a mode in which many who have walked the path before us have a great deal of trust and faith. Every great wisdom tradition states that we are, in truth, inseparable, each an aspect of a universal whole. In the depths of our being, we are all one. Why, then, not unite outwardly and share some of our journeying? As each individual awakens, all others are uplifted.

In her book, *Becoming Naturally Therapeutic*, Jacquelyn Small writes, “Sometimes when I try to visualize what self-actualization looks like, I see an image of all of us together making up a long chain of beings moving upward toward a very high place. The person just ahead holds out his hand to you, while you hold out your hand to the one just behind you. This is not an “over-under” situation, but one of true companionship. As you are being lifted by the one in front of you, you are also lifting the one behind. Giving and receiving are in perfect balance. In this way we all feel of equal value; each person serves a vital role in our collective wholeness—every one of us becomes a link in the chain of being.”

While it is impossible to predict the process or rewards of any particular gathering of individuals, it can be said that wonderful and unlimited potential exists when people join with one another in honesty and integrity, particularly if their sincere intention is to join at the level of the heart. The simple willingness of one human being to be truly present and attentive to another creates opportunities for learn-

ing experiences beyond what either could ever imagine.

To suggest that gathering to do transformational work or study as a group is without challenges and pitfalls would be misleading. But in a properly consecrated context, all that arises can be utilized as grist for the mill. The guidebook we have created for the use of Transformational Groups, for this reason, offers plenty of comprehensive information and suggestions for preventing problems and handling any difficulties that may arise.

Sometimes, however, challenges offer valuable rewards. One of the great advantages of working with a group is the opportunity to see ourselves “mirrored” in the presence of others who care and strive to understand our process. We might not always like what we see, but the dedicated explorer of consciousness is well-served by any forum that can facilitate discovery of areas of self-deception and “blind-spots,” alongside more easily-embraced personal tendencies, in order to move toward greater maturity and self-knowledge.

It is difficult to achieve such objectivity in isolation. Teachers, friends and partners can offer valuable exchange, support and feedback, but a group has the potential to accelerate growth in ways beyond that which daily relationships will normally provide. Exactly how deep personal transformation evolves within the individuals in a group dedicated to soulful and love-centered work together remains, ultimately, a mystery.

Each person coming into a newly-formed group will eventually bring “gifts” to share for the benefit of all the others. Someone may have been practicing a certain form of meditation for years; another

might have extensive experience in yoga; the next could bring knowledge of mythology, psychology, homeopathy, hands-on healing or nutrition. The possibilities are endless.

New friends could come from diverse and fascinating backgrounds, and a broad variety of professions or vocations. They may have read widely or studied with a number of teachers in fields where you share a common interest. Exposure to the knowledge, experience and expertise of others has the capacity to spark our passion and increase our scope in unforeseeable directions.

Like precious gifts brought to an altar, everyone's personal offerings combine to create beauty and grace for all to see and appreciate. Sometimes those who fear that they have nothing special to offer will end up contributing in a subtle way that enhances another's process beyond all measure. Such is the beauty of a group.

In every human encounter, there is something to learn. Cultivating new friendships with others who are spiritually-minded broadens and heightens that education still further. Consciously making ourselves available for opportunities to connect with people whom we might be unlikely to meet up with in the regular course of our daily lives creates new and wondrous possibilities. Every combination lights sparks to kindle the common fire.

Participating in the birth of a forum designed for this purpose is a way of enlarging the sphere of our life experience, widening our circle of sharing, loving and learning. Before long, circles begin to expand, touch and intersect. •

University of California Press

Quest Books

A Global Shift in Consciousness

T I N A R A S M U S S E N

“**B**ecause of the interconnectedness of all minds, affirming a positive vision may be about the most sophisticated action any one of us can take.” This quote from Willis Harman, futurist and past president of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, reminds us of the power we can create by focusing our attention on positive futures.

But with the global trends we are facing, this positive vision may seem difficult to achieve. In 1992, over 1,600 senior scientists, including a majority of the living Nobel laureates, signed and released a document entitled *Warning to Humanity*. This warning declared that humans and nature are on a collision course so extreme that life as we know it may not be sustainable. They pointed out that our industrial-era paradigm is now generating more problems than it is solving, creating the need for a new paradigm which provides more viable solutions.

In search of some indications that this new paradigm might be emerging, researcher, social scientist and author Duane Elgin (*Voluntary Simplicity*, 1981; *Awakening Earth*, 1993) conducted an extensive study with co-researcher Colleen LeDrew. The study sought to objectively determine whether there is a counter-



vailing set of trends indicating that we humans are beginning to wake up to a new level of consciousness, prompting us to address our global challenges.

The study examined five areas, all considered to be possible indicators of an “awakening” of global human consciousness:

- the communications revolution’s impact on global consciousness (the “global brain”)
- ecological awareness and concern
- a shift toward “postmodern” values
- experiential or firsthand spirituality
- sustainable living.

COMMUNICATIONS REVOLUTION “GLOBAL BRAIN”

The researchers found several successful examples of planet-wide cooperation in communication, such as the world weather system, which includes more than 100 countries; the eradication of worldwide diseases such as smallpox; and global air transportation agreements which provide safe airways. Televised events are now seen simultaneously worldwide, such as the Olympics, LiveAid concerts and Space Shuttle broadcasts. And

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worldwide news such as CNN allows uplinks from almost anywhere to almost anywhere in a matter of minutes or hours, making political repression, human rights violations and environmental degradation much more difficult to conceal.

Telecommunications growth has been tremendous. For example, a century ago, it took months to communicate overseas. Now, we can connect with nearly two billion persons via telephone in seconds. By using fiberoptic cable or satellites, we can send the entire Encyclopedia Britannica (including illustrations) in three seconds. Computing speed and capability doubles every two years. And the Internet—the ultimate “global brain”—is exploding in growth, from 40 million people in 1996 to an estimated 200 million in 1999. The communications revolution does seem to be creating a global consciousness.

ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND CONCERN

Elgin and LeDrew were also able to find indicators of increased awareness on global environmental issues. The *Health of the Planet* survey, a 1993 study by Gallup International involving 24 nations worldwide, is the largest environmental poll ever conducted. The study included people from rich to poor, in both industrialized and developing countries. Contrary to popular belief that poorer people in developing countries are less concerned about the environment, the study found that concern was high across the entire range of respondents. In fact, majorities of people in most of the 24 nations surveyed ranked environmental protection a higher priority than

economic growth. And in 11 of 12 industrialized nations and half of the developing nations, people indicated a willingness to pay higher prices for environmental protection. In addition, people from both industrialized and developing nations thought both types of countries were equally responsible for today's environmental problems, rather than the poor or the rich blaming each other.

"POSTMODERN" VALUES

A shift in values could be considered another indicator of a global consciousness change. "Post-modern" values might include a belief in gender equity, tolerance for others, a desire for meaningful work, a commitment to family and community, concern for environmental sustainability, and inner peace over material acquisition. The researchers found several studies which point to this shift.

The 1991 *World Values Survey*, including 43 nations, represented almost 70 percent of the world's population and the full range of economic and political situations. The study concluded that, over the last 25 years, a cluster of industrialized countries have undergone a major values change. This "post-modern shift" includes:

- loss of confidence in hierarchical institutions (government, business, religion)
- declining trust in science and technology to solve problems
- more trust in personal/inner authority
- material security resulting in less desire to maximize wealth, more desire for meaningful work
- environmental sustainability over economic growth
- growing interest in spirituality, but a decline in traditional religion

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The *Gender and Society* study conducted in 1995 by Gallup surveyed 22 countries in Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America—for a total representation of three billion people and a majority of the world's population. The results indicated:

- people in most countries believe society favors men over women
- in most countries, majorities believe the position of women has improved in the last five years
- majorities in all countries said job opportunities should be equal for men and women
- in all countries but one, the majority of people believe their country would be better governed if more women were involved in politics.

In terms of democracy, the organization Freedom House noted that today, 3.1 billion persons of the world population of 5.7 billion live under democratically elected governments. And 61 percent of all countries and 55 percent of the world's population live under free and fair political processes, representing a landmark shift.

FIRSTHAND SPIRITUALITY

As noted in the *World Values Survey*, people around the world are withdrawing trust from traditional institutions and relying more on inner experience. To supplement this, the researchers examined U.S. studies which revealed confirming indicators that people are turning more to firsthand spirituality. For example, the percentage of Americans who believe in God or a universal spirit was 94 percent in 1976 and 96 percent in

Timeless Books

One Dream/Sisgold

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 35

Holocaust in My Body

STEVE SISGOLD

Many times in the past, I had imagined taking this train ride through the wheat fields of Poland. This time it was real. As I rode the train to Auschwitz, many images flooded in... brand new, yet hauntingly familiar. In my mind, I saw faces of the people who were forced into the cattle cars. With my eyes, I watched elderly Polish farmers lifting their heads to see the train pass, just like they had watched other railroad cars clatter by 50 years ago... trains that journeyed one way full of people, but always returned empty. In my body, I felt surges of long built-up anger and sorrow—feelings arising from when I first realized the impact of the Holocaust on the lives around me in the Jewish neighborhood I grew up in.

As an author and teacher, trained in body-centered psychotherapy, I knew through powerful experience how important it was for me to embrace my past trauma and express what I felt in my body. Committed to healing myself, I was on a personal quest to explore, understand and release the many confusing and painful emotions that the Holocaust stirred in me.

Even though I was not alive during the Holocaust, I was born right afterward. My neighborhood in Baltimore was flooded with Jewish refugees who had suf-



*Steve at the entrance of Birkenau,
A former Nazi death camp.*

fered at the hands of the Nazis. Although the adults tried to cover up and forget their recent traumas, as a child I could not help but be influenced by their pain and loss.

The year was 1957. I imagined that I was my hero, Brooks Robinson, playing third base for the Baltimore Orioles, my real-life home team. I stepped up to home plate (a cardboard box), threw my Pency Pinkie ball way up, and punched it with all that I had as it came down. It was a blast, way over the outfielder's head.

But I didn't get a chance to celebrate. Instead, my mom yelled, "Stevie, I need you to go the store." She sent me off to Aaron's Grocery for a fresh rye and a few dill pickles from the barrel.

When I arrived at the store, I noticed Mrs. Margaretten was there. A funny feeling ran down my spine. I was a little uncomfortable around her because she was different than the rest of us. She was one of the new immigrants from Europe—people said they were "refugees."

It was one of the hottest days of the summer. Mrs. Margaretten always wore long sleeves, but today, shopping in the store, she had rolled them up. On her arm, I saw a sickening, bluish-green tattoo of numbers that

Kripalu

looked as if it had been branded into her flesh. Feeling nauseous and afraid, I left without my bread and pickles and went home and asked my mother about what I saw.

She looked uncomfortable and suggested that I go back to my baseball game. When I persisted, she told me that the Margarettens and a lot of other Jewish people had been held prisoner and killed by “Nazis.” She said I should just forget about it, like she and everyone else had decided to do.

But I couldn’t. In that moment, my childhood world of innocence and trust was shattered by my first knowledge of the Holocaust. Millions of Jews had been horribly murdered. But for quirks of time and place, I could have been one of them, I suddenly realized.

All my life, I had lived in an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood where I had felt safe and loved. At Aaron’s Grocery, I had received my first introduction to anti-Semitism. Like my family and neighbors, I now knew that there were people elsewhere who didn’t like Jews.

Over the years, my horror about the Holocaust grew. My aunt took my cousins and me to a public swimming pool across town where a sign at the entrance warned, “No Jews or dogs allowed.” I felt confused, ashamed and angry at having to lie, yet I quietly signed in the name “Smith” as Aunt Eva told me to, in order to swim. I remember thinking, “Is this how the Jews felt when the Nazi persecutions began?”

I had my own first encounter with the Holocaust’s aftereffects when Leo Spivak died. An older kid at school, Leo had looked frail and sickly all the time. I overheard my parents talking about how his mother had been pregnant with



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him in a concentration camp where she was starved and tortured.

I felt sad and afraid. This wasn't TV, or ravages of a long-ago atrocity reflected through hollowed eyes of older survivors. This was a kid about my age, someone I really knew, who died years later because of the Holocaust.

When I channel-surfed on the TV and came upon documentaries or movies about the Holocaust, I would get anxious, sick or angry. At the same time, I thirsted for information about Nazi hunters like Simon Weisenthal. I took out subscriptions to Jewish newspapers and newsletters seeking information on anti-Semitism and Neo-Nazi activity, and what was being done to counter it.

As an adult, my empathy for anti-Semitic persecution grew when the Ku Klux Klan visited my home outside Tampa, Florida, and asked me to leave the neighborhood. I left.

Some people have asked why I think the Holocaust has had such a great impact on me, since neither I nor my parents were in concentration camps. Growing up far away from the Nazi atrocities, I should be untouched by them, a lot of people expect. Besides, it all happened over fifty years ago—why should the Holocaust affect me now?

But I know the impact it has had on my life isn't unique. I've encountered so many people, Jews and non-Jews, who tell me that they're still troubled by the Holocaust... that movies like *Schindler's List* stir up feelings which overwhelm them.

To better understand my own emotions, I went to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 1995.

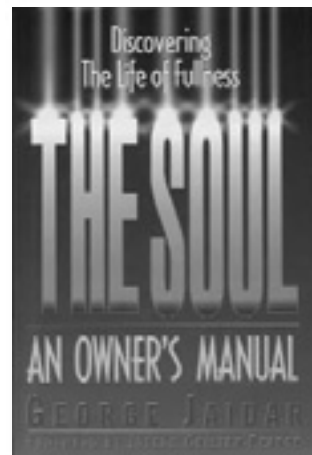
This was my turning point. In the day I spent there, I went on a roller coaster ride of feelings, especially in my reactions to depictions of the shocking medical experiments conducted by Dr. Josef Mengele, and to a Nazi propaganda film depicting Jews as rats and describing how they must be exterminated. The visit unleashed powerful emotions in me. Anger towards Nazis, Skinheads, the Ku Klux Klan—the persecutors. And love for the survivors who shared stories, and for the victims who perished.

I realized I was ready to confront one of my deepest issues. I decided to make a trip to Poland. Poland, homeland of my grandparents, and where the Holocaust took the lives of millions of Jews.

I traveled with my colleague Gay Hendricks, pioneer in the field of body-centered psychotherapy. He offered to come along to assist me in my journey, helping me sort out what was (the past) from what is (the present).

When I told friends and clients about our planned trip to Poland, hundreds called and sent letters saying I was going for them. Many wrote that they had traumas from their childhood that they never expressed, yet ones they believe still trouble their lives today. These people all said they felt inspired by my courage to face my big terror, the Holocaust. Through my story, they hoped to learn how to confront their own fears.

These letters made me understand that although I was going to Europe for my personal healing, my journey would also serve as a model for others who wanted to embrace terrible events of the past, personal or historical, and change how they impacted their lives today.



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Gay and I traveled to Poland, from where my grandparents had fled in the 1890s. They left because Jews were being persecuted and accused of killing non-Jewish children for their blood which was supposedly used in matzo. Pogroms (internment camps) were being constructed for them to live in, due to the hysteria that swept Poland. Now, we visited the concentration camps where they would have almost certainly died had they not had the courage to leave their beloved homeland earlier.

As we drove from Warsaw to Krakow, our interpreter, Malvina, told us about an abandoned Jewish cemetery near where my grandparents used to live. Once, there were over three million Jews in Poland; now only about 5,000 remain. We decided to take a detour and see it.

The cemetery was located on the outskirts of a tiny village named

Karczew. Graves had been vandalized: and now, forest reclaimed the site, moss grew inside the engraved Hebrew letters on the upturned and shattered tombstones.

With Gay's support, I probed deeply into my feelings of sadness. First, they changed to anger about my grandparents having to leave their home at the turn-of-the-century. Then, I came to a greater understanding and appreciation for them. I imagined how confused they must have felt leaving Poland. I appreciated that they left so that my dad could live—and eventually father me. I started touching the soil and stones, then began clearing debris and lifting many grave-stones upright. I felt pride in my family and a sense of purpose. In a strange way, it was almost as if my grandparents had left Poland so I could come back here to tell their story.

We continued on to Auschwitz, which is located about 40 miles west of Krakow, a territory annexed to Nazi Germany following Poland's defeat in September 1939. The first concentration camp was built shortly afterwards. A second site, known as Auschwitz II or Birkenau, was built in March 1941, about a half-mile from the original camp.

At Auschwitz, people worked till they died. At Birkenau, people were simply murdered—children, the elderly, the disabled. Over one million people died here, ninety percent of them Jews.

Like millions of Jews before me, I rode the train from Krakow to Auschwitz. The metallic cacophony of shrieks and whistles contrasted with quiet farmlands and homes.

When I arrived at Birkenau, I went into shock. Both Gay and I gasped, agreeing that it was the

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darkest place we had ever seen.

Everything has been left exactly as it was when the camp was liberated by the Allies. As writer Primo Levi, a Birkenau survivor, describes from his 1980s' visit, "Nothing has changed. There was mud, and there is still mud; here nothing has been prettied up. Rows of wooden barracks intact; its sheer size is terrifying, stretching out as far as one can see."

I knew I could never feel what a survivor had undergone, but I wanted to come as close to the brink of the experience as possible. We went into one of the barracks, where I lay down on a narrow, hard wooden plank, which at one time would have accommodated five men or more.

Overwhelmed by the shocking reality of where I was, I felt my breaths grow shallow. Despair overwhelmed me. I felt frozen stiff. I said, "I want out of this place, but it's no use." I was temporarily blinded. I lost all sensation of my body, and began retreating deeper and deeper inside of myself.

My surroundings were too big, too dark, too sad. I blurred and couldn't function except deep inside of myself. I kept my eyes closed and focused on my breath and the overwhelming feelings crowding upon me...

Suddenly, something shifted. The more I concentrated within, the greater the feeling of peace that came over me. Then an inner voice arose and told me that no matter what happens in my surroundings, I will always find safety inside—with God. It was one of the most profound spiritual experiences I have ever had.

After a while, with Gay's guidance, I relaxed and breathed deeply. Now, other feelings started to

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emerge—grief, changing to outrage and anger. Gay suggested I try to move. I started slowly, but then all of my rage surged forward.

Leaving the barracks, I ran towards a prison watchtower and kicked it so hard, it cracked. I felt relieved. It was as if I had wanted to strike back for forty years, and now I had. I felt the Holocaust's grip on me loosen. Letting out my intense feelings of bitterness helped me release the anger that had festered inside of me for so long. For the first time, I did not hold back or suck my rage in... I ran wildly and let it all out.

My last night in Poland, we went to a dinner concert at Arrielle's in Krakow. A former bath house, it is now renovated as a Kosher restaurant with a stage and live entertainment.

In the corner of the restaurant, an antique sideboard displayed Kosher desserts. My eyes met those of the dozen or so other Jews in attendance. I felt so proud of the people who continued to celebrate their heritage even amid the obvious anti-Semitism that still exists in Poland (the *International Herald-Tribune* reported that a Jewish cemetery near Warsaw had been vandalized on the day I left).

A lit sabbath candle was clearly visible from any seat in the restaurant. To me, its flame—slender yet burning intensely—symbolized the victory of Jews against the forces of evil who tried to snuff them out forever. Light, not darkness... Life, not death.

For me, the Holocaust took on a new symbolism. I realized we all have our personal "holocausts" within us. But I realize that when we take action and heal those traumas, we free ourselves to live more joyfully in the moment. •

Global Shift

Continued from page 28

1994. The percentage who believe their soul will survive death was 75 percent in 1965 and 80 percent in 1996. A 1996 poll found that 19 percent of Americans have practiced meditation; 47 percent said it helped a lot, and 41 percent said that it helped some. The percentage of Americans reporting a religious or mystical experience rose from 22 percent in 1962 to 33 percent in 1994. Overall, there seems to be an upsurge, with 58 percent of the U.S. adult population reporting that they are more interested in spiritual matters than they were five years ago.

SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Both the *World Values Survey* and the *Health of the Planet* survey reveal widespread support for sustainability. Additionally, the Trends Research Institute of New York described "global simplicity" or "voluntary simplicity"—which originated in the U.S. and is now spreading throughout the industrialized world—as one of the top 10 world trends of 1997. In fact, the institute wrote, "Never before in [our] 17 years of trend-tracking has a societal trend grown so quickly, spread so broadly, and been embraced so eagerly."

The Merck Fund also commissioned a report which found that U.S. respondents' deepest aspirations are non-material. In fact, 28 percent said that they had made voluntary changes in the last five years which resulted in making less money, including reducing work hours, changing jobs, or even quitting work. When this implies that more than 50 million Americans have "downshifted" in the last five years. In addition, 88 percent of the downshifters described themselves as happy with the change.

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Richard Moss

*In the Presence of the Teacher,
the Soul Knows Itself and Knows
Itself to be Recognized.*



Richard Moss, author of *The Second Miracle*, *The Black Butterfly* and *The I that is We*, addresses the fundamental necessity for practical spirituality, spirituality that enhances our capacity for conscious relationships, relationships that teach us how to shift from suffering and avoidance to openness and joyousness. His teaching skillfully integrates meditation, energy work, dream work, body consciousness and self-inquiry, awakening each participant to a relationship to truth and to the transformative grace of life's intelligence.

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Reflections



From Our Readers

EXCELLENT

I would like to thank you for publishing such an excellent journal as *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. It is eclectic enough for a broad range of readers. Your journal is written with such warmth and hospitality of feelings that it gives me a professional lift in a moral, ethical and holistic way. By far, the most important thing it has done for me was accomplished while reading an article on guilt. My life was transformed, and I was released. I thank you for it! It seemed that "True Peace" entered my life. I have a better view of myself now.—*Len Holmes, Austin, Texas.*

REMOVE MY NAME

Please remove my name from your mailing list. To date, I have received one copy of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* (June 1997). I read through it and thought I would subscribe. But then I noticed an ad (on p. 75) for erotic videos. When I saw that ad, my whole feeling about the magazine shifted. I cannot (in conscience) subscribe to, and don't want coming into my home or office, ads for erotic material. Owning/looking at/paying for erotica is not consistent with my personal view of personal transformation. Accepting this kind of advertising clearly and unequivocally undercuts and destroys any kind of positive, qualitative image

you may have wished to present. You missed the mark, and I do not want to be associated with that kind of deliberate and chosen failure.—*Joan Fronc, Marriottsville, Maryland.*

FILLING THE NEED

I am real excited about your magazine. I discovered it through a friend and it is fantastic! Thanks for filling that need that *New Age* and *Body, Mind and Spirit* try to fill but fall short on. Keep up the good work!—*Slate-Stanfield, Greensboro, North Carolina.*

THANKS

It is with thanks and appreciation for your attention and consideration for looking into the issue of my subscription. *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* is a great magazine, and I will continue to tell others about the great articles and the difference it has made in my life. Thank you again, by your fairness and understanding. I think you will do very, very well in your career.—*Sunny Miller, Idaho Falls, Idaho.*

TRANSFORMATION GROUPS

I am interested in learning more about your transformation study group project. I have attempted to start my own spiritual enlightening group here in my area but have had trouble defining and structuring its

content. It seems that you may be able to aid me in accomplishing just that! Send me information about conducting your community group project, and if it is what I have been searching for, I will be glad to start the group. There is a great need for an expressive, non-religious gathering of souls!—*Rebecca Rutecki, York, Pennsylvania.*

HEALING MY PAST

I recently received a sample copy of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. It has changed my life! I immediately sent out a check for a subscription. As a birthday present, my husband is buying me all the back issues. I received the magazine at the point in my life where I was working on healing my past, trying to figure out who I was and where I was going in my life. I still have a long way to go, but your magazine helped start me on the right path. I belong to a self-help group now, but everyone is so negative. I need to be with positive people who want to make positive changes in their lives. I am interested in hosting a transformation group in my area.—*Catherine Taylor, Beacon, New York.*

DISAPPOINTED IN THE DIRECTION

I am really disappointed in the direction *LOTUS* magazine took

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when it became *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION*. It no longer offers me articles which I feel have psychological and spiritual depth; but too many are personal accounts by laymen. It's become a new age trendy Enquirer. No Thanks!—*Penelope Williams, Columbia, South Carolina.*

I C U T P T U P

I am sorry to say that each time I receive an issue of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* I cut it up. There are so many articles that I want to save that I've created a subject file to hold them. Both my husband and I enjoy *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS*. It gives us many opportunities for discussions and spiritual growth. Your contributors write with simplicity and depth, enabling the readers to engage their minds in questions and answers of enlightenment. Thank you for all

that you are and all that you do in that name of human potentiality and spiritual awakening.—*Fran Lenzo, Huntinton, New York.*

T R U L Y D I S M A Y E D

I am truly dismayed that such an admirable collection of professional people who embrace the high-minded values and ideals, encourage and enable others to as well, would then include in the classified section of their very excellent magazine—listed with sources of life, soul lifting courses, and opportunities to bring people to a better place within themselves and their lives—an advertisement that is degrading, embarrassing and hurtful as the *Asia Blue*. This ad seriously damages all intent of your magazine and causes one to question the message of each contributor. Is pornography in keeping with

the emotional and spiritual freedom that is so prevalent in your pages? Is it in keeping with the understanding that all people need to look upon each race and culture as worthy of respect, love and an attempt to bring all we contact and know into their own place of honor and freedom? Please think again about including this lewd collection of erotica in this otherwise most important magazine. I sincerely appreciate your desires to help change this crazy world. I myself am doing all that I can. We all need to support the efforts of those around us in a healthy way. I do not believe that pornography is healthy. Thank you for your time and consideration of my desire to keep this kind of aberration from distracting me from my work.—*Ye Xio, Peoria, Illinois.*

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Inner Traditions/new

Near-Death Experiences

B R U C E G O L D B E R G

The best scientific evidence of the soul's survival beyond the physical death of the body comes from near-death experiences (NDEs). Depictions of NDEs have been around for a long time. Dr. Raymond Moody, in his ground-breaking book *Life After Life*, coined the term "near-death experience."

As a society we have become more aware of this phenomenon since Dr. Moody's book first appeared in 1975. Researchers may differ somewhat in their specific conclusions about NDE, but their studies reveal a similar picture of this phenomenon. The typical encounter is described as being in a dream. Surprisingly, this experience seems more real than ordinary waking consciousness. The five senses are heightened; thought processes are rational and crystal clear.

The main difference noted is a disconnectedness from your physical body. A floating sensation ensues, and the soul views the lifeless body from a corner of the ceiling. A sense of calm and serenity dominates now, and time has no meaning. The soul feels drawn to a dark tunnel with a brilliant white light at its end.

As you enter the white light, a loved one or a religious figure greets you. At this time, you become aware that you will return to your physical body. Prior to this, however, you have perceived in the form of flashbacks an instantaneous panoramic review of your former life.

Most people do not remember these events when they are resuscitated. Some people report becoming aware of discomfort or being propelled uncontrollably back into their body. Reports prevail of a greater appreciation of life, an increase in the importance of personal relationships, and a determination to maximize the opportunities afforded to them.

In summary, the core experience of an NDE includes (1) hearing loud noises very early in the death process; (2) moving through a long, dark tunnel; (3) seeing a white or gold light that is separate from oneself; (4) seeing religious figures like Jesus or Buddha

or Moses; (5) a panoramic life review/judgment; and (6) indications that this is a learning process.

It must be pointed out that any NDE represents only the early stage of death. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* would classify this as the first bardo after death. What is interesting is that the death process, like life, involves choice. These choices form the basis for learning as well as the initiation of personal experience.

Children also report NDEs, but their experiences differ. They have more vivid recollections and see the brilliant white light twice as often as adults. Children have shown a tendency to temporarily forego their childhood identities and become "ageless and wise beyond their years." In addition, the panoramic memory life review is absent in a child's NDE.

Kenneth Ring's book, *Life at Death*, reports that forty-eight percent of the people he interviewed who had an NDE described the core experience. Prior religious beliefs had no effect on these observations. In fact, more NDE experiencers than non-experiencers previously felt that death resulted in the end of consciousness. None of Ring's subjects experienced anything hellish. Eighty percent of the subjects reported that they now had little or no fear of death.

Nearly twice as many of those who had no NDEs were aware of this phenomenon and, through the media, of the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and Raymond Moody's work. This defeats any argument that the experiencers were culturally conditioned to have this result.

Another qualifying factor to these reports being accurate comes from the reports of Michael Sabom, an Atlanta cardiologist. He interviewed thirty-two patients who claimed to have had an NDE. None of them made any major mistakes in describing the resuscitation procedures applied to them while they were out of their body observing these procedures. Sabom noted that twenty-three of twenty-five patients who did not have an NDE, but made "educated guesses" as to the procedures involved, made



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major errors in their reports to him.

Moody reported that a woman was able to accurately describe the instruments that were employed in her resuscitation following a heart attack—right down to their colors. What makes this case especially significant is that this elderly patient had been blind for fifty years! Moody, among others, also reports a reluctance to return among NDE receivers. Some of these patients even express anger toward their doctors for bringing them back.

One rather interesting observation from some NDE reports is that of precognition. Ring reports a “life preview” and “world preview” as a component of these futuristic depictions.

The life previews were glimpses of the patient’s future, and unique to each individual. However, there was considerable consistency of global events, both in timing and content. The life previews are presented as a vivid memory rather than a forecast, and are highly detailed. They seem to occur as an

extension of the panoramic life review.

There is documentation for many of these futuristic projections, according to Ring. One man described the Three Mile Island incident to his wife just two days before it happened. Another patient described the eruption of Mount St. Helens to her husband. He mocked her until a few hours later when this event was shown on their local television news. Since 1977 my work with age progression through hypnosis most definitely demonstrates the accuracy of the mind's ability to see the future. I refer you to my first book, *Past Lives—Future Lives* for a detailed discussion of progression, along with case histories.

Ring also noted that NDEs resulting from illness were more likely to contain the core experience than those from accidents. On the other hand, the accident experiencers were more likely to experience the panoramic life review as compared to the victims of illness or attempted suicides.

The decision to return is often related to some unfinished business that the patient feels must be completed prior to his or her death.

THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE THAT INSPIRED DR. RAYMOND MOODY'S WORK

I am fortunate in having had the pleasure of knowing Dr. Raymond Moody since 1983. We were both conducting workshops at an Association of Research and Enlightenment Conference in Washington, D.C.

Ray is also the first person to document the core experience of an NDE. As the father of the field of NDE, his work has added significantly to the field of conscious dying, even though an NDE is an example of unconscious dying.

What most people are not aware of is the first case Dr. Moody investigated. This case was responsible for his devoting his entire life to the investigation of NDEs.

If you read Moody's *Life After Life*, you will note that the book is dedicated to George Ritchie, M.D. In December 1943, the 20-year-old Ritchie had been pronounced dead by two doctors. He lay cold, covered from head to toe, for nine minutes. He was traveling through another dimension of life. His

guide was Jesus Christ. Miraculously, Ritchie returned to his body, shocking everyone present. He would never be the same again—neither would those whose lives he touched.

Only minutes had passed between Ritchie's death and his miraculous revival, but somewhere beyond time he was absorbing the love and wisdom of Jesus Christ. "Here stood a Being that knew everything that I had ever done in my life, for the panorama of my life surrounded us, and yet he totally accepted and loved me," he wrote.

What Ritchie saw convinced him of the existence not of a rigid judgmental God, but of a God whose love for his creatures is ever ascending. He saw that a person's learning did not stop with physical death. Endless levels of attainment await us.

EXPLANATIONS FOR NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

The classic psychoanalytical explanation for an NDE is that when a person's life is threatened, the ego activates a psychological defense mechanism creating the elements of the core experience. Others feel that the "happily ever after" stance toward death may represent a form of denial when what is really needed by the dying is a demonstration of real concern and real caring in their present experience.

This notion of a protective response provided as an escape for the ego when confronted by death, along with laboratory-induced afterlife visions, fails to account for the overnight permanent personality changes that are observed. Included among these changes are healthier eating habits, improved self-images, and a greater zest for life. These people are not just *saying* they are different, they are *acting* empowered.

Cross-cultural studies of NDE have been conducted by the well-respected researchers Karlis Osis and Erlender Haraldsson. Their conclusions are that the evidence from NDEs is highly suggestive of life after death. Apparitions that are contrary to the expectations of the experiencer are especially significant. Children surprised at observing angels without wings and patients seeing people they assumed to be alive, but were in fact dead, support

this hypothesis of life after death.

Neither cultural conditioning nor medical or psychological theories can explain these.

Recent Gallup polls show that about sixty percent of Americans believe in hell. Yet no Euro-American NDE report indicates a judgment procedure. The life reviews always have love and comfort as the theme.

Another interesting fact about NDE is that there is such a similarity between the consciousness at death and that of life that the patient has difficulty in recognizing that he has shifted realities. This is supported by the Tibetan Buddhist belief that all of the bardos, including life, dying between lives, rebirth, hypnosis and dreaming are basically identical in the dualistic structure and appearance.

My medical colleagues are quick to point out the biological effect of cerebral anoxia, or the effect of general anesthetics and narcotics used in a hospital. In order for this strictly neurophysiological explanation to carry weight, it would have to account for the entire core experience, but it most certainly does not. In addition, amnesia is a result of cerebral anoxia. NDE reports would not exist if cerebral anoxia were in effect. The presence and/or the "voice" often encountered during an NDE is most likely the Higher Self, not an extension of the personality.

SUMMARIZING NDE

- NDEs cannot be explained adequately on the basis of drugs, hallucinations, cultural conditioning, etc.
- Religion, race and age are also unrelated to NDEs.
- Ninety-five percent of NDEs are positive and literally transform the personality of the recipient. Many patients do not want to return to the physical body because it is so positive.
- A Being of Light often conducts a panoramic life review of the patient during an NDE. Not only is every action observed, but the effects on others are noted. Telepa-

thy is the mode of communication.

- The patient sometimes gets information about the future. Some of these precognitions have been documented.
- The overnight personality changes that occur, including greater zest for life, improved self-confidence, healthier eating habits and increased compassion, simply cannot be explained by hallucinations or any other conjecture proposed by the skeptics critical of this experience.
- An NDE is one of the most powerful events a person can experience. It has redirected lives, created saints, inspired religions and shaped history.
- NDEs are reported in thirty-five to forty percent of people who have a brush with death.

RELATING NDE TO CONSCIOUS DYING

An NDE is an example of unconscious dying. This is a prelude to many of the circumstances that a soul will encounter in conscious dying, with one great difference. That difference is related to the disorienting forces of the lower planes or karmic cycle.

The advantage of maintaining contact with the Higher Self at the moment of death is that the soul can avoid the need to come back again to the earth plane, or any of the other lower planes. If these souls must return, their new life will be far more fulfilling and empowered than if they died unconsciously.

We can learn from NDEs what not to do. In addition, the phenomenon provides us with a glimpse of what death will be like. This should remove the fears commonly associated with this transition. It is this fear that disorients the soul upon death and creates many of the problems the transitee experiences when he or she dies unconsciously. •

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God's Will

S R I C H I N M O Y

God's Will in an individual is progressive, like a muscle developing—strong, stronger, strongest. God's Will is to make an individual feel that there is something abiding, lasting, everlasting. When an individual reaches that stage, he will know God's Will. God's Will we can know from the sense of abiding satisfaction it gives us.

Anything that is eternal, anything that is immortal, anything that is divine, is God's Will. Even though God deals with Eternity, He is not indifferent for one second. For it is from one second, two seconds, three seconds that we enter into Infinity and Eternity. Let us try to feel God's Will in us at every second.

There is a very simple way to know what God's Will is for us as individuals. Every day when we start our day, we build our own world. We make decisions. We feel that things have to be done in a certain way. I have to deal with this person in this way. I have to say

this; I have to do this; I have to give this. Everything is I, I, I. If, instead of all this planning, we can make our minds absolutely calm and silent, we can know God's Will. This silence is not the silence of a dead body; it is the dynamic, progressive silence of receptivity. Through total silence and the ever-increasing receptivity of the mind, God's Will can be known.

When the human mind works powerfully, the Divine Will cannot work. God's Will works only when the human mind does not work. When the mind becomes a pure vessel, the Supreme can pour into it His infinite Peace, Light and Bliss.

Right now we do not hear God's Voice. There may be something we hear from within that we feel is God's Voice, but it may be only a voice coming from our subtle physical or subtle vital or from somewhere else. But when we silence the mind, we can hear a silent voice inside the very depth of our heart or

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above our head, and that is the Voice of God. Once we hear the Voice of God, we cannot make any mistake in our life. If we listen to its dictates all the time, we will go forward, upward and inward constantly.

We are constantly building and breaking our mental house. But instead of making and breaking the house at our sweet will, if we can empty our mind, make it calm and quiet, then God can build His Temple or His Palace in us in His own way. And when He has built His Abode within us, He will say, "I have built this for you and Me to reside in together. I have built it, but it is not Mine alone. It is also yours. Come in."

The easiest way for us to know God's Will is to become the instrument and not the doer. If we become only the instrument for carrying out God's Plans, God's Will will act in and through us. God does the acting and He is the action. He is everything. We only observe.

To easily know what God's Will is,
We have to feed the divine in us
And illumine the human in us.

How can I know God's Will in my daily life?

You can know God's Will in your daily life if early in the morning you offer your utmost gratitude to God for what He has already done for you. When you offer your gratitude-heart, then it expands; and when it expands, it becomes one with God's Universal Reality. A gratitude-heart blossoms like a flower. When the flower is fully blossomed, then you appreciate and admire it.

In your case also, when your heart of gratitude blossoms, immediately God is pleased. If you offer gratitude to God for what He has already done for you, then naturally God's sweet Will will operate in and through you. Early in the morning, before you meditate or do anything else, offer as much gratitude as possible; offer your soulful tears just because you have become what you are now. If you do this, eventually you will become infinitely more than what you are now. Gratitude will be able to make you feel what God's Will is. God's Will will act in

and through you and God will do everything in and through you, and for you, if you offer gratitude.

How can I know what God wants me to do?

You will know easily if you are not attached to the result or elevated by the result. Before you do something, pray to God: "God, if it is Your Will, then please inspire me to do it well." While working, tell God, "God, since I have accepted this work with the feeling that You wanted me to do it, please work in and through me so that I can do it well. From Your inspiration, I will be able to know that it is Your Will." At the end of the work, whether the result comes as success or as failure, offer it at the Feet of God with the same joy.

How do I know if I am executing God's Will or I am fulfilling my own ego?

When you fulfill the demands of the ego, immediately you will feel that you are the lord of the world or that you are going to become the lord of the world. You are bloated with pride, and you feel that the rest of the world is at your feet. Once a desire of yours is fulfilled, immediately you feel, "Oh, my desire is fulfilled: I have become something, and the rest of the world will not achieve what I have." Always there will be a feeling of superiority when the ego is fulfilled.

When you execute the Will of God, the question of superiority or inferiority does not arise. At that time you feel only your oneness. You feel that God has appointed you or that God has accepted you as His chosen instrument, and that He is acting in and through you. No matter what you achieve, even if it is something very grand, extraordinary, unusual, you will not have any sense of personal pride. On the contrary, you will feel extremely grateful to God that He has chosen to fulfill Himself in and through you. There will be no pride, but only a feeling of expansion.

To execute God's Will means to achieve something. When you achieve something, you feel an expansion of your consciousness. But when you fulfill the demands of your ego, you feel totally separated from the rest of the world. You are the lord,

and the rest of creation is at your feet. In this way you can know the difference between the two.

Self-giving to God's Will
Is, without fail,
A slow-ripening
But most delicious fruit.

Should we pray for something we want or should we just pray for God's Will to be done?

To pray for God's Will to be done is the highest form of prayer. But a beginner finds it almost impossible to pray to God sincerely to fulfill him in God's own way. Early in the morning, a beginner will say to God, "God, I want to be Your unconditionally surrendered child." Then, the next moment, when jealousy, insecurity or pride enters into him, his self-offering becomes all conditional. At that time the seeker says, "God, early in the morning I prayed to You so sincerely to fulfill Your Will in me, but You did not listen to my prayer. Otherwise, I would have been above jealousy, fear, doubt, anxiety and attachment."

If the seeker prays for something in the morning, and his prayer is not fulfilled in a few hours' time, immediately he becomes discouraged. Then he stops praying and meditating for six months. For a day he offers his sincere prayer, and then for six months he is ready to enjoy ignorance. So when a seeker is just starting out, it is always advisable for him to pray to God for whatever he feels he needs most, whether it is patience, purity, sincerity, humility or peace. Then God will give him peace, light and bliss, which are the precursors of something infinite that is going to come into his inner being.

Once he has received and achieved some peace, light and bliss and has become established to some extent in his inner being, he will have some confidence in God's operation and also in his own life of aspiration.

When one is making very fast progress or is a little advanced, he feels that there is a Reality within himself that is not going to disappoint or desert him. He feels that God is fully aware of what he needs and is eager to supply him with the things that he needs, because God wants to fulfill Himself

in and through His chosen instrument. At His choice Hour, God will fulfill Himself in and through that particular chosen instrument.

When a seeker feels this kind of confidence within himself, that is the time for the seeker to pray, "Let Thy Will be done." At that time he can sincerely say, "God, now I want to please You only in Your own way." At that time he will feel that God wants to manifest Himself in and through him. He will feel that the moment God makes him perfect, he will be able to serve the divinity in humanity.

If a member of one's immediate family is sick, what is your feeling about praying to God for healing power?

Let us say that your mother is sick. Instead of saying, "Cure my mother, cure my mother," if you can say, "I place my mother at the Feet of God," you will be doing the best thing. Your best healing power will be to place your mother at the Feet of God, because He knows what is best.

When you offer your own will to the Will of God, you gain power, and this power will be utilized for God. God Himself will tell you how to utilize it. But if you try to heal on your own, in spite of your best intentions, you may stand against the Will of God.

Suppose you pray and meditate to acquire divine power so that you can cure people and help the world. You say, "I want to be a camel and carry the whole burden of the world on my shoulders." But if the camel is not illumined, then how can it help others gain illumination?

You are running toward your goal. If you ask God to give you something, then this is just an additional thing that you have to carry, and it may slow you down. If illumination is your goal, think only of your goal and nothing else.

Again, if a remedy for a disease comes spontaneously from within and you do not have to exercise your mental power or will-power, then there is no question of ego, pride or vanity. If in your meditation, all of a sudden you see inner light and in this light you get a cure for some fatal disease, then naturally you will be able to offer this inner illumination to the world at large. But the best thing is to become illumined first. Then only will you be serv-

ing God in His own way. Otherwise at times you will serve God in His own way, and at other times you will be feeding your own ego.

How can you tell the difference between the Will of God and wishful thinking?

In order to know God's Will, one need not be a great spiritual Master or a highly advanced soul. There are very few of these on earth, very few. But one has to be at least a seeker in order to know God's Will. How can one be a real seeker? One can be a true seeker if he feels that he is not only helpless, but also hopeless, meaningless and useless in every way without God. Without God he is nothing, but with God he is everything. He is aspiration. He is realization. He is revelation. He is manifestation. If one has that kind of inner feeling about oneself, then one can be a true seeker overnight.

A sincere seeker tries to meditate devotedly each day. One who meditates devotedly each day will soon have a free access to God's inner Realm and be able to hear the Message of God. Of course, it is easy to say that you have to meditate devotedly, but to actually meditate devotedly may seem as difficult as climbing up Mount Everest. When you start meditating, you have to feel that your very life, your very existence, your very breath, is an offering to the Inner Pilot within you. Only in this way can you meditate devotedly and have a devoted feeling toward God.

During your meditation there comes a time when your mind is absolutely calm and quiet. There is only purity, serenity and profundity in your mind. Purity, sincerity and profundity have one common face, which is called tranquillity. When tranquillity is with them, they are perfect.

When the mind has become calm, quiet, tranquil and vacant, inside your heart you will feel a twinge, or you will feel something very tiny, like a soft bubble. It is a tiny thing, but there in golden letters is written a message. Even if you keep your eyes closed, no harm. Sometimes the message is transferred from the heart to the head, and with your mind you can see that the message has come. But if you have the capacity to go deep within, you will see that the message has already been inscribed in the heart. Just because you cannot see the message

there, it has to come to the physical mind to convince you.

Inside the inmost recesses of the heart, where everything is flooded with purity, a message cannot be written by anybody other than God. There no undivine force can enter. This is not true about the mind. In the mind there can always be a mental hallucination, a fabrication or some self-imposed truth that we have created.

But in the inmost recesses of our heart, no disturbing thought, no struggling thought, no strangling thought will ever dare to enter. The depths of our heart are well protected, well shielded by God Himself, because God's own Wealth and Treasure is there. He Himself is there as a gatekeeper, guarding His Treasure.

When you meditate, please try to feel the necessity of opening your heart fully and closing your physical mind fully. The physical mind is the mind which thinks of your near and dear ones, your friends, the rest of the world. When you bolt the door of your physical mind and open the door of your heart, the mind becomes calm and quiet and the heart becomes all receptivity. When your concentration and meditation are focused on the heart and the heart is receptive, then naturally what the heart treasures, the Message from God, will come to the fore and you will be able to read it and utilize it in your day-to-day life.

Now, it is one thing to hear the Message of God correctly and another thing to listen to it and fulfill it. There are quite a few who can hear God's Message, but in their outer life they cannot execute it. For that, you need faith in yourself, faith that you are not just a child of God, but a chosen child of God. Everybody is God's child, but everybody cannot be God's chosen child because everybody is not consciously aspiring. The chosen are those who really want God here and now, those who feel that they do not exist, cannot exist, without God. Just because you aspire sincerely, you can claim yourself as a chosen child of God. •

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Beginning Anew

T H I C H N H A T H A N H

Do you have someone to love? We all want to love and be loved. If you do not have anyone to love, your heart may dry up. Love brings happiness to ourselves and to the ones we love.

We may want to help those in need. We may want to love children who are hungry, disabled or abused, to relieve them of their suffering. We carry that love in our heart and hope that someday we will be able to realize it. But when we actually contact these children, they may be difficult to love. They may be rude, they may lie, they may steal, and our love for them will fade. We had the idea that loving children who need our help would be wonderful, but when confronted with the reality, we cannot sustain our love. When we discover that the object of our love is not lovable, we feel deep disappointment, shame and regret. We feel as though we have failed. If we cannot love a poor or disabled child, whom can we love?

A number of Plum Village [Thich Nhat Hanh's

retreat in France] residents of Vietnamese origin want to go back to Vietnam to help the children and the adults there. The war created much division, hatred and suspicion in the hearts of the people. These monks, nuns and lay people want to walk on their native land, embrace the people, and help relieve them of their suffering. But before they go back, they must prepare themselves. The people they want to help may not be easy to love. Real love must include those who are difficult, those who have been unkind. If they go back to Vietnam without first learning to love and understand deeply, when they find the people there being unpleasant, they will suffer and may even come to hate them.

You think you can change the world, but do not be too naive. Don't think that the moment you arrive in Vietnam, you will sit down with all the conflicting factions and establish communication immediately. You may be able to give beautiful talks about harmo-

IMAGE: BANS/MARC ROMANELLI

If we do not practice mindful breathing to untie the knots of pain in ourselves—the knots of anger, sadness, jealousy and irritation—what can we teach others? People need to hear how we have to be able to overcome our own suffering and the irritations in our own heart.

ny, but if you are not prepared, you will not be able to put your words into practice. In Vietnam there are already people who can give very good Dharma talks, who can explain how to reconcile and live in harmony. But we should not only talk about it. If we do not practice what we preach, what can we offer anyone?

We must practice harmony of views and harmony of speech. We bring our views together to have a deeper understanding, and we use loving speech to inspire others and not hurt anyone. We practice walking together, eating together, discussing together, so we can realize love and understanding. If older sisters do not hold each other's hands like children of the same mother, how can the younger sisters have faith in the future? If you are able to breathe and smile when your sister says something unkind, that is the beginning of love. You do not have to go someplace else to serve. You can serve right where you are by practicing walking meditation, smiling and shining your eyes of love on others.

We want to go out and share what we have learned. But if we do not practice mindful breathing to untie the knots of pain in ourselves—the knots of anger, sadness, jealousy and irritation—what can we teach others? We must understand and practice the teachings in our daily lives. People need to hear how we have to be able to overcome our own suffering and the irritations in our own heart. When we talk about the Dharma, our words need to have energy. That is not possible if our words come only from ideas, theories or even sutras. We can only teach what we have experienced ourselves.

Eight years ago I organized a retreat for Ameri-

can veterans of the Vietnam War. Many of the men and women at that retreat felt very guilty for what they had done and witnessed, and I knew I had to find a way of beginning anew that could help them transform. One veteran told me that when he was in Vietnam, he rescued a girl who had been wounded and was about to die. He pulled her into his helicopter, but he was not able to save her life. She died looking straight at him, and he has never forgotten her eyes. She had a hammock with her, because as a guerrilla, she slept in the forest at night. When she died, he kept the hammock and would not let it go. Sometimes when we suffer, we have to cling to our suffering. The hammock symbolized all his suffering, all his shame.

During the retreat, the veterans sat in a circle and spoke about their suffering, some for the first time. In a retreat for veterans, a lot of love and support is needed. Some veterans would not do walking meditation, because it reminded them too much of walking in the jungles of Vietnam, where they could step on a mine or walk into an ambush at any time. One man walked far behind the rest of us so that if anything happened he would be able to get away quickly. Veterans live in that kind of psychological environment.

On the last day of the retreat, we held a ceremony for the deceased. Each veteran wrote the names of those he or she knew had died, and placed it on an altar we constructed. I took a willow leaf and used it to sprinkle water on the names and also on the veterans. Then we did walking meditation to the lake and held a ceremony for burning the suffering. That veteran still did not want to give up his hammock, but finally he put it on the fire. It

Beginning Anew is not easy. We have to transform our hearts and our minds in very practical ways. We may feel ashamed, but shame is not enough to change our heart. I said to him, “You killed five or six children that day? Can you save the lives of five or six children today? Children everywhere in the world are dying because of war, malnutrition and disease.

burned, and all the guilt and the suffering in his heart also burned up. We have taken one step, two steps, three steps on the path of transformation. We have to continue on that path.

Another veteran told us that almost everyone in his platoon had been killed by the guerrillas. Those who survived were so angry that they baked cookies with explosives in them and left them alongside the road. When some Vietnamese children saw them, they ate the cookies and the explosives went off. They were rolling around the ground in pain. Their parents tried to save their lives, but there was nothing they could do. That image of the children rolling on the ground, dying because of the explosives in the cookies, was so deeply ingrained on this veteran’s heart, that now, twenty years later, he still could not sit in the same room with children. He was living in hell. After he had told this story, I gave him the practice of Beginning Anew.

Beginning Anew is not easy. We have to transform our hearts and our minds in very practical ways. We may feel ashamed, but shame is not enough to change our heart. I said to him, “You killed five or six children that day? Can you save the lives of five or six children today? Children everywhere in the world are dying because of war, malnutrition and disease. You keep thinking about the five or six children that you killed in the past, but what about the children who are dying now? You

still have your body, you still have your heart, you can do many things to help children who are dying in the present moment. Please give rise to your mind of love, and in the months and years that are left to you, do the work of helping children.” He agreed to do it, and it has helped him transform his guilt.

Beginning Anew is not to ask for forgiveness. Beginning Anew is to change your mind and heart, to transform the ignorance that brought about wrong actions of body, speech and mind, and to help you cultivate your mind of love. Your shame and guilt will disappear, and you will begin to experience the joy of being alive. All wrongdoings arise in the mind. It is through the mind that wrongdoings can disappear.

At Plum Village, we practice a ceremony of Beginning Anew every week. Everyone sits in a circle with a vase of fresh flowers in the center, and we follow our breathing as we wait for the facilitator to begin. The ceremony has three parts: flower watering, expressing regrets, and expressing hurts and difficulties. This practice can prevent feelings of hurt from building up over the weeks and helps make the situation safe for everyone in the community.

We begin with flower watering. When someone is ready to speak, she joins her palms and the others join their palms to show that she has the right to

You keep thinking about the five or six children that you killed in the past, but what about the children who are dying now? You still have your body, you still have your heart, you can do many things to help children who are dying in the present moment. Please give rise to your mind of love, and in the months and years that are left to you, do the work of helping children.”

she speak. Then she stands, walks slowly to the flower, takes the vase in her hands, and returns to her seat. When she speaks, her words reflect the freshness and beauty of the flower that is in her hand. During flower watering, each speaker acknowledges the wholesome, wonderful qualities of the others. It is not flattery; we always speak the truth. Everyone has some strong points that can be seen with awareness. No one can interrupt the person holding the flower. She is allowed as much time as she needs, and everyone else practices deep listening. When she is finished speaking, she stands up and slowly returns the vase to the center of the room.

In the second part of the ceremony, we express regrets for anything we have done to hurt others. It does not take more than one thoughtless phrase to hurt someone. The ceremony of Beginning Anew is an opportunity for us to recall some regret from earlier in the week and undo it. In the third part of the ceremony, we express ways in which others have hurt us. Loving speech is crucial. We want to heal the community, not harm it. We speak frankly, but we do not want to be destructive. Listening meditation is an important part of the practice. When we sit among a circle of friends who are all practicing deep listening, our speech becomes more beautiful and more constructive. We never blame or argue.

Compassionate listening is crucial. We listen with the willingness to relieve the suffering of the

other person, not to judge or argue with her. We listen with all our attention. Even if we hear something that is not true, we continue to listen deeply so the other person can express her pain and release the tensions within herself. If we reply to her or correct her, the practice will not bear fruit. We just listen. If we need to tell the other person that her perception was not correct, we can do that a few days later, privately and calmly. Then, at the next Beginning Anew session, she may be the person who rectifies the error, and we will not have to say anything. We close the ceremony with a song or by holding hands with everyone in the circle and breathing for a minute.

After the Beginning Anew ceremony, everyone in the community feels light and relieved, even if we have taken only preliminary steps toward healing. We have confidence that, having begun, we can continue. This practice dates to the time of the Buddha, when communities of monks and nuns practiced Beginning Anew on the eve of every full moon and new moon. Thanks to our practice with veterans and others, we have adapted it for our community. I hope you will practice Beginning Anew in your own family every week. •

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Suffering And Compassion

P O L L Y Y O U N G - E I S E N D R A T H

We learn from the resilient how those who acknowledge their suffering can discover knowledge and wisdom and tolerance through helping others. Compassion is a suffering with. It is not sympathy, pity or simply the urge to do good. Rather, it is a need to help others in order to understand how and why one suffers, oneself. And perhaps, it is not even that ordered or sequential; it is more of a jumble of one's own suffering or pain and seeing others who are similar and then recognizing oneself within them.

Psychologist and radio talk-show host Dan Gottlieb's life story is a parable of suffering and compassion. Dan's was an ordinary life into which terror, loss and tragedy came marching. He is no Mother Teresa, nor was he ever. Dan could have been any of us who are trying to be regular and successful—and then an accident resulted in his becoming a quadriplegic. Dan could have wallowed in self-pity for the rest of his

life, mucked about in discontent and negativity, and not one of us would have blamed him.

Dan (now age 48) exudes a quiet kind of energy and activity, and works about 60 hours a week doing psychotherapy, teaching, supervising, hosting a national radio talk show, and writing a newspaper column. Although he is bound to a wheelchair and has around-the-clock nurses, I never consider him “disabled” because his life is so active and his engagement with others is so energetic.

When Dan was 26, his 23-year-old wife, to whom he had been married for three years, was diagnosed with melanoma. They had two babies, and Dan was deeply scared. “Between the surgery and the chemotherapy, the initial trauma lasted almost eight months. It was one of those shocks that changes you to the core. It was a confrontation with solitude for me, one that I'd never known before. I felt existentially alone, that no one could understand my terror. I

IMAGE: BANG/ALYSS UPTIS

“I make others less afraid, first of me and then of themselves. In the same way I had to go through the process of becoming less afraid of me, of my own dependency and vulnerability, of my own death and my nakedness, I show others how to be less afraid.”

was alone facing the death of my partner and best friend, as well as the mother of my very young children.”

Dan’s wife recovered from her cancer, something for which she and he felt enormously grateful. But the illness and their reactions to it were not all positive. Each did things that hurt the other, and for Dan the entire experience had stirred fears and neuroses that led to greater suffering.

And then Dan’s life was irrevocably changed. “At the age of 33, just when I thought I was a pretty powerful guy professionally—running two drug clinics and supervising 30 people and teaching at the Family Institute of Philadelphia—I encountered the most transformative event of my life. I was driving on the expressway on my way to pick up a Thunderbird to celebrate our 10th wedding anniversary.

“We both had always loved those cars, and I was driving up to meet my Uncle Irv, who was a car dealer near Harrisburg, to get the car. It was December 20th. I was listening to Donna Summers on my eight-track, feeling really good, a great sunny day. All I remember is seeing a black thing flying through the air. I saw it for a millisecond before it hit me. The truck wheel (from an oncoming tractor-trailer) hit the top of the car and just flattened the car out. People came around and the only thing I remember is saying, “Call everybody I know and tell them to come here right away.”

“That moment I was a quadriplegic. But I didn’t know it for 24 hours, although everyone was telling me. It just didn’t register. My body was paralyzed

and traumatized and so was my mind. I became, in many ways, like an infant, and it would take me eight years to grow up again.”

Dan was taken to an intensive care unit at a local hospital in a small Pennsylvania town. Because his neck was broken, his head had to be prevented from moving so there would be no further damage to his spinal cord. Dan and his wife decided that they didn’t want the required neurosurgery (a necessity for preventing further injury) to be done at this local hospital, but wanted him transferred to Jefferson Hospital in downtown Philadelphia. However, his condition was considered too unstable to risk transportation.

His wife found out about a piece of equipment called a Halo vest that the local hospital had never heard of. She and Dan decided to use the vest to secure Dan’s head in order for him to make the trip in the ambulance to Philadelphia. “The vest had two parts. There’s a headpiece, which is a band of metal about a quarter-inch thick that fits around the head. It’s literally bolted at four places into your head, from which metal bars come down into a plastic vest that fits around your chest. This is supposed to be put on during surgery while you’re under general anesthetic, but they had to put it on me while I was conscious. It was just indescribable pain. They had to use a torque wrench to put the bolts in. I was determined to do it because I felt that going to Jefferson would save my life. It was one of those things where something in me just decided to live, and I believed that I had to get to Jefferson in order to live.

“It took us around three hours to get to Philadelphia in the ambulance, and when we arrived, I looked up at the people in the emergency room and said, ‘Help me or kill me. Either one is okay.’”

Dan was trying to communicate his level of agony to the staff, but they had little understanding or empathy. Instead of commiserating with him, they sent a psychiatrist to treat him for depression. When the doctor began asking Dan about his relationships in early childhood, Dan demanded that the psychiatrist leave the room.

Most people seemed unable to tolerate seeing Dan bolted into the Halo vest and in such pain. One resident was an exception: “I was very, very, very verbal about my pain and my psychic injury, but no one would listen. Then one young medical resident, walking by the room at about midnight, looked in and saw me and then returned. He just looked at me for a minute or so and said, ‘I have no idea what you’re going through, but my wife and I just went through a miscarriage, and if your pain is anything like mine, it must be just awful.’ I never forgot him.”

In this brief interchange, Dan experienced the gift of a stranger’s compassion. In directly acknowledging his pain, the resident had reached Dan at the level of some recognizable truth, and for the first time after the accident, Dan was open to another person. Unfortunately, though, most people couldn’t respond empathically or compassionately to Dan’s great pain. For the most part, he felt isolated.

“I wanted people to look at me more honestly and say something about the pain. After I got out of the hospital, I was going to a friend’s swimming pool with my daughters, who were 5 and 7 at the time. Something happened while we were driving there, maybe I had a bladder accident or something, and my older daughter, just blurted out, ‘I hate you for ruining my life!’ and I felt relieved. I was always so guilty for being a burden, and I knew what she said was true. It helped me feel closer to her. It may sound like a cruel thing to say, but it was actually loving because it was honest and I knew it.”

Suffering and pain are transformative when they are faced and expressed in a way that reveals the

truth. Dan’s daughter went directly into her own suffering and linked it with Dan and his accident, and then she spoke straightforwardly. Both she and Dan were suffering from hating Dan, from wishing that life could go back to the past and undo the accident, from wanting to have control where there was no control. Dan benefited from her remark, and so did their relationship, which remains close.

It is the descent into hell—the hell of *dukkha*, of fantasies and fears—that permits compassion to arise. It is never the sugarcoating, the reassurance, or the mere support, but the real and actual distress that’s shared and recognized in compassion. Many myths and stories reveal this symbolically when a god or goddess, prince or princess, willingly sacrifices comfort for pain. This sacrifice is not merely to learn more about oneself, to go “into” the depths of despair in order to see what’s there. It is fundamentally about sharing in the limitations of human life and feeling the connection to others through pain and suffering.

Most people were unable to suffer with Dan. They experienced self-consciousness, perhaps their own shame and embarrassment, at seeing him bolted into the vest. They tried to reassure him that “everything will be okay” and that they still loved him. Although Dan could appreciate their love and their self-consciousness, he was not deeply helped by such reassurances, nor had they made any direct connection with him.

Even before Dan had any notion of what would be required of him to re-enter life, he began to recognize that something positive was happening alongside his pain and misery. “I found that some barrier between me and others had disappeared. I remember talking to people in intimate ways in my hospital room, and just floating inside of them and knowing what it was like to be them, and knowing how they felt. A lot of people would come to see me and say that they didn’t know why they were coming. It wasn’t about their guilt or compulsions or any of that crap. There was something pulling them there, and I think it was because of the way I talked and listened to them.”

Ultimately, Dan and his wife were not able to keep the connection between them alive. Dan’s wife had been his truest best friend early on after the

accident; her devotion to his welfare seemed almost superhuman. But as Dan began to recover some of his functioning and reclaim his strengths (something he might not have done without her help), he felt that she began to pull back. During his stay at a rehabilitation hospital, about six months after the accident, it became clear that she was still aggrieved about some of his responses to her own illness and its aftermath. When Dan finished the initial round of his rehabilitation and began to reclaim his career, he and his wife grew further apart. Ten years after Dan's accident, they separated and eventually divorced.

Feeling a deep parental bond with his daughters, Dan eliminated the "option for suicide" after his accident and decided to get on with life, although he was frequently overcome with shame, resentment and self-pity. "I still saw myself as the old Dan who was incompetent when it came to holding a pencil or a fork or putting on a jacket, these simple things. Every time I went by a golf course or a baseball field or saw people dancing, it was like being faced with my death. I just heard a voice saying over and over, 'You'll never do these things again.'

"I was terribly dependent and ashamed of it for the first two years. I was ashamed that I needed help peeing and cutting my food. I was ashamed of the emotional dependence, too. The shame was excruciating, but I began to see that it was optional. So I turned things inside out and began to talk about my dependence and my shame, to address men especially and say how much strength is required to talk about your weakness. It's an act of courage, an act of faith. The old Dan began to die, as I saw that I could help others face their shame and dependence. But it didn't feel like heroism. It felt more like cowardice."

Talking openly and deeply about his weaknesses is a strength of Dan's compassion as he repeatedly transforms his own pain and suffering into comfort and knowledge for others who are suffering. *Turning things inside out* means paying attention to your own reactions and seeing what kind of reality you are creating. When Dan began to talk about his own responses—his shame about dependence—he was suffering with others, putting his difficulties into words, not to complain about them but to join

with other people with similar problems, to say that they were not alone.

I titled the story of Dan's life a "parable" of suffering and compassion because his life teaches us specifically about suffering—the dissatisfaction and alienation that arise from wanting things to be different from how they are—and compassion. Dan has had to accept and tolerate enormous pain, loss and misery of all sorts, but he has transformed the suffering that accompanies his pain into his purpose in life. By opening up to others his own reactions to his pain, Dan has reached countless people through his national radio show, "Voices in the Family," at WHYY in Philadelphia, helping them to see that they are not alone in feeling ashamed, dependent, afraid and angry. In their connection to him, they begin to be hopeful about making their lives and relationships work. "My suffering and my injuries have brought something to the fore that's of value to others. And that I truly feel is my purpose in life. I make others less afraid, first of me and then of themselves. In the same way I had to go through the process of becoming less afraid of me, of my own dependency and vulnerability, of my own death and my nakedness, I show others how to be less afraid."

I asked Dan directly what he thought might be at the core of his resilience, what the most important factors were. "We can talk about my own history and my genes, and that's a piece of it, but the biggest piece is having a purpose. My career on the radio has carried me through; it's a large part of what saved my life. The show came to me before I had a so-called spiritual awakening, but when it was offered, I felt like it was God saying, 'Okay, I broke your neck, but now you can have this in exchange.'" The show has led to thousands of relationships that Dan has developed with people "who don't have bodies—kind of like me" and who listen to him faithfully. A belief in purpose transcends all of the ongoing pain. He deeply believes that he might never have found a purpose had he not broken his neck.

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Security

TERRY LYNN TAYLOR & MARY BETH CRAIN

In 1942, Thomas Merton wrote in his journal detailing his experiences in the monastic life. When you think about Merton, the worldly Eastern intellectual, getting a call one day to serve God and ending up a Catholic monk in an abbey in the hills of Kentucky, you realize how little we really know about life—how much of what happens to us is totally unpredictable, impossible to plan for. And you realize that when we try too hard to predict, plan and control our destiny—when we rely too much on our belief in and need for what we call security—we risk missing the once-in-a-lifetime chance to reach our true measure as human beings and beings of God.

Most of us spend a large part of our lives running after what we perceive to be security. We believe that a good job, a good marriage or relationship, a nice house, or a hefty savings account will protect us against adversity forever. In other words, most of us

live in the realm of illusion. None of these things is real, in the sense of being permanent. The only thing that is real is loss. But being human and keyed up for physical survival, we prefer not to think about the inevitability of loss. Instead, we continually plan for and live in the future, as if we had one whit of control over it. And in the process we live in a state of grasping onto things that we feel will secure that future and in fear that these things might be taken from us.

Unlike your average everyday human, the *optimystic* does not fear that the trappings of security might someday be taken; he or she knows that they certainly will be. And unlike your average everyday human, the *optimystic* therefore asks not, “How can I find security?” but “What’s so great about security?” What’s so great about having an orderly, predictable, comfortable, “controllable existence?” As *optimystics*, we understand that in letting go of preconceptions

IMAGE: HAN/STEVE SATUSHIK

Give up everything for God. You say that, and you don't know what you mean. In the Cathedral at Louisville, the afternoon I came here, I knew: it meant going by the way you know not, to get what you can't know. Every time you forget that, and every time you think you know where you are going, you are no longer living for God alone, for we only go to Him in darkness of self-denial, by the way we do not know.—Thomas Merton

about security, we are that much freer to live more intensely, more passionately, more *soul-fully*.

AN OPTIMYSTIC KNOWS THAT LIFE IS RISKY BUSINESS

Risk is the possibility of harm or loss and exposure to a chance of loss or damage. Because as humans we're conditioned to survive, we tend to equate taking risks with living on the edge. And this, we're told, is foolish. Don't take risks. Stay in your job, however much you hate it. Stay in your relationship, however bored you've become. Keep the status quo, don't play the stock market, and, for heaven's sake, don't follow your dreams, which are the biggest risks of all!

Yet we yearn to risk—to live boldly, to realize our visions, to be active, not passive, participants in life. Have you ever thought about the themes that pervade movies and literature, our two most potent means of cathartic living? Every movie and every novel you've ever read revolves, on some level, around the theme of risk—either risks taken that changed lives or risks not taken that were forever regretted.

The *optimystic* knows that *to risk is to live*. He or she also knows that, contrary to our security fantasies, life is, by its very nature, a continual risk. We are always living on the edge—either the edge of self-discovery or the edge of death. To deny this is to deny ourselves the chance to really experience the multidimensional nature of our earthly existence.

In 1933, British novelist I. A. R. Wylie wrote:

Either life is a tremendous adventure or it is nothing. And it is only when we behave and

“feel” ourselves as adventurers, who have cast away safety, that we become invulnerable... We must accept the fact that danger and uncertainty are really the breath of life. We must admit that we undermine ourselves by our demand for a safety and permanence that really bores us to death. Mentally and spiritually, we must strip ourselves of the deadly obesity which comes of habit and security... What we have to realize ourselves, and teach the next generations, is that only through fearless acceptance of change and a stern preparation of our souls and bodies to meet it can we hope to come through with our real treasure intact.—“The Challenge of Change,” *Readers Digest*

As *optimystics*, we cannot afford to fear change. Instead, we need to look at change as creative energy simply waiting to be used. Nothing, after all, is stationary. Even if it isn't visible to the naked eye, change is occurring every instant, from shifts in particles, atomic structure and energy to shifts in perception and consciousness. Add to this the fact that no two people see any one thing exactly alike because we all view the world through the unique filter of our own personal experience. Change is life, and risk is adaptation to change. Therefore, to take risks and to greet insecurity with hope rather than fear are crucial steps in the direction of moving from surviving to thriving.

Risk is a force of energy that holds great promise. We take risks because they inevitably lead us onward. But *optimystics* take risks wisely in order to proceed upward. Many of us are so afraid of taking risks that we downscale, leading truncated,

unfulfilled, but predictable lives. Others take unwise risks, devoid of foresight or strategy, and so experience a continual pattern of frustration and difficulty. As *optimystics*, we need to be able to discern the difference between a life-affirming and a life-destroying risk. We need to know when to forge ahead, when to stay still, when to retreat. Life has its little and big ups and downs. It is like a roller-coaster or an enchanted ride into the tunnel of love—the *optimystic* amusement park, full of thrills, packed to the gills with the unexpected, yet always bringing us, sooner or later, safely home. The one thing we don't want is to know too much about what is ahead of us. This is why *optimystics* usually like the hills and dales rather than the flat view of the prairie. Both hold beauty, but one encourages the excitement of surprise and discovery.

THE OPTIMYSTIC KNOWS THAT LIFE IS OUT OF CONTROL

In our technologically alienated age, we live in the complete illusion of control, choosing to disregard the fact that in actuality we live in a continual state of uncertainty. We persist in the belief that loss of security happens to other people, not us except when it does happen to us, and we find ourselves completely unprepared for it. The *optimystic*, on the other hand, lives comfortably with uncertainty. As the Boy Scout's motto is "Be prepared," so the *optimystic's* motto is "Be prepared for loss of control." This does not mean helplessness or victimization, however. *The optimystic knows that we can't control life; we can only control our attitude toward life.*

Indigenous people and other cultures are far more evolved in their understanding of how little control we have over anything. But modern technology finds idol or fetish worship or clearly defined ritual immensely amusing. Who but simpletons would give over their own power to an inert object? But in truth what such forms of worship say is, "I realize that I don't have control over my environment, that the danger of loss is ever present. Therefore, I surrender to the superior wisdom of a higher power and to my own strength as a flexible human being to bend in whatever direction the fates stretch me." The Catholic worship of saints, along with veneration of crucifixes, statues of the Virgin, miraculous medals, and relics, is a form of

this spiritual letting go. All of our religions understand that prayer, ritual and objects that link us to the divine are all healthy forms of surrender.

And in technosociety, don't we have our own form of idol worship? Look at our dependence on computers. We rely on them for everything. When they go down, we're helpless until a computer consultant—the high priest of technoreligion—can come to our rescue and intercede. We feel so all-powerful manipulating this machine to perform all sorts of miracles; we surf the Net with blissful omniscience. But in reality, it is the computer that so subtly controls us, making us its slave through dependency.

Like sleepwalkers in a dream of being at the controls, we are unconscious of the fact that we're the ones who are being controlled. We are unaware that because we have become alienated from our spiritual centers and from our environments, we have lost our ability to fend for ourselves. What we really want is spiritual security. But we don't realize that. So, when we encounter a serious upset or loss, when the rug is pulled out from under us, we continue to search for security in the rubble of our shattered illusions about it, rather than understanding the limits of our human control and learning to trust in the unexpected.

THE ILLUSIONS OF SECURITY: THE FOUR CONFESSIONS

As *optimystics*, we ultimately have to be honest with ourselves about the bogus nature of security. We have to confess our "sin" of worshipping the god of security before we can become free to follow the lead of the true God within. So, the following are the Four *Optimystic* Confessions about security:

1 *Security can be boring.* It might make us feel more comfortable to always know where we are headed, to plan for a future that we expect to turn out a certain way, to be in uneventful but predictable relationships. But what we're trading for comfort is passion and excitement. Oh, yeah, we buy those romance novels by the barrel to make up for it. But when all is said and done, wouldn't we prefer to have an actual rather than vicarious experience of the intensity of life? As humans, we tend to distrust the unknown. As *optimystics*, we move to redefine the unknown as the unexplored. As explorers of life, *optimystics* can't afford to be tied to the

apron strings of security. This doesn't mean that *optimystics* can't make money or have successful careers or stable, fulfilling, long-term relationships. It just means that they are willing to take risks, in the spirit of adventure, in order to fully experience the adventure of the spirit.

2 *Security can be a prison in disguise.* We might have a Porsche or a great big house or a \$20,000 stereo system. We might have a nice fat pension waiting for us at the end of the retirement rainbow. On the other hand, we might be living simply or getting by on just enough. The question to ask ourselves is, "In trying to acquire material security or in just trying to maintain the status quo, are we genuinely happy? To what have we become attached in order to maintain our current lifestyle? Has our work become our prison? Are we chained to our career? Are we stressed, worn out, and headed for a heart attack but terrified to leave for fear of losing our security? And what about our personal life? Are our relationships with our spouse, our children, our friends fulfilling? Do we have enough time and energy to make them so? Are we too busy at the job or business to do the things we really want to do, to be the person we really want to be with those we love?" Security has no meaning whatsoever if pursuing it prevents us from living the life we really dream of living, and if it prevents us from realizing our true potential as physical and spiritual beings.

3 *Security can be a con artist.* Just when you think you've got it, look out—it's gone. Because life is temporary, anything of the earth is only on loan to us, including our own bodies. So no amount of financial security, not even the perfect relationship, can give us security.

You have believed in security, and it has let you down. You have invested so much in the pursuit of security, only to discover that there's no such thing. Now what?

4 *Security can take us away from our real purpose.* It is a siren along the spiritual journey, singing to us from the Prudential Rock, luring us into believing that there is actually such a thing as "life insurance." In search of security, we follow its call instead of the song of our own hearts and souls. We forget what we're here for; we ignore our dreams. And we ignore the call of our mystic selves to become centered in faith, to experience the true

security of oneness with the divine, to invest in the only reliable institution left in the world—God's Savings and Loan. In pursuit of a trust, have we forgotten how to trust—in the higher spiritual power that will always rescue us, no matter how dire our circumstances? What greater security can there be than the revelation that we are more than our bodies, more than our physical existence—that we really cannot and do not die, except to our earthly illusions?

THE BENEFITS OF UNCERTAINTY

Optimystics know that uncertainty is the prelude to discovery, and discovery is the prelude to growth. In other words, uncertainty can be a real blessing. It can propel us in new directions. It can make us take risks and live more radically, more intensely. Uncertainty can turn us in the direction of our spiritual selves; so often, it is a security crisis in our lives that brings us to spiritual awakening and peace. Uncertainty may force us to face our fragility, giving us the opportunity to lay down the burden of our illusions of control—to face life naked but free, open to a new destiny. We are humbled, more reverent toward a higher power, more appreciative of the things and people that contribute to our sense of well-being. *Optimystics* believe that God likes to rattle us a little, perhaps because the noise reminds us of his or her presence!

You don't have to live on the edge; that's not what we're saying. We are not advocating feeling insecure in the sense of helpless, grasping, fearful and inferior. What we are saying is that security is an illusion and that uncertainty is the reality of the human condition. Viewed from this angle, insecurity is actually the opposite of helplessness, grasping or low self-esteem. It is a state of unsureness and therefore of great openness to any and all possibilities. When you are not secure, you can't hold on, which means you have to let go. As a result, you are no longer shackled to constraining beliefs and fears. Instead, you are free to soar to your higher destination, and things of the spirit are now free to come into your life through the open space you have just created. •

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Why Prayer Backfires

L A R R Y D O S S E Y

Why does prayer so often lead to outcomes we did not ask for and could not predict?

One of the most helpful frameworks for thinking about how prayer backfires has been developed by sociologist Charles Perrow.

Unintended consequences occur, he states, when we intervene in complex technological systems whose components are so intimately connected that changes in one part of the system results in unforeseen changes in others. In such a system, Perrow states, “operator error” is inevitable.

All systems, says Perrow, are either tightly or loosely coupled. An example of a loosely coupled system is the relatively simple gasoline engine of a lawnmower. Its carburetor, spark plug, gas tank, cylinder, piston and fuel line function as reasonably autonomous parts. If one of them malfunctions, you can replace it and restore function. Breakdown in one part does not usually destroy another component. The parts are not very complex, and they are loosely coupled, to use Perrow’s terminology. But when machines become extremely complex, their parts can become so tightly coupled that the breakdown of one of them results in the malfunction of others. Sometimes a chain reaction is set off, one malfunction leading to others. This cascade can be entirely unpredictable, even by experts.

It is impossible to anticipate all the things that can go wrong in extremely complex, tightly coupled systems. This can be embarrassing to experts, as in December 1995 when a ringtail, a small desert cousin of the raccoon that is about three times the size of a domestic cat, jumped over a ten-foot-high barbed wire fence, slipped past guards, and short-circuited an outdoor transformer, briefly knocking out a reactor at the Palo Verde nuclear plant in Wintersberg, Arizona, one of the nation’s largest.

TIGHTLY COUPLED SYSTEMS AND PRAYER

Why should anyone interested in prayer be concerned with tightly coupled, complex systems?

A human life is one of the most tightly coupled systems in the universe, which means that there are many unpredictable ways it can malfunction. Although fail-safe mechanisms are built into both our bodies and our lives, which provide us with immense flexibility and hardiness, these backup systems are imperfect and do not always work.

When they don’t, prayer is one of the perennial ways we try to fix things. Prayer becomes our ultimate backup, the device to which we resort when nothing else works. This is not a criticism; why *shouldn’t* we use a device whose effectiveness has been affirmed in human experience throughout millennia? But instead of fixing things, prayer can make matters worse, because it is yet another interference in a system that *remains* tightly coupled and highly complex, meaning that we can cause *additional* problems after beginning to pray.

The issue is not *that* we pray, but *how* we pray. When something goes wrong in our life, we tend to invoke prayers involving highly specific, designated outcomes. We’re certain we have the knowledge to set things right, and we waste no time telling the Absolute what to do. We do not realize we are interfering in a highly complex, tightly coupled system that, when tweaked, often responds in unpredictable ways. Giving orders with prayer invites disaster. It is rather like hitting a card table from below, hoping that the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle on top will fall into greater order than before. This may happen, but usually the result is more disorganization.

To get a feel for how human interference and prayer, even if well-intended, can make matters worse, let’s look at an example from the field of urban planning. In one city, described by German psychologist



TSI/CHRIS WINDSOR

Dietrich Dorner in his provocative book, *The Logic of Failure*, the city council approved two measures designed to limit noise and air pollution—limiting the speed limit to twenty miles per hour and installing speed bumps. The results were not what anyone expected. The lower speeds forced cars to travel in a lower gear, producing more noise and exhaust than before. Shopping trips that formerly required twenty minutes now took a half hour, resulting in increased congestion. Shopping downtown became increasingly burdensome, which meant that fewer people went there. Even though this meant a decrease in traffic, noise and air pollution didn't change because of the effects of the speed bumps and lower speed limits. To make matters worse, the downtown area began to suffer economically as shoppers discovered it was less hassle to shop in outlying malls. To the dismay of the mayor and the city council, downtown businesses

began to drift to the verge of bankruptcy. Tax revenues plummeted. "The master plan turned out to be a major blunder," relates Dorner, "the consequences of which will burden this community for a long time to come."

Most of the situations we pray for are infinitely more complex than the design of downtown city areas. Our lives are exquisitely linked with the members of our family, community, nation and world. Our tight coupling with others and our world sets the stage for a negative outcome when we employ specific interventions, as it did for the well-intended urban planners. When the results are worse than before, prayer is often blamed for "not working." But the real problem may not be prayer, but an operator error—how prayer is used and what is asked for.

Can we avoid the unintended consequences of prayer by praying not for something specific but

for something general, such as abundance, prosperity, or a better life for those in need? Even with this strategy it is difficult to escape operator errors.

Dorner and his colleagues at the University of Bamberg devised a computer game in which the task was to improve the living conditions for the Moros, a semi nomadic tribe who wandered with their herds from one watering hole to another in the Sahel region of West Africa, and who also raised a little millet. Life was hard for the Moro people. Infant mortality was high and life expectancy low, their economy was decimated by recurrent famines, and tsetse flies ravaged their cattle, preventing an increase in their herds. But now—in the computer game—money was available and changes could be made. The tsetse fly could be combated and deeper wells drilled. Pastureland and the millet crop could be expanded through irrigation and the application of fertilizers. New strains of millet could be introduced. A health service could be installed. In the computer-simulated Sahel, there was no limit to the prosperity that could be extended to the Moros.

One day an economist and a physicist from a large, well-known company came to visit Dorner and his colleagues. They wanted to participate in the game simulation to see if it might be of use in their employee training program. Dorner discussed with them the purpose behind the game, which was to illustrate the failings of human thought and action and the inevitability of the arrogant belief that such failings were always somebody else's fault and that "we" could do better. The economist and physicist went to work at the computer game to improve the life of the Moros. They gathered information, scrutinized the map of the Moro region, formulated strategies, rejected one program and chose another, and finally reached a decision, which was fed into the computer to calculate the effects of their choices.

When the computer finished its analysis, it revealed that the fate of the Moros was worse. The participants were shocked. The physicist began to blame the economist for the blunder. The economist denied the charge and began to blame the physicist.

What had happened? Initially their joint deci-

sions had paid off; the Moros became better off. But across the simulated two decades of the computer game, decline had set in quite rapidly. As a result of an excellent health care system, infant mortality had plummeted. Initially there had also been a great increase in the size of the Moro herds, due to control of the tsetse fly infestations. Moreover, successful drilling of deep wells led to a large increase in available groundwater, leading to enlarged pasturelands. Shortly thereafter, however, disaster struck. The ravenous cattle tore up the grass roots, and the vegetated land area actually shrank. By the twentieth year there were hardly any cattle remaining because the pastures by then were almost totally barren. More wells were drilled to remedy the problem, but although this helped in the short term, the water supply was exhausted all the more rapidly.

"How could this have happened?" Dorner asks. Although the academicians were not specialists in the development of third world countries, they considered themselves capable of dealing with complex problems and reaching rational solutions.

Nevertheless, they made terrible decisions. They drilled wells without considering that groundwater is a resource that cannot easily be replaced. They set up an effective health-care system, reducing infant mortality and increasing lifespan, but did not institute birth-control measures. In short, they solved some immediate problems but did not think about the new problems that solving the old ones would create. They now had to feed a significantly larger population with significantly reduced resources. Everything was much more complicated than before.

There were no tricks in the simulated Moro computer game. No particular expertise was required to play it, and everything that happened was really quite obvious. It is precisely because the cause-and-effect relationships are *so* obvious, Dorner believes, that the participants are so dismayed and irritated when they fail. "The outcome of the Moro planning game illustrates the difficulties even intelligent people have in dealing with

complex systems,” Dorner states. “The economist and the physicist were by no means worse planners than other people. Their actions were no different from those of ‘experts’ in real situations.”

The simulated Moro situation actually came to life for Africans in the Okavango delta region in the mid-’80s. Scientists developed a simple plan: eradication of the tsetse fly and replacement of wild animals in the region with herds of cattle. Everything went well at first. Then hundreds of additional cattle herders migrated into the area. Overgrazing and drought followed, and the originally habitable land became a desert.

As with the world, so with the human body, which, as we’ve mentioned, is one of the most complex systems known. Our cells and tissues are so intimately related that a change in one can create immediate changes in others. These interconnections are controlled by a marvelous balancing process called homeostasis, in which self-correcting changes are automatically brought into play when any particular function goes awry.

Our body’s tight coupling can present special problems when we try deliberately to change any particular bodily function through prayer or any other strategy. For example, if we pray for an increased level of immunity and we overshoot, are we setting the stage for allergies, fatal anaphylaxis, or autoimmune diseases, which are diseases of too much immunity? I have known allergy sufferers who do not understand that their problems are due to an overactive immune response. Some of them have actually prayed for an “increase in the immune system” in the mistaken belief that they need more, not less, immune activity. This is self-inflicted negative prayer.

If we pray for greater willpower to follow a vigorous exercise program, might we be making excessive demands on our cardiovascular system? What if we pray for the discipline to follow a strict vegetarian diet in an attempt to lower our cholesterol level? Experts now know that some men who drastically lower their cholesterol level experience depression, suicidal tendencies, and a higher rate of accidents. Or, suppose we experience a kidney stone and pray for the discipline to follow a low-

calcium diet. In some people, such a diet actually *increases* the rate of subsequent kidney stone formation, for reasons that are not clear.

We should not blame ourselves for causing operator errors with prayer; when tightly coupled systems are involved, as they always are with prayer, even the experts get tripped up. We should, however, continually evaluate how we pray. Instead of telling our body specifically how to behave, we might pray for our bodily function to “return to a normal state” or “achieve balance and harmony.” Experiments with cancer cells suggest that this nondirected, nonspecific form of prayer can be highly effective and can avoid the “operator errors” often associated with prayer.

CONSULTING WITH THE EXPERT

In view of the potential of our prayers to make matters worse, it is easy to drift into a sense of futility and to abandon prayer altogether. But we should not give up on prayer. There is an expert who knows the specific interventions needed in any complex situation—the Absolute—God, Goddess, Allah, the Tao, Brahman, Universe, however named. Scientists have recently discovered new evidence of this wisdom and have been inventing new terms for it. Experts in chaos theory, for example, have stumbled onto a force called a “strange attractor,” an invisible ordering principle or “tug from in front” that guides current situations toward more highly ordered, future states. Some scientists believe that this apparent goal directedness is evidence of a Universal Intelligence, or God, working behind the scenes. The details of these developments need not concern us here. The point is that an innate, invisible wisdom does seem to be present in the universe. We are not required to understand this ordering force. Our task instead may be to cooperate and not interfere with it and to facilitate it where we can—perhaps by setting our personal agendas aside and praying “*Thy* will be done” instead of “*My* will be done.”•

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The Soul's Code

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES HILLMAN
BY MARY NURRIESTEARNS



James Hillman

James Hillman is a psychologist, scholar, international lecturer, and the author of over 20 books including "Re-Visioning Psychology," "Healing Fiction", "The Dream and the Underworld," "Inter Views," and "Suicide and the Soul." A Jungian analyst and originator of post-Jungian "archetypal psychology," he has held teaching positions at Yale University, Syracuse University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Dallas (where he co-founded the Dallas Institute for the Humanities and Culture). After thirty years of residence in Europe, he now lives in Connecticut.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: *Your best-selling book, "The Soul's Code," not only introduces, but documents, through fascinating anecdotal stories, the idea that a unique, formed soul is within us from birth, shaping us as much as it is shaped. While this is not a new myth, the possibility that we are fated, or called into life with a uniqueness that asks to be lived, is rejected by our culture. This myth is described as the acorn theory.*

Let's begin with a discussion of the acorn theory.

JAMES HILLMAN: It is a worldwide myth in which each person comes into the world with something to do and to be. The myth says we enter the world with a calling. Plato, in his *Myth of Er*, called this our paradeigma, meaning a basic form that encompasses

our entire destinies. This accompanying image shadowing our lives is our bearer of fate and fortune.

The acorn theory expresses that unique something that we carry into the world, that is particular to us, which is connected to our "daimon," a word rarely used in our culture.

HILLMAN: That's true. *Daimon* is an earlier word than *demon*. It became Christianized as *demon* because Christian theology doesn't approve of those figures who speak to us as inner voices and so forth. The Greek word was *daimon*, the Roman word was *genius*, and the Christian word is *guardian angel*. They are all a little bit different, yet each expresses something that you are, that you have, that is not the same as the personality you think you are.

A society that willfully insists upon innocence as the noblest of virtues and worships innocence at its altars in Orlando and Anaheim and on Sesame Street, will be unable to see any seed of any kind unless it be sugar-coated. Like Forrest Gump eating chocolates and offering sweets to strangers before he ever looks into their eyes, stupid is indeed as stupid does. The idea of the Bad Seed, the idea that there is a demonic call, should startle our native intelligence, awakening it from the innocence of our American theories so that as a nation we can see that evil is attracted to, belongs with, innocence. Then we might finally recognize that in America, Natural Born Killers are the secret companions of, are even prompted by, Forrest Gumps.

And this has our best interest at its heart.

HILLMAN: You are its carrier so of course it's interested in you.

Yet in our culture many of us find that difficult to imagine.

HILLMAN: Our culture has no theory of this at all. Our culture has the genetics and the nature theory. You come into the world loaded with genes and are influenced by nature, or you come into the world, are influenced by the environment, and are the result of parents, family, social class and education. These theories don't speak to the individuality or uniqueness that you feel is you. Other cultures have this myth, but American psychology doesn't. I think the book has been an enormous success because it introduces a very old and worldwide idea that has been omitted by our psychological explanations.

Why, in our society, are we afraid to admit this into our lives?

HILLMAN: I don't think individual people are

afraid to admit it. Vested interest in the nature/nuture view, whereby we come into the world empty and are formed by the genetic inheritance we bring as it reacts to the environment, doesn't consider the acorn myth a possibility.

In the acorn myth, the model of growth is one of growing down rather than growing up. Discuss that idea.

HILLMAN: The myth says that the roots of the soul are in the heavens, and the human grows downward into life. A little child enters the world as a stranger, and brings a special gift into the world. The task of life is to grow down into this world. Little children are often slow to come down. Many children, between the ages of approximately six to fifteen, say, "I don't know what I'm doing in this family; I don't know how I ever landed here." Parents say about children, "Boy, I don't know where this child come from. He's nothing like anybody else in the family," and so on. The perspective is that we came to earth as a stranger and slowly, as we

mature, grow into the world, take part in its duties and pleasures, and become more involved and attached. In other cultures, the task of older persons is to not be selfishly concerned, but to grow down into the world to help the younger ones find their places. In other words, as you get older, you become more social, political and responsible.

The acorn theory says that the “daimon” selects the egg and the sperm, that their union results from our necessity, not the other way around. This has huge implications.

HILLMAN: That’s the belief of the myth, and we have to make it clear that this is a myth, not a truth. It doesn’t have to be believed, and it’s not a theory that has to be proven. It’s a worldwide myth, and it’s a way of thinking or reflecting about life. It’s something you entertain to see what the story does for you. Plato said that those who think this way may find that their lives will prosper, meaning it’s not a bad way to think.

I was very influenced by reading the book and reflecting on my life. Looking back, I extrapolated different meanings out of past events.

HILLMAN: Yes, you can extrapolate different meanings out of events that had been locked up in former theories.

I found it to be like a breath of fresh air.

Hillman: I have heard that from many people. It’s the only way I can understand the fact that hundreds of thousands of people have purchased this book.

For me, it was a way to step outside of my culture and look at my life.

HILLMAN: Did you find that it bore on your own childhood?

Very much so. I looked at my childhood through a different lens. I have done a lot of psychological work and was surprised by memories that were accessed again, in a new and different way. I discovered a new sense of purpose about childhood and a sense of freedom from it.

HILLMAN: That’s really it. There are many stories in the book of people whose disturbed childhoods fit into their actual basic character.

Looking at life this way proposes that our

primary instrument of fate is not our parents.

HILLMAN: Of course, parents have a strong role. The myth itself says that the soul chose your particular parents, and so they are part of your destiny, whether you experienced a lack of parenting, peculiar parenting, single parenting, or adoptive parenting. But that’s not the be-all and end-all of existence. We overload parents today, as if they owned and were totally responsible for their children’s entire fates. Mothers feel that if they do one thing wrong when the child is three, their poor child will have to go to therapy for four years later on in life. This is a heavy burden. The story of the acorn is that you have your own destiny, and that your parents’ tasks are to provide a place in the world where you can grow down into life and to help make it easier for you to carry the destiny you have, which as a child is hard to carry. In addition to your parents, you need fantasy figures. You need strange people who excite your imagination, who may release an image of your calling. You also need mentors or teachers. Van Cliburn, the famous Texan pianist, was taught by his mother, who was a piano teacher and a musician herself. She said to him that while she taught him, she was not his mother. She made it clear that there were two functions, the mentor/teacher and the parent. The mentor/teacher is the person who sees who you are, sees your beauty, falls in love with it, helps and inspires it, giving it a chance to bloom in the world. The mentor is not concerned with your well-being, making sure that you have food, shoes and a roof over your head. That’s what parents do. Parents keep food on the table and make sure that you have protection, but they may never see who you are. Many people complain that their parents never saw them. They may have looked in the wrong place for recognition. It’s not necessarily parents who can see you. They have other destinies and eyes for other things. They may see other children and not you.

And that’s not odd or wrong.

HILLMAN: In extended families, adults often see things in another’s children. Just because your parents don’t truly see you doesn’t mean they don’t love you. Their form of loving is taking care of you,

making sure that you sleep and have clothes.

This myth unburdens parents.

HILLMAN: I think it does. It doesn't relieve them of responsibility, but it unburdens them of carrying the child's destiny.

And unburdens them to tend to the child and also focus on their own destiny.

HILLMAN: Their responsibility is to make the world a receiving place so children can grow up and follow their destinies. That's missing today. Something is wrong when one out of seven children lives below the poverty line. Most of the welfare arguments about saving money on welfare affect children, not the very old. There is something asked in parents focusing more on their own security for old age than on children.

You said that we are here to make the world receptive to the "daimon." How do we find our "daimon?"

HILLMAN: First of all, a person has to have this idea. As you noticed when you read the book, it was by getting the idea first that you began to see things differently. The word, *idea* comes originally from Greek. *Idein* was a way of seeing. So, if this idea is held in mind and thought about and then used for looking at your past, you may begin to see things that you didn't see before. This is the basic way to answer the question of how. It's not a technique; first of all it's an idea. It helps us look back at all our disturbances and dysfunctions, at how they have been necessary, how they fit in. It helps us look at what we have been doing and what we do well, what the world wants from us. The world may want from us what we do best, which could well be an indication about our calling. It may be a service; it may be friendship. We don't all have to be a celebrity.

Does the acorn theory help us look forward?

HILLMAN: I don't have anything to say about looking forward.

How can we grow the acorn?

HILLMAN: There is a chapter in the book about right nourishment. You need a lot of food for the imagination. The advertisers of the mercantile world recognize our need to stir our imaginations. Cars and shoes—two very practical items—when advertised are sold through imaginative fantasies.

Although they are serving other purposes than nurturing the acorn.

HILLMAN: Yes, but advertisers recognize that human

Why is it so difficult to imagine that something takes an interest in what I do, that I am perhaps protected, maybe even kept alive not altogether by my own will and doing? ...Despite this invisible caring, we prefer to imagine ourselves thrown naked into the world, utterly vulnerable and fundamentally alone. It is easier to accept the story of heroic self-made development than the story that you may well be loved by this guiding providence, that you are needed for what you bring, and that you are sometimes fortuitously helped by it in situations of distress.

Is eminence caused by the mother? Do mothers create their children as they carry them, bringing their spirits to birth as they bring their bodies to term? If we do not differentiate her daimon from her child's, then mother must also be declared a monster maker, whose daimon or demon lives out its life in her physical child.

beings respond to imaginative images and fantasies. That's the first food. The acorn needs around it people who have fantasies and who respond to imagination. That's why teachers who have imagination are the ones younger children are attracted to.

Another advantage of fostering imagination, particularly with the intention to grow the child or the human being, is that it gives some relief from the pressure of this culture, which runs counter to these ideas.

HILLMAN: We have to realize how counter the culture does go. It wants to produce units that fit into the economic system. Children are told they have to start school early, and they have to learn to read. Why do they have to learn to read? So they can be competitive. They have to be competitive, because the nation needs to have its gross national product stronger than other nations'. In other words, children are not told that education is healthy and good for the soul, or that it brings out the beauty and depth of the human being. In the Greek civilization, education was important because it made for a civilized nation and a cultured citizenship. We are told education is for competition. That's pretty sad, if you think about it.

In this myth, the soul chooses the "daimon" and then chooses its life. Where is our freedom?

HILLMAN: I have a chapter called "Fate" which discusses the question of freedom and pre-destination, as the Calvinists used to call it. I think both are fantasy ideas. We don't have absolute freedom. There are a lot of things we can't do. You might

think you would like to be a cook, and yet are the clumsiest, dumbest person in the kitchen. There is no way you will ever be a good cook. On the other hand, even if you are enormously talented in some particular way, it does not determine every single thing you do. Your life is not predestined, as in Calvinist thought, where everything is written down in the book of life long before your birth and is inescapable. There are choices, accidents, hints and wrong paths, and the ego you, or whatever you call yourself, is a factor in all this. But there is still this other factor that keeps calling. At some moment, people turn, in despair or when they are unable to go any longer on a certain route, and this voice says, "Where have you been? I've been waiting for you to turn to me for a long time."

You mentioned accidents. According to this myth, how do we relate to accidents?

HILLMAN: Let's first look at how we relate to accidents in our society. We turn to the insurance company and try to get something out of it. We turn the accident into a possibility for money. In other societies we might think that the accident has a "hint" in it. I'm thinking about Churchill, for example, who cracked his head open and had a concussion when he was a young boy. He had to stay inside and not do anything for a while, and that's when he began to do his great reading. The accident of his concussion had great meaning. The idea is to look at the accident, injury or disturbance, as a potential with some sort of meaning in it.

So we relate to accidents by asking how this fits in my life and what this means?

HILLMAN: Realizing that something else is going on here that I don't quite know about, and remaining open to the possibility that the accident has its own imbedded purpose.

I want to have some discussion on your chapter, "The Bad Seed." I'll bet you had a lot of response to that.

HILLMAN: I wish there had been more because I think it is so important.

I do too; that's why I want to cover it.

HILLMAN: Tell me how you took it, and then I'll respond.

We as a culture don't recognize "demon" energy, thus forcing it to emerge in destructive ways. We don't want to deal with evil, and it grows more powerful because we don't attend to it.

HILLMAN: We don't attend to it, and we don't have an idea about it. We think that people go wrong and then ask what happened. We answer that it must have been drugs or else his father beat him. I give eight different theories about evil, including the old Catholic idea that you could actually be possessed by a devil. Orthodox Christianity, whatever the denomination, always had a place for the devil. I don't want to say that's the reason for evil, but that is one of the theories. I do think you're right when you say our usual thinking doesn't have a place for the demon—the serial killer, the person devoted to torture and cruelty, the great murderer, or Adolph Hitler—whom I analyzed in the chapter. This is a great mystery in human life. What about these people; can one be called to evil? We have a lot of evidence of people who are. For example, that little girl, MaryBelle, who at age nine strangled two little boys, ages three and four. She showed no signs of remorse or even awareness that she had murdered. How could a little girl of nine do such a thing? Yet we read in the papers again and again of young children killing smaller ones. Where does that come from? Some say it is caused by watching TV. I find that a preposterously easy answer. There's something very unusual about that.

The myth says there is a "demonic" call.

HILLMAN: There is a call. It is a call to transgress, to go beyond human boundaries, literally a call to transcendence. The curious thing is that reli-

gions, including Hinduism, Judaism and satanist cults, have the same idea—that you can go beyond the normal by going into the abnormal. We don't have to interpret that people should do this, but it does emphasize that the bad seed is looking for a mode of transcendence, a mode of going beyond the ordinary human so that it becomes inhuman. We need to find modes of ritual, through the arts and ceremonies, which allow that excessive, extravagant, demonic force to find a way of expression without doing it concretely and literally. Art programs in schools are very important because they open the door to that excessive imagination.

And it's non-harmful expression.

HILLMAN: That's right. Instead we are shutting down art programs—which represses and drives into the street those strange desires which the arts have always been a vehicle for.

You also said that we have to mourn the demonic which implies, first of all, that we acknowledge our own capacity for evil. Only by acknowledging its existence can it be dealt with intentionally.

HILLMAN: And not be identified with. If you recognize it, it's easier to hold it at a distance and know that, while this too is me, I don't have to be it. Hitler was completely subservient to the demonic. He shouted to his people, "Don't you see, I can't be different," and murderer Jeffery Dahmer couldn't understand what came over him.

They weren't aware enough of this evil force. The arts are very important in this regard. The arts help us release and hold this calling at bay.

You also mentioned community service as a way of addressing the demonic, in which people who have been caught for crimes go into the schools, explain how the bad seed works, what it wants, what it costs, and how it can eat up one's humanity.

HILLMAN: Yes. That's very different than mere punishment which doesn't seem to affect this piece of nature.

Can the bad seed be redeemed?

As far as conversion or something like that, I'm very suspicious, but the religions say it can be redeemed. Within my realm, I don't take that ques-

The power is in the seed rather than in the person. The discrepancy between human personality and daimonic seed is so great that it is as if the human world were drained to feed the seed. The Bad Seed—perhaps, to a lesser degree, any acorn—acts as a parasite on the life of the person it has selected to inhabit, often leaving the person disorganized, symptomized, boring, emptied of eros, and unable to connect.

tion up. A lot of people, for example, who were attached to the Nixon/Watergate cover-up became evangelical. I'm suspicious of a sudden conversion from black to white because I always wonder about what happened to the old person, where's the demon now.

Let's shift direction. What determines eminence?

HILLMAN: A sense of calling, devotion to it and long, long prac-

tice, whether it's practicing the piano, basketball, or spiritual practice. Eminent people are devoted to repetitious, tedious practice. It's not enough to have a good voice; you have to train the voice and devote yourself to it. A mentor is probably needed, and there are costs.

What does eminence cost?

HILLMAN: Let's remember first that eminence doesn't mean fame. There are eminent friends and eminent public servants. Sometimes, however the "daimon" asks a great deal from you. You feel as if you've never done enough. You've never written enough, played enough, or fought enough, whatever it is. There is always more because it is like an unquenchable urge. It costs what you might call your normalcy. The cost is being less of a consumer or less involved with your personal security. The focus is on serving the good of the whole, so the cost may not be as great as it seems.

I can relate, in the sense giving my energy over to doing what is asked next in the publishing of the magazine or in my private practice and not doing something that I personally desire.

HILLMAN: It's the cost of certain personal satisfactions.

For instance, we are doing this interview on a Sunday morning.

HILLMAN: That's right.

As you look back, what do you identify as your calling?

HILLMAN: I have been working with, thinking about, and writing psychological ideas for thirty-five years. My calling is just what I'm doing in that book.

You are also a forceful voice in challenging contemporary definitions of psychology.

HILLMAN: I mean the mode of my challenge is through ideas.

You are also modest.

HILLMAN: I think that really is the way it is. Fortunately, there is a receptivity to these thoughts now, and other people are thinking them. For me that means these ideas may help psychology and help people who are suffering from ideas they identified with and haven't paid enough attention to. •

Relationships

Continued from page 13

that applies to all creativity:

"We aren't running everything, not even the writing process we do. At the same time, we must keep practicing. It is not an excuse to not write and sit on the couch eating bonbons. We must continue to work the compost pile, enriching it and making it fertile so that something beautiful may bloom and so that our writing muscles are in good shape to ride the universe when it moves through us."

When Gay and I first began to focus on developing co-creativity together, we found that interrupting routines gently jiggled us out of predictable, flat interactions with each other. I remember one period of time when we changed the side of the bed where we slept randomly over several weeks. We interrupted routines by having breakfast for dinner, communication routines by singing or miming our messages to each other, and role routines by taking on tasks that the other usually did. Gay learned to cook, and I often drove on long trips. Since many couples use their relationships as an excuse to slip into a trance, interrupting routines is a quick way to generate the energy for co-creative play.

The most powerful step you can take to open creating together is to commit your full energy. Close the door to making yourself right, and put your focus on generating wonder, play, authenticity and gratitude. When you turn your attention from complaint to contribution, the whole universe celebrates. •

Reflections

Continued from page 39

DONATING BOOKS

The PAGL Foundation has committed itself to a project to donate copies of the second edition of *Beyond the Dream: Awakening to Reality*, by Thomas Hora, (Crossroad Press, 1996) to interested libraries throughout the United States. To date, the Foundation has funded sending the book to over 4,000 public and academic libraries, and is in the process of sending it to prison libraries. We realize, however, that we might have missed many libraries serving readers who are interested in spiritual growth and its relation to physical, mental and emotional health.

Thomas Hora (1914-1995) was a psychiatrist whose primary interest was the healing of suffering and the subsequent fulfillment of each individual's life.

We would like to invite the readers of *PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION* to notify the Foundation if they are aware of any public or institutional libraries which would like a copy of *Beyond the Dream*. If the librarian or director of the facility writes to us on organizational letterhead, we will send a copy without charge. Our address is: The PAGL Foundation, P.O.

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Book Reviews



BARBARA NEIGHBORS DEAL

TEACHINGS ON LOVE, By Thich Nhat Hanh. Parallax Press, 1997. 185 pages, hardbound, \$18.00.

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, prolific author on Buddhist thought and practice, is perhaps best known for the recent, *Living Buddha Living Christ*. In this new work, wisdom drawn from Buddhist and Vietnamese teaching and distilled through Thich Nhat Hanh's experience and warm humor, the reader will find an alternative to our Western, often sentimental understanding of love.

The book begins, "Happiness is only possible with true love. True love has the power to heal and transform the situation around us and bring a deep meaning to our lives..." He offers the path of the *Brahmaviharas* (dwelling places of God) described by the Buddha, the four immeasurable minds which are the four aspects of real love: love, compassion, joy and equanimity; the practice of which "will heal the illness of anger, sorrow, insecurity, sadness, hatred, loneliness and unhealthy attachments." Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that those who wish to grow in love may follow this path without leaving their own religious tradition. "If you enjoy sitting meditation, practice sitting meditation. If you enjoy walking meditation, practice walking meditation. But preserve your Jewish, Christian or Muslim roots. That is the way to continue the Buddha's spirit. If you are cut

off from your roots, you cannot be happy."

Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that love is action rather than emotion, and real love is rooted in an awareness of the needs of the situation, the needs of the one to whom you practice love. Compassion, the second facet of love, is described as deep communication and communion with another who is suffering. Joy is the third element of true love, and involves a deep mindfulness of the moment that contains happiness, peace and contentment. Equanimity, non-attachment, is the fourth quality of love, "the ability to see everyone as equal, not discriminating between ourselves and others. In a conflict, even though we are deeply concerned, we remain impartial, able to love and to understand both sides. We shed all discrimination and prejudice, and remove all boundaries between ourselves and others..."

Meditations (precepts for contemplation) are recommended that can increase mindfulness and one's capacity to love. Thich Nhat Hanh instructs the one who practices a meditation to begin with oneself, and then expand the contemplation outward to include others, first toward someone you like, then someone neutral to you, then someone you love, then someone you strongly dislike. "May he/she be peaceful, happy and light in body and in spirit. May he/she be free from injury.



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May he/she live in safety. May he/she be free from anger, disturbance, fear, worry and anxiety.”

An underlying theme, woven through chapters on self-love, love and understanding, nourishing happiness, listening and speech, is encouraging the reader to look so deeply into others that you realize your oneness with them. If you become aware that underneath the appearance of separateness there is oneness with the one you love, and with the one who causes you pain, then you come to offer the other what you give to yourself—love and understanding.

A chapter called “Living Mindfully Together,” which explores the richness of love in a long term relationship, could profitably be incorporated in college marriage and family courses and in premarital counseling. Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that couples regularly practice The Five Awarenesses meditation, which focuses on understanding the relationship in the context of the flow of generations. He suggests the real message of love is, “Through my love for you, I want to express my love for the whole cosmos, the whole of humanity, and all beings. By living with you, I want to learn to love everyone and all species. If I succeed in loving you, I will be able to love everyone and all species on Earth.”

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on love and spirituality. I found myself wishing a glossary had been included. While Thich Nhat Hanh, on the whole, defines Hindi and Vietnamese words the first time they are introduced, or the meaning is apparent contextually, occasionally an overly optimistic assumption that the reader is grounded in Buddhist principles and vocabulary rendered

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Reviews

non-English words more mysterious than they need to be. The book could also have benefited from tighter editing; several times material is repeated. But looking beyond these minor flaws, the thoughtful reader will find much to explore in the Zen understanding of the practice of love.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP EXPLORATION

1. Do you feel that contemplating precepts can enhance your ability to love, as suggested by Thich Nhat Hanh? If so, would this meditation be a good place to start, either by yourself or with a group: "May he/she be peaceful, happy and light in body and in spirit. May he/she be free from injury. May he/she live in safety. May he/she be free from anger, disturbance, fear, worry and anxiety."

2. How does mindfulness contribute to personal transformation? What might I do to increase mindfulness, being present to this moment?

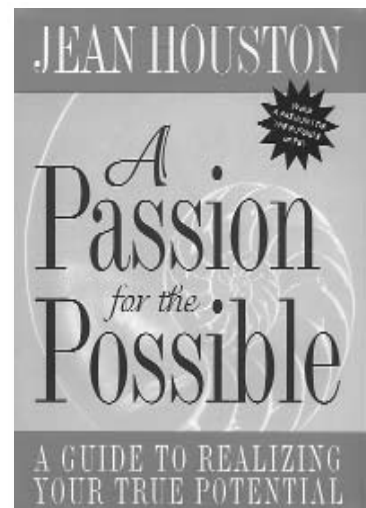
3. Is there a relationship in my life that needs healing? How can I increase my awareness of my oneness with that person, and so come into harmony?

A PASSION FOR THE POSSIBLE, By Jean Houston. HarperCollins HarperSanFrancisco, 1997. 193 pages, hardbound.

Jean Houston, noted speaker and writer (*The Possible Human, The Search for the Beloved: Journeys in Sacred Psychology, The Hero and the Goddess*, etc.) has written a passionate book on passion, subtitled *A Guide to Realizing Your True Potential*. The first chapter, "An Invitation to Discover More of What You Are," begins, "You! I know you." With immediacy and a warm

conversational style, she draws us into dialogue, first with her, then with ourselves. The book is "about our natural ability to gain a passion for the possible through the greater use of our innate potentials."

Jean Houston calls us to be aware of the critical times in which we live, and the nature of the opportunity that is before us. "Most of us will log five to fifty times the experience of our ancestors of two hundred years ago. Many of them received at birth the pattern for their lives, growing up to be farmer, weaver, soldier, priest, or mother bearing and burying one baby after another... And then it all



changed. It has been said that as many events have happened from 1945 to today as have happened in the two-thousand years before 1945. The ancient curse, 'May you live in interesting times' has come true for us. This is it—the most interesting time in human history. Nothing comparable has happened to humankind since the industrial revolution or, further back, since we gave up the wanderings of the hunt and settled down to agriculture and civilization." She contends that we must rise to greatness because greatness is required of us

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in this age of transition.

This book reveals Jean Houston as a gifted lyric writer. Savor this: “In the midst of the turmoil of too rapid change, an extraordinary light has arisen. Factors unique in human history are poised to help us become more than we thought we ever could be. We glimpse in the next century the coming of a planetary society, which heralds the end of ancient enmities and the birth of new ways of using our common humanity and its various cultures. In fact, we will need a gathering of the potentials of the whole human race and the particular genius of every culture if we are going to survive our time.” She gives examples of creative problem-solving from cultures as varied as a tribe in West Africa, artists in Bali, from the Inuit peoples of Canada and Alaska, the dervishes of Turkey. She sees the West’s great contribution to the coming world culture is that women are leading the way “to the rise of women around the world to full partnership with men in virtually the entire domain of human affairs. And as women are being equally empowered, men are being freed to discover that activities often seen as ‘feminine’—feeling, nurturing, collaboration, celebration, relationships—are in fact the domain of all.”

Jean Houston points to the evolution of the global village, where instant communication, via the media and the Internet, brings information and news quickly to people everywhere. “It is as if a worldwide nervous system is in the works. Each of us is a brain cell in that system, with powers that once belonged to kings.”

In order to survive living in such an interconnected world, so different from our past, Jean Houston

believes that we are encoded with an astonishing array of potentials. The heart of this book is a series of guided imagery practices that she believes will help the reader begin to recognize, and then to tap into these potentials and possibilities. The imagery exercises are designed to take the reader on a journey to heightened awareness in the realms of the sensory, the psychological, the mythic (“Did you know that you were the Mything Link?”), and the spiritual. Preceding each of the guided imagery exercises is a helpful introduction that includes some of Jean Houston’s own experience in exploring the realm. For example, before the imagery offered for the psychological, she shares her painful experience of “one of life’s betrayals” in the controversy surrounding her experience with Hillary Rodham Clinton. The media portrayed it as a seance and witchcraft, during which Jean Houston and Hillary Clinton consulted the shade of Eleanor Roosevelt about “building a better world for our children.” Jean Houston says it was simply “an imaginative exercise,” probably much like what she offers in this book.

The book’s conclusion begins, “Now the cat is out of the bag. With your senses tuned and your psyche primed, with a mythic path beneath your feet and the immensity of Spirit holding it all in love, your life can be your work of art, your great creation, your everyday passion.”

This book will be a delight for Jean Houston’s many students and admirers. Readers may find the evocative writing alone to be worth the price of the book, and some may find the imagery exercises to be just what they need to heighten

Southwestern

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Talk Power
Strip in picture
from
v6n5p79

A Global Shift

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IN SUMMARY

The overall results indicate that indeed a new global consciousness shift is beginning to emerge—one as dramatic as the shift from the agricultural to the industrial era. The researchers described this shift as having two distinct features: self-reflection and interconnectedness. They define self-reflection as the capacity to observe ourselves and the world from a distance, enabling us to free ourselves from the past and direct our own evolution. They define interconnectedness as the perception that all things—material and non-material—are one unified field of matter and energy in a grand web of life, and that all actions impact the whole.

While Elgin and LeDrew's findings included much worldwide data, they hesitated to estimate the percentage of the world's population which embraces this shift. However, their conservative estimate of the U.S. population was that 10% of Americans (20 million people) are within this new paradigm—a number which the researchers believe will be significant in influencing this shift. They also note a word of warning—that many obstacles exist before this new paradigm will come into being, and that the early decades of the 21st century are likely to be a time of intense confusion and conflict. They noted "Within our lifetimes, citizens of Earth will make choices that will have a deep and lasting effect on the future of the planet." It is our choice: will we drain our energy focusing on images of global deterioration? Or will we create a positive vision strong enough to bring a global transformation into reality?

Whichever we choose, we are contributing to the outcome in this "time of great reckoning."

Duane Elgin first presented a preliminary summary of this study to the 1996 State of the World Forum, a gathering of world leaders convened by the Gorbachev Foundation. The results were later compiled in the publication, "Global Consciousness Change: Indicators of an Emerging Paradigm," which was co-sponsored by The Fetzer Institute, The Institute of Noetic Sciences, The Brande Foundation, The California Institute of Integral Studies, and The State of the World Forum. Copies of the report can be obtained by sending a check for \$7.00 to the Millennium Project, P.O. Box 2449, San Anselmo, CA 94960. •

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their mindfulness about the sensory, the psychological, the mythic and the spiritual in their own lives. However, I found myself strangely unsettled as I finished the book. Jean Houston raises such profound, engaging, intriguing questions about humanity's evolution to this point, and the critical nature of the historical threshold on which we stand. Though she doesn't use these words, she is pointing to the same overarching need that philosophers and prophets see: the need for *metanoia*, a fundamental transformation of human consciousness.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP EXPLORATION

1. Considering the changes that are unfolding on our planet, particularly how the media and the Internet make instant news, information and opportunities available to everyone, even in the remotest

and least developed areas, what do you feel are the greatest challenges and the greatest opportunities generated by this growing interconnectedness?

2. What capacities, skills and talents do you bring to this time of planetary transition? What capacities, skills and talents do you need to explore and develop?

3. In Jean Houston's words, "What would you be like if you started today to make the most of the rest of your life? If you turned a corner and awoke?" •

Barbara Neighbors Deal, Ph.D., is a literary agent and writer in Ojai, California.

Reflections

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Box 4001, Old Lyme, CT 06371. More information is available on our Web site: <http://www.pagl.org>. —Heather Brodhead, Old Lyme, Connecticut.

EDITORIAL CORRECTION: In our last issue, (Issue 29 Volume 7, Number 1), the article "Who Are You," printed on page 80, was wrongly credited to Jean Houston, from the book "A Passion For The Possible." We took the excerpt from an uncorrected proof of the book and missed the credit. It should have been credited to Oriah Mountain Dreamer, in "The Invitation." We apologize for this mistake. We thank our readers who spotted this error and notified us. •

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Awareness

S H A K T I G A W A I N

We all have certain ideas, attitudes, core beliefs, and emotional patterns that limit our experience of well-being. Deep feelings of unworthiness, a sense of scarcity, fear of failure or success, conflicting feelings and beliefs about money, and many other issues can block our growth and fulfillment.

The dawning awareness about what doesn't work in how we are living is by far the most powerful step in our growth. It is also the most difficult and uncomfortable. As soon as we recognize a problem, we are on the road to healing it. However, that healing takes time. Meanwhile, we may have to watch ourselves repeat the same old self-defeating patterns a few more times.

It's difficult to do this without getting frustrated and self-critical. We need to understand how important this step of awareness is. When you are unconscious, you can repeat a behavior endlessly without gaining much benefit. Once you have some awareness and can catch yourself repeating the same behavior, you learn an enormous amount. You really feel the pain of it. Then you are able to explore other possible ways of handling the same situation. It's not long before things start to change. You don't have to make change. Focus on gaining awareness, and change will follow. •

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