

Jean Claude Seé

“Towards Transpersonal Psychotherapy”

"I am in my mother's belly. I feel marvellously well! She is speaking to me and I understand what she is saying! I don't understand the words, of course, but, beyond or below the words I know what she is saying and even what she is thinking: I am in her and she is in me! She is happy to carry me in her belly. She is laughing. And I, I am "speaking" to her: I answer her by hitting her belly with my feet. And she understands me!" This is not a dream. It's a memory, also a lived experience undergone recently through self-hypnosis during a group session of psychotherapy led by Barry Goodfield, director of the Video-Gestalt Institute and the Therapy Centre of Marin, near San Francisco, in California.

Barry Goodfield is one of these avant-garde psychotherapist whose theoretical and practical work stems from, and has developed from that of Wilhelm Reich, Fritz Perls, Alexander Lowen and, more recently, Arthur Janov. From Freud to Janov, one of the main trends of psychotherapy has been in deepening the discoveries of Freud on the subconscious and in perfecting the methods of exploration of the unconscious: W. Reich and his disciples, Doctors A. Lowen and G. Pierakos have stressed the language of the body which expresses, in the form of tendencies and blockages, the psychological traumas undergone since childhood: by acting on these tensions by means of special physical exercises, Bioenergetic science aims at dissolving them and re-establishing a free flow of energy. These exercises give rise to "emotional discharges" during which the memory of traumatic episodes at the origin of tensions frequently comes back. Fritz Perls, on his part, insisted with gestalt-therapy on the importance of taking consciousness of oneself HERE and NOW in therapy (if I am truly present to myself in the present moment, the trauma of the past no longer have a hold on me, neither does the fear of the future). Janov, on his part, with Primal Therapy, insists on the necessity of consciously reliving as an adult, the very first trauma (often a difficult birth or even an intra-uterine experience) around which subsequent traumas have, so to speak, snow-balled. Barry Goodfield is a young Californian psychotherapist who has integrated these therapeutic tools: video-gestalt under auto-hypnosis, for example, seems to be to the old Freudian psychoanalysis what the Concorde is to the Wright brother's plane!

How is Video-Gestalt Practiced?

Michele X. . . is seated in a comfortable armchair facing a television screen. She is not watching her favourite series but her own image! Michele is one of the fifteen participants in a group of video-gestalt therapy gathered for a week-end led by Barry Goodfield and one of his assistants, Richard Eaton. The group is assembled around the two television cameras directed towards

Michele. The pictures they are taking are transmitted to Barry, seated behind Michele, in front of a mixing machine and two monitor screens which enable him to choose the image or the combination of two images which Michele is looking at. A video-tape machine records the image on magnetic tape, which enables Barry to let Michele see as often as necessary certain of her expressions, to stop at a given image or to go through the tape in slow-motion. For the moment, Barry asks Michele to repeat her own first name as if she was talking to herself on the screen: Michele: Michele. . . Michele. . . Michele. . . Barry: Have you noticed that you blink each time you say your name?

M.: No

Barry puts the tape in reverse and stops it at an image where Michele has her eyes closed:

B.: What does it mean for you to close your eyes while saying your name?

M.: That I am not here. . . I don't want to hear.

B. : What or who don't you want to hear?

M. : I don't know . . .

B. : Say your name again.

M.: Michele. . . Michele. . . my mother, I want her to leave me alone. . . it's my mother who is calling me. . .

This revealing blinking of the eyes is an example of what Barry calls a "non-verbal escape", a message from the subconscious using the language of the body. Every gestalt-therapist is trained to discern this body-language, these unconscious movements of the face and body which contradict conscious verbal language: for example someone and his expression denies his verbal expression, etc. These "non-verbal escapes" reveal a conflict between the conscious and the unconscious. But they are extremely fugitive and difficult to point out. If they do not escape the attentive eye of the therapist they remain in general beyond the grasp of the client (1) even when they pointed out to him. Video and the magnetoscopes seem, therefore, to be therapeutic tools of the first order, decoupling the power of attention of the therapist and especially, the ability of the client self-knowledge:

- What do you see in front of you, Michele? asks Barry a little later.

Michele: A woman - as if she was dying. . .

B. : Would you like to erase that aspect of yourself?

M.: I look like my mother. . .(she begins to cry).

B.: Do you like it?

M.: Rather die. . .(she cries) . . .it's impossible to be a human being. . .It's impossible to live and to be like that. . . my mother is a killer!

B.: Did you see what is going on at the level of your throat? That tension? Do you want to work on it?

M.: Yes. . . but I'm afraid. . . I'm going to die. . .

B.: Now come and lie down on the floor: we're going to work on it. Michele lies down on the floor, on her back, for a session of auto-hypnosis. Richard, Barry's assistant comes near her and asks her to fold her arm and hold her forearm vertically, resting on her elbow.

Richard: I'm going to count "three, two and one" and each time I say "three,

two and one" you will be more relaxed. . . "three, two and one. . . , three, two and one. . .", but remember that it is you who are doing it and that even if you are in a deep state of hypnosis, you will remain conscious and able to stop and to come out of it when you wish. . . "three, two and one", let your body relax. . . "three, two and one. . . three, two and one. . .", each breath you take enables your body to relax more. . . "three, two and one. . ." Michele groans slightly and cries softly.

Richard: "Three, two and one. . . more and more relaxed. . . deeper and deeper three, two and one. . ."

M.: I feel such suffering in my heart. . .

R.: Let your body relax even more deeply. . . this time when I count three, two and one, you will relax twice as much as you are now. . .three, two and one. . . twice as deep. . .twice as relaxed. . .

Richard goes on like this for about ten minutes until Michele reaches sufficient degree of hypnosis to find memories engulfed in the unconscious related to her mother and related to the tension she feels in her throat. At one point Michele's hands begin to twist, as if she wanted to squeeze something, and she becomes agitated as if under the effect of some terrible pain. .

Michele: Protect me. . . protect me! (she rolls on the floor). . . Barry, I want to kill you. . . I'm afraid of hitting you very hard, Barry. . .

Barry: Let a sound come out your throat.

(Michele begins to scream, then exclaims: - I'm going to win!).

B.: Repeat that!

M.: I'm going to win . . . I'm going to win. . .

She gets up and begins to fight with Barry. Barry and his assistant hold her, some of the group participants help them (under hypnosis, a person's strength is sextupled). After a while, Michele finally collapses on the floor, exhausted. . . Richard then helps her to again deepen her degree of hypnosis:

R.: "Three, two and one. . .", choose one of your fingers and you will lift that finger each time you want to say "yes" to a question. Michele lifts her right index.

R.: We will call it your "yes" finger. If you want to go deeper you only have to move your "yes" finger and you will be twice as deep in the state. . . (a littler later): if you are twice as deep move your "yes" finger once. At this point Barry touches slightly Michele's mouth with his finger. Immediately, she begins to fight out and begins screaming: help! help!"

Barry: Let your body do what it feels like. Feel your emotions, feel them!

M.: Help! Help.

After a while, Michele finally calms down. "Now, says Barry, as an adult examine what you have just experienced, confront the past and what you are now experiencing in view of a new understanding of what you have lived then." After a few minutes, Richard helps her to still deepen her hypnotic trance for several minutes.

M.: They're. . .I'm so small I can't do anything. . . I'm so small. . . I don't know what she is doing!

Barry: Enable yourself to see where you are.

M.: I'm scared. . .(she starts speaking in Dutch, her maternal language) She waves her hands in front of her face, laughing.

B.: Feel your body. How is your body? See exactly what is happening.

M.: Has she (her mother) tried to kill me? (she becomes agitated, contorts her hands). I can't believe it!

B.: See exactly what happened, more and more clearly. And when you understand more clearly what happened in that situation, move your "yes" finger.

M.: The sun is out. . .

B.: Did she try to kill you?

M.: I. . . I'm not sure. . . I can't move my "yes" finger. She is smiling killer.

B.: Did she kill you?

M.: No

B.: Did she kill your father?

M.: No. . . She killed all of us. (She begins beating rhythmically with her hand).

B.: What is this that message?

M.: It's my father who is coming.

B.: What is that drum?

M.: It's my heart that's beating.

B.: What do you need?

M.: Not to die.

B.: Go ahead and let yourself die.

M.: I want to die (but her hand which is still rythmically beating her belly seems to say the contrary of her words).

B.: Let yourself die.

M.: I want to die.

M.: Again

M.: I want to die.

B.: I do not want to live.

M.: (whispered): I do not want to live.

B.: One, two and three, each time I repeat that you go deeper into yourself, you go back in time to the first time when you felt that.

Michele remains silent for some time. During that time Barry whispers the same instructions to her. After several minutes, she tries to remove something from her face with her hands. She says: "Water. . . water. . . SHE TRIED TO DROWN ME IN MY BATH!!!". Suddenly Michele gets up and throws herself in the arms of one of the group participants, a man in his fifties. She cries. Then she wants to spit. Barry hands her a basin: "Spit it out here! Let it out here! Let it come out!".

Michele: My eyes are coming out of my head! (she yells): "I want my brother! My brother is a wonderful guy".

Richard: Look at the situation as an adult now. Look at the decision you made at the time. Evaluate that decision. You can now make another decision, as an adult.

Barry: Your brother is dead. Your husband is dead. (Michele lost her husband one month previously and her brother a few years earlier, both under accidental circumstances.) See if there is a relation between these two situations.

M.: I am still with my husband. For me he isn't dead. He is alive with me.

B.: If you carry a dead brother and a dead husband with you. . .

M.: My daddy is also dead.

B.: Can you feel love for them? Do they want you to live?

M.: My husband does, yes, I'm sure. . . but my father, I don't know. . .

Barry beats his breast rhythmically as Michele did a moment previously.

M.: My heart is beating, my daughter's heart is beating. . . My heart says:

"I didn't kill them" (her "yes" finger moves very hard; it's a certain sign that she is telling the truth). . . "They died of themselves."

B.: Again, say that again.

Michele beats her head with her hands

B.: What do you hear?

M.: The beating of my hands on my head. . .

B.: Do you want to live?

M.: Do I want to live? That's a question I do not want to answer.

B.: Do you want to live?

M.: No. . . I want to decide by myself. . .

B.: What do you need to do now?

M.: To say yes to this sensation in my throat.

Barry puts her hand on her throat: "It's your mother's hand." Michele starts spitting. Barry tells her to keep her hand on her throat. Michele starts spitting. Barry tells her to keep her hand on her throat.

B.: Feel your throat, feel it.

Michele tries to spit or vomit.

B.: Feel that in your stomach and do what you must to get rid of it immediately. . . (Michele spits) . . .do what you feel like, she is right in front of you. . . Michele spits violently and burst out laughing. Barry asks her what she feels like doing.

M.: Spitting in my mother's face!

B.: Now look over everything we have done; and if you make new decisions concerning what we have done, examine what those decisions are.

M.: I don't want to be like my mother.

I don't want to kill myself. . .

I don't want to kill myself. .!

I want to live until I die naturally.

B.: What does it mean for you to say that?

M.: It's marvellous. I want to live until I die naturally! I want to have some pleasure. I want to relax in a hot bath. I want to swim. I want to gallop on horseback. And I want to do some Tai-Chi. (2)

B.: When I count "one, two and three" you will open your eyes and you will feel fresh, rested and in great shape: "one, two and three!" Michele opens her eyes, smiles, gets up, and Barry asks her to sit in front of the TV screen.

B.: Feel your body; feel the energy of your body.

Michele laughs: "I want to walk!"

Barry shows her her own image on the screen: at the beginning of the session

(she seems old, terribly sad, tense, nervous) and now (she seems younger by ten years: her face is relaxed, beautified, happy).
Barry: What do you wish to say to that young woman in front of you on the screen?
Michele: O.K.!

We can see it: in a few minutes, thanks to the combined use of video and auto-hypnosis, Barry Goodfield has succeeded in making Michele relive a trauma of her early childhood, what Janov call a "primal". (3)

How many months or years of psychoanalysis would it have taken to find these kind of memories? Yet Freud, at the beginning of his career practiced hypnosis, like the French mediums Charcot and Bernheim. He abandoned this practice in favour of "free verbal association" because the results were apparently not lasting. It must be said that hypnosis was then used very differently: the patient was plunged in a very deep state of hypnosis and submitted entirely to the will of the hypnotist. Once out of the hypnotic state, they didn't remember a thing! Yet, for hypnosis to have a therapeutic value, it isn't just a question of reliving a memory engulfed in the subconscious: one must be able to consciously understand and evaluate it, as an adult capable of reflecting and making conscious decisions - different from those made by the child at the time of the traumatic incidents. Since Charcot, Bernheim and Freud the use of hypnosis in therapy has evolved considerably. In Europe, Sophrology has gone so far as to abandon the term "hypnosis" - too discredited by music-hall hypnotists. In the USA, many recent works have rehabilitated hypnosis and perfected techniques like auto-hypnosis which leaves the one hypnotized entirely free to stop the session if desired and, above all, enables them to learn to discover that state by themselves and to continue exploring past memories. With Gestalt under auto-hypnosis one can even live, as we have seen in the case of Michele, the present and the past *at the same time!* This type of experience raises, of course, fundamental questions of the nature of memory as well as of the nature of time and space. We will come back to this later.

We must first eliminate the arguments of the opponents of therapies issuing from the conceptions of Wilhelm Reich (Bio-energetic Analysis, Gestalt therapy, Primal therapy, etc.). According to them the Reichian and neo-Reichian notion of energy, of free-flowing energy in the human body, of energy exchanges between the human body and its environment (close and distant), and especially of energy blockages in muscular tensions caused by psychological traumas, would not be based on any reality and would be, at best, purely metaphorical. Yet all the advanced research in biology, in medicine, in physics, in mathematics and even in botany comes to the aid of psychology to prove the contrary: it would go beyond the scope of this article to describe in detail the work of scientific researchers like Stanislas Grof (Psychiatric Research Centre of Baltimore), Elmer E. Green (Psychophysiological Laboratory of the Menninger Foundation), Prof. Lawrence Leschan (author of the untranslated book "The Medium, the Mystic and the Physician: towards a General Theory of the Paranormal"), Bill Tiller, physician,

to be continued on page 429

continued from page 422

professor at the Laboratory of Physical Sciences at Stanford University (California), or of the astronaut Edgar Mitchell, founder of the Institute of Poetic Sciences. All these fields of research converge, as do many others in the USA, in the USSR and in Europe, towards a new conception of the psyche. This scientific conception tends to abolish all dualism, in particular the old spirit-matter antagonism, in favour of a conception of the universe conceived as a living whole, and immense gathering of interdependent energy systems. This view of the world which conforms to the deepest traditional conceptions of the universe, for instance that of Buddhism or of Hindu Samkhya, rejoins the views exposed by G. I. Gurdjieff to P.D. Ouspensky which seems at the time (1915) so fantastic: "Everything in this universe can be weighed and measured. The absolute itself is no less material, no less ponderable and measurable than the moon or than man", "*Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*", Stock Ed. (page 132 - 137).

A cathartic scream which liberates the blocked. In other words, the relations between matter and energy, as beginning to be transposed and verified experimentally in the field of psychology. And Barry Goodfield, encouraged by the ex-astronaut Edgar Mitchell, is making fascinating experiments in this direction, at the Medical Centre of the University of California in San Francisco: using thermography, a technique usually used in the early detection of certain cancers, Barry Goodfield has succeeded in proving that psychopathological blockages corresponded in fact to energy blockages registered under the form of muscular tensions linked to the traumatizing memory. One subject under hypnosis placed in front of a thermovision machine (which shows on a cathodic screen an image revealing the differences in heat put out by various parts of the body), in finding the forgotten memory of a fight where he had almost been strangled at the age of seven, revealed quite unusual temperature difference at the level of the neck and shoulders as he progressively remembered this forgotten episode. "He was literally choking", says Goodfield (4), "although nothing was touching his neck. I told him to do what he felt he must do to stop choking and he began to scream and to call his brother exactly as he had done at the age of seven". After this cathartic scream, the body temperature registered by thermovision changed with a rapidity that the participation thermographists had never observed before. The tension at the level of the shoulders disappeared: the energy, blocked at that level by this trauma which happened during childhood, was liberated. Barry Goodfield has registered on video tape a gestalt-therapy session with thermography during which a man of fifty six, impotent as far back as he can remember, discovers the memory of a primal episode which happened at the age of one when his grandmother pricked him with a pin in the buttocks to punish him for having soiled his diapers. It's absolutely fascinating to observe on a TV screen the progression of therapy (this was shown in Paris to members of the French Society of Sexology Clinic, presided over by Dr. Gellman:) At the beginning of the session one can see the energy blockages at the level of the sexual organs and the groin, then, as the subject under hypnosis remembers the primal trauma, a zone of blocked energy at the level of the anus, and finally the liberation of this blocked energy at the moment of

the cathartic "primal" scream. As a result of this session the impotence disappeared.

Thanks to these experiments a first step has been taken to measure in a quantifiable way what, as Barry says, sages, prophets, Zen masters and the great spiritual figures of other civilization have known since time immemorial.

One visualizes the energy blockages.

The energy modifications in the course of therapy that Barry Goodfield has measured in terms of heat should, in the near future, be able to be measured in terms of electromagnetic and electrostatic fields: Dr. Becker, in charge of cardiological research at the University of Syracuse (USA), amputated a rat's leg, then produced - around the place of the amputated leg - an electromagnetic field. The stump began to grow again until the sixth week of growth!!

Could our capacity of perception be atrophied?

The interaction between physical, psychological, physiological and parapsychological fields is beginning to be brought to light by the new generation of scientific researchers. We are hardly surprised that healers heal by the laying on of hands after a study at the hospital of New York University has shown the significant increase of the haemoglobin percentage in the blood of a patient after laying on of hands by a famous healer. We should not wonder about distance diagnosis and healings of psychic healers when we have proof that some plants are sensitive to an accident which occurred to the person who habitually takes care of them, several kilometers distant from where the plants were. Could the capacities of perception of men be lesser than those of plants or are they only under-developed and atrophied, as is any organ atrophied which no longer functions? We are led to think so. The therapeutic value of silent meditation is becoming universally recognized.

All this data, and much more which would take too long to develop here puts into question the occidental conceptions of the psyche and its relationship with the body and also raises a whole series of questions on its relationship with time and space. On the other hand, since this conception gives a major place to the "Superconscious" - beyond the conscious and the subconscious - it is in complete accord with what Aldous Huxley called "The Perennial Philosophy" (5) and in particular with Oriental thought.

It's been quite a number of years that writers like Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts (6) have put into question occidental psychiatry and psychotherapy in the light of metaphysical conceptions of the Orient (7).

Today, scientific research tends to confirm their intellectual theories by material proof.

References

- (1) "Client". The words "patient" or "sick person" are generally banished from the vocabulary of "humanistic psychology" or "growth movement". To the notion of mental health as opposed to illness or of normality as opposed to abnormality, this movement prefers the notion of continued and indefinite growth and development.
 - (2) Tai-Chi, or more exactly Tai-Chi-Chuan, is a Chinese physical exercise, a meditation in movement, half-way between dancing and martial art.
 - (3) Arthur Janov, author of *"The Primal Scream"* (Published by Flammarion) is the creator of primal therapy which consists essentially in finding the very first trauma at the origin of a neurosis. Its practice entails spending three weeks isolated from the outside world, "working" several hours a day with a therapist: therefore, it is very expensive.
 - (4) Barry A. Goodfield, *"Thermographic Video-Gestalt Therapy: a way to the liberation of potential energy"*. Therapy, Center of Marin, California. 1975.
 - (5) A. Huxley, *"The Perennial Philosophy"*. Harper & Row, New York 1944. paperback 1970.
 - (6) A. Watts, *"Psychotherapy, East and West"* Fayard Ed. Paris. *"Psychotherapy and Eastern religion: Metaphysical bases of psychiatry"*. Journal of Transpersonal Psychology. Vo. 5 No. 1. 1974. Palo-Alto, California.
- See also:
Dr. Roberto Assagioli: *"Psychosynthesis"*. Viking Press, New York 1965
- (7) Dr. Hans Jacobs, *"Oriental wisdom and Occidental psychotherapy"*. Payot, Paris, 1964.

This article is translated from the French, published in the magazine "L'INCONNU" No. 7, June 1976, under the title: "Crier pour guerir" (title given by the publisher).

