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Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation

Background

I first became interested in inner speech while studying literature as an undergraduate. A natural tendency to introspection and a strong interest in fictional technique combined. Innovations toward interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness by Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, and Eliot fascinated me. I ended by writing a senior honors thesis called "The Relation of the Inner and Outer Lives in the Works of Virginia Woolf," which won the Bowdoin essay prize, mostly, I suspect, because of boosting by Albert Guerard, Jr., a professor of comparative literature, now at Stanford but then at Harvard, who is a novelist himself and an unusually perceptive critic. In his lectures and articles he opened new doors for me to fictional process. Like most literature professors in the heyday of Hemingway, he preferred masculine action novels and wondered if Virginia Woolf was really readable, but his support of my weird preoccupation with her valiant and artful efforts to make inner events as dramatic as outer testified to the ability he had, which made him a real teacher, to subordinate his own attitudes to the education of his student.

As a teacher myself later, learning through trials and errors at Exeter, I gradually worked out a spectrum of fictional techniques scaled according to the point of view of the narrator, whether avowed ("first person") or anonymous ("third person"). With the help of colleague Kenneth McElheny, I embodied this spectrum in an anthology of short stories (*Points of View,* a Mentor book, New American Library). The matrix was interior monologue, the fictionalization of inner speech, the initial "narrative" point of view from which others are departures to varying removes in inner and outer space/time. An important concept from Guerard, which I've never properly acknowledged, is that of the "imperceptive narrator," who tells a different story from what he thinks he is telling, because he is not on top of the experience recounted. Guerard pointed out examples in Gide and Dostoevski and other modern novelists. Eudora Welty's "Why I Live at the P.O." is a fine instance, and, descending to burlesque, so also is the popular song of some twenty years ago, "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus underneath the Mistletoe Last

Night." Such a narrator stands somewhere between raw (unabstracted) inner speech and "objective" discourse.

Then matters got out of hand. I began to see such a scale not only in narration but in all discourse. Carried away, across the whole hierarchy of levels of abstraction, I tried to get rid of my obsession by writing it up, or out, as key chapters of *Teaching the Universe of Discourse.* Always it was from the amorphous, undifferentiated crucible of inner speech that these gradations of discourse were generated. (*Matrix, mother,* and *matter* all come from the same root.) By then I was reading scientific descriptions of what I had first known from my own introspection and from literature, and these helped me to formulate and support my theories.

Just as my old preoccupation was becoming perhaps too much of a head trip, and stagnating there, I began to practice meditation and then to undergo the inner disciplining of Swami Sivalingam. Then I saw inner speech very differently from the way I had through either psychology or literature, though perhaps I was only going back in a new way to where I had begun, in introspection. This career-long trip spiraled over into another dimension, and I had to start re-viewing and re-casting most of what I had ever thought about language and literature, as I am still doing. Some of us just seem to take a long time getting to the point—late bloomers I guess we're supposed to call us in education.

This essay went through three lecture versions in 1979—one delivered from detailed notes at the convention of the California Association of Teachers of English in San Diego, a much longer one read over three evening sessions from a written text at the Bread Loaf Summer School of English in Vermont, and a reduced form of that to the first annual conference on writing of the Independent School Association of Massachusetts in Cambridge. In 1980 I spoke on this subject at the Third International Conference on the Teaching of English at Sydney, Australia. The article is published here for the first time.

Writing and meditating are naturally allied activities. Both are important for their own sake, and through each people can practice the other. Relating the two by means of a bridging concept, that of inner speech, brings out aspects of all three that can illuminate old educational goals and identify new ones. To work with this three-way interrelationship, we must construe writing in its highest sense—beyond copying and transcribing, paraphrasing and plagiarizing—as authentic *authoring,* because inner speech and meditation concern forms of thought, the composing of mind that constitutes the real art and worth of writing. Authoring is working up a final revision, for an audience and a purpose, of those thought forms that have surfaced to the realm of inner speech.

Inner and Outer Speech

Whatever eventuates as a piece of writing can begin only as some focusing on, narrowing of, tapping off of, and editing of that great ongoing inner panorama that William James dubbed the "stream of consciousness." What I will call here "inner speech" is a version of that stream which has been more verbally distilled and which can hence more directly serve as the wellspring of writing. We might ask someone suddenly to say what he is thinking and thereby learn the subject matter, the order or disorder of the thoughts and images, and perhaps some aura or vein characterizing this material, but until asked to tell us, the person may not even have been aware of his stream and, even if aware, may not have put it into words. And the selection, wording, and emphasis with which he verbalizes the material to us may not be the same as he did verbalize or would have verbalized it to himself. So we must understand "inner speech" as referring to an uncertain level of consciousness where material may not be so much verbalized as verbalizable, that is, at least potentially available to consciousness if some stimulus directs attention there, and potentially capable of being put into words because it is language-congenial thought (discursive).

When James Joyce and other fiction writers have simulated stream of consciousness, verbalization often shifts or wavers between that of the persona and that of the author, between the literal realism of speech that is "in character" and the poetic realism of language that cleaves to a truth beneath words. The two samples here from *Ulysses* may illustrate how the literary technique of "interior monologue" plays in between stream of consciousness as distilled for oneself into inner speech and stream of consciousness that might, without an author's intervention, remain as subverbal imagery and feeling. Strolling near Trinity in Dublin, Leopold Bloom watches the great Parnell pass by talking to a woman at his side:

> Her stockings are loose over her ankles. I detest that: so tasteless. Those literary ethereal people they are all. Dreamy, cloudy, symbolistic Esthetes they are. I wouldn't be surprised if it was that kind of food you see produces the like waves of the brain the poetical. For example one of those policemen sweating Irish stew into their shirts; you couldn't squeeze a line of poetry out of him. Don't know what poetry is even. Must be in a certain mood.
>
> The dreamy cloudy gull
> Waves o'er the waters dull.[1]

Now Stephen Dedalus, alone suddenly in the library:

> Coffined thoughts around me, in mummycases, embalmed in spice of

[1]James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 163.

words. Thoth, god of libraries, a birdgod, moonycrowned. And I heard the voice of that Egyptian highpriest. *In painted chambers loaded with tilebooks.*

They are still. Once quick in the brains of men. Still: but an itch of death is in them, to tell me in my ear a maudlin tale, urge me to wreak their will.[2]

Inner speech distills not just *the* stream but a confluence of streams issuing from sensory receptors, memory, and a variety of more or less emotional or logical kinds of reflection. All the elements of this rich mixture trigger, interrupt, and reinforce each other. Sometimes they interplay rapidly, indicating perhaps that attention is free to skip more "randomly" or "spontaneously." Sometimes strong external influence or strong inner will sustains attention so steadily on one current that a clear continuity develops. Sword fighting, for example, holds consciousness to sensory information. An old person finished with striving may "dwell in the past," shutting out environmental stimulation and letting the memory current flow with little interruption—chronically, in some cases. Another person well into maturity may constantly see in everyday occurrences or news instances of generalizations that he is given to forging, so that reflection stands in high ratio to memories and sensations. A teenager may spend much time worrying about what will befall him in the future or making scenarios to help meet trying situations he is busy foreseeing. At any moment this heady stuff can be tapped off and converted to ink.

Clearly, numberless circumstances, inner and outer, determine what sort of mixture the stream consists of and hence what kind and qualities of discourse might ultimately be further distilled from the inner speech. Some of these circumstances are immediate, like what the person is doing at the moment, what his surroundings are, his mood, the state of his mind and organism, and so on. Other circumstances span a long time—personal traits, conditioning, habits, relations. Stephen's and Bloom's interior monologues are meant to contrast in this way, partly by holding time and place constant to some extent so that both react to the same external circumstances and thus differentiate character. Influences on the qualities of inner speech range then, in time, from immediate to long-term and, in space, from the most indwelling nature to the farthest-flung cultural and material environments.

If talking to oneself and hearing voices indicate insanity, then the whole culture is crazy. True, for most of us this does not happen "out loud," for we learned some time befor entering school that some things that come to the tongue you had jolly well better keep to yourself and let "come to mind" only. But the main reason the child splits off his ex-

[2]Ibid., p. 191.

ternal speech and shunts some of it inward to subvocalization or silent thought concerns not merely social disapproval but social irrelevance. What Piaget has called the "egocentric speech" of the small child comprises play prattle (often to objects), "task mediation" or guiding and planning talk accompanying an activity, self-reminders, and just a kind of rehearsing of verbal powers in the form of running observations cued by ongoing or surrounding stimuli. Speech that is egocentric does not distinguish speaker from listener or speaker from subject, in keeping with the general trend of cognitive development to begin in syncretism and move toward discrimination. As the child realizes that some speech is really for himself, he deflects it inward. Momentous indeed is this shift from thinking out loud to thinking silently, for the inner life that was constantly manifesting itself in external speech as well as action now becomes inaudible and invisible (expressive body action becoming more subdued also), so that henceforward we cannot regard the child as an open book but must expect him to manifest his mind by excerpting and editing his inner speech.

As fluency is confluency, so interior monologue is really interior dialogue. We can gain tremendous perception and perspective from regarding inner speech as colloquy among the individual's many personas—the roles, factions, viewpoints, and other divisions within himself and the culture he has incorporated. George Herbert Mead described some time ago with great justice this process of introjecting the "other" into one's inner life.[3] When the child shunts some of his outer speech inward, he is necessarily internalizing the voices of others whose language he or she learned.

The idea that most thinking, the discursive part, derives from internalized speech seems rather universally agreed on by specialists in cognition today, as shown by the enthusiasm of Piaget and Americans for the work of Lev Vygotsky and A. R. Luria, whose school has for decades insisted that the sociohistorical origins of thought have not been adequately emphasized.[4] Society peoples the head of the individual via speech, which is learned from and for others but in shifting inward merges with universal inborn logical faculties, biologically given, and with idiosyncratic penchants of mind to result in thinking that is at once personal and cultural. As Hans Furth reminds us from his work with the education of the deaf, not all thinking is verbal, and conceptual maturation may occur

[3]George Herbert Mead, "Self" in *On Social Psychology: Selected Papers,* ed. Anselm Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

[4]First see Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1962). Included in this volume is an insert, "Comments" by Jean Piaget, that gives Piaget's main views of inner speech, especially as related to Vygotsky's. Then see his *Mind and Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) and A. R. Luria, *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

among people who cannot speak.[5] The Russian psycholinguists accept that thought and speech originate separately, but they play down the independence of innate mentation because they believe that human psychosocial evolution ("historical dialectic") determines individual thinking more than the biological givens.

Surely, we have here a serpent with its tail in its mouth: mind and society feed in and out of each other. Such biological givens as the faculties of analyzing and synthesizing can be neither given nor taken away by society, and idiosyncrasy asserts itself very powerfully not only among citizens sharing the same sociohistorical conditions but also among siblings sharing the same familial determinants.

Individuals influence history and language and are influenced by them. But the Russian emphasis does restore our balance and receives support not only from the too evident truth of McLuhan's (very Marxist) insight about technological shifts altering consciousness but also from recent findings about specialization of the brain hemispheres. This specialization into analytic and holistic does not occur in other mammals and occurs in humans only after around age seven, after inner speech has become established, that is, after the pristine thinking of the innate equipment has become thoroughly imbued with the culture's ways of perceiving and conceiving, embodied in the language and in the social relations in which it is learned. Joseph Chilton Pearce and others, including myself, believe that specialization of the hemispheres may occur to salvage holistic, nonverbal, metaphorical thinking from the heavy acculturation that makes the analytic dominate, even after the split, and that hits children at just about the time hemispheric specialization occurs (and when the notorious slump in school performance and attitude begins, toward the end of third grade).[6]

On the biological foundation, culture builds its own psychological structure, different from one epoch to another. Individuals are in a sense "bugged" by institutions, implanted with an invisible transmitter in the form of a discursive system that structures their own nervous system so that they are in some degree participating in group thinking whether they know it or not or like it or not. Language works by resonance, between sender and receiver, and this requires tuning all circuits to the same frequency. An insane person can no longer resonate with the society, but we note that the auditory hallucination so common to classic schizophrenia usually consists of hearing the voices of parents, God or the devil, or other authoritative voices from the near and far culture. Or to vary the comparison, it is as if acculturation hypnotizes us at the outset, when we are

[5]Hans Furth, *Thinking without Language: Phychological Implications of Deafness* (New York: Free Press, 1966).
[6]Joseph Chilton Pearce, *Exploring the Crack in the Cosmic Egg* (New York: Julian, 1974) and *The Magical Child* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977).

utterly open and undefensive, "suggests" by voice but by nonverbal means also that the world is so and so and not such and such, and thenceforward that is how we see and think about it. This is group hypnosis and, once built in, self-hypnosis—except to the extent that idiosyncrasy does indeed assert itself even to the point sometimes of affecting the very language and history that will in the future hypnotize subsequent generations.

Probably nothing is so important to education as this circularity of inner and outer speech, mind and society. By external speech, individuals communicate to each other, and by inner speech each informs himself. Aside from the broad matter of consonance or dissonance among individuals and between individuals and their shared institutions, this circularity of internal and external applies to other school activities such as listening, viewing, and reading, all of which entail wholesale introjection into one's stream of consciousness or someone else's stream. That is, in varying degree the auditor, viewer, or reader allows some interlocutor, performer, screen, or book to supplant his inner continuity with their or its own. Unless "entranced" or "spellbound" we probably never permit another to take over our consciousness completely, but pre-adolescent children are especially suggestible, and even much older people "lose themselves" in a book (if their ego is strong enough not to doubt regaining themselves). The effects of films and television may become clearer if we regard such programs as supplanting inner programs.

It may be helpful for teachers to regard listening or reading, say, as assimilating someone else's outer speech into one's ongoing inner speech, the effect being something like a garbled script or heavily annotated and superscribed text. Evidences of this hearing or reading may evince themselves minutes or years later when our receiver becomes sender in turn and synthesizes his own continuity for others to introject, naturally drawing on what he has heard and read along with other experience and his unique creativity. The circles keep turning over. People learn to talk and write by listening and reading as much as by anything else.

Educators need not feel that in staying especially mindful of the cultural inculcation of the individual, via such routes as the internalization of outer speech, they are subscribing to any school of psychology or political view. Growth means change, and educators have to concern themselves with the changeable aspects of people, which are not usually the biological givens but the cultural forces and, the individual willing, his idiosyncratic traits. Even to know if or how he wants to change, the individual has to be at least partly awakened from the hypnosis of acculturation. And education, finally, should foster human evolution. I am not interested in helping to teach young people to read just well enough to follow directions or write just well enough to take dictation.

Writing as Revised Inner Speech

However personal or impersonal the subject matter, *all* writing as authoring must be some revision of inner speech for a purpose and an audience. To say this is not at all to say that writing is solipsistic thinking about narcissistic content or even that it favors "personal experience." Because of the circularity just discussed, one's revised inner speech may reflect convention so much as to hardly bear a personal mark. "Off the top of the head," as we say. In Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* a slavish character called Lucky gives a remarkable soliloquy that starts as a surface verbal stream full of stock stuff and familiar phrases straight out of ads and folk talk and official promulgations, then moves downward to poetic and original verbalization of the deeper self, à la Molly Bloom or Anna Livia Plurabelle. (Beckett was not Joyce's secretary for nothing.) I saw the Trinidad dancer, Geoffrey Holder, perform this soliloquy by dancing out this descent into the self at the same time he vocalized the deepening verbal stream, creating an unforgettable audio-visual emblem as he bucked and spluttered his way down through tensions into the grace of unconflicted fluency.

Egocentricity is merely a localization within the larger circles of ethnocentricity, biocentricity, and geocentricity that are concentric to it. This is why "subjectivity" is not so personal as it is usually made out to be and why it is not the only issue to consider in adapting inner speech to public communication. So much of the dullness, awkwardness, shallowness, and opacity that teachers object to in student writing owes to skimming along in the froth instead of plunging into the current, where intuition lines up with intelligence and particularities of experience correct for cliché. Seldom has anyone shown them how to work their way down, like Lucky. Most discourse in society today follows the now notorious circuit of the computer, "garbage in, garbage out." Something really significant has to happen inside—mediation by mind. If "output" differs from "input" mainly in being more amateurishly put together, then subjectivity has little meaning, and objectivity cannot be an authentic enough issue to be dealt with.

What really teaches composition—"putting together"—is disorder. Clarity and objectivity become learning challenges only when content and form are *not* given to the learner but when he must find and forge his own from his inchoate thought. Now, *that's* hard, not the glorified book-reporting or the filling in of instances to fit someone else's generalization (topic). All this traditional school and college writing only *looks* mature because it is laced with generalizations of a high abstraction level—quotations from the greats, current formulations of issues, and other ideas received from books or teachers. Such haste to score, to make a quick intellectual killing, merely retards learning, because those kids have

not worked up those generalizations themselves. This short-circuits the natural circularity between thought and society, bypasses any true mediation by mind, and results in a simply more insidious form of inculcation, less honest than straight formula feeding because book criticism, research papers, and essay exams make students *appear* to be more the authors of the ideas than they really are. Consider too what a deceptive view this conveys to youngsters of both writing and themselves.

I invite the reader to think of writing not only as Lucky's descent into self but also as the ascent from chaos to cosmos. I certainly don't mean to equate the self with chaos, but the inner speech that boils off the self represents some sort of confused concoction of self and society, whereas through writing we may use composition to achieve composure.

A human being is literally *made to order* and will *make* sense of everything that comes into his ken, weird as his cosmology may look to another individual or another culture. The typifying trait of humankind is to "get his head together" even if his only symbolic medium for doing so is iconographic, and no matter how chaotic his environment. Once tool-using includes symbol-making, then people are naturally and necessarily creative in the practical if not esthetic sense. Writing throws out to society samples of the cosmology that any individual has to be making for himself all the time as an ongoing orientation to this world and an unceasingly updated guide for behavior. Writing is a further abstraction, via inner speech, of an involuntary abstracting that the individual engages in constantly for survival anyway. As micro-cosmos he reflects to some degree the cosmos of culture and the macro-cosmos of nature, but he is always in the process of converting chaos to cosmos—or perhaps of discovering the order concealed in apparent disorder—and the particular instance of this composition that we call writing partakes of this general ordering. Writing is an opportunity to find out who I am and what I am to do with my life.

Lest all this sound entirely *too* cosmic to the teacher mired in the pseudo-pragmatic routines of the conventional classroom, the movement from inner speech to the written product gets us into all those familiar alternatives of thought and language that writing teachers call organization, transition, sentence structure, and word choice, or thesis, illustration, and conclusion, but this approach from inner speech shifts the perspective of written composition back downward to where classification and generalization are being spontaneously, even involuntarily, generated and where instances are original; where theses, transitions, and conclusions to thinking chains are all occurring thick and fast (without being assigned) but remain *implicit,* perhaps still in mythic or metaphoric form. Making the implicit appropriately explicit may well be the chief task of writing. Teaching writing is teaching how to *manifest* thought into language, and this requires raising consciousness of all this spontaneous

and often unconscious cosmologizing to the point that it passes from verbalizable to verbalized. At the same time, the writer has to become conscious of how the verbalization now manifesting to himself needs to evolve to that degree of explicitness that will make his ideas emerge sharply for others. Also, working deeper in the sources leaves open alternatives about *mode* of discourse that teachers too often foreclose on because of the prejudice about "expository writing." Mythic, imagistic, metaphorical writing does not say *less,* as the highest literary creations show.

Private ways of verbalizing often reflected in rapid note-taking may omit some parts of speech and much punctuation and let a few key words or ideas stand for other unverbalized material that clusters around these saliencies. This inchoate departure point for language use, far from encouraging muddy or solipsistic expression, serves as foil to bring out the real utility of all the parts of speech, the kinds of punctuation, complete sentences, and elaborated sentences, and all the resources of wide-ranging word choice and careful phrasing. Taking-for-granted is the enemy in this regard. Language usually comes across to youngsters as very arbitrary indeed or as picayune "rules." Only when they have to keep adjusting the language of their inner speech to accommodate actual audiences and purposes do the real reasons for language being as it is become clear to novice writers and the full resources of the language become available to them.

People learn to write by practice in conceptualizing and practice in conversing. If these are practiced copiously, realistically, and intelligently, writing itself becomes mere writing down on paper, self-dictation. How much a person actually has to practice with pen and paper depends on how much prior work has gone on with conceptualizing and oral verbalizing. Speaking and writing differ considerably, not least in the opportunity that writing affords to look back over what one has put down, react to it, and revise it. But revision starts much farther back in the inner life as one recapitulates and reformulates experience, reviews and re-states it in his own mind. *The inner speech that presents itself for revision into writing has been much determined in advance by this continual rumination.* Teaching methodology has to be based on this continuity of thought into speech and speech into writing. Progressive revisions at all stages mark this continuity; only *one* kind of revision occurs when someone revises his inner speech as he dictates it to himself. Opportunities for good teaching exist all along this continuity.

True, we learn to write by writing, by realistic practice of the target activity itself, but writing must be construed to begin with self-conversing and the outer conversing that feeds into it not only ideas and attitudes but also vocabulary, sentence structure, and even organization too (consider, for example, the differences in structure between gossip, scolding,

interrogation, how-to-do-it directions, etc.). Writing must have continual holistic interplay of many activities over a span of years—of observing and data-gathering, individualized reading, discussion, composition in other media than verbal, and opportunities at any time to practice the whole range of forms of writing practiced in the world beyond school. The subject matter of student writing needs to be material not previously interpreted or abstracted by others—his or her own eyewitnessing, memories, interviews, experiments, feelings, reflections, and reactions to reading. But central is the process of *expatiation* that takes the interplay of inner voices back out into the social world, where the give-and-take of minds and voices can lift each member beyond where he or she started. This requires enormously more small-group interaction than schools now foster—task talk, improvisation, and topic discussion. This global, long-range, and in-depth approach to writing I have already dealt with extensively—as theory in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse,* as teaching methodology in *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K–12,* and *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum,* and as school materials for students in *Interaction.*[7] To the extent that some teachers emphasize "oral-language development" and "pre-writing" and "integrated language arts," they are moving in this direction, but a rationale for teaching writing based on revision of inner speech would support such efforts at a time when schooling trends work against them.

Although I'm not one who believes that improved curriculum waits on further research findings, and in fact see this stand as often really a dodge or a stall, still certain especially germane research with learners may help teachers, I think. Encouraging, I find, are recent trends to look directly at what people do when they try to write—from elementary children (Donald Graves[8] and David Dirlam[9]) to secondary students (Janet Emig[10]) through college (Mina Shaughnessy,[11] Sondra Perl,[12] and Adela Karliner[13]) even to famous professional writers (as, for example, they talk

[7]James Moffett, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968); James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner, *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K–12* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, revised 1976); James Moffett, *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum,* Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1981; and James Moffett, senior author, *Interaction: A Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading Program* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

[8]Donald Graves, "An Examination of the Writing Process of Seven-Year-Old Children," *Research in the Teaching of English,* 9 (1975).

[9]David Dirlam, "The Changing Wisdoms in Children's Writing," unpublished talk delivered May 22, 1980, to the New York State Education Department Conference on Writing Education.

[10]Janet Emig, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth-Graders* (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1971).

[11]Mina Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for Teachers of Basic Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). She sets a good example of trying to account for the "errors" of student writing by getting into their minds and points of view as much as possible.

[12]Sondra Perl, "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers," *Research in the Teaching of English,* December 1979.

[13]Suzanne E. Jacobs and Adela B. Karliner, "Helping Writers to Think: The Effect of Speech Roles in Individual Conferences on the Quality of Thought in Student Writing," *College English,* January 1977.

about their methods and habits to interviewers in the *Paris Review*). The research of James Britton and colleagues in Britain (now being replicated in Australia) complements this American research.[14] The work of Graves and Karliner may illustrate also a felicitous teaching method which, quite independently of each other, they call "conferencing" and which consists of mid-composition dialogue between a writer and a coach about what the writer is trying to say. Comparisons between transcripts of this supportively groping dialogue with final versions of the compositions demonstrate improvement over first efforts and show again the value of socializing inner speech during writing.

The concept of inner speech will both support and benefit from another relevant research trend called the "psychobiology of writing," because the very nature of inner speech brings together neurophysiological functioning, linguistic structuring of thought, and transitions between personal and social expression. This includes much brain research, most outside the field of education, like the classic work of Wilder Penfield[15] and successors, and some that has moved from outside into education, like that with the hemispherical specialization of the brain[16] as well as the kind of psycholinguistic research that Courtney Cazden[17] summarizes for educators. For too long we have ransacked linguistic, rhetorical, and literary theory for paradigms or even just clues to the teaching of writing, but foremost we should look to the functioning of the human organism. To view writing as revision of inner speech is to see more clearly the way to go in both teaching methods and research procedures and to make this way reciprocal.

Some other advantages of teaching writing from inner speech regard therapy, art, and general self-development. The processes of psychotherapy and of writing both require maximum availability of information from all internal and external sources and maximum synthesizing of this firsthand and secondhand knowledge into a full, harmonious expression of individual experience. This calls for the removal of spells to which the person has not agreed and of which he is unconscious. Freud asked the patient to start talking about anything and just keep uttering as fluently, fully, and spontaneously as possible everything that came into his head—in other words, to attempt to verbalize aloud his stream of consciousness or externalize his inner speech. This technique presupposes that from the apparent chaos of all this disjointed rambling will emerge for analyst and patient an order, eventually "betrayed" by motifs, by sequencing, by

[14]J. Britton, T. Burgess, N. Martin, A. McLeod, and H. Rosen, *The Development of Writing Abilities, 11–18* (New York: Macmillan, 1975).

[15]Wilder Penfield, *The Mystery of the Mind: A Critical Study of Consciousness and the Human Brain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[16]A good account for the layman of hemispherical specialization is Howard Gardner, *The Shattered Mind* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1975).

[17]Courtney Cazden, *Child Language and Education* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

gradual filling in of the personal cosmology. Thus, if successful, the subject's cosmologizing processes, the idiosyncratic ways of structuring and symbolizing experience, stand more clearly revealed and presumably more amenable to deliberate change, if desired. The most important thing a writer needs to know is how he himself does think and verbalize and how he might.

Both writing and psychoanalytic procedure work with discourse to mediate between mind and society, considering society as introjected into the mind of a self that must in turn accommodate itself to that society while keeping its own integrity. More specifically, both tap inner speech to further the individual's dual goals of knowing himself and communicating with others. Regarding method, the critical parallel is that set and setting make enormous practical difference in the effectiveness with which the subject succeeds in getting command over inner speech. Just as the analyst's approach influences strongly what and how the patient will think when he free-associates (they say Jungian patients even start obediently dreaming mandalas), so the way a teacher "sets up the assignment" will influence crucially the focus, level, and selectivity of the student's inner speech. In fact, since writing will be some revision of inner speech, however the teacher conceives composition, it is wiser to create a set and setting that will acknowledge this at the outset and make it work best.

Not for a moment do I suggest that the teacher play psychiatrist. The therapeutic benefits from writing are natural fallout and nothing for a school teacher to strive for. They inhere in the very parallelism described here. Good therapy and composition aim at clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression. Precisely because it is not thought of as therapy and works toward another goal, writing can effect fine therapy sometimes. At any rate, self-awareness is the means in both cases, and this requires focusing attention on one's inner speech.

Artful simulation of inner speech occurs much more in literature than merely as a rare technique of modern fiction. In fact, prose interior monologue comes as a late representation of it. As stage soliloquy, it was a mainstay of Greek and Elizabethan drama. Classical Greek theater arrayed beautifully, as a matter of fact, the whole range of vocalization—from inner and outer monologue to staccato dialogue to the chorus, thus uttering individual inner life, exposition, interplay of personality types, and communal attitudes, the whole cycle of personal and social minds. The soliloquy endures today in the one stage convention of modern times that permits anything so "unrealistic" as voicing thoughts aloud to an audience—the musical, where song is the medium for self-verbalization ("If I Were a Rich Man," for example, from *Fiddler on the Roof*).

Song connects drama to the other great literary tradition of artful inner speech, which we find in much lyric poetry of both yesterday and to-

day, such as Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." (Note the titles, incidentally.) Although not so specific as to time, place, and character as Robert Browning's "Soliloquy on a Spanish Cloister," a considerable amount of lyric poetry sustains the outpouring of some soul whose setting and persona simply remain unstated and may or may not be those of the poet. The soul sings itself. This is why the more directly that literature gives it voice, the more lyrical—poetic and musical—becomes the language. Even prose writers like Joyce, Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf moved their language more into poetry the more they simulated inner speech. Joyce's final work, *Finnegan's Wake,* became one long polyglot poem as he attempted to give voice not merely to one person's stream of consciousness but to the race's collective unconscious. Perhaps the use of the aria for soliloquy in opera epitomizes this artful soul vocalization, bringing together as it does drama, poetry, and music.

The literature of inner speech can provide a powerful connection between what students read and what they write. I don't advocate "model writing" if that means fairly close imitation. This connection can, for the most part, operate implicitly. Let's say that, in a general way, as students are learning to capture their inner speech either by jotting down or by speaking spontaneously with partners (perhaps taping), and learning to work this material up for different audiences and purposes, they are also experiencing prose, poetry, drama, and song that simulate inner speech and make an art form of it. Much of this literature, interestingly enough, either was written for performance or readily lends itself to performance. This is so because inner speech moves, like the performing arts, moment by moment in time, so that, if "transcribed," it naturally becomes a script. So students can come to know this literature via a variety of means and media—silent reading, sight reading aloud with partners, giving a rehearsed reading, witnessing a performance live, listening to a recording of the text, or viewing a film or television performance. Thus a literature that might seem less accessible, because inner, turns out, in fact, to be very accessible indeed because inherently dramatic, performable.

This literature of inner speech will accomplish several very valuable services for students. In the first place, it validates this approach to writing at the same time it shows what to do with it. Through the literature closest to the chaos of "random subjectivity," it triumphs as public communication. Partly, it turns to advantage its apparent drawbacks—subjectivity and the moment-to-moment randomness. If the writer grasps the patterns of his own inner life well enough, chances are he will strike responsive chords in others, because patterns abstract experiences to a point where others can share. As shared medium, language makes this easier. And the moment-to-moment movement in time gives drama, vitality, freshness, and novelty of detail. This literature, then, demonstrates for

students in a lively way just what teachers would like to help their students learn—to revise inner speech into successful communication. The key is the artfulness, just what the undeveloped or naive learner lacks most, the knacks and skills, the profound tricks of the trade. This literature virtually *enacts* for students, before their very eyes, the process the teacher engages them in. It is unnecessary and unwise to point to strokes of genius and say, "That's what I want you to do too!" Immersion works best. Let them steep in this literature, and they will intuit technique. We are not trying to make little literati—in this respect the chips can fall where they may—but we are, rather, putting to work for us the best teacher in these matters, art. Trust it. Art is, after all, another version of composition, because both are cosmologizing, ordering.

Reciprocally, working at the art of converting one's own inner speech sensitizes students to literary techniques and textures as direct efforts to induce "literary appreciation" (postmortems and vivisections) never can do. For students unused to acknowledging and thinking about inner speech I recommend dealing with it first by improvising a skit in which a made-up character imagined in a definite setting and activity says aloud what he or she is thinking. Since this reverts to familiar play prattle, no one ever finds this activity strange. To get from local speech to paper, students can then either tape and transcribe their own improvised soliloquies or make up new ones on paper in the first place, that is, write down as a kind of script what their character is thinking. A further step at some point is to shift from an imaginary character to oneself and simply write down everything that comes into one's head for a certain length of time.

In revising their self-dictations, students should be reminded that these revisions may take any direction, not only toward drama, poetry, song, or prose but more specific directions within any of these toward lyricism, narrative, or reflection. Seeing these options becomes a real possibility when students start with the matrix itself from which stem all the adult examples they encounter. To see options as a writer facilitates enormously the appreciating of options made by the writers of the works one reads. Role playing the professional is the best way to understand what the professional is doing . . . and to learn his art. The proper relation between literature and composition is not for students to write about the reading but for them to make their own literature and read that of others as a fellow practitioner, however humble the state of their own art at the moment. Such a writing reader more readily attunes to tone, makes out the main point, differentiates voices and styles, follows threads of story or argument, and perceives motifs and patterns.

Most of all, keeping inner speech as the matrix of all writing keeps teaching of writing centered on authentic authorship, so that all these other benefits of writing accrue to the novice as well as to the professional. The novice needs, after all, not fewer but more kinds of motivation.

The student needs to enjoy and value the benefits of self-expression, communication, therapy, and art. The more evident are all these benefits the more easily can learners muster the strength it takes to stick at practice. Writing can be hard work, and until someone does enough of it to find for himself how well it pays off, he needs every enriching connection possible. Too specialized and isolated, writing becomes deadly indeed. Teachers would do well to situate it in those multiple contexts it deserves—of other arts and media, of related investigative disciplines, and of practical self-healing and self-development. The very complexity of writing invites and facilitates the exploitation of these numerous organic connections. Although not easy, this is easier than trying to teach writing within self-defeating conventions not derived from actual learning processes.

Finally, let me crystallize what I may merely have implied so far, that writing does not merely convey what one thinks, it shows what one *is* thinking and even helps to discover what, further, one *might be* thinking. That is, *if* practiced as real authoring, not disguised playback, writing *discovers* as much as it communicates, and this basic benefit must ever be held out and made clear to students. Writing is hauling in a long line from the depths to find out what things are strung on it. Sustained attention to inner speech reveals ideas one did not know one thought, unsuspected connections that illuminate both oneself and the outside objects of one's thought. No better motivation exists, because young people do want to find out what they and the world are like. But only if we construe writing at its maximum meaning will the discovery aspect of it become real for students. Instead of using writing to test other subjects, we can elevate it to where it will *teach* other subjects, for in *making sense* the writer is *making knowledge.* Certainly I'm not alone in arguing that writing should appear to students as a serious learning method itself to discover things about external subjects as well as oneself. Paradoxically, writing does not become an instrument of investigation and discovery of external things until it is acknowledged to be grounded in inner speech, because only when the individual brings some consciousness to the monitoring of the stream of experience does he start to become the master instead of the dupe of that awesome symbolic apparatus that, ill or well, creates his cosmos.

I want now to go beyond *discovery* of one's own mind to *control* of one's own mind, a much less familiar kind of learning that bears special affinity to writing but that will take us into another mental dimension.

Meditation as Control of Inner Speech

It's best to head off at the outset the common notion that meditation comes from another culture, that it is a practice only of strange and dangerous cults, or that it inculcates a particular religious doctrine. Meditation has always been and never ceased to be practiced in Western culture.

All cultures of all times, in fact, have included some forms of it. Though often connected with religions, meditation presupposes such serious intention and self-discipline that it has tended to thrive more outside the church than in, or, if in the church, in special groups well advanced beyond the mass membership. That is, spiritual discipline intended to alter consciousness was too much for most people, even in the ancient world, well before the rise of materialism. Thus each religion spun off an outrider group that became the custodian of the purest spiritual discipline—for Vedanta and Hinduism, yoga; for Mohammedanism, Sufism; for Buddhism, Zen; for Amerindians, shamanism; and for Christianity, the Gnostics, certain early Church Fathers, whose tradition survived in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and some medieval mystics. When Christ went into the wilderness to fast and meditate, as the Gospel relates, he was following ancient spiritual traditions that from all evidence seem to reach back to the Indus, Tigris/Euphrates, and Nile valleys, "pooling" in the Mediterranean/Balkan basins, and maybe even to stem from an earlier common source.

The modern meaning of meditate—"to turn over in the mind, reflect on"—represents a much more cerebral version of former practices, an idea of which we can gain from the etymology of the word. The Latin *meditari* crosses the words "to heal" in *medicari* and *mederi* via the Indo-European root *med-*, "measure, consider, reflect," and perhaps also in the Avestan (ancient Persian) word *vi-mad,* healer. The shaman and medicine man are one and the same. The association of meditation with healing is truly universal, however, and no doubt expressed what we call today psychosomatic medicine or holistic healing.

It seems clear that the meaning of meditation has changed as our culture has shifted to an emphasis on the new-brain, left-hemisphere, literate, technical, abstract modes of knowing. Consider this reference in Psalm XIX, 14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight." This idea that the heart, not the head, is the chief organ of knowledge has been cheapened in modern romanticism but is another serious cross-cultural belief from ancient times, ruling as strongly in yogic emphasis on waking the heart chakra (cardiac plexus or energy center) as in the Christian tradition of the "sacred heart." The Tibetan Rinpoche Thartang Tulkhu once said at a meditation workshop that "Meditation is non-conceptualization," that is, a bypassing of the whole cultural system for filtering reality based on logic and language.[18] My own yoga teacher, Swami Sivalingam, once said it was relaxation, by which he meant a total release of both muscles and thoughts right down practically to the cellular level of functioning.[19]

[18]Founder and head lhama of the Nyingma Tibetan Meditation Center in Berkeley, Ca., and author of many books published there.

[19]Swami Sivalingam, a life-long yogi from South India, is founder of the Prana Yoga Ashram, based in Berkeley with other centers around the world, and author of *Wings of Divine Wisdom,* published by the Ashram, 1977.

Surely, central to any definition of meditation as a spiritual practice would be some notion of transcending intellectual knowledge, which by itself will indeed proceed on the basis, as John Locke stated for the modern age, that "nothing is in the mind that was not in the senses." Sensory experience and hence memory provide grist for the intellectual mill to recombine by ratiocination into inferences. If intellect is the only source of knowledge, then Locke is right, as our epoch of culture tends to assume, although it somehow allows for, without understanding it, the role of intuition, usually chalked off (unscientifically!) to some swifter intellectual shortcutting. But the "higher knowledge" at which meditation aims, although no doubt related to our notion of intuition, cannot be merely relegated to the right hemisphere as just the way the (currently) nondominant half of our head works. It may well depend on unusual collaboration and harmonization of the two hemispheres, as scientific research with the electroencephalograms of meditators today is indicating,[20] but other universal traditions associate higher knowledge with the pineal gland, recently also become an object of serious scientific study,[21] taking us back to Descartes's belief that the pineal gland was the seat of the soul, but far before him to his own source in both the West and the East, according to which advanced meditation awakens dormant power in the pineal gland and opens connections between it, the pituitary gland, and cosmic energy or intelligence. All this suggests that deep meditation causes some "re-wiring" of the neurophysiological circuits and not merely loading up more heavily the existing circuits as conventional education tends to do.

The variety we are confronted with today represents not only alternative techniques preferred by individuals or cultures but also a gradation in depth owing to historical changes. Accordingly, meditation varies all the way from highly focused discursive reflection, close to the current meaning of the word, to rare mystic experiences of ecstasy ("being outside" oneself), but at this upper reach, meditation crosses over into what is called "contemplation." The meaning of *contemplari* was to gaze attentively, to observe (in both senses), but the literal meaning underlying this was, astonishingly, "to mark out an inaugural temple, "to set aside a place for religious observance or initiation, and, of course, the word "temple" for the sides of the head derives from the same source as the temple of contemplation!

But all these allusions to etymology and anatomy, useful as a suggestive framework for definition, cannot make clear the central notions of meditation so well as an account of some of the practices themselves,

[20]The *Brain/Mind Bulletin* of January 16, 1978, summarized such research by a team in Switzerland led by David Orme-Johnson and reported at the Ninth Annual Conference of Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology at Amsterdam.

[21]The Pineal, a research annual, Eden Medical Research, Inc., St. Albans, Vermont.

which will also move us closer to the reconsideration of writing methodology. My own practical definition of meditation states it as some control of inner speech ranging from merely *watching* it to *focusing* it to *suspending* it altogether. This range of meditative techniques suggests a rough developmental sequence of teaching methods relevant to writing. It starts in the pre-verbal and ends in the post-verbal and runs from uncontrolled to controlled mind.

Researchers at Harvard's Preschool Project reported that the children they observed whom adults described later, in school, as the "brightest, happiest, and most charming" had spent as much as 20 percent of their preschool time "staring" with absorption at some object or another, the largest amount of time the children had allotted to any single activity.[22] "Staring" is the small child's meditation and a chief way he or she learns. This affords direct knowledge, not yet mediated by discourse, and should be encouraged in school. Many bright thinkers and writers don't talk much in the early years but pay such rapt attention that when they do start talking they have a lot to say and know how to say it well. (Recall the etymological connection between gazing and contemplation.) Although it is wise, as we have claimed, to gain awareness of inner speech once it flourishes in oneself, it is unwise to push verbalization the way commercial greenhouses force growth in plants they are readying for the market: you can get a lot of blossoms fast for a short while, but the plant itself weakens and seldom if ever blooms again. The spontaneous gazing of the preschool years can easily continue as a pleasant school activity if children are furnished with engaging materials and encouraged to get deep into them individually, as some Montessori schools do. Besides coming to know things deeply this way, children may also want to gaze at simple positive images such as a star or candle flame.

For this and the following techniques a quiet location and a comfortable sitting position are essential. Although some Christian meditations stipulate kneeling, standing, or even walking, and the Tibetan Buddhist Chogyam Trungpa speaks of "meditation in action,"[23] most techniques require, certainly for the beginner, maximum quiet in the environment and stillness of the meditator. Sitting cross-legged on the floor or sitting on a chair (preferably without touching the back of the chair), one keeps the spine erect but not stiff, releases muscles, and slows and deepens breathing. The key to meditation is a *relaxed body* and an *alert awareness.*

A variation of gazing is visualization. The meditator closes his eyes and transfers the image inward to the middle of the forehead. Alternately gazing outward and visualizing inward teaches one to develop inner attention and imagination without forcing verbalization. Other pure visualization meditations can follow. Staying focused either in or out frees the

[22]Reported in Burton White, *The First Three Years of Life* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1975).
[23]Chogyam Trungpa, *Meditation in Action* (Berkeley, Ca.: Shambala Publications, 1969).

meditator a while from the excitations of the environment and lets him or her feel the strength of the self, the deeper self that abides at least somewhat independently of the outside. Writing presupposes just such inner strength. A writer of whatever age has to feel full of himself and have a degree of confidence, belief that he has something to say, faith in his will, and control of his attention. Gazing and visualizing, finally, develop *vision*—seeing and perceiving in both outer and inner ways prerequisite for writing. These first meditation techniques should help develop selfhood, control, and perception. From here on the techniques run from most discursive to least discursive.

The next simplest and easiest meditation technique consists of letting inner speech flow spontaneously but of *witnessing* it. Instead of floating along on this stream and being borne away from the center of the self, one sits on the bank, so to speak, and watches it flow by, staying separate from it, not trying to influence it, but above all not being "carried away" by it. The meditator centers within his inner sanctum, and focuses attention on the meditation object—in this case, his trains of thoughts. He watches and notes what flows by, as if he were a spectator at someone else's presentation, at a movie, and thus gains new knowledge of his thoughts and detachment from them.

Most of us most of the time do not know what is going on in our minds. The ancient dictum "know thyself" surely meant "know your own mind and the evanescent fluctuations of your temporal existence" as well as "know that thou art divine, despite these evanescent fluctuations." "Know your unconscious," says the psychoanalyst, eliciting the patient's inner speech until this speaker begins truly to hear himself—until both become aware of this incessant inner haranguing and dialoguing and detect the patterns and meaning of it. Swami Sivalingam constantly reminds his students to "watch your mind," in or out of meditation, and says "writing teaches you to watch your thoughts." This is in line with both Eastern traditions of "mindfulness" in keeping constant disciplined attention on the moment and Western traditions of "raising consciousness."

The "summoning" of thoughts about a subject that comes while writing depends on much prior awareness of thoughts that occur in inner speech when one is not writing. To appreciate the value of this mind-witnessing technique, you have to realize how much people normally think without knowing it and consequently how much of their thought they do not have access to at other times for writing or for any other purpose, although these thoughts are unconsciously influencing their behavior. It's important to distinguish the self-consciousness that this technique induces from the awkward self-entanglement associated with young people growing into and through adolescence. The latter sort of self-consciousness comes from unevenness of growth, unsureness of identity and role,

and acute concern about how *others* view oneself. Such confusion, in fact, naturally makes clear thinking harder, and posturing is a common resort, on or off paper. Witnessing will actually heal this sort of self-consciousness the homeopathic way, by redirecting it so that another form of the symptom cures the symptom. Periodically settling down and collecting oneself helps to center and balance the inner life while the insights gained from witnessing clarify problems and suggest how best to handle them.

The following techniques require and also develop increasing control of inner speech. Once able to still himself, turn inward, and witness his thoughts, the meditator may deliberately attempt to narrow down and focus his inner speech, to exert some control over it. Will comes more into play. Now, even to observe is to alter, so maintaining the witness distance and not getting "lost in thought" already assert some influence no doubt on the direction and content of inner speech. The present step consists, however, of setting a subject, holding the mind to it without distraction, focusing on it with special intensity, and developing it to an understanding not achievable by ordinary, relatively wayward reflection.

But this focusing differs from just intellectual concentration by a factor that only the most sensitive and original school teachers would ever allow for—the *state of consciousness* in which the meditator beams the topic. Passion, memory, imagination converge with intellect and intuition like rays of different colors coming together to create white light. Drawing on every faculty at once in a kind of all-out effort to penetrate the topic permits reinforcement effects like radiations from variant sources fitting their wave lengths and amplitudes together to make a super ray. Success owes much to set (mental and circumstantial) and setting (physical body and surroundings), to what we might call the assignment conditions. And success evinces itself not just as new ideas but as a more pervasive alteration of the meditator's inner and outer life, this global effect being the real goal rather than an intellectual breakthrough for its own sake.

Orthodox Buddhism and Christianity both have set forth in texts and teachings their methods for this very discursive sort of meditation and the themes they deem appropriate to focus on. Buddhist texts list, for example, such prescribed subjects as the four elements of earth, fire, air, and water; virtues or "stations of Brahma" such as compassion, friendliness, and evenmindedness; "repulsive things" such as skeletons and corpses in various states; and "formless states" of endless space, unlimited consciousness, and nothingness.[24] The death's head or "memento mori" has of course been a widespread Christian meditation object, the reminder of death or mortality, as sometimes depicted in medieval and Renaissance art. In both traditions the purpose may be to break attachment to the body, counter our belief in physical reality, and induce a deeper perspec-

[24]These themes are drawn from Edward Conze, *Buddhist Meditation* (London: George Allen and Unevin, 1956).

tive in which the invisible nature and purpose of human existence can be grasped. Meditating on one's greatest temptation—sex or wealth or power—has the goal of thinking it to death. The meditator may follow specific directions to break down the temptation into parts or aspects, break these down in turn, and thus proceed literally to "analyze the subject to pieces." If successful, the meditator should release himself from this temptation.

In contrast to this use of the destructive potentialities of discourse, some topical meditation is devotional and uses thought trains to lead into a beatific or compassionate state transcending the usual egoistic viewpoint with its limited personal feelings. Christians draw their subjects mostly from the life or sayings of Christ and meditate on one until it reaches its fullest meaning or until this focal intensity elevates feeling to finer levels. Church sermons often try to set a meditation example in how to discourse on a "text." Holding the mind to positive or transcendental topics or objects becomes a way of regulating state of mind and mood, or, as we say today, of altering the state of consciousness, in a beneficial way. Inasmuch as discursive meditation consists of a given subject and a stipulated procedure for focusing inner speech on that subject, it offers a remarkable analogy to school composition assignments, which we call, significantly, "themes," the same term by which church manuals commonly referred to meditation subjects.

Providing a splendid historical parallel between meditation and composition, Louis Martz developed during the 1950s the thesis that the traits our century came to recognize and admire in the so-called "metaphysical poets" of the seventeenth century derived rather directly from very popular meditation practices initiated by Saint Ignatius Loyola, spread by the Jesuits as part of the Counter-Reformation, and taken to heart by these poets. This Jesuitical meditation may best represent what I am calling discursive meditation, the sort most obviously related to writing as a finished product.

At the start of his exposition of this thesis in *The Poetry of Meditation,* Martz quotes Yeats and then summarizes his argument:

> Such thought—such thought have I that hold it tight
> Till meditation master all its parts,
> Nothing can stay my glance
> Until that glance run in the world's despite
>
> To where the damned have howled away their hearts,
> And where the blessed dance;
> Such thought, that in it bound
> I need no other thing,
> Wound in mind's wandering
> As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound.
>
> —William Butler Yeats, Oxford, Autumn 1920

"Day after day I have sat in my chair turning a symbol over in my mind, exploring all its details, defining and again defining its elements, testing my convictions and those of others by its unity, attempting to substitute particulars for an abstraction like that of algebra."

Such meditation is the subject of this study: intense, imaginative meditation that brings together the senses, the emotions, and the intellectual faculties of man; brings them together in a moment of dramatic, creative experience. One period when such meditation flourished coincides exactly with the flourishing of English religious poetry in the seventeenth century. There is, I believe, much more than mere coincidence here, for the qualities developed by the "art of meditation" (as Joseph Hall described it) are essentially the qualities that the twentieth century has admired in Donne, or Herbert, or Marvell. Those qualities, some thirty years ago, received their classic definition in the introduction to Grierson's anthology, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems,* and in Eliot's essay inspired by that volume. Developed in a series of influential books issued during the 1930s, the definition views Donne as the master and father of a new kind of English poetry, with these distinguishing marks: an acute self-consciousness that shows itself in minute analysis of moods and motives; a conversational tone and accent, expressed in language that is "as a rule simple and pure"; highly unconventional imagery, including the whole range of human experience, from theology to the commonest details of bed and board; an "intellectual, argumentative evolution" within each poem, a "strain of passionate paradoxical reasoning which knits the first line to the last" and which often results in "the elaboration of a figure of speech to the farthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it"; above all, including all, that "unification of sensibility" which could achieve "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling," and made it possible for Donne to feel his thought "as immediately as the odour of a rose. . . ."

The "metaphysical poets" may be seen, not as Donne and his school, but as a group of writers, widely different in temper and outlook, drawn together by resemblances that result, basically, from the common practice of certain methods of religious meditation. (W. B. Yeats, *A Vision* [New York, Macmillan, 1938], p. 301; T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," *Selected Essays, 1917–1932* [New York, Harcourt Brace, 1932], pp. 242, 245–248. *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century,* ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921], p. xxxiv.)[25]

The Jesuitical meditation structure that Martz says accounts for these traits of the poetry comprised (1) a prelude called the "composition of

[25]Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 1–2.

place," (2) a point-by-point analysis of the subject, and (3) a concluding "colloquy." Sometimes more preliminaries were recommended, and sometimes the number of analytic points or colloquies might be five, say, instead of three, but the main format was this trinity.[26] During the famous "composition of place" or "seeing the spot" the meditator tried to create as vividly as possible in his mind some scene or situation such as an incident from the life of Christ, the Judgment Day, the agonies of Hell, the miseries of his own life, the hour of death, or the glory and felicity of the kingdom of heaven. On this spot he brought to bear all the powers of his memory, imagination, and intelligence, to fill out the scene in fullest sensory detail and make it as real as if he were either there or it existed in him. An important specific suggestion of the manuals was to employ "similitudes" of various sorts to enable the meditator to feel the reality of the conjured moment and to relate it to his familiar world. Within this mental stage setting, virtually a controlled hallucination, the intellect made several distinct points by analyzing the scene or situation into components, aspects, causes, effects, and so on. Such points, stimulated by the dramatic and graphic intensity of "seeing the spot," not only deepened the meditator's spiritual understanding but brought on in turn a swelling of "affections" or feeling, a shift from head to heart, that the "colloquies" expressed. These seem to have been not so much dialogue as direct address or petition from the meditator to God, some other spirit or figure, other earthly creatures such as animals, or his own soul or self. In poetic rhetoric the equivalent, I assume, would be called "apostrophe." It was "familiar talke," as St. François de Sales called it, "colloquial," as we would say today.

Preliminaries included "premeditation," often the night before morning meditation, and prayers or petitions between the composition of place and the analysis. Like the Buddhist texts, the manuals enumerated appropriate topics, gave examples of meditations on these topics, and set forth the sequence of steps forming the structure of the whole meditation, frequently encouraging the meditator, however, to depart when spontaneity seemed right. No clear distinction was made between prayer and meditation, and the whole procedure was called "mental prayer" as well as "meditation." Finally, each of the three main steps corresponds to a human faculty and to a person of the Holy Trinity. "The minde is the image of God, in which are these three things, Memory, Understanding, and Will or Love. . . . By Memory, wee are like to the Father, by Understanding to the Sonne, by Will to the Holy Ghost."[27]

Martz relates both the general structure and specific traits of Jesuitical meditation to those of metaphysical poetry. He does not claim, however,

[26]Martz included as an appendix to his *The Meditative Poem: An Anthology of 17th Century Verse,* a typical manual of the time, Edward Dawson's "The Practical Methode of Meditation," 1614.
[27]*The Poetry of Meditation,* p. 36.

that the triune structure as an entirety informs more than a few of the poems, but rather that parts of the structure occur in many of the poems and that the typical traits singled out by Grierson and Eliot can be recognized as features of one or another of the three stages. The dramatic scenic openings, for example, for which metaphysical poetry is famous, the sudden, graphic beginnings, were generated, he says, from the poet's experience with the "composition of place, seeing the spot." The imagery drawn from commonplaces of everyday life as well as the daring comparisons, sometimes attenuated into "conceits," arose from this composition when accomplished by "similitude." The wit, the "passionate paradoxical reasoning," the "intellectual, argumentative evolution" derive from the middle, analytic section of the meditation *as set in motion by the graphic opening focus and the similitudes.* And the "colloquy" inspired the characteristic lapses into familiar address, simple and colloquial lines, conversational tone. One has simply to recall well-known poems of Donne or Herbert not only to see the more obvious thematic connections between the meditation and the poetry of the period but also to feel the truth of the thesis that as a mode of discourse the composition of Jesuitical meditations strongly influenced the composition of "metaphysical" poetry. The opening sestet of a holy sonnet by Donne:

> What if this present were the world's last night?
> Mark in my heart, O soul, where thou dost dwell,
> The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
> Whether his countenance can thee affright:
> Tears in his eyes quench the amazing light,
> Blood fills his frowns, which from his pierced head fell.

The "theme" here is both Judgment Day and the Crucifixion. The scene-setting for this meditation is graphically fixed before the mind. Then the argumentative octet, addressed to the soul in a kind of colloquy:

> And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,
> Which prayed forgiveness for his foes' fierce spite?
> No, no; but as in my idolatry
> I said to all my profane mistresses,
> Beauty, of pity, foulness only is
> A sign of rigor; so I say to thee:
> To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assigned;
> This beauteous form assumes a piteous mind.

The argument is that as beauty signifies only pity, and foulness only rigor, so the beauteous form of Christ can mean only that the poet-meditator will be forgiven.

Donne's "Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward" opens with a developed "similitude" that makes concrete the rather abstract subject, in ac-

cordance with meditation procedure when the focus is not on a clear scene or incident. Then Donne does settle on the image of himself journeying away from the scene of the crucifixion:

> Let man's soul be a sphere, and then in this
> The intelligence that moves, devotion is;
> And as the other spheres, by being grown
> Subject to foreign motion, lose their own,
> And being by others hurried every day
> Scarce in a year their natural form obey,
> Pleasure or business, so, our souls admit
> For their first mover, and are whirled by it.
> Hence is't that I am carried towards the west
> This day, when my soul's form bends towards the east.

Herbert's "Discipline" opens with a colloquy, which often was shifted around even in the meditations themselves:

> Throw away thy rod,
> Throw away thy wrath.
> Oh my God,
> Take the gentle path.

He opens "The Collar" abruptly and dramatically with a moment of rebellion from his own life:

> I struck the board and cried, No more!
> I will abroad.
> What? Shall I ever sigh and pine?
> My lines and life are free, free as the road. . . .

And closes, also in conversational style, but in colloquy with God, not himself:

> But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
> At every word,
> Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child!
> And I replied, My Lord.

Martz's argument may be most true for the example he cites who is both Jesuit and poet, Robert Southey, but who also wrote the least poetically. And Martz acknowledges that Renaissance meditation itself derived in turn at least partly from classical logic and rhetoric. Still, even all these ins and outs of inner and outer speech turning over into each other—treatises of classical rhetoric and logic, oral public sermons, manuals of meditation procedures influencing the inner speech of individuals at private devotionals, and these private thought practices returning outward as they influence the ways of writing poetry—all this relates ger-

manely to teaching writing. We have here in Martz's demonstration a relatively clear instance from history of efforts to control inner speech affecting writing. The fact that meditation had another goal than improving writing need not detract from the utility of applying meditation techniques to teaching it. And indeed, is the goal of writing so different from that of meditation?

The metaphysical poets had, like all serious writers, given themselves their own kind of composition course, drawing on those discursive paradigms from society that meant most to them. It was natural. Their utilization of current meditation practices to direct and organize their personal thoughts shows but another way that the individual may internalize outer speech into inner, society into mind. (Part of *Ulysses* is narrated in the question-and-answer form of catechism.) What did writers of other cultures utilize as paradigms for controlling inner speech? Did, for example, the initiation rites and teachings of the Eleusinian, Orphic, Brahmanic, and Odinic "mysteries" exert a comparable influence on the thinking and writing of their time? Manly Hall says that world mythologies are allegories of steps in these rites.[28] What rites and routines today are influencing how writers compose?

I can look upon this historical example as both negative and positive for the teaching of writing. For Donnes, Herberts, Vaughns, and Crashaws, it's all well and good to spell out what to think about and how to think about it. Like the others who made these manuals so popular, they chose freely to follow the meditation procedures. And, as original and creative minds, they knew how to utilize the contents and form for their own growth and self-expression. But *assign* such procedures? And to *school children?* Could it be possible that the American composition tradition of the five-paragraph "theme" preserves some residue of this very historical connection between church teaching and writing? Oh, not of course directly, because this country instituted at the outset the vaunted separation of church and state. But suppose the tradition lingers as a general exploitation of composition for moral inculcation. Look again at the 1978 CEEB topic, "We have met the enemy and he is us." (Confess, you sinner!) The composition is called a "theme" because subjects are essentially given, some allowance, of course, being necessary for individual variation in *which* prelisted topic to write on and in *which* points to make about this familiar topic. A theme is really variations on a theme. Then the tradition prescribes a structure, a sequence, for dealing with this topic, allowance again made for some leeway. Like the meditation structure, the five-paragraph organization calls for an introduction that conveys the theme in some arresting way, makes its three points analytically in the middle (one point per each of three paragraphs, though more of each are

[28]Manly Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* (Los Angeles: The Philosophical Research Society, 1978).

allowed if you want extra credit), then concludes with the uplifting peroration, the emotional dessert after the feast of reason. Some caricature helps us play devil's advocate here so that the dangers may emerge of applying such meditational techniques to the teaching of writing. And surely, at their worst, Renaissance meditation manuals must have locked onto the tendency any of us may have toward sterile exercises and petty piety. And all too easily can we imagine how the church and the society may by this means have reinserted into private minds its authoritative bugging device. The institution always parodies the individual—church, school system, or whatever.

These suggestive glimpses of discursive meditation cannot, of course, do justice to all of its possibilities either as variations of inner speech or as teaching measures. It can run a wide gamut from ordinary concentration or Wordsworthian "experience recollected in tranquillity" through many degrees of the Jesuitical "interior oratory and debate," as Martz once called it, to the edge of silence, into trance. Interestingly, to continue along the meditation scale I am delineating, we have to move backward in history, farther still away from the contemporaneous sense of meditation as merely turning things over in the rational mind. The extraordinary twentieth-century spiritual scholar and philosopher, Rudolph Steiner, has described the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance—Eckhart, Boehme, Paracelsus, Buso, Silesius, and others—in a way that makes clear that, despite a scientific bent or a scholastic training among some of them, their spiritual thinking began nearer, and carried them farther toward, esctatic transcendence of thought and language, the merging of the personal mind into cosmic "mind," or God, as they thought of it.[29] But these mystics themselves grew from an earlier tradition that affords an even sharper contrast with the meditation of the Counter-Reformation.

During the first few centuries of Christianity certain of the so-called "Desert Fathers" and "Church Fathers," especially in the Eastern or Byzantine church, practiced nondiscursive meditations, as they described and prescribed in writings collected in the Middle Ages and called *Philokalia.*[30] The central meditation of this Christian strain—called Hesychast and focused on the so-called "Jesus prayer of the heart"—will exemplify nondiscursive meditation. It still survives in certain Greek and Russian traditions, has been revived recently in the United States as part of the Charismatic Movement, and was attempted by Frannie in Salinger's story

[29]Rudolph Steiner, *Mystics of the Renaissance* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1911).

[30]*Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart,* trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer (London: Faber & Faber, 1951). For current material see George Maloney, *The Jesus Prayer* and Father David Geraets, *Jesus Beads* (Pecos, N.M.: Dove Publications, 1974 and 1969 respectively). These two books are published by the Benedictine Abbey at Pecos, which also publishes on the Charismatic Movement, in which the Abbey is active.

Frannie and Zooey.[31] The fact is that the meditation of silence has disappeared from view the more our culture has "advanced" into technological and discursive intricacies. Even in the church the mystic has seldom been long welcome. Far from enjoying papal blessing, practitioners of truly mystical meditation either inhibited their ultimate reaches to avoid breaking with the church, as Rudolph Steiner says, became so recluse as to make the whole matter academic, or did, in effect, break away. When his thought moves too far away from society (and the church is always part of society), the individual becomes either mystic or insane, depending on whether he yields his mind or simply loses it. From outside, the distinction blurs to the degree that for practical purposes it's all the same to the society, because the individual has got beyond its control. The individual may say he's now under God's control, but the church is not so sure. Once the agent in the ranks—internalized inner speech—has been silenced, church and society have been bypassed.

The Jesus prayer of the heart typifies the meditation method that consists of repeating over and over to oneself a *single* idea put in a *single* piece of speech until the focus of that idea and the incantation of that verbal sound induce trance. Consciousness is then altered beyond thought and speech. The "prayer" is, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me!" This is too simple—and too *religious.* But the holy fathers say, "Sit in your cell and this prayer will teach you everything." This quotation is from St. Simeon The New Theologian, who describes the meditation this way:

> Keep your mind there (in the heart), trying by every possible means to find the place where the heart is, in order that, having found it, your mind should constantly abide there. Wrestling thus, the mind will find the place of the heart. This happens when grace produces sweetness and warmth in prayer. From that moment onwards, from whatever side a thought may appear, the mind immediately chases it away, before it has had time to enter, and become a thought or an image, destroying it by Jesus' name, that is, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me![32]

But how can just saying something over and over reveal the highest truths about life? And what if you don't happen to believe in Jesus, or even God?

To answer that I will ask a third question: How does meditation differ from prayer? The astonishing healer, Edgar Cayce, answered that

[31]Salinger's Glass family had been reading *The Way of a Pilgrim* and *The Pilgrim Continues His Way,* trans. Helen Bacovcin (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Image, 1978).

[32]Quoted on p. 79 of *The Spiritual Instructions of Saint Seraphim of Sarov,* ed. Franklin Jones (San Francisco: Dawn Horse, 1973), which puts this tradition in relation to yoga and Oriental thought.

prayer is talking to God; meditation is listening to God.[33] Discourse versus silence. Among other things, people are transmitter/receiver sets, which means they are made both to transmit and to receive but not *at the same time.* If you want to listen, you have to switch the channel over to receiving and keep still. If God or Nature or Cosmic Intelligence is transmitting at the other end, and the individual is holding the line muttering and squawking and debating and petitioning, he is missing a lot! Missing perhaps what he most wants to know, for lack of which he must mutter, squawk, debate, and petition. But as everyone knows who has ever tried to stop thinking, it is very difficult indeed. The mind is a drunken monkey, say the yogis. But one way to cure the habit of ceaselessly speaking to ourselves is—homeopathically—to go ahead and speak to ourselves but to say the same thing over and over.

What Christians often call a prayer the Hindus call a *mantra,* a word or phrase intoned repeatedly in exactly the spirit the Christian Fathers did the Jesus prayer of the heart. When the priest tells the parishioner in need of strength to go say so many Hail Marys or Our Fathers, he is doing the same thing the guru does when he tells the disciple to "go say the mantra." Also like the Jesus prayer, a mantra usually refers to some aspect of divinity. Yogis call the repetition of a mantra *japa;* Westerners unfamiliar with their own spiritual traditions and not realizing the universality of meditation have associated it with the particular form of japa that the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi learned from his guru and introduced into the United States under the name of Transcendental Meditation. Hanging near me as I write is a sandalwood rosary that Swami Sivalingam brought me from India—called a *mala*—which is used to count the number of repetitions of a mantra without having to voice or subvocalize the counting, exactly as the nun "tells the beads" as she "prays." *Om,* sometimes spelled *aum,* the master mantra of Hinduism, has the same origin as the Christian *amen,* which evolved from an earlier word *aumen* and which was a mantra, not merely, as now, an affirmation of what preceded it.[34] Just as monks take vows of silence, the yogis practice *mauna,* the withholding of speech. Controlling outer speech aids the controlling of inner speech. It helps fulfill the aim of mantric meditation, to suspend ordinary thinking. Also parallel in both Eastern and Western spiritual traditions is the widespread practice of chanting or singing mantras aloud, alone or in groups. Much chanting or singing of hymns and prayers is really group recitation of mantras. The *kyrie eleison,* for example, which is Greek for "Lord, have mercy . . . ," fairly represents Christian choral literature as exemplary mantra. In fact, it would be proper to view virtually all West-

[33] *A Dictionary: Definitions and Comments from the Edgar Cayce Readings,* compiled by Gerald J. Cataldo (Virginia Beach, Va.: A.R.E. Press, 1973), p. 52.
[34] H. Spencer Lewis, "The Mystical Meaning of Amen," *The Rosicrucian Digest,* February 1976.

ern church services as modeling for the congregation the kinds of meditation—discursive in the sermon, mantric in the liturgy—that they may practice at home.

The adage "You become what you think" summarizes much spiritual lore. Christian, Caballistic, Buddhist, or Sufi, a true mantra must always symbolize the highest spiritual concepts, even though meaning may dissolve during repetition. The repeated word or phrase most often refers to an aspect of divinity by name or epithet. Thus in arguing that the teaching of Transcendental Meditation in American schools violated the principle separating church from state, the American Civil Liberties Union technically argued a sound case in those states where some teachers or schools had introduced TM into the classroom, because the TM mantras are usually Sanskrit names for different aspects of divinity. This presents no problem except legally; permitting one church's language and not those of other churches does violate the law. But in such cases the interpretation of the law should not make *any* practicing of meditation in schools illegal. The intent of the founding fathers, a very spiritual group, was not to hinder the growth of the soul! At any rate, the unbelievable power of the one-pointed meditation resulting from the mantric repetition makes it critical to keep mantras positive and elevated. But mantras need have no connection whatsoever with a church or religion. What makes them work fundamentally is *the suspension of inner speech* that they effect. Any mantra may accomplish this if the meditator succeeds in holding focus well enough, but in the meantime this tremendous concentration on a negative emblem could have the same bad effects that institutional, commercial, political, or other brainwashing can have.

Through hymns and chants the church attempts to use the internalization of social speech as a way of planting in the individual's mind both certain uplifting symbols and the internal speech habits that will, through repetition, remind him of the symbols. Unfortunately, less benevolent agencies of the society work the same way. Propaganda and advertising rely on repetition of group chants and rhythmic tunes to set revolving in the individual the shibboleths, slogans, and brand names they want perpetuated. Precisely because outer speech converts to inner speech, all spiritual traditions have come down hard on idle or loose speech, on giving voice to evil things, or, in modern idiom, "talking negatively." The reason is not superstition but good mental hygiene. The question arises, however, of what speech shall be repeated to suspend speech so the meditator can pay attention to the transpersonal or divine part of himself for a change. If a mantra is wrong, the cure could be worse than the disease. On the other hand, if children are picking up bad mantras from mass media and hate litanies around them, then perhaps school should try to help them take over more control of their inner speech.

To understand nondiscursive meditation we have to consider both what the mind is aimed at and what it is aimed from. The root meaning of "discourse" is "running to and fro." The meaning of "mystic" derives from *mystos,* "keeping silence," derived in turn from the Greek *myein,* "to keep closed" (of eyes and lips). The mantra substitutes for inner speech, which "runs to and fro," in usual discursive fashion and relatively so even in the focused devotional. During mantra repetition, inner speech continues, in a sense, but changes profoundly from *serial* thoughts, a *train* of thoughts, to a *point* of thought. The voice moves on in time, repeating the same words, but the mind becomes, as yogis say, "one-pointed." Repeating the mantra suspends or at least mitigates inner speech so that nonconceptual intuition can take over in an altered state of consciousness both more receptive and more perceptive. Not only does the idea or object contemplated reveal itself more deeply, but it is as if a whole new and finer attunement occurs, enabling the individual to detect signals from within and from the environment that the ordinary mind drowns out or filters out. Although some people may regard this as a kind of self-hypnosis, which would wrongly put meditation in some category of unconscious vulnerability to others, meditation succeeds actually to the extent that it *de*-hypnotizes the individual from the prior environmental conditioning and acculturation. (Hypnosis has no single brainwave pattern to define it, whereas meditation, like other definite states recognized by science, such as sleeping, dreaming, and waking, yields a distinctive electroencephalographic reading.)[35] This is why spiritual masters refer to the aim of meditation as "awakening" or "liberation."

Many modern people tend to be put off by talk of "higher knowledge" or "awakening" or "direct perception of reality." Let me put the matter this way. Pure light cannot itself really be seen, although it enables grosser things to be seen by illuminating them. Broken down into colors, however, light does manifest itself to normal human vision (although even then, of course, we are not seeing the color in the same sense that we see the object reflecting the color). Just as a prism breaks down light into colors, which we can perceive, so the ordinary verbal/conceptual mind breaks down reality in ways which it can manage, in the terms of its own medium. It translates reality, and because the ordinary mind undergoes such powerful influences from culture and language, it translates reality according to sociohistorical biases. The deepest nondiscursive meditation temporarily turns off that whole information system. Veils fall. Zen masters constantly compare this liberated consciousness to a perfectly still body of water that directly reflects reality, no longer distorting it with ruffles of egoistic feeling or ripplings of the social mind. Or, to use another comparison, the meditator attunes directly to nature

[35]Robert Keith Wallace, Herbert Benson, and Archie Wilson, "A Wakeful Hypometabolic Physiologic State," *American Journal of Physiology,* September 1971.

instead of just to human frequencies. But he may at any time switch back on the old information system, which is necessary, and he may tune at will either to the more limited, interpreted world of humankind or to the unrefracted sources themselves. I think that the religious trinity was a practical breakdown of primal unity, to facilitate understanding of what otherwise would be incomprehensible. Trinities like Father, Son, and Holy Ghost or Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva (or I, you, and it) make a concession to the limitations of conceptualized understanding, which must have parts, categories, and divisions and can do nothing with unity. This is why mystical means silent. But reintegration is essential, and this is why all cultures, as we will see, have developed some way of shifting attunement periodically from the social mediating of nature to nature itself. The breakdown is the process of becoming aware of all the possible divisions within unity. When the mind returns to unity without losing this awareness, this is direct knowledge, higher knowledge, or awakening.

All these meditation techniques may be summarized in the form of a scale progressing from nonverbal to verbal and then, within the verbal, from babble to silence. Put another way, it goes from external focus to internal focus and then, within the internal focus, from uncontrolled to controlled inner speech.

Nonverbal		GAZING—Rapt absorption in outer object, eyes open.
		VISUALIZING—Imagining of inner object, eyes closed.
Verbal	Uncontrolled	WITNESSING INNER SPEECH—Watching as bystander the inner stream.
		FOCUSING INNER SPEECH—Narrowing down to and developing a subject intensively with all faculties of mind and heart together.
	Controlled	SUSPENDING INNER SPEECH—Holding the mind on one point until it transcends discourse and culture and merges with cosmos, in trance.

If we think of gazing as the small child's "staring," then this progression comes full circle in the sense that it begins and ends in silence and rapture, but the circling rises rather than closes—spirals—because the child's gazing is spontaneous and unaware, whereas the meditator who has succeeded in suspending inner speech goes into conscious voluntary trance. Willed gazing or visualizing can be one means of suspending inner speech, since anything that holds the mind one-pointed will do. Also, we must imagine some gradations on this scale between any two adjacent

methods, as some witnessing when one is trying to visualize or trying to focus inner speech, or some focusing when one is trying to suspend inner speech. Likewise, success in intensive focusing of inner speech moves the meditator already into the state of altered consciousness that ultimately becomes ecstatic after inner speech yields completely to silence.[36]

The Grand Paradox

Much scientific experimentation has demonstrated that how people perceive the world even on the sensory level is governed by conceptualization and verbalization. People wearing upside-down glasses will start seeing rightside-up after a while because they *know* that's "the way it s'pozed to be." "Concept dominates percept," as the psychologists say, and the concept is verbal and social. Most thinking is mass thinking carried on in an illusion of privacy. We have so thoroughly learned our lessons, internalized the local cosmology, that because we think alone, the thought seems ours. Most of our "original" thoughts resemble the minute variations, imperceptible to outsiders, that Balinese dancers "improvise" within traditional dances. We live in a verbal-conceptual cage and think we live in the world, which reaches us ordinarily only by some dim translation relayed in changing versions through all the offices of our sensorial, memorial, emotional, and rational bureaucracy. God only knows *what* the truth is. The reason that such rumor-mongering passes for an efficient information system rests on our social dependency: The main thing is to fit in with how everyone else is thinking; we'll get around to the rest of reality when we have a free moment.

According to the extraordinary thesis of psychologist Julian Jaynes, however, until about 3,000 years ago people had no individual consciousness at all, certainly not inner speech as personal as we have described.[37] Rather, members of a culture heard and followed authoritative voices of "gods" of that culture that they hallucinated exactly as today's schizophrenics "hear" the voice of a parent, god or devil, or other introjected authority figure. It was not, he said, until cultures conflicted and the need for individual decision-making arose that consciousness replaced this earlier, "bicameral" or gods-attuned mind, which had "told" one what to do in novel situations not governed by hard and fast custom. Though I believe the date is much too recent, Jaynes's remarkable idea fits a number of reasonable assumptions such as the role of inner speech in guiding behavior, the social origin of inner speech, and the evolution of human be-

[36]For perhaps the best Western book on meditation see Claudio Naranjo and Robert Ornstein, *The Psychology of Meditation* (New York: Viking, 1971). This book benefits from the psychiatric, psychological, and neurophysiological background of the authors and from Naranjo's unusual understanding of Eastern teachings and his personal training in spiritual disciplines. See also Robert Keith Wallace and Herbert Benson, "The Physiology of Meditation," *Scientific American,* February 1972, but this and much other relevant research can be followed currently in *Brain/Mind Bulletin,* P.O. Box 42211, Los Angeles, Ca., 90042.

[37]Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

ings toward higher consciousness. Jaynes's brilliant and controversial work lends corroboration and perspective to the notion I have advanced of inner speech as social hypnosis and to my contention that the original and fundamental role of the arts was and is to counter the negative effects of inner speech.

Is, then, our rich inner life a lie? Are our "beautiful thoughts" only an illusion? No, these are real, but what mostly gives us the feeling of richness, beauty, and originality, I submit, owes, precisely, to our managing to escape a while from the cage. We would best regard fresh perception and original thinking as *un*thinking prior thoughts that were not so or were too partial, as *removing limitations that we previously "took for granted."* Most scientific breakthroughs push a dent out in the battered sphere of truth by undoing an epoch's "current abstractions," to use Alfred North Whitehead's phrase for the local cosmology.

Modern scientists, artists, and mathematicians have well recognized the limitations of ordinary language and have devised purer symbols to transcend them. But even in common parlance we all acknowledge the inadequacies of verbal-conceptual symbolism to do justice to those extremities of experience lying off the range of the workaday world. We are "struck speechless." "Words cannot express . . ." "I cannot tell you how . . ." The best and worst are "beyond words." Horror is "unspeakable," and bliss is "ineffable." Again, conceptual thought and speech serve the mid-range, socialized experience, and the modern intellectual who might regard as mere superstition the taboo on naming God would overlook the sagacity of this constant reminder that there is more in heaven and earth, as Hamlet says, than dreamt of in our "philosophy," that is, in discourse. The General Semanticist says, "The map is not the territory." Montaigne says, "What do I know?" like a true and, originally, positive skeptic. And nobody appreciates this caution better than today's theoretical physicist contemplating subatomic "particles" that are really processes, not objects, and black holes that tease him out of thought. The reminder is to stay as a small child, who keeps his antennae out and still feels awe and wonder because he hasn't yet put a grid over reality. To the charges against language that it limits, biases, and stereotypes perception according to cultural imperatives, we have to add a second charge, that in reducing reality to the terms of its own symbolism—and all symbols will do this—it devitalizes and negativises experience itself.

Discourse is divisive. Concepts are based on the analogies that the right hemisphere of the brain creates with its metaphorizing capacity. Naming is classifying, and classifying parcels reality into ticketed piles of "like" things (different for different cultures). These named things are then linked via the predicative and conjunctive logics of language to form chains of thought. The left, temporal hemisphere specializes in this chaining or logical sequencing. This entire collaboration of the two halves of the brain—one an analog computer and the other a digital computer—re-

quires and thrives on division. Although the right hemisphere, the analog computer, specializes in synthesizing wholes out of disparate items, these categories or constellations depend of course on selection and exclusion and therefore on dividing. It feeds these categories and constellations to the left hemisphere, which is divisive not only by the very nature of its chief function, to analyze or break down, but also by the fact of sequencing. The discrete items that the right hemisphere brings together as a class of similar things or a figure of interrelated things become available or "discrete" in the first place by virtue of some analytic breakdown instigated by the left hemisphere. And what are wholes as synthesized by the right become parts again when sequenced or serialized by the left into its logical enchainments. This circular processing by the new brain as an entirety generates and depends on division. This is why merely "teaching for the right hemisphere" does not go far enough. These brain functions account for the very nature of discourse—lexicon and syntax and "rules" of operation.

Hindu philosophy distinguishes two kinds of "mind," a lower called *manas,* which probably corresponds to the functions of the cerebrum just described, and a higher mind called *buddhi,* for which Western science or philosophy has no clear equivalent. Outside of mystical literature itself, the closest parallel to *manas* and *buddhi* in the West may be the distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena,* knowledge derived à la Locke from some logical permutation of the evidence of the senses versus knowledge perceived directly, without sensory data, by "intellectual intuition," a dictionary definition[38] of noumena that, significantly, has to collapse a major Western dichotomy to render the concept. This dichotomy between intellect and intuition invokes, in fact, a difference commonly used to distinguish the functions of the left and right brain hemispheres.

Noumenal knowledge may no doubt seem vague or vapid because instead of corresponding to a definite physiological site, like the cerebrum, it cannot be so located. Being unlocatable may indicate, precisely, the nature of being "higher": that is, noumen or buddhi may represent a superorganization of old and new brains, or a whole cerebro-spinal system, with the whole endocrine or glandular system, including activation of dormant functions in the pituitary and pineal glands. Past physiological research loses relevance at this point. The West's three leading brain researchers—Sherrington, Eccles, and Penfield—all concluded at the end of their careers that it is impossible to explain the mind by the brain. Meditation perhaps does not simply switch off the discursive and phenomenal system but switches on a larger system that subsumes and subjugates it.

From a different quarter comes one of the best statements of the negativity of inner speech. Across the tetralogy of his "conversations with

[38] *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (New York: Collins World, 1977), p. 1225.

Don Juan," Carlos Castaneda keeps reconceiving the nature and the terms of the spiritual disipline through which the Yaqui shaman is putting him and which he periodically reports. Never does he refer to meditation, and indeed Don Juan seems not to have taught it in any form, at least as we have discussed it here, but he teaches Castaneda a variety of techniques, mostly attentional, that result in *seeing,* supervision, by "stopping the world," as Castaneda earlier called the effect of these techniques. By the fourth book he has recast the terms of his cumulative experience and changed his summary of these techniques to "stopping the inner dialogue."

> "You think and talk too much. You must stop talking to yourself."
>
> "What do you mean?"
>
> "You talk to yourself too much. You're not unique at that. Every one of us does that. We carry on an internal talk. Think about it. Whenever you are alone, what do you do?"
>
> "I talk to myself."
>
> "What do you talk to yourself about?"
>
> "I don't know; anything, I suppose."
>
> "I'll tell you what we talk to ourselves about. We talk about our world. In fact we maintain our world with our internal talk."
>
> "How do we do that?"
>
> "Whenever we finish talking to ourselves the world is always as it should be. We renew it, we kindle it with life, we uphold it with our internal talk. Not only that, but we also choose our paths as we talk to ourselves. Thus we repeat the same choices over and over until the day we die, because we keep on repeating the same internal talk over and over until the day we die.
>
> "A warrior is aware of this and strives to stop his talking. . . ."[39]

Recapitulating all the techniques he has taught him over the years, Don Juan says, "Stopping the internal dialogue is, however, the key. . . . The rest of the activities are only props; all they do is accelerate the effect of stopping the internal dialogue."[40]

In astonishing accord with Don Juan, the classic yoga text, the *Yoga Sutras* (aphorisms) of Patanjali, written probably two or three centuries after Christ but codifying yogic practices and principles transmitted through two or three millennia before, states in a sutra at the very outset:

> Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of mind-stuff.
>
> —James Woods, the Harvard Oriental Series

[39]Carlos Castaneda, *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan* (New York: Simon and Schuster), p. 263.
[40]Carlos Castaneda, *Tales of Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 233.

Yoga is the suppression of the modifications of mind.

—Swami Hariharananda Aranya

Yoga is the control of thought waves in the mind.

—Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood[41]

I have quoted three translations of the same sutra to help the reader distill more surely for himself this key point. Also in common, Don Juan and Patanjali both say the mastery of stopping inner dialogue enables the successful practitioner to assume extraordinary physical and psychical powers (*siddhis*).

The reader can see already the paradox that we have been engaging with. If discourse is "running to and fro," why encourage it—especially if people desire composure? If the deepest and most desirable "meditation" is silence, "nonconceptualization," then why think? If suspending inner speech opens the gate to higher knowledge, who wants to *develop* inner speech? If language just distorts reality through a social lens, what good will it do to learn to write well? Doesn't successful verbal expression conflict with the very goal of expression—to speak the truth? Or is writing just a parlor game, to entertain and blandish, not to symbolize reality?

Certainly we have to face the negative aspects of speech, and even of conceptual thought itself. To do so, however, seems to undermine the main aims of schooling. If we are not trying to teach kids to think and to express themselves, then, hell's bells, what are we up to anyway? How can we old poetry-loving English teachers with our rich inner life and our great investments in language turn around and talk it down? Because, precisely, we have to say the truth, and the truth is that speech is double-edged, a curse and a blessing. (The root of *sacred* means both holy and cursed.)

The teaching of writing must rise to a new sophistication consonant with a new stage in human evolution. A paradox is literally a "double teaching," and that's exactly what we must do—teach two apparently contradictory things at once. Youngsters need to develop inner speech as fully as possible and at the same time learn to suspend it. They must talk through to silence. Of course, I can hear now the teacher who says, "Well, you don't know *my* kids. They come to me so inarticulate they can hardly talk at all—couldn't care less about language—are so brainwashed by TV they hardly have an inner life of their own—and here you talk of making them nonverbal and stopping their inner speech." But this state of affairs is all part of the paradox. Articulation is essential, and silence is golden indeed. Melville's male *ingénu* Billy Budd kills Claggett in a moment of

[41]These translations come from the three following sources, respectively: James Haughton Woods, *The Yoga-System of Patanjali*, the Harvard Oriental Series (Delhi, India: Motilal Barnarsidass, 1966); Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali* (Calcutta, India: Calcutta University Press, 1963); and Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1953).

helpless *stuttering* anger. He struck out because he could not speak out. The real goal is control and choice—exercise of will—so that people can avail themselves of discourse and still transcend it.

We can no longer regard schooling as only learning to verbalize. This is naive and irresponsible. It ignores the dangerous side of discourse, which if not balanced can be put into the service, like atomic energy, of the worst motives and phobias. Furthermore, it attunes us to humankind only, not to the whole of nature, leaving us with less than a half truth and therefore not even understanding humankind. ("Human voices wake us, and we drown.") Finally, the best way to teach how to fill out job applications is not to pound away at this as a "minimal criterion" but to help kids connect writing to the whole range of personal and social usage of discourse. Isolating a skill merely deprives it of the context and connections that would teach it. This is true of filling out job applications and of discourse itself. A paradox is not a real but an apparent contradiction. To develop and undo discourse at the same time would not be working against ourselves. Teaching both ways at once, double teaching, has its reason. People are at once both human and what we call divine, that is, they participate in the social subsystem which in turn participates in the total cosmic system. The new stage of evolution at which we are arriving demands education for conscious attunement to both. This means the ability to switch deliberately back and forth and know where one's mind is all the time.

Even if one rejects this dual aim and dual method, it is a practical fact that people who can suspend discourse think and speak better when they turn it back on. Thought straightens and deepens during the hiatus in accordance perhaps with William James's idea that we learn to swim in winter and ice skate in summer, that is, by lying fallow during the off season. Swami Sivalingam can switch with great ease from inner silence to very energetic speech. Given to long meditation all his life, still he thinks and verbalizes with tremendous speed and fluency, although seldom does he have the opportunity today to speak in his native Tamil. It is difficult to keep up with his thoughts and words even though he may be using a lately learned language. When Swami Sivalingam puts pen to paper he writes virtually without pause in a smooth transcription of inner flow. His own guru was the renowned Swami Sivananda, a Western-trained medical doctor turned yogi who wrote over 300 books, most on subtle and difficult subjects. Because their will is lined up behind their mind, and their thought is resolved, advanced meditators talk and write with a combination of depth and fluency that writing teachers should pay attention to and that demonstrates very convincingly how suspending inner speech benefits it.

Harder to believe perhaps is that this truth holds for so-called nonverbal or inarticulate people. Such people do in fact have a busy inner life, but (1) they are less conscious of it, and (2) they are talking to them-

selves in far more restricted, compulsive ways, telling themselves the same few things over and over, or rerunning in a mental twilight things others have said or shown them. Such people desperately need release from this narrow and uncontrolled repetition, which limits in turn what they can see, say, and do about things outside. So even for the "speechless" person the mind works better if it can be turned down or off from time to time.

Counterspell

It should be clear at this point, in the view developed here, that learning to write well is nothing less than learning to discourse well, and that, educationally, speaking up and shutting up have to be considered together. This means that we would do well not only to take a very broad view of what teaches writing but also to recognize that many of the best ways of teaching writing may be themselves ends as much as means. In any sensible set of humanistic values, meditation deserves a place in schools for its own sake, regardless of its value to writing, and writing might well be regarded as adjunct to meditation rather than the reverse. Aside from clerical maintenance that may be done by computers, what is writing for, anyway, if not to develop understanding? Let's keep this perspective in mind as we approach the question of what methodology may best act as counterspell to teach paradoxically.

First of all, *language* may be used as a counterspell to itself. The incantatory use of language, which is nondiscursive or only half discursive, resolves most directly the paradox of teaching and unteaching discourse at the same time. Rhythm, rhyme, repetition, nonsense, imagery, sheer sound and beat and vocal play—these take a minimum of meaning and charge it with a mental energy that works below the level of symbols and communication (and best appeals to the "nonverbal" or "inarticulate" person). Incantation makes words operate like music or dance or graphic arts. The tense emphasis school usually places on communication alone not only misses the proper entrance point into writing for less verbal people but also misses a key solution to the limitations of discourse, for the incantatory uses of language to undo language cast a counterspell.

Why does poetry always precede prose in the history of literature? Why is it considered the highest form of composition? Because in addition to, or beyond, any symbolization or conveying of meaning, it *summons power.* Vocal potency we no longer think of or think we believe in, although it works its effects on people today as much as ever, on writer as well as reader. Perhaps for the very reason that language is learned in an early state of susceptibility and internalizes the world, it evokes, invokes, conduces, induces, vibrates, and resonates. Yogis associate the energy center of the throat with those just above and below it along the cerebro-spinal chain, at the brain and heart, and regard this place of

speech not just as expressing thought and feeling but as a vibrational power source of great influence on what falls within its range. The allegory in Genesis of God *saying* things into existence means likewise that vocalization commands, exerts force like other energy but is directed by intelligence. Magic formulas of the "Open Sesame" sort popularize this ancient and universal conviction about language. "Logos" is translated as "word" in "In the beginning was the word," but an earlier meaning of "logos" than thought (logic) is "energy source of the solar system." In short, teachers will gain enormously from reinstating in school the primal and not merely primitive view of language as not just knowledge but also *power,* a vibratory force that acts on world as well as mind.

Schools need to emphasize, in parity with the symbolic uses of language to express ideas, the forms of language that transcend ideas and alter consciousness, induce trance. This means far more time devoted to song and poetry and to drama and fiction as rhythmic influences, not merely as thematic vehicles. And students should write more in these forms and *perform* such writings of others, not always read them silently. By organizing specialties like "creative drama" and "creative writing," schools have effectively placed them out of bounds for most students most of the time, whereas writing and performing of these art forms of language should occur constantly at all ages as a daily staple. Again, other educators and I have written much about this elsewhere—to no great avail so far because of state doctrines favoring lower goals falsely regarded as utilitarian.

Communicative discourse itself, however, can become a major way of teaching the paradox, in conjunction with silence. We have to think of "developing discourse" as not just throwing open the sluice gates, but of *channeling* discourse and especially *raising the quality* of it. The internalization process itself will accomplish this if well arranged in the classroom. Where can rich variety come from into the inner life? And how can the individual become aware of how he does think and talk and how he might think and talk? From hearing out the world. From listening to and reading or viewing a far broader spectrum of discourse than schools and parents have so far facilitated. Inner speech must be elaborated, refined, and enriched, and this takes a school revolution, for now both student activities and the type and timing of materials are so overcontrolled as to caricature the growth of inner speech. The model of inculcation, dearer perhaps to the public even than to the profession, must go for good. Far from working toward a counterspell, it merely deepens the original social hypnosis, which parents still asleep think they want for their children.

At any rate, in addition to quieting the mind as one method of awakening, we should employ what only appears to be the opposite—namely shaking up the mind, stimulating and activating it so that it *moves.* If the mind *either* holds still enough *or* moves enough it will shake off conditioning, for either liberates, and that is the key. Running to and fro, which

is compulsive, must change to running straight on and on along the individual's proper path. If inner speech keeps evolving, people eventually work through the world of words and on out the other side. The more we consciously employ language, the more detached we become from it and know what it can do and what it cannot do. Only after we have spoken up can we shut up. I suspect that when Shakespeare announced his early retirement through Prospero, the magus of his last play, *The Tempest,* he had talked his way into silence and made composition coincide with composure. Teachers don't aim to make little Shakespeares, but we should not miss the lesson that the best way to improve writing is to keep refining inner speech till it evaporates. (A playwright shows most clearly how to set up colloquies in which different aspects of oneself talk toward inner resolution.) A main effect of writing, anyway, is personal growth, which is the best guarantee of effective communication, whether in a job application or a poem. Writing should be taught unabashedly as a spiritual discipline.

But, of course, I'm suggesting that forms of meditation are the main counterspells. To connect meditation more directly with schooling, let's look again at the scale of meditation techniques sketched earlier. This array can serve to find the best meditation for a given writer and topic. The point on the scale closest to the finished composition lies near the middle, where we found the structured discourse of the Jesuits. But if fluency comes hard, maybe one should babble first, just witness the spontaneous production of ideas, words, and images. If depth is needed, perhaps one should aim for silence, try to get beyond what one has already heard and said and read about something and just focus on the subject nondiscursively—that is, just hold, centered in consciousness, some idea, emblem, or phrasing of the subject, sink deep in without trying to have thoughts about it; *then* the meditator could back up on the scale toward discourse and begin to permit trains of thoughts to build up about his subject. More generally, where on this scale, a teacher might ask, can a certain student find himself at the moment, given his verbal and nonverbal development so far?

Gazing, contemplating, may be done at any age as a way to know most fully some object of the material world. The famous biology professor Louis Agassiz, at Harvard, would send a student back repeatedly to look at a fish and describe it until the observer began to see *internal* features of it that he would normally not perceive. Let a learner visually lock into some object he or she has chosen either out of curiosity or deep involvement or as part of a project requiring further knowledge of the object. As a meditation, gazing slips the limits of conceptualization and enables one to see more and hence have more to say when back in the discursive mode.

Students can practice visualizing in connection with many imagina-

tive activities in school, including the already popular "guided fantasy" technique some teachers have adopted. Alone, the meditator imagines, with eyes closed, an inner picture at the "third eye" (Cyclopean) position in the middle of the forehead. Though common to probably all cultures, including Christian, the conjuring and holding of an image before the inner vision has been especially developed in Tibetan meditation, which draws on Buddhism and yoga, especially tantric yoga.[42] Tantra emphasizes transcending rather than shunning the senses as a means to spiritual development. This means that the aspirant subtilizes his sensory vision right onto a higher plane, partly by gazing at "art objects" especially made for this (as indeed was much Christian art) and then by introjecting these, eyes closed, and continuing to see the object. Sometimes one uses a visual construction, called a *yantra,* that is especially designed to be contemplated for its effect on consciousness, being a schema of cosmos as both unity and multiplicity. Carl Jung's mandalas, some Persian rug patterns, and Navajo sand paintings are yantras. Found or student-made yantras can serve to establish visualization as a general practice for imagining anything at will. Through visualization, incidentally, the old link between meditation and healing, buried, as I pointed out, in the etymology of the word, has come alive again in recent years: After Dr. Carl Simonton showed at a military hospital that some "terminal" cancer patients could reverse the disease by meditating and visualizing their cure in some graphic way of their own, Dr. Irving Oyle and many other physicians and therapists have begun incorporating this combination of techniques into general medical practice and into the current holistic health movement.[43]

Since television may well cause some atrophying of the visualizing faculty, as some of us educators have conjectured in regard, usually, to reading problems, visualization practice may improve both comprehension and composition at once. It played an important role in the "composition of place" and no doubt also in the production of "similitudes," which entail *seeing* similarities between points in one's subject and comparable concrete items.

The way in which the Jesuitical sort of discursive meditation might be applied to writing found a spokesman in Gordon Rohman over a decade ago.[44] Rohman lifted out of the ecclesiastical context the essential process that worked for meditators and writers of the seventeenth century and offered it to teachers as one pre-writing technique, leaving subject matter open and capturing the spirit rather than the letter of the

[42]Phillip Rawson, *The Art of Tantra* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1973).
[43]Carl Simonton et al., *Getting Well Again* (New York: J. P. Tarcher, 1978), and Irving Oyle, *The Healing Mind* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976).
[44]Gordon Rohman, "Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," *College Composition and Communication,* May 1965.

procedure. Doing the same thing in my own way, I would recommend that teachers coach students on how to get themselves into a meditative state of unusual absorption in a subject that interests them and then to visualize, imagine, feel, and think everything they can about that subject without at first concerning themselves about writing something down. After students have brought to bear on a subject all their faculties and thus focused intensively for a time their inner speech, then they would write down some version of these thoughts and proceed from there to work up a composition, presumably with mid-writing response from others and as much repetition of these inner and outer processes as is appropriate for student and subject. So the aim of discursive meditation is to channel and intensify inner speech in a state of heightened consciousness and self-communication that enables the writer to summon all he is capable of saying about the subject. Previous or concurrent practice in visualization will aid this much.

The yogic or Hesychast type of nondiscursive meditation does not have to be done with a mantra. Virtually any focal point that is powerful and positive for the meditator can serve well. When using mantras, students should make or choose their own. Making and discussing mantras should, in fact, become an important classroom activity. What is a good thing to keep saying to yourself? Are we already repeating, consciously or unconsciously to ourselves, certain key words or magic phrases? Are they good or bad for us? What ideas are "elevated" or spiritual? What aspects of language form make for good mantras? Word? Phrase? Sentence? Stanza? Work with mantras can become part of writing and performing song and poetry.

Alternatives to mantras are yantras and other tantra, that is, all arts and sensory avenues. Repetitive external sound may work well to help some individuals to stay one-pointed. Verbal or nonverbal, visual or auditory, physical or imaginary—these are good choices to have for individualizing. A phrase may be sung aloud or intoned within. A verbal person may start to still his inner chatter *only* by vocalizing something. A nonverbal person may achieve good focus best on an image. An unimaginative person may do well to transfer an image by alternately gazing and visualizing. A lonely person may release some anxious "running to and fro" by chanting with others.

Zen Buddhist practitioners of the meditation technique called za-zen focus on their normal breathing, which moves in time but stays the same in the sense that in even respiration one breath is like another. In this respect breath is like a mantra, and in some meditation practices, like the Hesychast, breathing and repetition of the mantra are coordinated. Za-zen emphasizes the here-and-now in contrast with conceptualization, which by its abstract nature necessarily refers out of the present. Holding attention on regular breathing is perfectly safe and may be an easy, fitting focus for many students, offering an alternative to senses.

Breath has a very close connection to thought, almost entirely unsuspected in our era, that I think science will soon begin to rediscover. Though za-zen is simply attending to breathing without altering it, some of the most powerful consciousness-altering exercises entail slowing, holding, or patterning the breath. *Pranayama,* or breath control, has for thousands of years been associated by yogis with mind control, in keeping with the etymological connection in all languages I have heard of between breath and spirit. Pranayama is the specialty of my own teacher, Swami Sivalingam, who has said that it is a "short-cut meditation." So powerful is breath control, in fact, that it can be dangerous without a teacher when carried beyond the more elementary exercises. Some day soon, educators should work out with wise specialists like Swami Sivalingam just which exercises can be safely done at which ages and with how much or how little monitoring by others.

Yogic texts say, "Quiet the breath, quiet the mind."[45] We can notice for ourselves how breath alters as certain emotion-laden thoughts or events occur to us. When the yogi says, "I am in your breath," he means he is following your thoughts and feelings in his concentration. But again, this insight about breath exists in our own heritage as well as in the East. The Christian mystics and fathers refer often enough to control of the breath to show that they too understood very well its connection with the mind and spirit. And it was undoubtedly part of pre-Christian spiritual discipline in the West. Any serious consideration of meditation must in one way or another deal with breathing, since it is likely that thought and breath each can be controlled from either end. I have myself experienced, in common with many others I have talked with, a natural slowing and even stopping of the breath during meditation, but as soon as I become aware of cessation, it starts again, responding directly to the thought. This accompanies a general slowing of metabolic processes, probably related biologically to hibernation processes, that scientific monitoring of meditation corroborates. This is very good for health and might well ease many school problems concerning excitation, emotion, attention, and energy. Aside from its indirect value to writing as an adjunct to meditation, breath control affects clear thinking and expression quite directly by steadying the mind. "Alternate breathing," through one nostril at a time, will, I think, soon be shown to stimulate the respective brain hemispheres through crossed-over neural connections between nostrils and hemispheres. It is nothing less than naive to continue to regard writing as only "mental," and if the trend toward the psychobiology of it succeeds in helping the teaching of writing, it will do so by treating discourse within the total functioning of the organism.

[45]For specific references both to connections between thought and breath and to general doctrines of Tibetan yogic techniques of enlightenment see W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation or the Method of Realizing Nirvana through Knowing the Mind,* Commentary by C. G. Jung (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).

Because meditation techniques are the closest to writing, I have featured them, but suspending inner speech as a means to greater knowledge and power underlies a prodigious array of activities of all cultures of all times that may suggest how teachers might go about finding and devising counterspells in lieu of or in league with meditation. The "techniques of ecstasy," as the scholar Mircea Eliade has called them,[46] may be physiological as well as psychological. Physical activity calling for totally external focus of attention or total bodily involvement can make inner speech virtually impossible. In writing about "sports highs" that athletes report, Michael Murphy has recently made this connection.[47] This explains why martial arts like judo and aikido are considered spiritual disciplines. (As my younger daughter said of her high school fencing class, "Your mind doesn't wander!") Think now of the real meaning of Shakers, Quakers, and Holy Rollers, who attempt to bring on this state by dancing of a sort, as do the Sufi Whirling Dervishes, whom I have seen do authentically their gradually accelerating revolving movement with eyes closed and to the accompaniment of chanting. All of the arts originally aimed at trance induction for purposes of enlightenment, as typified by some of the Greek Mysteries, the main source of Western drama, music, art, and dance to the extent that these did not derive more directly from the mysteries of earlier civilizations.

Chemical means were sometimes used in combination with sensorimotor activities. A distinguished scientist/scholar trio has recently asserted, for example, that the mysteries of Eleusis included ingestion of a psychotropic drug from a fungus similar to the peyote mushroom employed since ancient times in Meso-America for shedding the veil of ordinary reality.[48] Aldous Huxley's classic account of the effects of a similar psychotropic drug, "Opening the Doors of Perception," accords remarkably with this ancient chemical approach.[49] But fasting and breath control can also produce liberation from the ordinary mind or "highs" by affecting the chemistry of the brain without the need of ingesting drugs.

There are electrical as well as chemical means for suspending inner speech. Natural sleep produces slow brainwaves of long amplitude that cancel out the higher frequency crackling of thoughts, and electroshock therapy "works" in the brutal fashion it does by shooting through the nervous system a charge so strong that it likewise overwhelms the finer

[46]See Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Bollingen Series LXXVI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964). Eliade's remarkable scholarship combines with rare personal understanding to make him one of the most valuable contemporary explainers and presenters of spiritual disciplines. See also his *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Bollingen Series LVI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958).

[47]Michael Murphy and Rhea White, *The Psychic Side of Sports* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1978).

[48]R. Gordon Wasson, Carl A. P. Ruok, Albert Hoffmann, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

[49]Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

neural activities like thinking and literally shocks the patient right out of his mind. Epileptic attacks have been described by brain researcher Wilder Penfield as a kind of electrical storm, which, although they may end in a coma that parodies meditation trance, do seem to occur in people gifted with unusual insight, if not clairvoyance, like Dostoevski. Scientists have found that when psychics are performing their feats while wired to an electroencephalograph they yield unusual brain-wave patterns characterized by the very low frequencies called theta and delta associated with creativity and trance states. (The way most true psychics describe their concentration for a task indicates pretty clearly that they shut off inner speech.) In the case of one famous psychic, Matthew Manning, the electrical activity, which formed a pattern unrecognizable to twenty of the twenty-one scientists present, was traced to the old brain. Also, a common experience reported unexpectedly by some psychics polled for a survey was that they had received a severe electric shock before the age of ten.[50] Although teachers will not want to employ chemical or electrical means, of course, I think knowledge of these means helps teachers to gain insight into such behavior of students as attraction to drugs and into conditions of the body and the environment that in good and bad ways can suspend or reduce students' inner speech.

Other bodily activities are more directly relevant to teaching methods. Pleasantly monotonous craft movements like knitting and weaving or work activities like hauling a rope or wielding a pickaxe or shovel or thrusting seedlings into mud tend to "entrance" the ordinary mind and constitute a natural kind of meditation. Crafts, arts, sports, and many practical self-help activities hold inner speech in abeyance or mute it and thus help attune us beyond discursive thought. Since these possible counterspells should be curriculum candidates anyway, in keeping with the principle that worthy means are also worthy ends, they will offer opportunities to integrate writing with many other kinds of learning to which it is organically related by way of regulating and balancing one's own mind and body.

Let me summarize the value of regarding writing as revised inner speech and of applying meditation techniques to the teaching of writing. We may compare this approach to prevention in medicine as opposed to curing. If health is neglected for years, then at a certain point it appears there is nothing for it but to undergo surgery, consume drugs, or take some other drastic treatment. Good schooling would never let reading or writing get to the point that they are now, where most teaching is remedying, that is, resorting to very artificial "cures" for "weak vocabulary," "ineffective sentence structure," "poor organization," and "short, shallow papers." In effect, schools teach one year of beginning reading and writ-

[50]Matthew Manning, *The Link* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: 1974), pp. 20–26, part of an introduction by Peter Bander.

ing and eleven years of remedial reading and writing, because the approach is based on the mechanistic functioning of inorganic matter instead of on the realistic way that human beings learn to conceptualize and verbalize. Then severe problems of thinking and language arise which it seems only specialized drills will remedy. The causes of this colossal misdirection go well back into the whole culture, beyond the education profession itself, and form another story unto itself. The point here is that we can head off a myriad of learning problems by making the rise, growth, and self-control of inner speech a central focus in curriculum.

Some teachers teach meditation under other names or have initiated related activities. *The Centering Book* and its successor *The Second Centering Book,* pioneering works by education professors, contain many verbatim directions for leading youngsters in exercises of relaxation, concentration, breathing, visualizing, centering, and inner attention.[51] Other books are coming out all the time on the teaching of meditation to young people, usually based on experience in school or community settings. The most educational experimentation with meditation has occurred outside of school, however, in workshops for adults. In his *Intensive Journal* workshops Ira Progoff, a psychotherapist, teaches people how to use writing to discover what they really feel and think and want and are.[52] I have been greatly struck, as have some others, by the similarities between the kinds of writing and the climate for writing of my own approach for school teaching of language arts and Progoff's approach for adult therapy, both developed independently at about the same time. I am struck too that Progoff has also come to use meditation as a method of engaging people in writing.

But to teach meditation one must practice meditation. Though always surprised at how many teachers "come out of the closet" when I talk about meditation, the profession needs far more practitioners. Any interested person can start to meditate without joining an organization, paying money, or necessarily having a teacher, by practicing one of the techniques described in this article. To the extent that schools have the money, projects for changing teachers and the "facilitative behaviors" movement in staff development have tried to improve curriculum by arranging experiences in self-awareness and personal growth for the teachers. Since meditation naturally fulfills this aim, if staff development included it, then schools would simultaneously prepare teachers to improve writing while fostering their general adult growth.

[51]Gay Hendriks and Russel Wills, *The Centering Book* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975). Also, Gay Hendriks and T. Roberts, *The Second Centering Book: More Advanced Awareness Activities for Children, Parents, and Teachers* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977). For early rationale for introducing meditation into schools see *Phi Delta Kappan,* December 1972, which featured articles on Transcendental Meditation and education.

[52]Ira Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal* (New York: Dialogue House, 1975). For a useful incorporation of some of Progoff's practices into schools see Mark Hanson, *Sources* (Box 262, Lakeside, Ca. 92040: Interact).

Meditation techniques show how to witness one's own mind, direct one's own mind, and silence one's own mind. Teachers can give no greater gift to their students than to help them expand and master inner speech. Good writing will ensue, whereas fiddling with form alone will teach, if anything, only how to carpenter better the craziness of themselves and their world. Let's direct discourse toward its own self-transformation and self-transcendence. In doing so we will also accomplish better the traditional curriculum goals.

> Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less
> Withdraws into its happiness;
> The mind, that ocean where each kind
> Does straight its own resemblance find,
> Yet it creates, transcending these,
> Far other worlds and other seas,
> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade.
>
> From "The Garden," Andrew Marvell