

## The Other Side by Jim Burns

~ Excerpted from *At Home with the Inner Self*

*James Burns grew up in Squirrel Hill near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On occasion, Jim talked about his father's bouts with schizophrenia and manic depressiveness. At times, the abuse was so bad at home that he enjoyed any opportunity to get away from his father. His life-long situation was complicated from having only partial use of one arm, which was injured by a drunken doctor during birth. The result was that, for most of thirty years, he was in and out of mental institutions and the psychotherapy system. Jim's unusualness is that instead of succumbing to mental affliction, he continually pushed his thought and sensitivities to completely understand every aspect of the workings of the mind.*

*By age 16, Jim was meditating as a way of dealing with his circumstances and regularly having profound consciousness experiences. Without books or teachers, he walked the path alone, and the agony of his lifelong circumstances led to a profound enlightenment at a very early age. He speaks from this perspective of how to teach yourself to be your own teacher since this is what he knows.*



The source of all this world to me and to the extent which our structures allow us to understand it, is that there is an energy, of which the most physically understandable aspect is light. This energy is slowed down. When it is slowed down to an extent, there is time and space. In the condition beyond time and space, there is only a condition in, and not a condition to question in. Our problem is our lack of ability to accelerate our being to the absence of time, the absence of motion.

People who desire a mystic experience may actually be preventing it by thinking that the urgency they feel may be for that experience, when at that point in time it may be for something completely different. You have to find a way of knowing the hunger inside of you. If you don't find a way of satisfying the hunger, you will be hard pressed to pursue anything. You have to see where accidentally you have been making efforts against your own best interests.

In an extreme form of concentration, like in motorcycle racing, a person develops attention able to be focused on about fifteen different factors at once. All the while the person is also maintaining a single overriding frame of mind. If something breaks the concentration, he better get out in a hurry. Musicians in a band also achieve this state of concentration and hear every note that is being played. They may even be aware of the state of mind of each person they are playing with. No one can stay in this state for very long. Drugs make it impossible.

When I finally became successful at deep meditation, I came to a frame of mind that was identical to this type of stream consciousness. I had the ability to be on stream totally in all levels of capacity to perceive in any sense, from physical things right down to the most abstract level of comprehension. I don't know if this would be called Cosmic Consciousness because I don't know for certain what is meant by the term. I've only had this experience once. When I try to talk to someone about the thing, I'm strapped for a description. The only way I know how to describe it

is that, if you imagine your comprehension as a pinpoint in space, and from all directions around that point you are perceiving totally. It is the same function as the increased concentration in the motorcycle racer example, but about a thousand times more intense. It is being at the peak of the universe and surveying it all in comprehension.

Illumination is the opposite of the feeling of complete worthlessness. Everybody has known a time when they felt completely outcast, downtrodden, completely worthless and useless. The other extreme on that same line of experience is the feeling of being completely at one with yourself, being completely informed and capable of handling anything that you have to face, of being completely serene and beyond the capability of doubting your own capabilities and capacities. To understand this phenomenon, you can see that the concept of focus in calm consciousness is merely the focal point between internal drives and external fulfillments. In the one case where you are feeling utterly worthless, the lens of focus has fallen slack, is nothing but a pane of glass and cannot focus on anything of value either on the inside or the outside. At the other extreme, the lens is sharply focused and very clear, and able to pick up desires without any effort, and with no effort be able to find in the world the sources of fulfillment.

The most overwhelming experience I've had was the knowing of my Overself that occurred to me in my middle teens. It answered to a whole realm of my being that I had no suspicion even existed before the experience. Nothing in my Catholic education suggests that such a thing could happen to a person. I had to totally give up the sense of any personal being and take a chance that there was nothing there that would be destructive to me. Which I was able to do and did. It was a death from remorse, from failure. I literally died from it—the pressure was so great. It got me to the other side, and the minute I got there, my first question was "Did I fail?" My answer was, "You couldn't have failed if you tried to. You did a brilliant job. You went down like a valiant sailor." I haven't been bothered by failure again. I know it is a false concept. No one can fail. I feel this experience is what has carried me through the rest of my life. I know that this body will pass and I will return to that place.

The sense that first came to me was that of being free of the trap. It was a relief beyond expression here. There were different experiences in the same realm. To describe it, I can only point to the wonder of a child the night before Christmas, the inability to contain your desire to be there before you're there. Strangely, it is the simple experience of being there in the full realm of the things you experience there.

The question of returning came up and it was similar to that of my other experiences. The capacity to do generates the necessity to do. As soon as you have on the other side committed yourself, even by a slight suggestion to return, then the hunger to return is generated. In my experience, to be honest, this world is quite miserable. We are not all here. We are familiar with physical existence and accept it as being here. When I was on the other side, this life was just a sad, sad joke. I'm very unhappy with it.

You are rooted in this system. If you stop breathing while you're on the other side, you won't be back. It's as simple as that. I had a choice over this the first couple of times I went over. I had complete knowledge and there were no blind decisions. I knew exactly what was involved, but for some reason, I chose to come back. I was given the opportunity to knowingly choose.

The main reason for coming back was my attachment to people. I was so attached to the idea of my death generating a sense of loss in them. Come to the fork in the road, I'll go back and see. I didn't know what was going to happen. In one sense you have completely resolved all questions

over there. You come back out of a sense of duty, which is generated out of being here. It is not native to that condition. I was still alive here, so I still would have died here. Had I ceased living here, the sense of duty would have evaporated. It is only generic to this condition. When you are in that condition, you are true to it also. When you are on the fence and the life force and health is good, you tend to come back. You think you have a choice, you probably don't. What makes us want to come here to physical existence is a real question. All I can tell you is that we are incurable nebshts! I can remember with sane clarity one experience in this lifetime of being on the other side. It was very... all encompassing. I could talk about aspects of it for hours. It only contained about fourteen hours. It was an experience of our being to experience that has been uncommon to me, so I often return to it in my wondering. When I was there I was at peace. At first, to say that I couldn't believe it only suggests the force that it had. It was peace. Now I knew a man, now here's a switch, he had a scratch for every itch—and that was me. But I was there, so in time I believed it, remembering that the time experience on that side is totally different.

Once you've had this experience, you come back with one apparently unreduceable experience. You realize that all you are here, is made by being here, and it is to answer to this dimension alone. When you come to this experience, you will recoil in fear. If you are forced into it many times, you will come to a condition of being unfrightened by the unanswered. You come to a state where you accept the fact that this is the limit of your present capacity to know, and are not threatened by what you know is knowable, but not by you now.

I wouldn't object to success in the world if it wasn't at the cost of inner accomplishment. My answer is to know the Self. You see people chasing cars and status and money and all the rest of it, and the more they get the more they want, and there's no end to it. It means they have mislabeled their urges. They are looking in the wrong direction. What they don't know is that they want to understand their own inner workings. They are like children and look outside for internal answers.

A side of human nature has to be able to go out, work, and accomplish, I've been unable to do this. You can't be as one-sided as me and have a great deal of relief, although I have about as much relief as anyone, but on the other side of the fence, internally instead of externally. People are always at war within, but just don't know it. I'm different in that I've faced this war and had my day in the sun. Once you've had a day in the sun, your system will not accept any other answer. The things that satisfy me now—a simple room, a few pegs to hang my belongings on, would send most people living in the success mode into the depths of depression. To me it is being free, free from having to chase things.



Look for *At Home with the Inner Self* by Jim Burns at your favorite bookseller. Publication is slated for Spring 2011.