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**THE ART OF BREATHING:
AN EASY WAY TO BE IN CONTROL OF YOUR BREATH
BY
NANCY ZI**

“Just breathe naturally,” “take a deep breath,” “be conscious of your breathing” – these are some of the very familiar pieces of advice that have become quite fashionable, especially for therapists in many diverse fields. But what do they really mean? How does one actually go about “breathing” the way he/she is advised? What are the basic mechanics of an effective breath?

As a classical singer and a voice teacher for decades, I know that just talking about the breath is far from being sufficient. Singers and voice students need to know how to accomplish a controlled breath that will actually affect their voice perceivably and positively. They need to be taught the actual mechanics of their vocal instrument, which is a wind instrument, which relies on manipulated air for the controlled breath to function well or otherwise.

As a fervent practitioner of Chi Kung, I am convinced that a sound breathing technique is universal, intercultural, and timeless. A good breathing technique should support and reinforce any major discipline and skill that anyone wishes to undertake, and in no way should such a breathing technique contradict with any healthy undertaking.

What is Natural Breathing?

Breathing correctly is natural, but breathing naturally is not always correct.

What does it really mean to be doing something naturally? A person who is accustomed to walking pigeon toed feels very natural with the way he/she walks. A person who is accustomed to wearing a frown does it unknowingly. A habitual shallow breather inhales and exhales shallowly without hesitation. To these three people, they are doing their things naturally. Therefore, to suggest or insist that everyone should “just breathe naturally” can indeed be confusing and misleading.

What is a deep breath? Attempting to suck in as much air as you are able with all your might will not necessarily produce a “deep breath.”

To simply be conscious of your breathing doesn’t do much, unless you understand the how-to of correct, effective breathing, and have the understanding to differentiate between abdominal deep breathing and shallow chest breathing.

What is abdominal deep breathing? It is allowing your abdomen to participate in one of your most important activities – this act of breathing, which you perform every moment of your life.

To breathe correctly, you must think of your lungs as a relaxed container for air and the abdomen as the pump that draws air into the lungs.

The diaphragm is the sheet of muscle that separates the lung cavity from the abdominal cavity. When you inhale correctly, your lower circumference, which encompasses your lower abdomen, lower back and sides, should expand outward, causing your diaphragm to lower. This allows the lungs to elongate like an accordion held sideways,

drawing in air freely and deeply. Shallow breathers incorrectly pull in their stomachs and tighten their lower back muscles as they inhale, causing the diaphragm to push upward, resisting the current of inhaled air, and decreasing their lung capacity. Another type of shallow breather constantly hold in their abdomen, causing constant rigidity of the lower back, which often brings on lower back pain.

Exercise 1. Are you a shallow breather?

To find out if you are a shallow breather, try this simple test: put your palms against your lower abdomen, and blow out all the air. Now, take a big breath and monitor. If your abdomen expands on inhalation and air seems to flow in deeply to the pit of your stomach, you are on the right track. However, if your lower abdomen expands when you exhale, and compresses when you inhale, you are a shallow breather.

Physical posture and physical texture both greatly affect breathing. In other words, if you have perfect posture and are as stiff as a marble statue, proper breathing is not possible. We need to texture our bodies so that they are flexible, soft and supple. A good, relaxed posture brings about a more receptive container into which air can flow deeply and fully into the depth of our bodies, our center core. We know that inhaled air does not actually flow into our abdomens, but it is the sensation that counts.

Exercise 2. Correct Breathing

1. In a sitting position, all muscles, especially those of the legs, are more relaxed. In this position you can readily focus your attention on the abdominal muscles.
2. Sitting straight is important in order to form a right angle at the torso-buttocks junction. This position gives the lower abdominal area a maximum spread upward, which in turn allow greater breath capacity.
3. Sit up straight in a chair with your feet on the floor 6 to 7 inches apart. If the feet are too close together, the lower front abdominal muscle is restricted; if they are too far apart, the tailbone tends to stick out, resulting in a swayback that restricts the lower back muscles.
4. Place your hands against the lower abdominal wall with your palms inward, fingertips not quite meeting.
5. Place the tip of your tongue behind your bottom front teeth. Exhale through your mouth by blowing gently through slightly pursed lips to a slow count of 1-2-3-4-5. Begin the exhalation from the abdomen, simultaneously deflating the abdominal wall and adding inward pressure from the fingertips. On the sixth count, exert extra pressure to deflate the abdomen completely.
6. Place the tip of your tongue against the back of your top front teeth. Inhale through your nose as you create a yawning sensation in the back of the nose

and throat to a slow count of 1-2-3-4-5-6. At the same time, expand the lower abdominal wall outward. On the seventh count, give the lower abdominal wall an extra push outward with an emphatic intake of breath to reach maximum expansion.

7. Without pausing, repeat the exhale-inhale sequence three times.
8. If you have never attempted to control your breathing before, you may feel slightly dizzy at this time. Don't be alarmed. Just relax for a few minutes before going on to the next exercise. (This is Exercise-1A, the first of a course of progressive exercises, quoted from my book "The Art of Breathing.")

Breathing and the Core

Once you have learned to breathe correctly, the act of breathing can supply you with ample oxygen, as well as generate an inner vital energy (chi), which can be directed and channeled to any part of the body at will for healing and self-empowerment. Compressing and expanding our lower abdomen with every exhalation and inhalation stimulates our core, thereby nurturing a center for our mental and physical stability.

Chi Kung is an ancient Chinese discipline of utilizing the breath in coordination with appropriate movements and meditation to cultivate and harness chi energy for personal power and healing. In Chi Kung practice, "Chi" represents the very basic vital energy of mankind and the universe. Chi is vital to our wellbeing and for sustaining all human activities. Without chi, a person dies. In Chi Kung, the "dan-tien," which I frequently refer to as the "core," is the seat as well as the generator of chi energy.

Exercise 3. The Lotus

Imagine a large lotus blossom within your lower abdomen. As you inhale, the blossom gently and gradually opens, blossoming fully within. As you exhale, the lotus closes steadily, bringing in all its petals and becoming a bud once again. Visualize the movements of the petals as being controlled at the center of the bud and not by each petal individually.

Like energy, the core is an abstract entity. It is a sensation of vitality situated a few inches below the navel. The entire body is coordinated from this center of balance. Compare this to the hub of a wheel where all the spokes come together, balance, and coordinate as a whole. All our body's extremities and activities are coordinated and balanced at this energized supportive center. Our extremities can include any functional parts of our body such as our fingers our feet, and even our tongue. It is when these parts are mentally and cellularly connected to the core that they can function with ease and versatility. The tongue can be looked upon as the thermostat that measures tension in the body. If the tongue is tense, the body cannot relax, and visa versa. In fact, the condition of our tongue indicates the condition of our wellbeing. Chinese herbalists (doctors) begin diagnosing a patient by first inspecting his/her tongue.

Recently, at a workshop I presented for a Parkinson's disease support group, I worked with an elderly gentleman whose hands have been trembling constantly for more than a decade. By leading him to breathe deeply toward his core, then leading him to focus his mind on controlling his hands at the core, he was able to stop the tremor. Of course it wasn't a permanent cure. He will need to work at the technique I showed him to reap long term results. I asked him to compare controlling his hand in the way he would fly a kite. One does not fly a kite by getting up in the sky and pushing it around. It is more effective to control the kite at the other end of the string, which he is holding onto while standing on solid ground, thus manipulating it with remote energy. The many people in the room that evening loudly applauded his accomplishment.

At various other workshops I have presented, it wasn't infrequent that asthma sufferers spontaneously found relief as soon as they got the knack of abdominal breathing and were able to shift their attention of pumping for air with their lungs, to pumping with their abdomen. This shift of control results in relaxing the bronchial tubes, throat, clavicular and chest muscles, allowing air to flow more freely.

Empowered Breathing

In a nut shell breathing correctly and drawing energy and control from the core can produce amazing results. It will help you reduce tension, improve sleep and promote healing. It will improve your voice, energy level, mood, physical grace, coordination, and sense of wellbeing. It will enhance virtually any endeavor you pursue be it in singing, athletics, theater, yoga, meditation, and more.

According to the principle of Chi Kung, chi is directed by the mind as we breathe deeply. We can lead chi to any location in the body by leading our awareness to that spot, especially as we exhale. To experience leading your chi, try this very basic imagery.

Exercise 4. Leading Chi

1. Imagine a shiny copper penny at the back of your navel.
2. Gradually move the penny backward an inch or so, then 2-3 inches downward. At this core location, spin the penny slowly and watch it glow. Mentally cause the penny to move easily towards your right hip, then lead it down to your knee, then down further towards your ankle, then towards your toes. Feel your toes warming with chi energy. Leave that penny where it is, and relocate your mind behind your navel where you will mentally create another copper penny. Imagine the same movements with this one, leading it leftward and downward. Feel your left toes also warming up with chi.
3. Lead your mind back to the core location, and place your palm against your lower abdomen as you relaxed your entire body and mind.

We were all born with the natural instinct of breathing deeply. Watch a sleeping baby. Its stomach rises on inhalation and lowers on exhalation. As we go through life, we are influenced – by our peers, teachers, parents, even the media – to hold in our stomachs con-

stantly, causing us to become shallow breathers. Relearning what we used to do as babies is simple. One of the worst habits many people acquire is lifting their shoulders on inhalation. People routinely recommend taking a big breath and then they demonstrate it visually – by lifting their shoulders. Remember that when you breathe correctly, the diaphragm should lower, allowing the lungs to elongate. Lifting your shoulders has the opposite effect, raising the diaphragm just as you are initiating a breath. This pushes against the flow of inhaled air, making every inhalation more laborious, using unnecessary effort with every breath. The persistent straining of shoulder breathing often develops into chronic aches and pains in the shoulder, neck and back, which may spread to other parts of the body.

You may have observed great classical singers, wind instrumentalists, and other “professional breathers” who sometimes during performances seem to lift their shoulders as they take a big breath. But if you observe more closely, you will notice that they first fully fill their lungs from the bottom upward, then add more air, maximizing their lung capacity at the top.

Breathing and Pollution

Many people have concerns about breathing deeply in metropolitan areas and thus inhaling polluted air. Keep in mind that breathing involves both inhaling and exhaling. Knowing how to exhale fully enables us to eliminate any stagnant air that may have collected in our lungs.

Abdominal Breathing: the basic foundation for health

I firmly believe that this fundamental abdominal deep breathing technique must be mastered as a basic foundation for healthy human existence. It is especially important for those with plans to venture into specialized disciplines that require specialized breath manipulation: for instance, panting for rebirthing or during natural childbirth, temporary reversal of abdominal breathing for certain forms of Chi Kung regimen, and suspended breathing for certain physical or mental disciplines. Without being equipped with a firm fundamental breathing technique where one can reflexively switch back from where ever he/she had taken off to, breathing-wise, how precarious or even scary such an unpredictable situation can be.

Let's exaggerate and compare the above breathing matter to the necessity of knowing how to walk confidently before embarking on tap dancing, ballet, or the intricate footwork required for excellence in various sports or other physical performances. In spite of mastering specialized footwork, we obviously need to have the capability to revert instantaneously and reflexively, from dancing, jumping or whatever stance, back to walking as ordinary humans. Otherwise, we might end up stuck as jumping kangaroos, skipping birds, or waddling penguins without knowing how to switch back to the ordinary human mode of walking firmly on two feet.

We begin life with the first breath, and end with the last. All those breaths in between are up to us individually to enhance and make the most of. The way we breathe affects the wellbeing of every fiber in us, and everything we think or feel or do. We breathe more

than 20,000 times a day. If we can improve just a little with each breath, imagine the consequence this will have on this, our journey through life.

About the Author

Nancy Zi is the author of *The Art Of Breathing* book and video (Vivi Company). For more information, visit her Web site at <http://www.theartofbreathing.com>. *The Art of Breathing* was reviewed in *The Healing Breath: a Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*, Vol. 1, No. 3.

For more than thirty years, Nancy Zi gave voice lessons including intensive breathing techniques in her private studio as well as at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. It is her policy not to give private consultation on breathing exclusively on an one on one basis as she is neither a medical doctor nor a licensed therapist, taking into consideration that people with breathing problems may come from all walks of life and sometimes have precarious hidden physical afflictions. She does, however give breathing workshops in which her main aim is to instruct, encourage and help participants to become their own teacher on breathing. Her book *The Art of Breathing* and its companion video are effective tools and aid for working towards accomplishing individual endeavors whether they be in sports, singing, meditation, martial arts, healing, improving health, etc.

ACTING OUT AND INTEGRATING BY WILFRIED EHRMANN, PH.D.

Introduction

The term catharsis was used by Plato to describe the effects of psychedelic mystic rituals. In his book on poetics Aristotle gave the name “catharsis” to the crucial phase in Greek drama that led to the cleansing of feelings and thoughts. Freud took up this term in his early writings to show the necessity for acting out the repressed feelings created during traumatic childhood experiences. Later he gave up the technique of encouraging/facilitating dramatising or acting out as a means of therapy and went on to explore the interactive relationship of transference and countertransference and the world of inner fantasies. Some authors like Alice Miller strongly criticise this change of direction which Grof described as a shift towards more subtlety and superficiality (Grof, German, p. 276; English p. 224). Few psychoanalysts went back to early Freud. Most considered catharsis to be a form of avoidance. They judged it to be acting out, as opposed to working through deeply rooted neurotic patterns at a profound level, and so catharsis got a bad reputation.

Catharsis in Bodywork

The psychoanalytical dissident Wilhelm Reich (re)discovered body memories: traces of early trauma left behind in the form of bodily tension but hidden from consciousness by sophisticated defence mechanisms. His work concentrated on provoking tension and charge which eventually led to the discharge of the suppressed material in a cycle like that in Greek drama.

Gerda Boyesen, the famous Norwegian body therapist, describes these connections:

Psychological defence mechanisms help us to avoid the unpleasant feelings that come up in a vegetative release. We would do anything humanly possible to avoid sickness, trembling, diarrhoea and pains in the stomach. The main function of psychological defence mechanisms are, therefore, to impede vegetative release or its complete process. As soon as we suppress a feeling we also suppress the release: we stop the vegetative phenomena which come up with it. With regard to fear, these reactions are mostly stronger than the defence mechanism. Increased heart rate, hot or cold sweating, pains in the stomach – these are all manifestations of the vegetative branch of the nervous system which threaten us because they cause us to lose control. But without vegetative charge there can be no emotion. What happens, then, when there is conflict? A vegetative charge is built up without the possibility of discharge taking place: the ‘gestalt’ is incomplete on the vegetative level. The discharge is suppressed with the result

that a neurotic balance is created. For this reason, the therapist must first provoke the vegetative charge, i.e. permit its expression, in order to allow the natural shift from charge to discharge. In this way the emotional-vegetative cycle can be completed.” (Boyesen, 40, transl. by the author and editor).¹

There is no healing without expression – this is both Reich and Boyesen’s message and that of many areas of body therapy. “Garbage” has to be cleared out in order to get rid of unresolved emotional cycles and blocked energies. Following Reich’s concept of charge and discharge, there has to be an energetic release on the physiological level for healing to take place. Suppressed emotions are blocked charges and we have to experience them and act them out. And then they are gone. This is a concept that emphasises the release of unfinished business rather than the process of coming to terms with it through integration and acceptance.

Catharsis in Breathwork – For and Against

In the field of breathwork we find similar experiences to those in bodywork because the accelerated breath often brings up strong feelings and dramatic emotional outbursts. In holotropic breathwork as well as in early rebirthing, there was an emphasis on catharsis (cleansing). Later rebirthing developed subtler ways of breathing. In particular, Phil Laut and Jim Leonard transformed rebirthing into a more integrative technique and renamed it Vivation. This approach emphasises the acceptance of any feeling or sensation that comes up and teaches that energy should be contained and movements and emotional outbreaks avoided.

The German Vivation trainer Demian zur Strassen writes:

Many body therapies and some breath therapies are more or less strongly moulded by a position that favours catharsis. They assume that “negative feelings,” “ballast” or even “garbage” from the past really exist within ourselves. They suggest that we should “purify” ourselves from these feelings by yelling, letting go, or “by releasing them on the outbreath.” In brief, they suggest that we get rid of these feelings in a more effective way than before. Even if at first we find this viewpoint plausible, the basic pre-supposition of repression: the rejecting behaviour towards the (“negative”) feeling; persists in part and gets reinforced subliminally. ... This is why we can in fact gain some kind of temporarily relief through cathartic methods. We can also access suppressed feelings by their means. But we cannot fully develop our skill in integration through them.” (Strassen 1999, 60f, Transl. by the author and the editor.²)

¹ It has not been possible to find an English edition of this book. Strangely, it seems that nothing by Boyesen has yet been translated into English.

² This book has not been translated into English.

Strassen emphasises the necessity of integrating feelings by accepting them unconditionally. As long as we want to get rid of feelings, we do not become reconciled to our experiences. And what else do we want other than to get rid of something when we yell, scream or vomit during a session?

We can even make a habit of cathartic work. This reveals itself in our continually searching for “stuff” that we can scream out, with the result that we feel incomplete if, sometimes in a session we do not find anything, or go without our expected dramatic outburst.

The cathartic position imposes the view that “old garbage” must be cleared, out of necessity (to purify oneself) The “old garbage” that must be purified, and the fact that “garbage” can be found again and again is accordingly denigrated. There is, then, a level on which we question the degree of relief or even integration we have reached and rip ourselves off again.” (Strassen 1997, p. 88, translation by the author and the editor)

This view is supported by the findings of academic psychology with regard to the issue of whether or not anger should be acted out. It concludes that that catharsis in the case of anger does not really help to get rid of anger. Expressing rage increases the stimulation of the emotional parts of the brain and stimulates the internal anger reaction even more (cf. Goleman 1996, German, p. 89-90; English, p. 64-65).

According to this approach, cathartic action in therapy is counterproductive to emotional healing as it tends to open and enlarge wounds instead of closing them, and is even in danger of creating an habitual – if not an addictive – reaction pattern. The urge to get rid of all of our negativity binds us to that negativity and invites it back into our lives again and again.

The body psychotherapist George Downing describes working with catharsis during the early days of body therapy in this way:

Some of the more stable patients who were at ease with strong emotions seemed to get stuck in cathartic outbreaks. As a result their exploration of their emotions gradually somehow became stereotypic and artificial in the middle phase of their therapy. It was as if a certain ritual was expected of them and they took care that it took place at any price and in any form whatsoever. (Downing 74, transl. by the author and editor.³)

Do we have to throw out our inner enemies: our inner saboteurs, suppressers and aggressors, or should we make friends with them? This is the basic question on the issue of catharsis versus integration. The gap, however, may not be as deep as it seems. All practitioners and all writers are influenced by their personal experience. Therefore their inner preference is formed by what has helped them to grow and heal. This influences the way they choose to work as therapists and in consequence, creates the results they obtain with their clients.

Let us now examine the common ground. There is a large consent about the necessity for getting in contact with one’s feelings in therapy and becoming familiar with

³ It has not been possible to obtain the English translation of this book which is out of print.

them. Many people have difficulties in feeling their feelings or in correctly labelling what they feel. Others have difficulty with certain feelings while they have easy access to others. Still others have difficulties in controlling their feelings and are often overwhelmed by them, etc. In therapy, we often discover that our realm of feelings is composed of many layers; we start with feelings that are obvious and on the surface and we explore back to deeply rooted “core” feelings. There is no doubt that exploring these deeply rooted feelings is important for success in therapy. The question is which method should we choose to accomplish this.

What is the cathartic way ?

Catharsis, as we said, means not only to feel a feeling but also to express it physically. Catharsis, therefore, can be seen and/or heard: we can see someone crying, weeping, screaming, trembling etc. Catharsis also means deepening and intensifying emotional expression: to go from weeping to sobbing or from shouting to yelling, i.e. it means to go from a controlled to a less controlled state of consciousness. Cathartic work in therapy, then, means applying techniques which enhance progress towards uncontrolled emotional expression.

The practice of cathartic breathwork

What are the breathwork techniques that enable cathartic work?

1. The breath itself:

Accelerating and deepening the breath increases the flow of energy in the body. Simply charging the body with energy will, in many cases, bring up feelings and trigger a cathartic process without much interference from the therapist at all. Often it is enough to encourage the client to stay with the depth of the breath, i.e. to continue to breath deeply for this to occur. Sometimes the client can be advised to breathe in the belly or to breath through the mouth.

2. Encouragement to express feelings:

Sometimes a client comes close to deeper feelings but is scared to or embarrassed about expressing them. In this case, the therapist can help by verbally encouraging the client to express whatever s/he is feeling. The therapist can also suggest that the client produces a sound, or even him or herself produce the sound that corresponds to the emotion the client is feeling.

3. Suggesting body movements:

Especially when a client experiences difficulties in expressing anger, it can help the process if he/she is encouraged to express the feeling as bodily movements or postures, such as clenching fists, making faces, hitting or kicking the mattress, twisting the body etc.

4. Interventions by the therapist:

These are mainly bodywork techniques such as massage, applying pressure to certain areas of the body, or moving the client's body. When the client feels pain in a certain part of his/her body, the therapist can help to bring up the underlying feeling by carefully exerting pressure in this area. Similarly, stroking the forehead or other parts of the face, or the chest, can help to express sadness. Lifting the client's legs and pressing them, knees bent, towards the chest can bring **out/up** the energies of anger and resistance etc.

5. Environmental tools:

The most important tool in this area is music which is used especially in holotropic breathwork to take consciousness beyond its habitual control and provoke the emergence of repressed emotions.

Cathartic breathwork: When to apply it; when to avoid it?

In my view, cathartic breathwork has a valuable, if limited role in therapeutic breathwork. The criteria for its appropriate and sensible application can be derived from the training and experience of the therapist, including supervision, and in the situation and motivation of the client.

Cathartic work is a strong tool in the hands of a therapist. It can bring quick, and often astonishing results. This is why it has to be used with great care, and why, also, only therapists who have been well-trained and who have sufficient experience should use it. A therapist should only use it after careful reflection: careful reflection because of the trap of attributing to the therapist's own ingenuity the speedy results and breakthroughs that are larger in catharsis than in slow and unspectacular therapy. The client's immediate reactions provide the guideline along whose basis the techniques can be carefully applied. The client's resistance must be highly respected and explored before any attempt to go deeper into the emotional material. Resistance itself contains much important and interesting information about the Soul's experience and work.

Therapy, nevertheless, always involves a certain degree of challenge. Most clients come with well-established and protected comfort zones. On the one hand they want to transcend these, and on the other, to hold on to them as tightly as possible. The therapist has, therefore, to find a good balance between respecting the client's resistance and motivating the client to go beyond it. (One should also take into consideration that this balance is often influenced by subconscious forces in the patterns of interaction between the therapist and the client – transference and countertransference – an issue I do not want to go into here.⁴)

⁴ See my article 'Transference and Countertransference in Breathwork,' In *The Healing Breath*, Vol.1, No. 2. May 1999.

In which cases can cathartic breathwork be helpful?

Clients who lack activity, motivation and expressiveness generally react positively to cathartic work because they get access to feeling more aliveness and openness that way. These are often cases of manifest or hidden depression. Depression is frequently linked to suppressed anger. For these clients, to learn to incorporate their angry self physically can be a crucial step out of their self-destructive patterns. Indeed, most of these cases need some time to build up trust in the therapeutic situation and relationship before they dare to take the step into more intense forms of expression.

People who tend to put themselves down and have low self-esteem connected to difficulties in taking a stand in life and asserting themselves gain a great deal when they discover the explosiveness of their inner fire. These cases too have learned from an early age to suppress their anger. Discovering this energy connects them profoundly with their emotional power and lays a new basis for healthy self-esteem.

Then there are clients who have cut themselves off from feelings of sadness and grief because of experiences of separation and loss in the early phases of their lives. These people have adopted ways of living their lives in sobriety and restriction. Sometimes the suppressed pain is additionally protected by compulsive mechanisms. Breathwork can help to soften these defensive barriers and open the doorway to their underlying vulnerability. Tears, when they finally come, are often warmly welcomed by these clients as they get a feeling of returning home.

Sometimes, the suppression of feelings comes in the form of an “airy-fairy” spirituality. These people have lost contact with the ground and with that, contact with their body as well, often through painful childhood experiences in relationships. They have often developed unusual skills and openness in the transcendental or psychic realms in order not to feel what hurt them in the first place. The task of therapeutic work in these cases is to build a bridge from the spiritual to the physical world, and here breathwork can be a very valuable tool as this bridge can be experienced in every breath. In these cases too, there has to be a gradual approach to cathartic work, as these people often are judgmental about strong emotions because of their inner fears: they judge strong emotions to be unspiritual and may come to this judgement because they are afraid of the power of their own inner feelings.

Work on traumatic wounds needs special care and often requires a lengthy period of patient exploration on a verbal level, with perhaps the inclusion of visualisation exercises. When these clients have built up a feeling of safety within themselves as well as with the therapist, they are finally ready to open up to the repressed feelings stemming from the core situation that wounded them so deeply. This can help them not only to relive the original situation in a safe environment but also to fully experience all the emotions that were triggered at that time (cf. Grof, p. 278).

What was said about a unique incident of traumatization is also valuable for clients who suffer from early childhood disturbances that continued over time. They would need a long period of less intensive/non-intensive techniques including gentle forms of breathwork to rediscover their body with all its sensations and sensitivity. Gradually they can go deeper and, in cases where feelings were cut off, rediscover their emotions or, in cases where feelings were distorted, learn to identify and clarify their emotions through cathartic work.

Where to be cautious about cathartic breathwork

When I introduce clients to breathwork I usually let the breath do its own work in the beginning. I do not start with cathartic work until I can feel **AND SEE** the client's inner urge for expression. Signs for this urge can be: body movements, restlessness, cramps in certain parts of the body and finer changes in the expression of the face. When there is enough trust between the client and myself, and the client has a certain degree of experience with breathwork and in feeling bodily sensations, I sometimes suggest certain forms of introduction to cathartic work. When it is the right moment, clients go into stronger expression with trust and achieve good results.

Special care has to be taken with clients who have been traumatised early in their life (borderline), as I said above. Triggering deep feelings too early can be overwhelming for them (Downing, p. 74) and cause an overwhelmingly strong reaction. In severe cases it can even initiate psychosis (cf. Hilarion Petzold in Platta, p. 187). Sometimes people with a long history in different therapies come to breathwork hoping for the final breakthrough. When they tell their stories and speak about their high hopes regarding breathwork, we have to be especially careful and responsible and avoid the trap that lies in their high expectations which may trigger our vanity as therapists. We have to apply a high level of carefulness and mindfulness in handling these expectations.

As I said above, the therapist has to be attentive to the structure of the client's process in a holistic way. A client may have had important and helpful experiences through cathartic work and, therefore, have the expectation that a good session must be expressive, strong and loud. There are clients who lie down on the mattress and start to twist, shiver and tremble almost immediately and are in catharsis straight away. This can be a repetitive pattern which no longer helps the client to move on but rather keeps the process stuck. It can indicate a special form of avoidance and resistance for a deeper rooted issue which has to be uncovered in a different, and maybe gentler way.

There is another pitfall connected with cathartic work which is pointed out by George Downing in his critique of Wilhelm Reich. He writes about Reich's generalised concept of energy and says:

What, then, is the criterion for this deeper letting go? Depending on the attitude of the therapist, there are, in most cases, two possible solutions. The first, and most common solution is that emotional catharsis is considered as a sign that energy has been freed/liberated. The more intense the catharsis, the better. The belief is that the intensity of the emotional expression mirrors the growing flow of energy.

The second solution lies in considering the well-being of the client at the end of the session to be the proof of the resolution of energy blocks. The more pleasure and expansion the client experiences at this point, the deeper and more effectively the energy process has worked.

... Instead of catharsis, the feeling of satisfaction becomes the criterion for therapeutical success ... In the same way a pressure to produce satisfying experiences can lead to an alliance (between therapist and cli-

ent) which has the intention of avoiding other issues and processes – for instance frustration, ongoing grief, negative transference and so on. (Downing, p.374-375, translation by the author and the editor)

Catharsis: the rules

First of all, as a general rule, cathartic work requires a certain level of stability in the personality of the client. This is indicated both by the client's ability to keep his/her emotional life in sufficient equilibrium to be able to handle emotional life in a stable way, and also by his/her ability to cope well with daily life beyond the therapy room, which includes having a supportive network of friends. If I am not convinced that the client fulfils these conditions, and if I am not convinced that the client is stable enough, I do not suggest cathartic work.

Secondly, cathartic work requires on the part of the therapist a good framework of theory accompanied by the necessary supportive methods that facilitate integration and completion. Catharsis seen as one way to integration on deeper levels is no contradiction or competition to other approaches but rather is part of self-experience into which most of us and most of our clients should go from time to time, but where, nevertheless, we should not remain forever.

A Comment from Seth Bartlett

(Seth Bartlett is my former breathwork trainer and friend. This appendix is his letter commenting on my catharsis article. I am adding this to my article as it provides interesting points from practical breathwork. I have his permission to publish it. W. E.)

Hi Wilfried,

I read your article on catharsis with great interest. It seems to me there is no dichotomy between catharsis and integration when the therapist is tuned in to the needs and energy of the client. In my experience catharsis is not necessary in order to release the energy of a suppressed emotion once the client is able to be in the feeling. So I have found that acting out a feeling is useful only to help the person get into the feeling when this is not happening naturally, that is, allow themselves to fully feel it. Once a person is in a feeling, I believe that you can trust that the energy cycle of the feeling will complete itself naturally (integrate) all by itself with intervention by the therapist being unnecessary and superfluous.

If I learned anything from the Xanthiros experience (this was a group of people living in Vancouver and working with intense emotional catharsis in interactive group work. The leader of this group was Robert Augustus Masters – W. E.) it was that the price of any level of provocation is way too high. You lose trust which is ultimately what allows the whole process to work in the first place. People who use this approach are seduced by temporary short term openings, but my experience is that they do more harm than good.

The more experience I have, the less I tend to interfere with the natural opening process of my clients. I am teaching my clients how to do their own work, so trying to do it for them is counter-productive. So, when there are no feelings coming up, the session becomes a training in the process of connected breathing where we both end up spending time connecting with our inner core. I trust more than ever now the innate rhythm and timing of each individual. And I trust the connected breathing rhythm. I don't feel I can add much more without contaminating the process. If a person has opened energetically through the connected breathing and no emotions are being expressed, then I trust that the time is not yet ripe for deeper suppressions to surface, even though I may be certain that there is tons of suppressed material that the person needs to release.

There is one approach that I do use quite extensively, however, and that is role-playing. Relationship is so powerful in its ability to activate suppressed material. If people had a mature perspective on this we'd all be out of jobs. So what I do when I know that the person is being emotionally activated in a relationship is, once they have opened themselves

by breathing for 20 min. or so, I ask them to imagine that that person is standing in front of them and, once they can see them clearly, I ask them to tell them out loud honestly how they feel about what is happening in their relationship. I don't encourage them to cathart - only to express themselves authentically, but I don't try to discourage catharsis if it does occur. Rarely do people dramatize. But, if they are holding any feelings, almost invariably they let go into them and allow them to complete themselves. If nothing comes up, it's fine and I trust that the timing is not right yet.

To me, this is not intervention but rather using the real life situation that the person is in to facilitate the deeper release, and using the breathing and relaxation to open and make the release more gentle and easier to be with as it completes itself.

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All of the quotations were translated by the author and the editor from the German editions of these books where we have not been able to find the English editions.

About the Author

Wilfried Ehrmann, Ph.D., was trained as a breath-therapist by Leonard Orr and Seth Bartlett. He is a qualified psychotherapist trained in Rogerian counseling, Gestalt, energy and emotional work. In 1991 he founded and chairman of ATMAN, the Austrian Association for Integrative Breathwork and Rebirthing. He is the chief trainer in the ATMAN-trainings project for integrative breathwork, and the International Breathwork Foundation co-ordinator for Austria. Wilfried is the author of many articles on Breathwork.

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Seth Bartlett is breathwork trainer and founder of "Enlightenment 108." He lives, practices rebirthing and spiritual counseling, and teaches the skills and principles of the creative process in groups in Seattle, USA. He also makes music. Seth has published his first CD called "BOLO BOLO" (Sing Out Sing Out) which is of "unconventional" devotional music and chanting. It begins with an incredible jaikar at darshan with Babaji in Herakhan and then you hear Baba's voice welcoming you. Seth had a lot of fun doing the music and chanting. He can be contacted at seth@fidalgo.net.

SEXUAL ABUSE; MYTH, DREAM OR REALITY – A BREATHWORK CASE HISTORY¹

BY
JOY MANNÉ, PH.D.

1. Breathwork

The potential of Breathwork ranges from the development of awareness comparable to Gendlin's focussing,² through psychotherapy³ to shamanic altered states of consciousness and beyond: the Buddhist *Anapanasati Sutta*⁴ describes a method of Breathwork that leads to Enlightenment. Breathwork is basic in all kinds of bodywork (as the breath takes place in the body), and in techniques of relaxation, guided visualisation and hypnosis, whether the therapist using these techniques is aware of that or not, and whether or not that therapist is using the breath consciously and purposefully.

I call the kind of Breathwork I do 'Conscious Breathing Techniques.'⁵ I work in a structured way and I take it as my first task to help my clients to develop grounding and awareness skills and techniques. To be grounded means to be in the present, in touch with what is happening on a physical and mental level here and now. Unless a client is grounded and capable of awareness, understanding and integration will not happen and therefore therapy cannot take place.

Careful Breathwork is capable of outstanding results. Careless Breathwork has particular dangers in common with any other careless psychotherapy, and especially in common with careless hypnotherapy and other trance work, careless guided imagination, and careless use of suggestion, for all of these may be present in Breathwork – depending on how they are defined, and depending on the nature of the Breathwork session – and all of these have been abused by professional therapists of various denominations in cases of purported sexual abuse.⁶ One could argue that because the breath is of fundamental importance in techniques such as hypnotherapy, trance work, and guided visualisation and in the use of suggestion, and also in techniques that use association, careless hypnotherapy, trance work, guided visualisation, psychotherapy, and use of suggestion may also be aspects of careless breathwork used by therapists who, *through having no knowledge or understanding of breathwork*, do not really comprehend that they are in fact working with the breath, or what they are doing with it.

¹ Paper presented at the 2nd World Congress for Psychotherapy, Vienna, July 4-8th, 1999 whose theme was *Myth, Dream and Reality*. I thank Catherine Dowling for her perceptive and intelligent reading of this article and her numerous helpful suggestions. Any faults that remain are my responsibility.

² Gendlin, 1981.

³ Hendricks, Manné.

⁴ Majjhima Nikaya, III, Sutta 118, p. 82f; see Manné, 1997, 1999.

⁵ See Manne, 1997, Chapter 20.

⁶ Goldstein and Farmer (1993), Yapko (1994).

Whatever our therapeutic tool, we have to be especially careful where the client claims to have been sexually abused, or where the therapist imagines or supposes this, otherwise, we risk causing the invention of the abuse during the session as memory scientists like Loftus⁷ and social psychologists like Ofshe⁸ have so clearly demonstrated with regard to many hypnotherapists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists and others,⁹ although it must be said that the results from their own experiments are not universally accepted either by scientists or by the law courts.¹⁰

There is a contemporary issue concerning whether memories that were previously unavailable to consciousness but are regained through any form of therapy whatever are “false memories,” i.e. “memories” of events that never took place, or whether they are memories of actual events.¹¹ When these retrieved memories concern sexual abuse, this phenomenon has been given the name “False Memory Syndrome”¹² first by the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, and the press who have blown up and sensationalised the small number of cases that have occurred.¹³ The memories of the objects of the sexual abuse – most frequently women are the victims – are accused of remembering wrongly, while the memories of the subjects – most frequently men are the abusers – are, strangely, not put into question in the same way. This, then, is a contemporary question of myth, dream or reality.

2. The Client

Claire came to see me for Breathwork. Claire is tallish, very slender – but not anorexic, flat-chested, almost 27 but looking 19, virginal. A diagnosis based on the elements would be “lots of Air and not nearly enough Earth.” Claire is ethereal. Her voice comes from her sinuses and does not resonate in her body. In Breathwork terminology she is not grounded. I ask her if she eats. “Yes, one good meal each day.”

What does she want from her therapy with me? To get her memory back. She can’t remember her school days or her early life with her parents. Therefore, she thinks she has been sexually abused!

Claire has a responsible profession which she is enthusiastic about. She is between jobs when she starts her work with me, looking for a workplace with a different specialisation. She is in the middle of a transformation of energy and not sleeping. She is a Reiki master – Reiki is a form of hands-on healing with a fantastical myth, initiation rituals which can be very expensive, bought mastery, and magical symbols. Claire does not herself initiate people. Recently she had become interested in ancient Egypt. She believes she is a person with an important destiny.

⁷ Loftus, 1994.

⁸ Ofshe, 1994.

⁹ See also Goldstein & Farmer (1993), Yapko (1994).

¹⁰ See Orr, 1998, p. 86ff.

¹¹ See Sinason for an interesting collection of readings on this subject.

¹² See Adshead for a discussion of this terminology, Rose on “syndromitis,” and Conway on common assumptions on this issue.

¹³ Sinason, p. 4.

In her family, Claire says she came after the dog and even the dog was not interested in her unless no-one else was at home. She has a nice sense of humour. Her parents are cold, distant, and destructive about each other. They tell her she has a bad character, she's obstinate, she shuts herself away and they can't get through to her. She experiences her parents as indifferent towards her and feels that this indifference disempowered her. Her mother is authoritarian and her father subservient. She despises him for his weakness, and at the same time feels sorry for him. She sees her mother as surrounded by a wall of indifference and cannot get close to her. Her father was known as a healer in the area, but always refused to do healing work with her when she asked, telling her instead to do it for herself. She was the only person in the family that he refused. She has a brother two and a half years older with whom she has a difficult relationship. When she was very young, only eight years old, her parents often went off to participate in personal and spiritual growth groups leaving her alone with her brother for the weekend. Claire resented this. She left home at 23.

Claire has been in therapy and personal growth since she was thirteen or fourteen when she had Sophrology sessions.¹⁴ Her father had Castaneda's books, purportedly anthropological studies of a shaman called Don Juan, but also called shamanovels¹⁵ and she had read all of them by the time she was twenty. She is interested in crystals. When she was twenty-four she saw a psychiatrist for a year with the same goal as the one she brought to me: to get her memory back for her early years. The psychiatrist told her he suspected her father of incest. Now Claire wonders about it.

I told Claire that this was a very serious accusation, and was currently the rather facile explanation for everything that anyone complained of in almost all departments of the psychotherapy "industry," and that I did not work like that or go along with this trend. I explained that it was important for me and for her that we do not jump to conclusions, but explore her life experiences carefully to try to find out what really happened.

My question is: Has Claire been sexually abused? Is this myth, dream or reality?

3. Technique: Using Breathwork with Claire

A typical breathwork session comprises an interview in which the client tells how s/he is, what has happened since the last time, and what the issues are for the present session. The breathing session follows and this may or may not have a suggested theme. The breathing takes the client into a trance of concentration and may last from between forty-five minutes to an hour and a quarter. A period of discussion follows in which there is integration of what happened during the breathing session. The entire session takes about two hours. Clients usually come once a week, but sessions may be spread out over a longer period for financial or other reasons. Clients leave when they wish to, although some therapists make contracts for a certain number of sessions. It is unusual to formally "follow up" clients after they have left therapy. Breathwork is for people with Sufficient Available Functioning Adult Autonomy,¹⁶ people who choose to come to work on their development, and who are sufficiently self-responsible to choose when to leave it. Claire cer-

¹⁴ *Sophrology* is a catch-all of New Age techniques popular in the country Claire comes from.

¹⁵ See Noel, 1997.

¹⁶ Mowbray, 1995; Manné, 1999, p. 172, 181.

tainly has Sufficient Available Functioning Adult Autonomy: she has a responsible job, manages her money competently, manages her relationships with awareness of where she needs to develop, is systematically pursuing her self-development, and – most important of all – can put herself in question.

Breathwork can bring up memories of past lives,¹⁷ and other non-ordinary states of consciousness.¹⁸ I do not consider that it is my duty to judge whether these experiences reflect a scientifically unrefutable reality, but rather to try to understand their significance in the context of the life and problems of the client.¹⁹ On the other hand, accusations of sexual abuse have serious consequences: the accused may indeed go to prison. When these accusations are due to retrieved memory it is especially important that they are not simply accepted by the therapist, or – worse – suggested to the client (as Claire's psychiatrist suggested to her) but allowed space for exploration, consideration and integration, until the client can discern their foundation in reality for him/herself.

In the early sessions and for most of the period of therapy, it is only possible to do limited Breathwork with Claire. Breathwork brings one close to one's feelings, even the gentlest kind of Breathwork which is comparable to the first stage of Gendlin's focusing.²⁰ Claire is scared of her feelings and protects herself from them through talking. In our first session she tells me she believes she has an important destiny. Claire tries to approach who she is rationally: to construct an identity rationally and through her will, rather than to discover her identity through self-observation, awareness of feelings and emotions. She wants to decide who she is, rather than to discover it. Claire's enormous need to talk about herself is both a way of avoiding feelings, and also necessary. It is essential to her development and her method of learning about herself and I respect it.

With Claire sessions can only be one hour long and only include very short periods of Breathwork. That is all she can cope with. Even the most gentle Breathwork is very powerful and will bring up too much for Claire, which is why she instinctively avoids it. For financial reasons, we work fortnightly. Our sessions mainly consist of Claire talking, although I do insist on short periods of Breathwork aimed at gradually making her feel safer with what is happening in her body and with her feelings. I also use Breathwork to support techniques such as guided imagination. Claire is comfortable with this technique.

To give an idea of the kind of Breathwork session that characterised our work together, here is an account of my first session with Claire.

In the 1st session, I begin by eliciting basic information from Claire. Breathwork has a very direct approach to this. I usually ask what the client knows about her/his birth, the various family relationships, the psychotherapeutic and medical history, and what the client hopes to attain by means of our work together. In the first breathwork I do with Claire, my goal is to help her to get in touch with her body. In conformity to the first level of my graduated method of working, I give Claire the simple instruction, "Put your attention on your breathing and tell me what happens," adapting this for her by ask her especially to tell me what she feels in her body.

¹⁷ Manné, 1997, Chapter 20; Begg.

¹⁸ Taylor, 1994, 1995.

¹⁹ See also Casement, 1998.

²⁰ Gendlin, 1981:71ff.

Claire's feet vibrate, she's getting heavier and feels drawn downwards, there's warmth along her back bone which stops at her neck, and then she feels that she's leaving her body. This often happens to her when she's alone, and she does not let herself go as she's scared she cannot get back. She now feels that the left and right parts of her body are separated. Suddenly she covers her face and cries, remembering the terrors of her childhood and adolescence, and her tendency to imagine scenes of rape before falling asleep.

Virginia Beane Rutter, a Jungian analyst, says:

When male forces reign in a woman's psyche, her dreams are preoccupied with male figures who are either threatening, violent, and annoying or powerful, charismatic, and helpful. Rape, assault, burglary, machines, and nuclear war are prevalent themes. ... The woman and other female figures appear briefly and tangentially. They are powerless, subdued, in awe, or at best, on the defensive in relation to the male figures. The woman is either terrified of, dependent on, or identified with the internal and external men in her life. This complete preoccupation with maleness is more pronounced in women who have experienced male violence toward the feminine as children, either physical or emotional, in conjunction with mothers who were identified with the masculine or unable to embody the feminine themselves. (Rutter, 1993:17f)

We will see many other instances where male forces and themes of rape and assault reign in Claire's psyche.

In this first session, there has been some grounding when Claire came into her body, and lack of grounding when she went out of it. This can be seen as some form of splitting, as clearly is the separation of left and right parts of the body. Many people see splitting as a sign of sexual abuse. Splitting is not quite the same as multiple personality disorder (MPD) as the client is not claiming to be a number of different people. However, I think about splitting as Katherine Mair does about MPD, now called 'disassociative identity disorder' (DID). She says,

... people with multiple personalities have, throughout history, varied so remarkably both in their numbers and in the stories that they tell. They seem to be like chameleons, reflecting the preoccupations of the age.

In the past they have been thought to demonstrate reincarnation, survival after death and telepathy. In recent years, when there has been justified concern about child sexual abuse, they have been said to show us further horrifying evidence of its prevalence and extreme nature. (Mair, 1999:79)

Someone like Claire, sensitive, ethereal, mediumistic, interested in the psychic, and with an insecure sense of self is very likely to "reflect the preoccupations of our age" until she finds her own identity and can deal with her own individual, personal problems.

4. The Development of Claire's Process

Two contexts take precedence in this report. They are birth trauma, and accusations of sexual abuse. Irving has pointed out that birth traumas and sexual abuse traumas have common symptomatology, feelings and life patterns.²¹

Sessions reveal the following information:

In **session 2**, Claire starts by complaining that in adolescence and still today she is unable to test her power against her mother. I wish now, with all the wisdom of hindsight, that I'd asked Claire to specify what exactly she meant. At the time I thought I had understood, and some aspects certainly come out in the sessions. Now, however, I would prefer her precise definition. In this session Claire discovers that she herself is unwilling to approach her mother. **Session 3** reveals Claire's problems in relating to her new work group. The themes of separation pain and the feeling of difference develop in the **4th session**.

Claire went to a lecture on the symbolism of the birth trauma²² before our **5th session**. She tells me her birth was induced because she was two weeks late. She feels dispossessed, deprived. She needs to take her time. She had no time to prepare herself for life. Often she finds herself faced with a fait accompli and just has to adapt herself to it. The result of this is that others made choices for her and she had to adapt herself to survive. In her family she is a victim. Claire cannot approach her birth through Breathwork. The emotions are too deep. We talk about her voice. It is high and comes from her sinuses. Her throat is often closed. She can't scream and feels that she is suffocating. Just as she couldn't be born on time, she cannot wake up in the mornings.

In her **6th session** Claire tells me about family problems four years ago (the period that she was working with the psychiatrist) when she indirectly accused her father of incest. Now, she feels accused by her family. Her brother wants them all to go to family therapy. Claire suspects her father of touching her inappropriately and of penetration. She has feelings of rejection and disgust in front of her parents and blames them for her terrors and demons. In the Breathwork, she says, "I cannot get control of the situation .. my body, my intestines ..colic.. I want to roll into a ball." I encourage her to follow her body language. She folds up with her head on her knees. I ask what words come out in that position? "Help!" She is five years old, afraid and wants to cry. "Who was the last person you saw before you took up this position?" "A man." "Someone you know?" "No." Then she tells a past life story in which her mother sells her to a man. She fights and flees and hides in a forest behind the house. She is still there. Her mother sold all her children to that man who turned them into prostitutes. The man is her present mother, and the mother in that life is her present life father. The man finds her in the forest and rapes her to show who is the more powerful. Afterwards she tells me that this memory had come back to her in 1995 – three years before our work together; I do not know under what conditions or through which kind of therapy, and I am surprised that an already known about experience can come back with so much affect. Claire tells that she reincarnated with her parents in order to forgive them. In this life her power struggle is with her mother. Her father is passive and powerless. "I'd like to shake my father so that he starts to exist and ceases

²¹ 1997, p. 215.

²² For Breathwork literature on this problem see Orr & Ray (1983), Leonard & Laut (1983), Minett (1994); for other literature see Janus (1997), Chamberlain (1998).

to be dependent. Dependence is aberrant.” Claire is in despair because she cannot make her father want to develop and grow, a task which had been given to her by her father’s guardian angel.

It does not deny the truth of Claire’s past life memories if we also respect their meaning and symbolism in her present life. This account can be taken to describe her present day conflicts and her power struggle with her parents. Her father (then mother) sells her and her siblings; her mother (then father) buys her and her siblings to turn them into prostitutes, and then rapes her. Now she is elected to make her father develop and grow. At least some element of the power struggle with her mother, and even “the mother” as an archetype, must be to prevent this ever happening again.

The **7th session** brings progress on the work front; the **8th session**, some information about a previous relationship. By the **9th session** she has a relationship, and when I see her for the **10th session**, she has cut her hair and is wearing fitting clothes – before they were loose and shapeless. She looks very pretty and she knows it. She is trying to find out who she really is. She is looking for a style of dressing of her own and has been shopping for more formal clothes *with her mother*, who she now tells me is teaches dress-making. This is all evidence of integrating the feminine, and yet, she tells me that she has cut off her feminine element and has made her bedroom very masculine. Her boyfriend is down to earth, grounded, Capricorn, divorced, 7 years older, and very rich. I note as I have on many previous occasions (e.g. the **6th session**) that the male forces are reigning in her psyche, but observe that now the feminine forces are taking up more space.

Through the **11 and 12th sessions**, Claire is not feeling good. She mentions phenomena which I associate with birth trauma: She feels pressure on the top of her head. She feels “that I am the origin of the movements of the ocean, the tides. In fact it is the water which moves, which develops – a water which cleans, purifies, changes things completely, infiltrates, brings grace and freedom.” Her neck feels strange – as if it were about to be released. She says, “the barrier which I have always felt at that level has burst,” and cries. It is very rare that Claire cries. There are several reasons why I do not do Breathwork with Claire at the level of energy which would bring about the resolution of these indications of birth trauma and which might show whether there was also a present life trauma relating to sexual abuse. One is that she does not want to work with the breath at the required intensity and I do not wish to persuade her to go further than she finds comfortable: that is against my style of working and my ethics. In any case, Claire is unable to do the more intense and open kind of breathing required. She needs further awareness work to develop greater safety with her bodily sensations, and integrative work to lay strong foundations for her personality and self-knowledge, and further analytical breathwork to get some perspective on her “story” before intense regressive work can be undertaken. [Although these aspects of breathwork technique: awareness, integration and analysis; each deserve a whole chapter of explanation and illustration (and I hope to write about them in detail in the near future), I have added a brief appendix to demonstrate what I mean.]

The **13th session** brings up some sibling rivalry.

By the **14th session**, Claire has moved in with Pierre, her partner. She is feeling more able to work on her emotions as she is no longer alone. She looks vulnerable and is having nightmares. The following comes up in the Breathwork: “I don’t know where I am. It’s all dark, like a cave. I feel desperate. It’s a cage more than a cave, shut in. I have

no perceptions. The blackness extends all over. I don't know why I am here." Claire is very sad. "I try to hide, to escape an aggressor. I am in my cupboard, in my room in my parents' house. I'm about 9 or even older. I am scared stiff. I also feel ashamed. I avoid thinking or feeling. When my terror is over, I go back to bed." Claire explains, "My father used to wake me up in the mornings – why does the fact that it is my father who comes to wake me up perturb me so much? I don't know why I'm terrified at night. I don't know if it is because of him? Why am I afraid of him? He is so cold."

Claire continues, "Now I'm in the middle of a terrible mental and emotional struggle. My father used to come up the stairs in the middle of the night to me to abuse me in some way. It did not go on longer than when I was 14, because I can remember things that happened after that. At that time I'd tell myself stories of rape to put myself to sleep. Also we had an American girl lodger. It was a year of deliverance when she was there. Even then my parents would not let me go out, they were so determined to keep control of me.

As Irving has pointed out, birth trauma imagery and sexual abuse imagery have many features in common. Did Claire's father behave inappropriately, or do the cave and cupboard imagery tell of an intrauterine experience of Claire's parents having sex? Or, are both of these – birth trauma imagery and sexual abuse imagery – metaphoric ways of expressing the power struggle with her parents?

At this point I had to make the choice whether to try to regress Claire to a time before she was terrified, but it seemed to me that that would suggest and even imply that something real had happened, and invite her to fill in the details. As her psychiatrist had already told her he suspected her father of incest, I did not wish to take the risk of reinforcing that suggestion. Claire's boundaries and self-knowledge were not yet so secure that I could risk working at the boundary of myth, dream and reality, which is where regression work takes place.

In the **15th session**: Claire tells me that her whole vision of her life has changed. She is no longer alone but with Pierre, her partner. She wants to change her profession to something in energy medicine. She can't bear black because it is like a dark night. In a horrible dream that she had, she pressed a spot on her body and a worm came out. Claire does not ask to work on the dream.

During the breathwork, Claire is in her bedroom in her parents' house. The atmosphere is cold. Her only refuge is her bed. I ask, "Why did you need a refuge?" "To have a place to myself." Claire hates the wallpaper of that bedroom. She does not like what her parents have made of the house. "They killed its soul as they killed and destroyed me. It's disgusting." She cries. "I'm still in my room. It's the void. The room is dead – now I understand what happened. I'm disgusted with my parents, my father, I want to vomit. I feel it in the top of my body." Claire puts her hand on her heart. "I'm always listening for approaching steps. I'm never at peace. I don't know why. In the first apartment we lived in, before the house, I was 5. Outside, a girl who was fatter than me – or someone else – said to me, 'Take care of what you think: it will come to pass.' I thought, 'I must stop thinking what I think. I must stop imagining scenes of rape and being touched.'"

Joy: Did you think of that at 5?

Claire: At 7 at the latest. When I heard her I was 6-7. What she said shocked me. (Claire cries.) I did not have bad thoughts, but according to her I did have. That's why I don't know whether it happened or not.

There was a forest in front of the house with a clearing in the middle. The house was alive. It was hard to see through the forest. My parents removed the forest except for 2 trees, and cut down 2 pines behind it. It's previous owner was an old lady who had many plants in her living room. It was full of plants. The house had a soul. My parents removed its soul. My parents renovated it. It was no longer a house.

Joy: So I can fairly say that the house was raped and that your parents did it.

Claire: (agrees)

Joy: Did you identify with the house?

Claire: Yes. That house was me.

Joy: It's not the same to rape the Earth and to rape one's daughter, or is it?

Claire: It is.

Joy: But one does not go to jail for that.

Claire: Why do I feel so identified with the house? I lived there before. It was me who built it, more than a century ago [in a previous life]. Why did it happen that after building the house I went through its death? To turn a page. Because this house was evil. The ghost that lived there was evil. I was there to give it its soul back, and I succeeded. And I'm not on the same wavelength as my family. It was only after my parents sold that house that it found its soul back.

Joy: A sensitive child could experience that as a rape.

Claire: Yes, that's more like what it is.

Joy: More than a physical rape?

Claire: Yes. Its not the rape that I find unbearable but the absence of contact/touch.

Joy: (very gently) But were you raped physically?

Claire: It's the house. The first room they renovated was my room. They had the kitchen done. They did my room themselves. I had a basin. They removed it. And I did not choose the carpet/wall paper. Everything went wrong. It's something which I could never express. Indeed, the ghost was not all that evil. It was not evil towards me. The scene with the girl happened the summer that we moved. It could have been a premonition.

Joy: I don't want to interpret.

Claire: No, it was not a premonition. I don't know anything. My need to be touched. To have a energy contact.

At this point Claire comes out of the Breathwork trance of concentration, back into the present and normal consciousness.

In this very important session, the rape she accused her father of became the rape of a house, and indeed of Claire's identity and individuality when without consultation and with no opportunity to choose she had changes to her bedroom forced upon her.

In the **16th session**, Claire brings me a photo of the house. It is indeed a very beautiful house. She has been grieving for the house. Now she's ready to give her attention to her life with her partner. She's starting to fill her emptiness. She is different with her parents.

In **session 17**, we worked on her family relationships. Claire said, "I don't know what to do with my parents or how to make our relationship develop." Before **session 18** she talked to a family psychotherapist, chosen by her brother, about her disgust regarding her father. She is now no longer disgusted by her father. She is clear now too that there

was no touching. The therapist suggested that there was an “incestuous context” I ask what an “incestuous context” means. “Non-respect for adolescent shyness.” Her father shared the bathroom in the mornings. She found it was unbearable. I ask for further details. “He was always in a bathrobe.” At the end of the **20th session** Claire says, “This session confirms my view that what I thought happened (namely the sexual abuse by her father) did not happen.” Her problems now become attributed to her mother, who, she says, could not talk about sex.

Before the **22nd session** Pierre ends their relationship. By the **25th session**, her relationship with her parents is so much improved that they enjoy each other’s company.

In **session 27** once again Claire complains that her parents do not understand her or take their responsibility towards her. This is despite the fact that they have over the years listened to her accusations without rejecting her, gone to therapists with her on occasion, and supported her when she went to the psychiatrist (I do not know whether she told them about our sessions). Now she tells me that she is so powerful that it makes her parents feel impotent. Therefore, by implication, she has tested her power against her mother and has won. Once again with hindsight, I wish I’d asked Claire about this directly as it was in this session that Claire told me that her father knew secrets, healing formulas to stop bleeding and so forth, and healed other family members, but when he asked her father to heal her he would not and told her to do it herself and she was not able to. At least her father is not as subject to her power as she’d like.

There was a pause of 4 months after Claire’s **28th session**, and then Claire wanted to come again. In her **29th session**, Claire told me that she had been doing some developmental workshop and now remembers that it was her brother who abused her, not her father. When they were children her parents were often away and they were often left alone together. Her brother is now off his pedestal. When she remembered that, she tells me, her voice went from her head into her body, and indeed she looks much more solid, and has put on weight.

5. Analysis

The position that Zweig & Wolf take is common to a large group of therapists. They say,

As more and more adults have recalled episodes of childhood abuse in therapy, the validity of their memories has been called into question and dubbed “the false memory syndrome.” For us, the actual reality of these incidents is less significant than the reality of the psyche: if a boy was not sexually molested but has a felt sense of intrusion, he may have been emotionally molested. Either way, his soul was violated and cries out for healing. (1997:77)

There are innumerable opportunities in our daily human lives for feelings of intrusion to arise, and so such a comprehensive judgement does not seem wise to me. “Intrusion” can be felt on an oral, anal or genital level; intrusion can be felt spatially, psychically and spiritually. Intrusion can be felt socially and educationally. How can we help our clients to understand themselves when our categories are all-inclusive? Besides, in

this day and age, all of our souls cry out for healing, for we are all suffering from some sort of abuse – having to stand by helpless through the recent ethnic cleansings shown in all their gruesome detail on our televisions is in itself a trauma for each soul, let alone having had to participate in some way in the recent horrors.

In preparing this article I came across a Janice Haaken's too little known book, *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back*. Haaken asks, "Why ... do so many of the memories women are recovering involve sexual abuse? Women certainly experience other difficulties in the course of development, other traumas, including poverty, neglect, non-sexual abuse, and burdensome domestic responsibilities. Why is sexual abuse such a dominant motif in the distressing childhood stories that emerged in psychotherapy in the 1980's?" (p. 4) She says, "While the debate has been understood as a struggle over the factual basis of allegations of sexual abuse, this limited approach to the issues overlooks the truths contained in even false accounts about the past." (p. 4)

I will look at this case history of purported sexual abuse in the light of three of her many interesting propositions. I hasten to observe that these do not exhaust her contribution to our understanding of this complicated problem.

The first is Haaken proposition concerning women's roles in legends. She says,

Women are spared and at the same time deprived of grand legends that place them at the centre of cosmic dramas. Western cultural legacies offer women few illusions about their importance as agents in the larger order of things. (p. 2f)

It is an essential part of this case history that Claire thinks she has an important destiny, something she told me in our first session. Her quest for importance and recognition takes her to the world of healing where she becomes a Reiki master. It takes her into a relationship with a very rich man. And there are the accusations against her father, and then against her brother. Through these accusations she makes herself the most important member of her family. Her brother is obliged to seek the solutions, finding the family therapist, and persuading his parents also to attend. Her parents are forced to acknowledge her importance and her power. She no longer "comes after the dog in her family" – one of the first things she told me about herself.

The second is Haaken proposition concerning the boundary violations that cause women suffering. She says,

The reservoir of female experience, traditionally located within familial struggles and at the borders between private and public life, generates female idioms and imagery as much as it does a "fund" of concrete experiences. In this realm of the symbolic, incest emerges as an insurgent form of female storytelling based on actual historical trauma. But the very reality of incest, and rumours of incest, creates a generative space for metaphorical truths, for the vivifying of female boundary violations and bodily located threats to well-being. (p. 13)

Women's experience has traditionally been limited to family and family issues, where even today a woman who works retains this central role, including primary child care, and care for aged relatives, his as well as hers. Naturally, then, women's thinking, imagining and story telling are focussed in this area, as much as are their real experiences. Claire agreed with the therapist who suggested that there was an "incestuous context" in her family, and indeed Claire felt that her boundaries were violated when her father came to wake her up in the mornings, in the family bathroom and when she was left alone at home with her brother for long periods of time. As her therapist, I have to ask myself if Claire's question whether indeed her father had abused her, or not, was her metaphoric way of vivifying experiences with her father that she experienced as boundary violations, but that were insensitive rather than incestuous. I had to ask myself, whether Claire's her most recent accusation against her brother rather specified metaphorically the way she felt about him, than any actual physical experience in which he had been involved.

Finally, Haaken introduces the concept of *transformative remembering*, stressing her use of the verb *remembering* rather than the noun *memory*. She says,

The concept of transformative remembering permits a new path into the thicket of difficulties women face in giving narrative coherence to disturbing, dysphoric states, on the one hand, and arousing, excitatory states on the other. In a sense, the memory controversy is more about emotion, distress, and bodily arousal than it is about memory per se. ... The sexual past, particularly, is a Pandora's box of exciting and dangerous imagery—a container for myriad anxieties and fantasies, individual and collective, which gives rise to transformative remembering and storytelling. (p. 15)

Remembering is not simply access to facts: at least that is now well accepted by informed people. In her quest for her early memories and her attempt to discover what happened in her childhood between her and her parents, or her and her brother, Claire has to tell and retell herself stories, as pieces of memory emerge into the light of awareness and require analysis and integration; she has to engage in the task of transformative remembering again and again. Through transformative remembering Claire has to reconcile her sexual fantasies about rape, her past life "remembering" – to keep to Haaken's use of the verb rather than the noun – of sexual abuse by the people who today are her parents, her feeling that her father held out on her with regard to his mystical knowledge including healing, his views on Casteneda, her psychiatrist's suggestion that her father sexually abused her, her family psychotherapist's suggestion that there was an incestuous context in her family, experiences in her therapy with me, and so forth to finally be able to tell herself, and a therapist or person she has a relationship with (if called for), a coherent story.

And very basically, women who make accusations of sexual abuse have to be heard these days. Claire uses her accusations to be heard, noticed and taken account of in her family.

6. Conclusions

Haaken's propositions provides a rich and fair means of understanding Claire's struggle. First her idea that if she could not remember her childhood her father must have

abused her provides her with the impetus to push her father's influence away and to gain some freedom. She gets a job she enjoys, makes progress in taking up her place in society, has a relationship, and achieves some independence in her relationship with her mother. Eventually she can give up her accusations, and create an image – her relationship with the house – which can take over her abuse story and resolve it. She is now free to relate to her father, and also her mother, in a different way. The end of Claire's relationship causes more identity problems. Does Claire go back to a sexual abuse story—now naming her brother—as her means to resolve these, or does this story of sexual abuse have a factual basis?

Or is quite another understanding possible?

In another case I know of, a young woman in her mid-twenties suddenly through various circumstances remembered her father sexually abusing her. Like Claire, this young woman had an induced birth. A house was important in her story too: this young woman placed the first time the event occurred on the night her family's house had been burgled, when she was in her early teens. Does a combination of experiences: problematic relations with parents, induced birth, traumatically experienced incidents involving houses; become, through transformed remembering, an accusation of sexual abuse against a father in our days or is it just coincidence that these two cases have these elements in common and are these particular fathers justly accused? Was Claire ever indeed, factually, sexually abused? Is there a reality, or are we in the realm of myth and dream?

7. Afterword

I do not know how this new development in Claire's accusations of sexual abuse will end, nor, indeed, whether Claire will come to tell me about developments. I do not “follow up” my clients once they move on. I find this practice, which is common in certain therapies, to be intrusive and ethically questionable: if clients know they will be followed up and their progress controlled a year after therapy ends, they are not free. They have not achieved autonomy. They are still implicitly “in therapy” and answerable for their well-being or otherwise. Besides, Breathwork is not a therapy where we keep our clients for years. Rather we encourage them to move on at a certain time, to have experience with other breathworkers with different approaches, and, if they choose, to go on to varied experience of personal and spiritual development, as we consider this best serves their individual development.

I do not have, and do not consider myself obliged to have, a position on whether Claire was or was not sexually abused. I do not see it as my task to believe my clients' stories in any “scientific” way—to examine an imaginary secret video recording of what really happened to see whether they are telling the factual truth, so to speak. I do consider it my task to be as richly receptive as possible to the many dimensions of their stories as they develop, and to remain open to the ongoing development of these stories through each client's transformative remembering.

Appendix I: Awareness, integrative and analytical breathwork

In my description of Claire's 11th and 12 session, I say that she needs "further awareness and integrative work to lay strong foundations for her personality and self-knowledge, and further analytical breathwork to get some perspective on her 'story' before intense regressive work can be undertaken." The following is an case history illustration of what I mean.

In Claire's 17th session we were working on her sinuses. I have said that her voice came from her sinuses, making it less "embodied" than if it resonated in her throat and chest as is usual. In the Breathwork, I asked Claire to put her fingertips on her cheekbones and, supported by conscious breathing into her belly to keep her grounded, to become aware of what she was feeling. The purpose of this exercise was in a safe and grounded way to increase her *bodily awareness*: her sensitivity to what was happening in her body as well as her ability to remain *mentally conscious and aware* of what was happening in it. I asked her to do that for five minutes, an imaginable short period of time. It was not easy for her, even for such a short time. In the process, the pain left her sinuses and moved to the back of her head. She told me, "It feels that there's so much pain there [in that whole area]."

When we can say "Yes," to our pain, rather than trying to repress it, we can *integrate* its source and content, and this invariably reduces it. Claire and I then did fifteen minutes of awareness work with the breath in which, supported by breathing into her belly, she gently and slowly "unloaded" her pain in the following way. With her fingers still on her sinuses, remaining with the pain that this light touch brought to consciousness, Claire became aware of each thought, feeling and experience that came up and told them to me as they arose. Telling a sympathetic witness who can keep us in the present (and hence avoid retraumatisation) supports awareness and integration, and unloads repressed tensions.

I asked Claire what the space of her sinuses stood for to her? She answered, "Expression." With that *analysis*, her whole body posture changed, becoming softer and more relaxed.

Work like this lays the foundation for safety with one's thoughts, feelings, emotions and bodily and mental pain. It is empowering at a fundamental level. Each step of awareness, integration and analysis lays and strengthens the foundation of character independence and autonomy. To do intensive regressive work before there is a sturdy foundation is to risk retraumatisation: namely, that the client will relive a traumatic experience as if it were happening in the present without the necessary and essential development of the witness state of consciousness which enables her/him to become aware of what is happening, to understand it and to integrate it.

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About the Author

Joy Manné began her practice of Breathwork in 1961 with Vipassana meditation taught by Dhiravamsa. She has a degree in Psychology and a Ph.D. on the debates and case histories in the Pali Canon (the Theravada Buddhist scriptures) which she reads in their own language. She was trained in Breathwork with Hans Mensink and Tilke Platteel-Deur in Holland. From 1989 –1995 she ran her own school of personal and spiritual development in Switzerland. She has developed her own form of Breathwork which integrates Vipassana with Rebirthing, called 'Conscious Breathing Techniques.' She now has an interna-

tional career, teaching and lecturing in many countries. Joy has published many articles on Buddhist Psychology, Breathwork and Rebirthing. She is the author of, Soul Therapy (North Atlantic, Berkeley, California), The Way of the Breath - the first Breathwork novel (www.i-breathe.com/wayofbreath) and the editor of this journal. She is a founder subscriber of the International Breathwork Foundation (www.ibfnetwork.org) and edits its Newsletter.

SPIRAL DYNAMICS: BREATHWORK AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION¹

BY
JIM MORNINGSTAR, PH.D.

I want to share with you one of the most useful tools I have encountered for understanding conscious evolution on our planet, Spiral Dynamics. This tool has helped me realize and explain the importance of breathwork (Morningstar, 1994) as a means of social integration at this point in human history. Spiral Dynamics is simply a framework for understanding how we grow and gives excellent clues as to where we are going. Breathwork is the tool for bringing about change and integration particularly suited to our current place in the cosmos.

Spiral Dynamics had its roots in the levels of consciousness research begun by an American psychologist, Claire Graves, in the 1950's. Frustrated by the conflicting jumble of theories of human behavior, he set out to illuminate the core motivational beliefs of humans on the planet. His research spanned several decades. His results began to correlate with data from other world-wide projects coordinated through the United States National Institute of Health. The beauty of his work is in its blending of simplicity, reaffirming universal principles we know, and complexity, collecting data from incredibly diverse areas of human knowledge. Canada's MacLean Magazine reporting on Grave's work in the late 1970's called it "The Theory that Explains Everything."

Graves, a professor at Union College in New York, died relatively unknown in 1986. I had the privilege of meeting him in the 1970's. Like many geniuses who are perfectionistic, he never published his complete work. That is because he was always discovering new refinements and exploring new horizons such that he saw his work as never complete. Also like many geniuses, the publishing and application of his work was later accomplished by his students. Two such enterprising followers, Beck and Cowen (1996), coined the term Spiral Dynamics and applied its principles to social change. They were hired by the government of South Africa, for example, to assist in the transition from apartheid. The theory has been successfully applied to the areas of social welfare, education, business management and marketing. My interest is in the area of psychotherapy and consciousness growth. It helps me select which healing approach is appropriate with which individuals, under which circumstances. It makes obsolete questions like what is the best form of government or best system of education or best form of therapy. But more than this, it indicates what is most likely to be effective with whom and when.

Graves asked a wide variety of individuals over a long period what motivated their life choices. Two broad groups always emerged: those who touted self-expression, those who favored self-adaptation, those who were more yang and those who were more yin. Among the self expressionists are those who favor winning at all cost and those who take a more measured reasoned approach. Among the self-adapters were those who professed submission to a Higher Authority and those who promoted conformity to the will of the group.

¹ Paper presented at the International Breathwork Foundation's 6th Global Inspiration Conference, Spain, June 1999. The IBF's website is www.ibfnetwork.org.

So far this is fairly common knowledge. What made it more interesting is the predictability of how and when people made changes in their beliefs. Not surprisingly most people tended to take on the belief system of their family. However, a great revolution in belief systems is happening. Growth on our planet is evolving at an exponential rate. When open system individuals grow, they always go from an adapt to an express system or vice versa in a predictable order.

These changes in belief systems are not about what people think, but rather how they think. This involves using different parts of the brain, stimulating different body chemistry and engendering whole new sets of behaviors. Each stage of growth builds upon the preceding one at the same time that it refutes many of its major tenants. At any one time we are a combination of many differing systems of belief, but there tends to be a major or nodal system through which we are interpreting our life. Figure 1² shows that as we progress psychologically, we adapt higher systems and are still influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by those we have grown past and those we are growing toward.

Figure 1

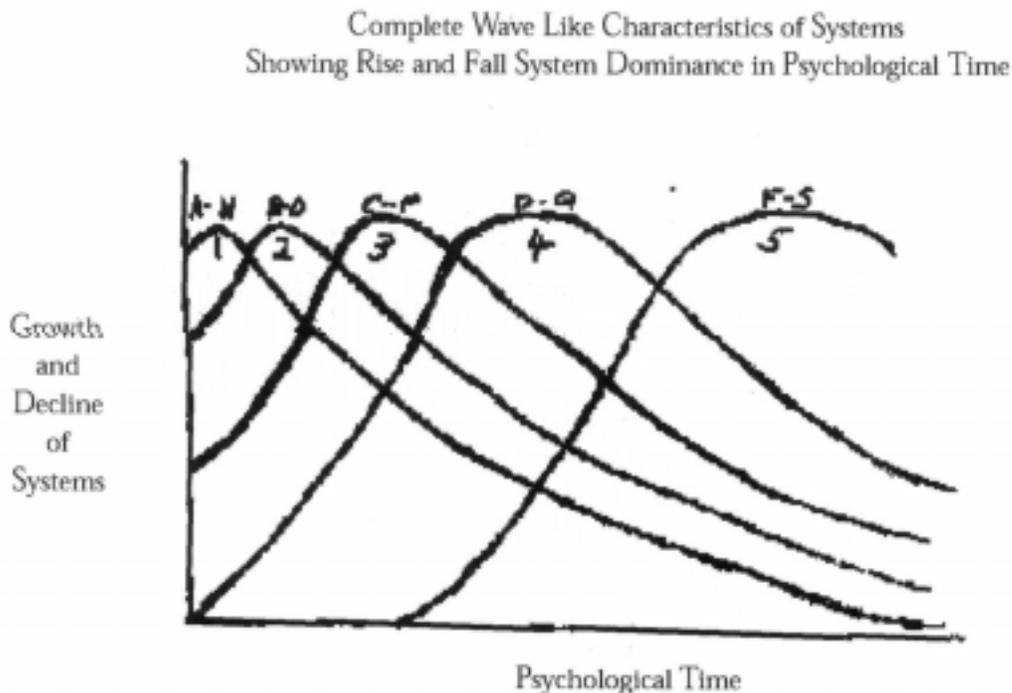


Figure 2 is a symbolic representation of the concept that each stage in growth (each widening circle) involves more areas of the brain (area of X's + O's) and takes us further into our universe (dotted line circles). It also lists the conditions for consciousness changes. First, we must have the biological equipment, not be severely brain damaged. Second, we must address and successfully solve the challenges at that stage of growth. In tribal life,

² The figures and tables herein reproduced are from lectures given by Claire Graves.

for example, I must learn the customs and rituals of my clan and glean the advantages they bring. Third, there must be some dissonant stimulus to my current belief system that attracts me. In the Sainly system (Level 4), for example, I begin to notice those who are not waiting till the hereafter to enjoy their rewards, and who do not seem to be immoral people to me. Fourth, I must get insight into how I could live differently than in the prevailing system, envision myself in a new life as it were. And fifth, I must then overcome the barriers, inner and outer, that the current system has to my growing beyond it. I have to do the work, in other words.

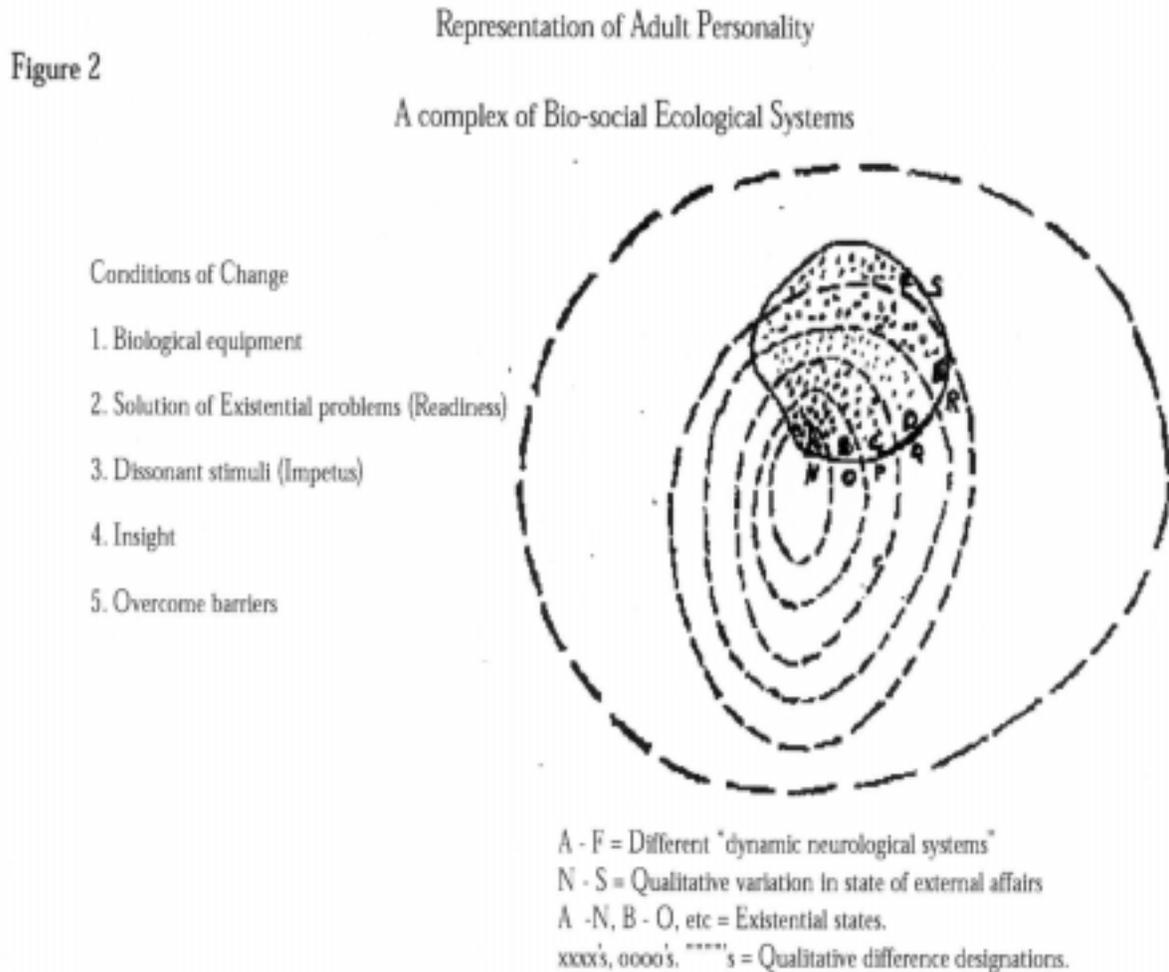
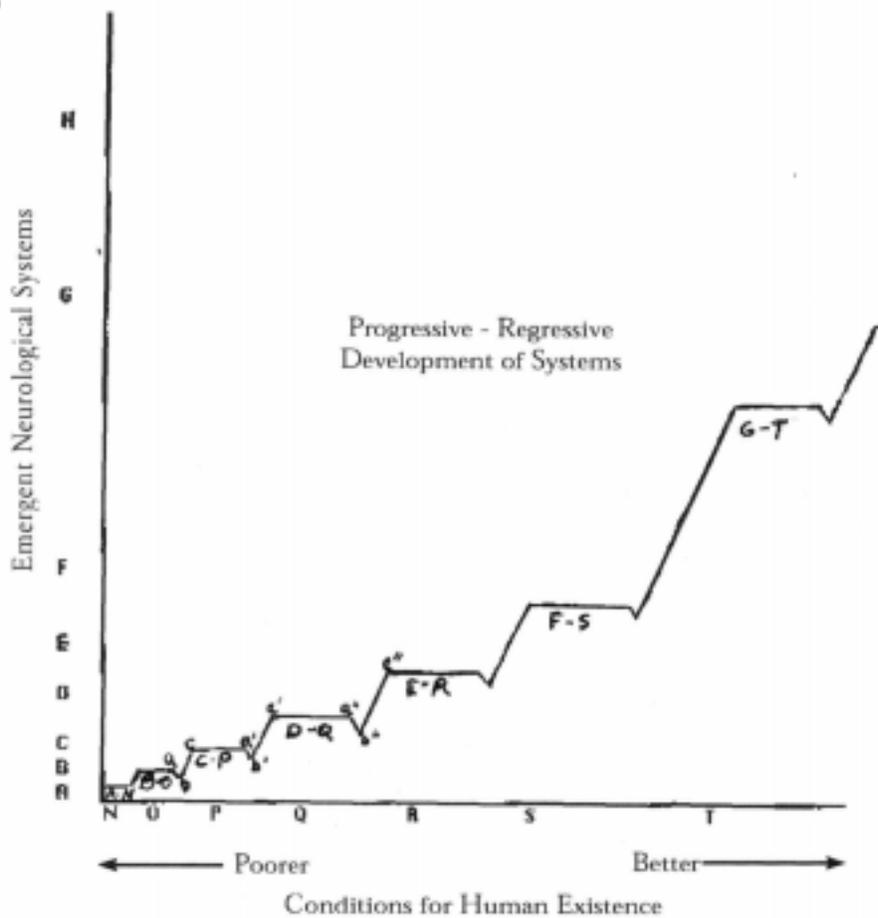


Figure 3 graphically portrays another facet of our human growth patterns - they are seldom in a straight line. As we progress, we reach plateaus then often seemingly regress before we grow further. If we are growth oriented, we can fully contain our spirit within any belief systems only so long, till we reach a point of moral crisis. In the Pragmatic System (Level 5), for instance, I may no longer believe that just accumulating more goods or money is truly fulfilling to me. I may seem to be left without moorings then I cannot subscribe to my old beliefs, but I do not have a fully integrated new set yet. This is

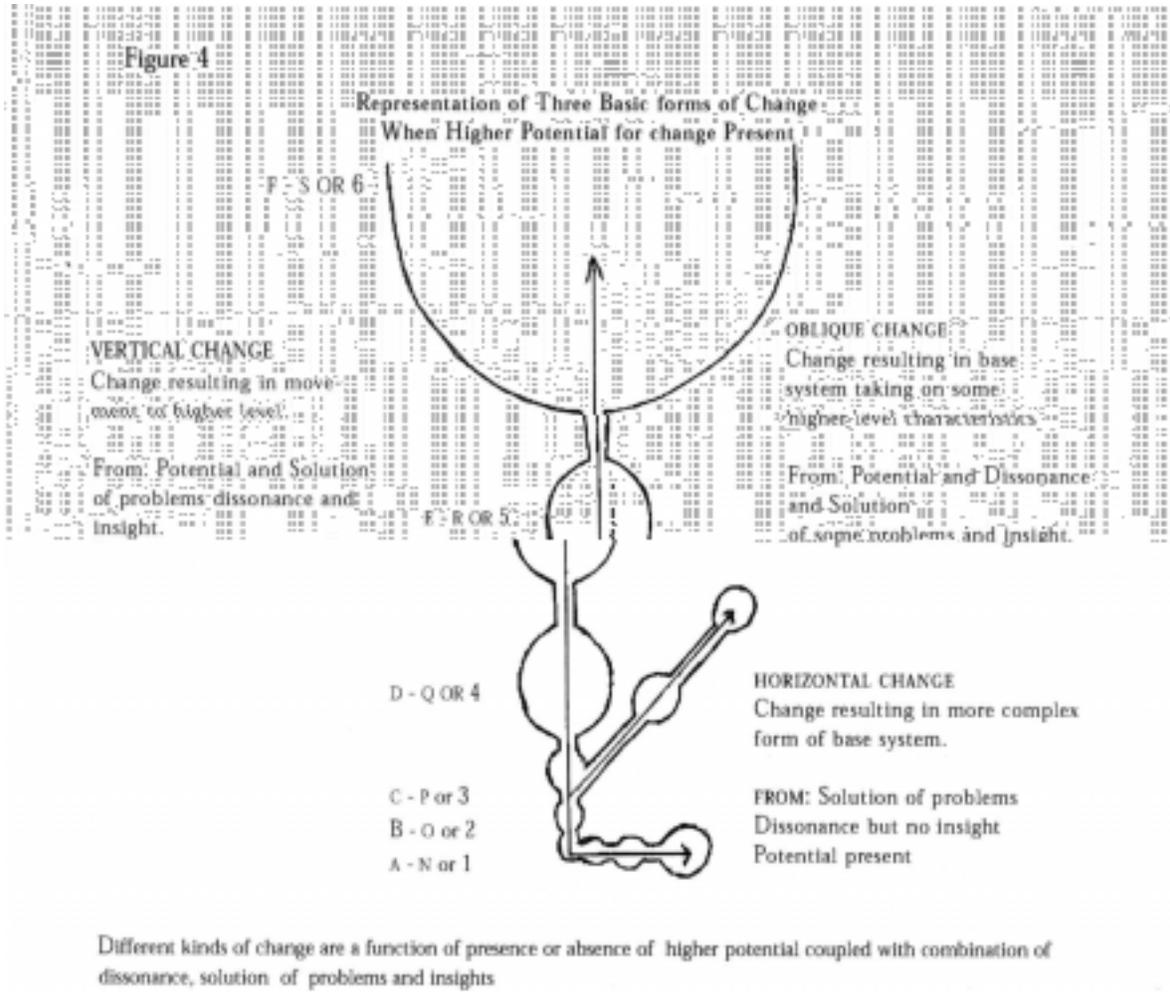
when we often see people in therapy or breathwork. They are looking for help in making sense of an expanding universe (to them it may seem disintegrating). This is represented by the dips at the end of each plateau (a, a', a"). Some people get stuck in these dips for years or perhaps lifetimes. During this period I search often through old forms of doing and explaining life. These can be old adapt self forms if I am growing into another yin system, e.g. old time religion. They tend to be old express self forms if I am growing into yang system, e.g. using "Attila the Hun" tactics for corporate management. In the end, these will not suffice and I reach a point of behavioral crisis (b, b',b"). At this point, I hit rock bottom, really let go and start to put together a new life based on the new principles I am learning. Given the success of this integration, I reach a new plateau and spend time there mastering this level and the challenges it brings.

Figure 3



Even this explanation of growth is greatly oversimplified. Figure 4 shows what happens when there is growth without all five factors for change being present. We can make a Horizontal Change when there is dissonance within our current system, e.g. Religion A appears hypocritical to me, but there is no Insight into a new level of consciousness. So I convert to Religion B which has a different set of authorities and doctrines, but essen-

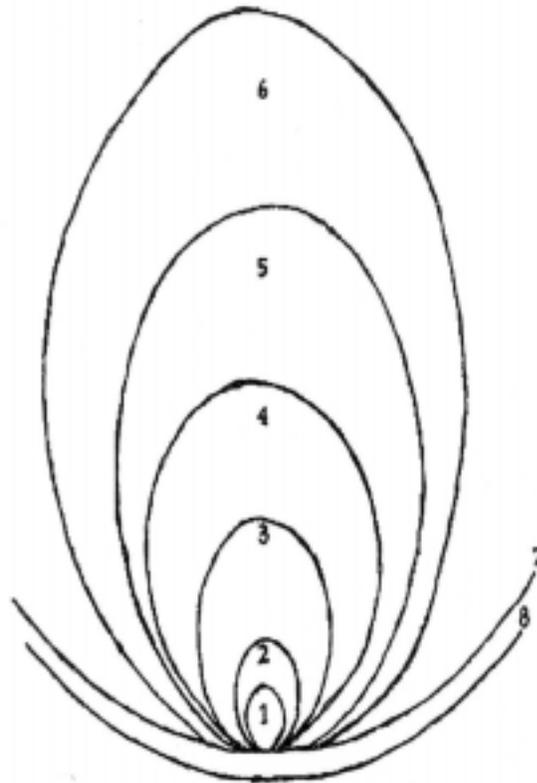
tially still subscribes to a black and white system of right and wrong. What I think has changed not how I think. Oblique change happens when I take on some higher level characteristics, but do not solve all the problems for existence at that level and/or do not have complete insight into a new way of being. I might choose Religion C which affords me more opportunity for self determination, but still limits my vision through some restrictive doctrine. True Vertical Change indicates I am experiencing my world in an entirely different way.



A less linear model of growth is shown in Figure 5. Each system incorporates the one before. We can always go back to and use the strengths (or weaknesses) of a prior system when called for. In a crisis I may revert to “more primitive” forms of behavior which may be entirely appropriate or even life saving. I may not say “excuse me” or take a vote before going to get the fire extinguisher in an emergency.

Nesting Aspect of
Adult Personality Systems

Figure 5



When new system takes over, lower level system is subordinated in the newer system.

When lower level system dominates that part of higher level system emerged operates in service of lower level system.

This is an example of a centralized level six system with developing level seven and eight systems.

Graves outlined motivational thinking and value systems for each of the levels of existence which we are about to review. Table 1 is presented just to hint at the greater complexity of each level should you wish to look further into them. I have added a middle column on learning systems which is relevant to how we learn at each level and consequently what forms of therapy will be effective with individuals at various stages of growth. In another work I have delineated the development of twentieth century psychotherapy modalities as change agents (Scholz, 1973). Table 2 presents the themes and problems associated with each level. For our purposes here, the development and role of breathwork in the transformation of world consciousness will be highlighted.

Table 1

Level of Existence	Existential State	Nature of Existence	Learning	Motivational System	Type of Thinking	Value System	
						Means Value	End Value
2 nd Being	H – U	Experientialism		Experience	Differentialistic	Experiencing	Communion
1 st Being	G - T	Cognitive		Existence	Systemic	Accepting	Existence
6 th Subsistence	F – S	Sociocentric	Roter Social Learning	Affiliation	Experientialistic	Sociocentricity	Community
5 th Subsistence	E – R	Materialistic	Sign Gestalt Perceptual	Independent	Objetivistic	Scientism	Material
4 th Subsistence	D – Q	Saintly	Avoidant 2 – Factor	Security	Absolutistic	Sacrifice	Material
3 rd Subsistence	C – P	Individualistic	Operant Conditioning	Survival	Egocentric	Exploitative	Power
2 nd Subsistence	B – O	Tribulistic	Classical Conditioning	Assurance	Autistic	Traditionalism	Safety
1 st Subsistence	A – N	Automatic	Imprinting	Psychological	-----	Values purely reactive	

“Ontology recapitulates phylogeny” is an old dictum indicating that each of us in our development relives the growth of our species. As a child we grow through automatic, tribalistic, heroic and saintly systems, repeating the stages of thousands of years of human development in the first seven years of life. Now we are perched on the threshold of a tremendous change in planetary consciousness which is simultaneous with the new millennium. The moral crisis has been reached and we are ready for a new level of integration, or recycling – going through the same cycle again and again – as recent Balkan wars have threatened. Breathwork as we have witnessed facilitates a profound increase in conscious awareness which not only heals our past, but helps us build a new global spirit. Let us look at the reasons why this technique is particularly suited to what our society needs and what our responsibility is in this critical process.

In traditional therapeutic terms, anxiety and compulsive behaviors are characteristics of yin (adapt self) systems whereas acting out and impulsive behavior are associated more with yang (express self) systems. Breathwork as a holistic technique has been able to do what few other change agents have done, that is to bridge all the systems of our past and open the neurological circuitry for higher levels than group consciousness has been ready to integrate until now.

Table 2

Theme for existence associated to each existential state:	
1. A – N:	React naturally to imperative physiological needs so as to reduce the tension of them. No concept of cause and effect.
1. B – O:	Live in accordance with established tribal ways.
1. C – P:	Express self for what self desires regardless of the consequences lest one feel ashamed.
1. D – Q:	Sacrifices the desires of self now in order to get reward later on in some other realm.
1. E – R:	Express self for what self desires but in a rational, calculating way without feeling. shame or guilt.
1. F – S:	Sacrifice what one desires now in order to get reward now in the form of acceptance by and approval of others.
1. G – T:	Express self as self is inclined but not at the expense of others.
1. H – U:	Sacrifice the idea that man will never know what it is all about and go on living.
Problems of existence represented by each letter:	
N	Achieving stability of imperative Psychological systems.
O	Achieving basic safety in a non-comprehended world which seems full of spirits.
P	Awareness of existence as an individual; how to live against the fact of death.
Q	Reasonable order in a world of seeming chaos; how to live in a world of threat and want.
R	Reasoned knowledge leading to control of the physical universe; How to conquer threat and want
S	Comprehension that human subjectivity is a reality not a myth to be cast aside; how to live in a world of abundance for human wants.
T	Restoring ecological balance disturbed by the knowledge accrued; how to restore disturbed uni- verse
U	Truly accepting the reality of ever broadening realms of consciousness; how to live when having, but never really knowing life.

Let us review the eight levels of consciousness as we know them to date. Beck and Cowen (1996) have added the dimension of the spiral to this model which may appear hierarchical in its presentation thus far. Indeed no one level is better than another. Countless humans have lived happy and fulfilled lives at each level presumably because they came here to address the lessons that level had to offer. These lessons tend to come around again and again, but with increasingly expanded awareness as we grow. Beck and Cowen use colors rather than numbers for each stage. Rather than belief systems they use the concept of meme, “self replicating patterns of information that propagate themselves across the ecologies of mind.” (1996, p 30) For simplicity, however, I will refer to eight levels. Here I will quote from their work *Spiral Dynamics* (1996).

“BEIGE ‘Survivalistic’ MEME 1st Awakening
Basic theme: Do what you must just to stay alive
Characteristic beliefs and actions:

Graves Code: A-N

- Uses instincts and habits just to survive
- Distinct self is barely awakened or sustained
- Food, Water, Warmth, Sex, and Safety have priority

- Forms into survival bands to perpetuate life

Where seen: The first peoples, newborn infants, senile elderly, late-stage Alzheimer's victims, mentally ill street people, starving masses, bad drug trips, and 'shell shock.' Described in anthropological fiction like Jean Auel's 'Clan of the Cave Bear.'" (Beck & Cowan, p. 45)

Help at this level would be CPR or intravenous feeding. All assistance is here directed toward keeping the individual breathing as we are often called to do as rebirthers when "unconsciousness" sets in.

"PURPLE 'magical' MEME 2nd Awakening Graves Code: B-O

Basic theme: Keep the spirits happy and the 'tribe's' nest warm and safe

Characteristic beliefs and actions:

- Obey the desires of spirit beings and mystical signs
- Show allegiance to chief, elders, ancestors and the clan
- Preserve sacred objects, places, events, and memories
- Observe rites of passage, seasonal cycles, and tribal customs

Where seen: Belief in guardian angels and Voodoo-like curses, blood oaths, ancient grudges, chanting and trance dancing, good luck charms, family rituals, and mystical ethnic beliefs and superstitions. Strong in Third-World settings, gangs, athletic teams, and corporate 'tribes.'" (Beck & Cowan, p. 45)

Notice their inclusion of "guardian angels." Lessons at this level return, I believe, in level eight which is the threshold of where we are now as a planet. Help at level 2 involves classical conditioning procedures because they intervene at the human brain stem level. Background anxiety from birth is the underlying condition of most humans on earth. Rebirthing literally reconditions trauma to the breathing mechanism which verbal therapies cannot reach (Morningstar, 1994). It thus prepares our brain for higher order functioning which we cannot talk ourselves into.

"RED 'Impulsive' MEME 3rd Awakening Graves Code: C-P

Basic theme: Be what you are and do what you want, regardless

Characteristic beliefs and actions:

- The world is a jungle full of threats and predators
- Breaks free from any domination or constraint to please self as self desires
- Stands tall, expects attention, demands respect, and calls the shots
- Enjoys self to the fullest right now without guilt or remorse
- Conquers, out-foxes, and dominates other aggressive characters

Where seen: The 'Terrible Twos,' rebellious youth, frontier mentalities, feudal kingdoms, James Bond villains, epic heroes, soldiers of fortune, 'Papa' Picasso, wild rock stars, Atilla the Hun, William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies,' and Mighty Morphin Power Rangers.'" (Beck & Cowan, p. 45)

Helping techniques at this level include operant conditioning procedures, “shaping” behavior or deconditioning phobic responses. Again these are precognitive interventions and address deep level habit patterns, e.g. addictions, and fears e.g. phobias. Helping here requires altering the active reward-seeking behavior of those being helped. Because rebirthing is not “done to” someone, like Pavlov’s dog was trained, rebirthees learn to shape primitive behavior patterns and decondition deep-rooted fears in sessions themselves with the assistance of the rebirther.

“BLUE 'Purposeful' MEME 4th Awakening

Graves Code: D-Q

Basic Theme: Life has meaning, direction, and purposes with predetermined outcomes

Characteristic beliefs and actions:

- One sacrifices self to the transcendent Cause, Truth, or righteous Pathway
- The Order enforces a code of conduct based on eternal, absolute principles
- Righteous living produces stability now and guarantees future reward
- Impulsivity is controlled through guilt; everybody has their proper place
- Laws, regulations, and discipline build character and moral fiber

Where seen: Rev. Billy Graham, Frank Capra's 'It's a Wonderful Life,' Puritan America, Confucian China, Hasidic Judaism, Dickensian England, Singapore discipline, codes of chivalry and honor, charitable good deeds, the Salvation Army, Islamic fundamentalism, Garrison Keillor's 'Lake Wobegon,' Boy and Girl Scouts, patriotism.” (Beck & Cowan, p. 46)

At this level more coordinated functioning between the sub cortical forebrain and the brain stem along with an abundance of adrenalin makes the avoidance of punishment a very powerful motivating factor. It is said that if there are no aversive consequences at this level, there is no learning. At this level I first learn to avoid punishment and am rewarded later. Delayed gratification is actually a great advance in our civilization over the Atila the Hun quest of immediate gratification of the previous level. Guilt, penance, expiration confession are all important steps in development. But if this has been inflicted too harshly or dogmatically, it hinders later growth Many rebirthees engage in a form of confession and expiration as they release guilt. Some even utilize the pain of tetany in a healing way to get beyond the fear of pain despite the rebirther’s attempts to avert it. Part of the rebirthee knows what is needed for his or her healing.

“ORANGE ‘Achievist’ MEME 5th Awakening

Graves Code: E-R

Basic Theme: Act in your own self-interest by playing the game to win

Characteristic beliefs and actions:

- Change and advancement are inherent within the scheme of things
- Progress by learning nature's secrets and seeking out best solutions

- Manipulate Earth's resources to create and spread the abundant good life
- Optimistic, risk-taking, and self-reliant people deserve their success
- Societies prosper through strategy, technology, and competitiveness

Where seen: The Enlightenment, 'success' ministries, Any Rand's 'Atlas shrugged,' Wall Street, Rodeo Drive, The Riviera, emerging middle classes, the cosmetics industry, trophy hunting, Chambers of Commerce, colonialism, TV infomercials, the Cold War, DeBeers diamond cartel, breast implants, fashion, J.R. Ewing and Dallas." (Beck & Cowan, p. 46)

Psychoanalysis grew out of helping people transition from the prior Sainly System (4th Awakening) to this more cognitively reliant Pragmatic System. The authoritative doctor allowed guilt ridden patients to bring their libidinous id (level 3) out from the Victorian rule of their superego (level 4) and be guided through the rational ministry of their ego (level 5). Facilitators who are at the next level of growth are best in helping others overcome the barriers of the prior level. In the 5th level we see the advent of many cognition therapies which teach us to think rationally to a better life (Ellis, Kelly) or to communicate more clearly to improved family systems (Satir, Jackson). Rebirthing uses affirmations to retrain the brain with its increased neo-cortical development at the level toward more clear and healthy thinking and self-talk patterns. (Scholz,1973)

“GREEN ‘Communitarian’ MEME 6th Awakening Graves Code: F-S
Basic Theme: Seek peace within the inner self and explore, with others, the caring dimensions of community.

Characteristic beliefs and actions:

- The human spirit must be freed from greed, dogma, and divisiveness
- Feelings, sensitivity, and caring supersede cold rationality
- Spread the Earth's resources and opportunities equally among all
- Reach decisions through reconciliation and consensus processes
- Refresh spirituality, bring harmony, and enrich human development

Where seen: John Lennon's music, Netherlands' idealism, Rogerian counseling, liberation theology, Doctors without Borders, Canadian health care, ACLU, World Council of Churches, sensitivity training, Boulder (Colorado), Green Peace, Jimmy Carter, Dustin Hoffman in 'The Graduate,' animal rights, deep ecology, Minneapolis-St Paul social services, the music of Bruce Cogburn, Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream company." (Beck & Cowan, p. 46-47)

At the sixth level there is a more refined integration between lower appetitive centers and higher cognitive processes. People learn here through observation of others rather than having to make all their own mistakes. This yin (adapt self) level recognizes the authority of the peer group. The advent of group therapies and consciousness raising groups is especially meaningful at this level. The therapist is not looked to as the authoritative answer giver. Solutions come more from group process. The rebirthing movement started amid

this level of growth in our world and still reflects the importance of group dynamic in heightening the growth of rebirthees.

“YELLOW ‘Integrative’ MEME 7th Awakening Graves Code: G-T

Basic theme: Live fully and responsibly as what you are and learn to become

Characteristic beliefs and actions:

- Life is a kaleidoscope of natural hierarchies, systems, and forms
- The magnificence of existence is valued over material production
- Flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality have the highest priority
- Knowledge and competency should supersede rank, power, status
- Differences can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows

Where seen: Carl Sagan’s astronomy, Peter Senge’s organizations, Stephen Hawking’s ‘Brief History of Time,’ W. Edwards Deming’s objectives, Paul Newman’s version of stardom, chaos theory, appropriate technology, eco-industrial parks (using each other’s outflows as raw materials), early episodes of TV’s Northern Exposure, Fel-Pro, Inc. (a gasket manufacturer), Fred Alan Wolf’s ‘new physics’ Deepak Chopra’s ‘Ageless Body.’ (Beck & Cowan, p. 47)

The seventh level marks a new tier in the spiral of human consciousness, coming from a being motivation rather than a survival mentality: i.e. valuing one’s being rather than doing to survive. Learning here is more with the whole person than any one part or parts of the brain. Gestalt techniques and those which bring into play non-verbal and non-linear processes often open the door for guidance from other dimensions of our being. Here is where the use of rebirthing has had a great impact on our evolution. Although frustrating to those who want to capture its essence in a formula, it is its very ineffable nature in which lies its value. Rebirthees are drawn to it because it does not define them in survival terms, but liberates the spirit to be and express fully.

“TURQUOISE ‘Holistic’ MEME 8th Awakening Graves Code: H-U

Basic Theme: Experience the wholeness of existence through mind and spirit

Characteristic beliefs and actions:

- The world is a single, dynamic organism with its own collective mind
- Self is both distinct and a blended part of a larger, compassionate whole
- Everything connects to everything else in ecological alignments
- Energy and information permeate the Earth’s total environment
- Holistic, intuitive thinking and cooperative actions are to be expected

Where seen: Theories of David Bohm, McLuhan’s ‘global village,’ Gregory Stock’s Metaman, Rupert Sheldrake and morphic fields, Gandhi’s ideas of pluralistic harmony, Ken Wilber’s ‘Spectrum of Consciousness,’ James Lovelock’s ‘Gaia hypothesis,’ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s ‘noosphere.’” (Beck & Cowan, p. 48)

This is our cutting edge. People at this level register a different physiology, often standard deviations different from others, i.e. less core anxiety and operating from a different ground of being. Helping at this level entails not doing something to change someone, but being them as you both change. This requires a commitment of total being and removal of all illusions of separation. This higher yin (adapt self) stage to which we are evolving necessitates a global transformation toward the divine feminine if our old male models are not to become top heavy and lead to a collapse of our support systems. Rebirthing has paved the way for this breakthrough level for many. It is imperative that we reach a critical mass of being at this level to tilt the balance of world consciousness. Breath is the thread which runs through the physical, emotional, cognitive and metaphysical systems and brings them together as no other element can. Love and light are also universal principles and healing forces, but they are otherworldly without breath. It is only through breath that love and light can transform the beings of this planet.

We are called as rebirthers to open our hearts and minds to all who seek this transition to a higher level of being. We are called to train other rebirthers and to serve as direct agents for the Spirit of Breath. All other therapies can be combined with and used with breathwork to increase their effectiveness. Only breathwork, however, has spanned the healing spectrum of the twentieth century from classical conditioning of the brain stem to embracing of our eternal spirit. It is not a “new age” discovery. Breathwork is a timeless truth that has been awaiting this point in our evolution to reemerge because we are now ready to integrate all our levels. Breathwork is a holistic marriage of the Divine Male and Divine Female as is experienced in each complete cycle of inhale and exhale. We need every level of our being and every person on our planet to effect this transition. Some will not participate consciously, but we need many more to be conscious. We are given an incredible opportunity to change the face of our planet or to revert to primitive forms of struggle for individual power and survival. Every breathworker has received a calling to do this work by the Spirit of Breath. This is the greater plan of social evolution. It is our privilege and mission to embrace our highest and share our breath with all our brothers and sisters now. There is only One Breath.

References

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- Morningstar, Jim (1994) *Breathing in Light and Love*. Milwaukee, WI: Transformations Incorporated
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The figures and tables herein reproduced are from lectures given by Claire Graves.

BOOK REVIEWS

Jim Morningstar, Ph.D. Breathing In Light And Love: Your Call To Breath And Body Mastery. Transformations Inc., 1994.

This is as good and as complete an account of rebirthing as any one book can be. Its approach is grounded and practical, and guided by common sense. It takes full account of the spiritual element in this technique. Every point it makes is richly illustrated with a case history. It is ground-breaking in showing how Rebirthing theory and practice can integrate bioenergetic body and character analysis. It is an important book for rebirthing.

Morningstar describes Rebirthing as ‘a personal growth and self healing technique,’ and “a direct and immediate means to breath and body mastery.” (p. xv) He defines the rebirthing process as, “learning to breathe in such a way as to release physical tension in the body, clearing the mind of negative thoughts and limiting conclusions reached about past experience, and accepting the spiritual joy and light that result when illusions about ourselves are cleared away.” (p. xv) This book contains many definitions of Rebirthing (pp. 49, 52, etc.) which shows how vast a subject this is and how difficult to delimit.

Although many people these days throw the word “mastery” around rather lightly, the spirituality in this book is grounded. Morningstar defines breath mastery: “Taken too literally, breath mastery is endless practice of mechanical exercises, trying to huff and puff my way to heaven. Taken too ethereally, breath mastery is fervent cloud gathering that has little effect other than to keep me avoiding life through fantasy. Balanced breath mastery means taking responsibility on all levels, caring for my body, clearing my thoughts and living the divinity of my spirit.” (p.xii)

Chapter One concerns ‘Becoming safe in your body and your world.’ Morningstar respects the body which is ‘integral to our purpose here,’ and part of our spiritual journey. (p. 4) It is our means “to sustain aliveness in our bodies and either increase our experience of safety and pleasure or reinforce our feeling of suffering and pain.” (p. 8) Fear, held in place by negative and self-limiting beliefs inhibits the full flow of life energy. Our body simply responds to our mind. When we limit ourselves, we do the same to others. Also, “As we breathe we are giving instructions to our body. We are translating our spiritual intentions into mental instructions to our body.” (p.14)

On the subject of being spiritual, Morningstar is wise and respectful, “Each of us has come to the planet with our unique version of the truth. ... All must be heard. Each breath, each voice is integral to the whole picture. This does not mean that every message is equally true, but each is a true expression of one point of view. ... each is an aspect of our potential, positive or negative, and must be taken into account if the totality of who we are is to be realized.” (p. 17) There is much wisdom here about growing up spiritually. Morningstar is concerned with the individual, the family, society and our planet.

In this chapter too, Morningstar compares the purpose of yogic techniques and Rebirthing.

Chapter Two, ‘Discovering your own Rebirthing,’ shows the range of problems that Rebirthing can deal with, each illustrated with a case history. These include dealing with fear; emotional recovery: i.e. relating in a wholesome way to feelings; physical

healing; dealing with illness; discovering and healing the source of relationship patterns: discovering core beliefs: ideas like “I am not safe,” or “I must be in control;” discovering one’s spirituality. There are several case histories of sexual abuse.

Morningstar goes on to explain how birth events, which he calls the “Birth Drama” rather than the Birth Trauma” influence our ability to feel alive and our way of living. He expounds the Rebirthing “doctrine” that “Thoughts are Creative” – a phrase that he does not use – in the following non-doctrinaire way, “I am not just the passive recipient of things done to me, I am also the active shaper of the events and reacher of the conclusions about them.” (p. 57) There are good and varied descriptions and explanations of the fundamental importance of our breath in our actions and character throughout this chapter and especially pp. 59-66 where breath mastery is explained.

At no time does Morningstar make exaggerated claims for Rebirthing or claim that it is the only method that works. “Of course a simple breathing technique cannot change my entire relationship to body, mind and spirit. Rebirthing teaches me to breathe more freely and easily as a result of an inner transformation.” (p. 53; see also p. 57)

Chapter Three is called ‘Rebirthing Your Inner Child.’ Morningstar noticed that his clients had many childhood memories and that they had a variety of relationships with the child who they were ranging from acceptance and love to total rejection, from total identification to awareness and observation. In his case histories, Morningstar illustrates sensitive ways to work with the Inner Child, including dealing with themes like basic safety, scarcity and abundance, freedom of expression, gender identity, and intimacy. He explains why we deny our inner child, and suggests way of getting into dialogue with her/him. Finally he draws attention to the importance of developing a competent Inner Parent, and the importance of going beyond both Inner Child and Inner Parent to the neutral Witness state and forgiveness. The chapter ends with suggested Affirmations for the Inner Child with recommendations how to use them.

Chapter Four is about ‘Rebirthing Yourself.’ Morningstar’s goal is “to assist each rebirthee to, as soon as possible, to engage in the process on one’s own.” Here he says something very important with regard to rebirthing as a healing technique, “Each rebirther is a student of the process who assists others by observing the healing, pointing it out and getting out of the way to let it happen. All healing is self-healing and is assisted by the medium of love. The rebirther presents a model for the creation of this medium.” (p. 113) There are different views whether rebirthing is a therapy or not. I think it is difficult to be categorical: rebirthing certainly works therapeutically, but it does more than that. Morningstar has certainly described the required approach and attitude of the rebirther succinctly. His emphasis in self-rebirthing is self-responsibility and self-analysis and awareness, “I must be willing ... to see my loving intentions and how they have gotten distorted by limiting beliefs...” (p. 114) He describes how to organise daily breathing practice, how to choose a rebirther, and the common denominators of a successful rebirthing session. The latter include being clear about one’s intention for having the session, and what can happen on the bodily, mental and spiritual levels during a session, how a session begins, knowing when a session is over, how many sessions to do, connected breathing, the length of the period of sustained breathing rhythm, how to breath through feelings, how to change thoughts, releasing resistance, and progress through a series of sessions. Basic elements in rebirthing psychology are also described, including finding one’s Personal Law, i.e. one’s basic limiting belief, and the Five Biggies, re-

birthing's charming and user friendly expression for the basic elements in rebirthing psychology; the birth drama, the parental disapproval symptom, the specific negatives (limiting beliefs), the unconscious death urge, and multilevel karma. In rebirthing psychology, completion of these Five Biggies is completion in life, "a putting in order the present which allows for a new beginning, a starting point of clarity, truth and balance." (p. 151)

Physical Immortality is a controversial doctrine in rebirthing and one of the principle reasons why many practitioners trained as rebirthers do not use this term for their work, but prefer to call it Conscious Connected Breathing, or (as the present writer does), Conscious Breathing Techniques. Morningstar gives a non-fanatical account of this doctrine.

Chapter Five, on 'Being a Rebirther,' describes the rebirther's role and essential qualities. Morningstar says, "All techniques are secondary in importance to the healing presence the rebirther provides." (p. 162) Morningstar is quite simply right: there is a great deal of research into the efficacy of various methods of therapy, and it invariably comes to the conclusion that the character and qualities of the therapist are what makes any method successful. Morningstar recognises the important point that all therapists learn from their clients. He deals with issues like setting boundaries, psychic contact with the client – an area which concerns transfer and counter-transfer, although Morningstar does not use these terms, and the contract between rebirther and rebirthee. He recognises the synchronicity and intuition which bring rebirther and rebirthee to work together.

Morningstar gives a brief exposition of the way he developed Alexander Lowen's ideas about body types to systematise his observations about styles of breathing patterns, "It is the mind and its pattern of thought which manifests into a body and its way of breathing." (p. 181) The types are described and ways of rebirthing them are suggested and illustrated with case histories. He writes about professional training, establishing a practice, and listening to one's inner guidance, "The ultimate trainer in rebirthing is the spirit of breathing each person." (p. 204)

The final chapter, 'The Birth of Transformations Incorporated and Community Rebirthing at Rebirth Trainings' is devoted to how he started his centre and his teaching and training programme. The importance of working in a group is described here. There is one appendix on 'Rebirthing through Pregnancy and Delivery,' and another on the three year programme of his school.

Morningstar calls rebirthing "the oldest profession," "Assisting others in the process of breathing fully and freely while affirming their safety in body, mind and spirit is the goal of the rebirther or breath guide. This is symbolically the oldest profession, initiated by God in the creation of Adam. God taught Adam to put life into his mud." (p. 161)

In this good, sensible, grounded exposition of rebirthing theory is clearly expounded, the spiritual element is honoured, and every point is illustrated by a coherent case history. This makes it an outstanding book on this subject. It should be a text book wherever rebirthing and breathwork are taught and studied.

Reviewed by **Joy Manné.**

Swami Ambikananda Saraswati, *Principles of Breathwork*. London: Thorsons, 1999.

This book is one of the latest in the *Principles of...* series by Thorsons. As such it follows a format in relation to structure, style and length that is common to all books in the series. *Principles of...* are small books - this one is 142 pages - that aim at being simple introductions to various techniques and disciplines that broadly fall into the category of alternative therapies. They are usually concise, well-written, accessible and informative and this one is no exception to the rule.

Principles of Breathwork is written by Swami Ambikananda Saraswati, a yoga teacher, acupuncturist and herbalist who, after many years of study, came to realise that “breath is pivotal to both our physical well-being and our pathway to freedom, and it is the place where all healing paradigms, from modern technological medicine to the most esoteric and ancient medical systems, converge.” (p. 10) This statement forms the remit of the book. It is a very large area for one small book to cover, too large one might think, but the author has a go at it anyway. And she succeeds surprisingly well.

After some preliminary information on breathing the book begins quite literally at the beginning. It takes us back 4,500 million years to an uninhabitable earth and proceeds to describe the development of life forms out of this volcanic wasteland. These early single cell forms turned carbon dioxide into oxygen and life as we know it began. Oxygen was the key to the development of life on earth and the author very skilfully weaves this central theme through a brief history of time that encompasses western science, eastern spiritual and developmental practices, psychotherapy, bodywork and medicine. There are fourteen pages devoted to this subject and as it is a lot to cover in such a small space so nothing is examined in any great depth. Still, it is very well done and is certainly enough to whet the reader’s appetite for more. I particularly liked the parallels drawn between the development of the human embryo in the womb and the broader process of evolution and the central role oxygen and breathing play in both. By the end of the first chapter we’ve got the message. Respiration is fundamental to every aspect of life on earth.

At this point the author pulls away from her broad canvas and focuses in much finer detail on the process of respiration itself. The book gives a good account, in accessible language, of internal and external respiration and the essential balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood. It also links imbalances in this to the stress response and to a variety of symptoms well documented in other literature as the results of hyperventilation. This is one of the most accessible accounts of hyperventilation I’ve come across. However, in referring to a client called Steve, the author attributes his panic attacks to “...taking in more oxygen than he could convert to carbon dioxide and more oxygen than he required for his metabolic needs.” (p. 28) Anything I’ve read on this subject (e.g. Robert Fried, *Breathe Well, Be Well*; Gay Hendricks, *Conscious Breathing: Breathwork for Health, Stress Release, and Personal Mastery*. New York: Bantam, 1995; etc.) links hyperventilation with the depletion of carbon dioxide due to faulty breathing patterns that place too much emphasis on the exhale or the speed of breathing, not to taking in more oxygen than necessary for current activity. Perhaps it is the same thing but, like a lot of other literature on this subject, this section of the book leaves a lot of

questions unanswered. Given the limitations of space, this book does a very good job in dealing with a complex material.

After concentrating on the biological details of respiration the author broadens her focus yet again by describing the body-mind connection and the role breathing plays in mental and emotional well-being. Here she acknowledges the work of Reich, Lowen and Alexander as well as the practice of yoga as a means of healing both mind and body. She is very clear that “The mind does not ‘act’ on the body...the division [between mind and body] has no meaning. There is a whole organism at work.” (p.63) This contention is supported by references to science and philosophy from Plato to quantum physics. Again, given the limitations of the format these cannot be explored in any depth. This unity of mind and body is explained by means of case histories and exercises which allow the readers to experience the effect that visualising two different scenarios has on their breathing. Freer breathing heals the whole organism.

To facilitate freer breathing, relaxation exercises for seven different segments of the body are explained and supported with diagrams. In each segment the author describes the kind of ‘body armouring’ that both produces and is the result of stresses of various kinds. She links armouring and restricted breathing to emotional trauma, suppression, child rearing practices and physical restrictions as simple as ill fitting shoes, etc. Changes in breathing patterns can help resolve physical stresses in the body as well as old trauma that may have originated or played a part in the armouring of the muscles.

From this physical/emotional plane the author then expands her focus yet again returning to the more cosmic arena where the book began. In a chapter called The Soul of Breathing she looks at the relationship between the breath and the life force. While acknowledging the contributions of Freud and Lacan she focuses on the tantric system, prana and tattva. This world view is explained with clarity and simplicity within the restrictions of the format.

This is an excellent little book, particularly for people who know little about breathwork and the vital role breathing plays in every aspect of a person’s life. It is well-written, draws in an impressive array of references and on a practical level provides a range of exercises for readers to try for themselves.

However, as a rebirther I found one very glaring omission. While the Buteyko method for control of asthma and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy are explored in some detail, there is no reference anywhere in the book to either Rebirthing or Holotropic Breathwork. This omission is even more obvious because the author freely acknowledges that breathing can give access to the realms of emotion and stored memory. Given her obviously extensive background knowledge it seem strange then that she would not be familiar with two breathing techniques whose focus is this particular aspect of personal growth. Perhaps this has something to do with her commitment to slow nasal breathing into the abdomen paying due respect to the natural pauses between breaths. Unfortunately restricting the range of techniques in this way greatly narrows the scope of the book and sets limits to the seemingly unlimited potential of breathwork. The subtitle of the book is ‘The Only Introduction You’ll Ever Need’. This omission means that an otherwise excellent little book does not live up to its title.

Reviewed by **Catherine Dowling**.

Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentyne, M.D. & Alan Hymes, M.D. *Science of Breath: A Practical Guide*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania: The Himalayan Institute Press, 1998. (First ed. 1979)

This is a revised edition of the 1979 book of the same title. It consists of four chapters, one by each of the authors and one that is not attributed. Its Foreword claims that it is “an introduction to the immense subject of how yogis regulate prana through the science of breath, written in terms a Westerner can understand.” (p. ix) Swami Rama, it tells us, was raised in a Himalayan cave and trained in the closely guarded secrets of yoga from boyhood.” In 1970 he was tested in an American research laboratory “where he simulated death by virtually stopping his brain waves and heart beat – and yet remained fully conscious of events occurring around him.” (p.vii) The introduction by Dr John Clarke, M.D. tells us that this book is “an examination of the breath – how it integrates different levels of our being into a functional whole, the nature of the interactions occurring on various levels, and some practical methods for modifying these interactions. ... Precisely because its ripples influence so many human functions, a thorough understanding of the breath provides a powerful tool for expanding our awareness of the various dimensions of the body and mind. It is also useful as a therapeutic modality. ” (p. xi) The relationship between emotions and the breath and the “language” potential of the breath are recognised. (p. xiii, cf pp. 7, 36, 83, etc.) The central thesis of this book is “that the breath is the link between the body and mind,” (p. xiii) and its goal “to present theoretical knowledge regarding the breath in such a way that it can be applied as a tool for personal growth.” (p. xiv) This is, therefore, a modern adaptation of yoga, which originally was a tool rather for *impersonal* growth into detachment and liberation.

For people who have ever wondered how safe experimentation with the breath, at least physically there is no danger, “depending on one’s proficiency in dealing with the breath, the rate and depth of breathing can be altered, but involuntary reflex activity limits the degree to which this can occur. (p. xii, 40)

Chapter One, ‘Why Bother with the Breath? Yoga and the Body of Energy’ begins with a justification for devoting a whole book to the subject of breathing. In 1979, the time of the first edition, this may have been necessary, but now there are very many books with many different approaches to the breath available. In the discussion of the mind-body problem which follows there is a similar problem. The writer’s assertion that the Western scientific perspective is based primarily on the study of material phenomena is no longer true. This too has changed considerably since 1979. Further, the assertion that “in the West we remain confused about the relationship between the mental realm and the tangible world,” (p. 3) is simplistic and out of date too. Consciousness studies are advancing rapidly in the west and there is the free admission that the final answer is not known. Nor is it in the ‘East’(if “the West” is a category, this must be one too) where the religions and psychology: Yoga, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, etc.; which have observed the mind through various meditation and other techniques, have come to no final consensus on the mind-body relationship. “The Upanishads,” which the author casually refers to *en masse* (p. 7), were composed over a period of **2000** years (there are early and late Upanishads) and do not agree with each other on all points either. There is no reason to denigrate other efforts in order to promote the yoga view, which is, in any case,

this particular yoga view put forward by a particular yogic school. It is useful to remember that all schools of yoga do not agree on all points.

This yogic school explains that the mind and body interrelate through an intermediate layer of functioning involving energy called prana which they compare to Freud's concept of libido. (Here's an example that disproves all the claims that "the West" does not deal with these problems.) "Breath is the vehicle for prana," and "prana is called the vital link between psyche and soma." (p. 7) The author rightly says, "We indicate through our language an intuitive recognition of the relationship between the inspiration, expiration, and the vital energy necessary for life and creativity," it is right, and there is a growing literature on this subject (see e.g. my article 'Breath is a Language' in *The Healing Breath*, Volume 1, No. 3 at www.i-breathe.com/thb13/index.htm.) of which the writer is obviously ignorant s/he has not bothered to check on developments since the first edition.

The author describes the flow of energy through the body as perceived by this school of yoga. S/He shows not awareness that Chinese medicine too is concerned with the flow of energy through the human body. That the breath supports the metabolic processes of the body is known also in "the West," (see, e.g. Robert Fried, Ph.D. (1990), *The Breath Connection: How to Reduce Psychosomatic and Stress-related Disorders with Easy-to-do Breathing Exercises*. New York: Plenum Press), as is the effect on the body and the breath of shock and trauma in our language (We become *choked with emotion*; we advise a person who has had a shock and who is stressed, to *take a deep breath*, so that they can recover their breathing rhythm and their composure.), and, i.a., in the work of Wilhelm Reich and Alexander Lowen's development of it into Bioenergetics. Lowen and his work are acknowledged by the author of Chapter Two. (p. 37)

There are also sections on the Cosmic Breath and Developing Breath Awareness.

This chapter should have been revised and brought up to date with the re-edition of this book. Its good and interesting information in this chapter is lost in superstition and misinformation. If you believe it, you are gullible. If you want to remedy that, go to the secondary literature on Yoga and explore the field, and read too about Western Breathwork.

Chapter Two, 'Respiration and the Chest: The Mechanisms of Breathing,' is written by Alan Hymes, M.D. The physiology of breathing is described and illustrated with diagrams. There is a section on Breathing Habits which underlines the importance of diaphragmatic breathing. In this section there are many good indications on how to observe the breath, e.g. "Is it smooth and continuous or irregular and choppy?" (p. 41) and a description of paradoxical breathing. (p.40f) This is a very good chapter, and could well be on the set list of any Rebirthing/Breathwork school.

Chapter Three, 'Following Your Nose: Nasal Function and Energy' is by Rudolph Ballentyne, M.D. This is a very interesting chapter which explains fully the work of the nose. Every time I read this chapter I am intrigued. I would summarise the whole chapter if did not limit myself to one example here. Ballentyne points out that the floor of the nose is the roof of the mouth, and the roof of the nose is the floor of the brain and the cavities that house the eye-balls, so "we are speaking of a three-story structure, ... That puts the internal nose in an interesting place since anything going on inside of it is closely related to the brain, the nervous system, the pituitary gland ... and many other strategic structures." (p. 48) The role of the nasal mucus as an eliminatory system, and its relation-

ship to health, diet, colds and constipation is explained. There is a justification for a nasal wash – the tears do that all the time anyway – and instructions are given. There is an interaction between the sexual organs and the nose which also contains erectile tissue which Freud too was conscious of. There is a natural biological rhythm, the infradian rhythm, which governs alternation in nostril predominance which was known to ancient yogis. Each nostril influences different psychological and physical functions. The yoga exercise for *Nadi Shodanam*, alternative nostril breathing, is described with some of the advantages of choosing through which nostril to breath, e.g. the right one helps digestion. (p. 67) The shape of the inner passage ways of the nose shapes the airflow within it, and this in turn influences character, as some nasal surgeons have discovered.

Chapter Four, 'Portal to Higher Awareness: The Science of Breath,' is by Swami Rama. It opens with a definition of *pranayama*, especially, "it is through the control of respiration that the yogi proceeds to control the other subtle energies of prana." (p. 74) There is an outline of the relationship between *pranayama* and the nervous system, including a brief description of some of the many *nadis* (they vary according to the yoga manual) of yoga anatomy, and the chakra system, each of the latter illustrated with a diagramme. Once again there are competitive claims: "Yoga anatomy and physiology are clear and accurate to those who systematically study and practice the science of yoga, and they find that it reveals more about the internal functioning of the human body than any modern scientific experiment or explanation." (p. 80) The section on Basic Breathing and Cleansing Techniques includes water cleansing where we read the following proviso: "Personal instruction in this technique from a qualified teacher is recommended before attempting it on your own." (p. 85) This warning is not given in Ballentyne's chapter where the same practice is described. The importance of diaphragmatic breathing is explained and a number of yoga and other exercises to teach and strengthen this are given and illustrated. *Nadi shodanam* is taught with no reference to its description in a previous chapter. There are various other yogic breathing exercises and some postures for meditation, and some further repetition of the information in the 2nd and 3rd chapters.

This is an irregular book. Hymes' and Ballentyne's chapters are exemplary while the competing with "the West" in the non-attributed and the Swami's chapter are sectarian and old-fashioned. Swami Rama, like so many other gurus, has since been discredited for sexually abusing his followers.

Although I think the Himalaya Institute could have come out with a much better book than this reissue, the good chapters and the collection of breathing exercises in Swami Rama's chapter make this a book worth having. You can also use the non-attributed chapter as a personal gullibility test.

Reviewed by **Joy Manné**.

Denis Lewis, *The Tao of Natural Breathing*, with a forward by Master Mantak Chia. San Francisco, CA: Mountain Wind Publishing, 1997.

This is an excellent and indispensable book for all practitioners of Breathwork, whatever their chosen method and should be on the reading list of all Breathwork schools. It is clearly written and full of interesting exercises you will certainly want to try.

Lewis is trained in the Taoist tradition by Master Mantak Chia. He is also informed about other systems and teachings including Gurdjieff Work, Advaita Vedanta, Feldenkreis® and Ilse Middendorf, as well as anatomy, physiology and neurochemistry. His philosophy is that “poor breathing habits ... (arise) out of psychosomatic ‘ignorance,’ our lack of organic awareness, ... (as well as) out of our unconscious need for a buffering mechanism to keep us from sensing and feeling the reality of our own deep-rooted fears and contradictions. ... *Superficial breathing ensures a superficial experience of ourselves.*” (15) No Breathworker would disagree with this!

In his introduction, Lewis discusses the various warnings that have been given regarding the dangers of changing one’s breathing, particularly through yoga exercises. Chapter I explains the mechanisms of breathing. Chapter 2 explains the Taoist perspective that our organism is a microcosm of the universe. Obviously, we need to develop sensory awareness if we want to be able to listen to our body, observe our breath, and become sensitive to the relationship between our breath and our emotions. Lewis observes that hyperventilation is intimately bound up with our anxieties, fears and emotions. (54) There is an exercise for sensing one’s internal organs and any emotions that may be connected to them. In Chapter 3 Lewis discusses the relationship between energy and breath – *prana* and *chi*. Chapter 4 explains how to breathe using one’s whole body. Chapter 5 is about achieving spacious breathing. Chapter 6 has the lovely title “The Smiling Breath.” It explains how the energy produced when we smile can be breathed into our organs for healing purposes. Chapter 7 teaches us how to create energy harmony by circulating our breath through the two main psychic channels to create the “microscopic orbit.”

There are many interesting remarks about the symbolism of inspiration and expiration. One example is, “the extent and comfort of our inspiration reflects our readiness and ability to embrace life at that moment.” (54)

Every chapter of this beautifully produced book ends with section on “Practice” which contains relevant exercises that are well-explained through clear diagrams. There is an Appendix with specialized breathing practices and an Index, and the footnotes refer to a rich Bibliography.

I am trained as a Rebirther and I have incorporated the Vipassana approach into my practice of Breathwork. This is the first book on Taoist breathing I have read. I was pleasantly surprised to find in it exercises I have used spontaneously for myself and with my clients, e.g. placing palms over the navel to draw the breath into the belly. (105) I could give many more examples. With regard to the psychology of Breathwork, there are many sentences that could have come from any good book on Rebirthing or Conscious Breathing Techniques. This confirms what I have been discovering recently and have begun to research further and to write about – there is “only one breath.”

Reviewed by **Joy Manné.**