

The Healing Breath

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REBIRTHING – AN ORPHAN THERAPY OR A PART OF THE FAMILY OF PSYCHOTHERAPIES?¹

BY
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To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. (Oscar Wilde, *The importance of being Earnest, Act I*)

The first book published about Rebirthing is called *Rebirthing For The New Age* and was written by Leonard Orr and Sondra Ray and published in 1977 (revised edition 1983). The second is called *Rebirthing : The Science Of Enjoying All Of Your Life* and was published in 1983 by Jim Leonard and Phil Laut, who now call the type of Rebirthing they do Vivation. In Orr & Ray (henceforth frequently O&R), Leonard Orr is acknowledged as the founder of Rebirthing. There are no other acknowledgements in that book with regard to influences upon Rebirthing,² although a relationship with psychoanalysis and psychotherapy is alluded to in the following comparison which is written with reference to the trauma of painful memories which frequently come back through Rebirthing:

Rebirthing is focussed on releasing rather than on re-experiencing the trauma. ... If psychoanalysis and psychotherapy are like diligently picking through your psychological garbage in an attempt to understand it, then rebirthing (in most cases) is like carrying out your garbage in one fell swoop. (p. 88)

“In most cases”. Is this in fact an acknowledgement that in the remaining cases Rebirthing is like psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, so that these are among its parents and ancestors?

The influence of Babaji on Leonard Orr and Sondra Ray is acknowledged in many places in this book

In Leonard & Laut, Leonard Orr is once again acknowledged as the founder of Rebirthing. I have found no reference to other therapies in this book.

Is Rebirthing really an orphan therapy as these books seem to indicate? Has it really no roots in the development of psychotherapy, which, James Hillman and Michael Ventura (1993) tell us, has gone on for 100 years “– and the world is getting worse.”

Nicholas Albery, in his book *How To Feel Reborn: Varieties Of Rebirthing Experience – An Exploration Of Rebirthing And Associated Primal Therapies, The Benefits And The Dangers, The Facts And The Fictions*, comments that “New therapies and new techniques often emphasise their newness by not fully acknowledging their indebtedness

¹ This article was first published in the International Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine, Vol.6 (1994), No. 4, 503-517. It is republished here with a few emendations.

² Leboyer's *Birth without Violence* is mentioned on p.xx and Janov's *Primal Scream* is mentioned on p.19, but neither is acknowledged as a source or as an inspiration for Rebirthing.

to their predecessors.” (p.19) Albery discusses some of the roots of Rebirthing. So does Irène Abbondio in her excellent monograph, *Traumatisme de la naissance et souffle dans la psychologie occidentale : manual de référence à l’usage des Thérapeutes du Souffle* (1994).

Rebirthing is practised in many countries. The first book, Orr & Ray, already claimed that approximately half a million people had been rebirthed. (p. 173) The second book, Leonard & Laut, in which “rebirthing” was awarded its capital letter claims that Rebirthing “has been used successfully by millions of people throughout the world.” (p. xii) These numbers are certainly exaggerated and may be taken to designate “a lot” in American culture, just as in the Buddhist texts certain numbers like 1250 or 500 designate simply “a lot” and are not to be taken literally.³ Certainly there are enough people who practise Rebirthing, i.e. who receive Rebirthing sessions, give Rebirthing sessions and teach Rebirthing, for it to warrant taking seriously. The Rebirthers themselves have taken themselves seriously, and at a conference in Sweden in July-August 1994 founded *The International Breathwork Foundation*⁴ which has among its goals making Rebirthing more widely known, research, documentation, professionalism and international co-operation. It’s annual conference attracted more than 200 people in 2001. The International Breathwork Alliance was founded in 2001 to standardise breathwork trainings world-wide.

Perhaps, if the “orphan therapy” that Rebirthing seems to be can find its parent therapies, and thus its roots, it will be able to grow in the way that I myself, many other Rebirthers and breathworkers, International Breathwork Foundation and the Breathwork Alliance would like it to. The interests in research of these groups require Rebirthing to have roots in other theories, therapies and practices. Rebirthing’s connection to other theories, therapies and practices requires recognition from them so that they, in return, can become more effective through assimilating some of its methods.

For the purposes of this paper I will take several prominent aspects of Rebirthing and show that they have in fact respectable roots – as Jack Worthing turned out to have in Oscar Wilde’s play *The Importance of Being Earnest* – in psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and in the mystical traditions of many religions.

Rebirthing not only has ancestors but it has descendants. By placing Rebirthing in the family of therapies to which it belongs its contribution can better be recognised, and we can better develop the training of Rebirthers and thus the way Rebirthing is practised. We can also suggest those other methods which could usefully incorporate Rebirthing techniques.

WHAT IS REBIRTHING?

This question cannot be answered in full in one article. I have written about it in the article in *Breathe: The International Breathwork Magazine*, (1994) and in my book, *Soul Therapy* (1997). It is not a simple question to answer and my purpose here is only to establish some aspects of the parentage and the heritage of Rebirthing. What I will say is

³ Manné, 1990, pp. 45, ii; 49, c. These numbers frequently designate the size of the Buddha's following, especially during debates with members of other religions.

⁴ Information can be obtained from www.ibfnetwork.org.

that it is a very powerful, interesting and important method of psychotherapy and of personal and spiritual development based upon breathwork, whose potential and effects have barely begun to be seriously described.

Rebirthing is particularly identified with being a breathing technique which brings about regression so that memories of the Rebirthee's birth trauma and of other traumas previously unconscious become accessible to consciousness. Rebirthee is the usual term for the person receiving the Rebirthing session. Rebirthing recognises that people repeat unproductive behaviour patterns and works with these through the breath, through relationship trainings and through affirmations. The repetition of unproductive behaviour patterns is known technically in psychoanalysis as the Repetition Compulsion. Rebirthing leads to a large variety of altered states of consciousness, to what Maslow called peak experiences (1968), to transpersonal states and to ecstatic experiences. It is these aspects of Rebirthing and their roots in other therapies and practices that I will write about in this paper under the following headings: (1) Rebirthing and breathing methods, (2) Rebirthing and the birth trauma, (3) Rebirthing and regression, (4) Rebirthing and the Repetition Compulsion, and (5) Rebirthing and spiritual development.

I am purposefully avoiding what Albery calls "*the Wilder Fringes*" (pp. 67-83) of Rebirthing, such as Orr & Ray's ideas about Physical Immortality (although I suspect that someone with enthusiasm for this subject will be able to relate it to Freud's concepts of the Death Urge and the Pleasure Principle), and the first 42 pages of Leonard & Laut which purport to explain all of life and which I find unreadable.

These first books about Rebirthing are not easy to read because of their "wilder fringes". Nevertheless they contain a considerable amount of interesting and useful material. I hope that through my training in philology I will be able to reveal some of this in what follows.

1. Rebirthing And Breathing Methods

Rebirthing is also called "conscious breathing" or "energy breathing" or "a relaxed, continuous breathing rhythm." (Orr in O&R, xvii.)

The potential parent of this aspect of Rebirthing might be Arthur Janov who is known for having invented Primal Scream therapy or Primal therapy.

Janov gives the impression that he would like to have been the father of Rebirthing. In fact, in the 1970's he came near to inventing it with his Primal Scream Therapy and his birth trauma work.⁵ Chapter 9 of his book *The Primal Scream* could almost be about Rebirthing:

"The technique of deep breathing is used during Primal Therapy to get the patient closer to his feelings. .. patients reported the differences in their breathing after therapy; only after they had begun to breathe deeply did they understand how shallow their breathing had been previously. ..

⁵ See Albery, Chapter 2, pp. 19-66 for a full and interesting discussion of the relationship between Primal Scream therapy and Rebirthing. Pp.41-66 contain a discussion between Albery and Janov, commented upon by Leonard Orr, Eve Jones and Avoda Judith Collignon. The two latter are prominent practitioners of Rebirthing.

Proper breathing should be instinctual.. forcing the Primal patient to breath deeply often helps lift the lid of repression. The result is the emission of explosive force, .. Primal breathing techniques become the *via regia* to the Pain, unblocking memories along the way. .. they are the pathway to the unconscious.

It is tempting to minimize the Primal experience as simply a result of the hyperventilation syndrome ..

In the majority of cases, breathing techniques are either not necessary or rarely used after the first few days of therapy. It must be remembered that it is the Pain we are after and that breathing is one of many devices we use to arrive at it.” (1973, p.125f)

The indispensable element in a Rebirthing session is the breathing technique. Janov came near, but did not quite invent Rebirthing, as his last paragraph clearly shows. This makes him very cross, and he blames others for misinforming him:

“When I started out we were told that it was impossible for a person to re-live his birth because the nervous system was not sufficiently mature at the time to record usable memories. I discounted the event of birth for years due to that misinformation. We know now that the birth trauma is indeed coded and stored in the nervous system. A whole cottage industry of re-birthers has grown up around my discoveries, leading to the most dangerous kind of charlatanism.” (1991, p. xii)

Here Janov tries to claim Rebirthing as his offspring. The fact that he is so very angry about not being recognised as the inventor of Rebirthing tells us how important and how powerful a therapy he thinks Rebirthing is.

For various reasons the Rebirthing method of breathing has become identified with hyperventilation. Orr & Ray claims its importance,⁶ yet, not all of the case histories in their book relate the results of Rebirthing to hyperventilation.⁷ Leonard & Laut dismiss it as unnecessary in just one paragraph. (p. 51) There are also many passages like the following in both Orr & Ray and Leonard & Laut:

“Rebirthing is primarily a relaxed, continuous breathing rhythm in which the inhale is connected to the exhale in a continuous circle. This rhythm has to be intuitive, because the purpose of the breathing is to breathe life energy as well as air. Breathing life energy cannot be done with a mechanical breathing technique. Energy is the source of the physical body and the universe. The breathing mechanism is a vehicle to reach aliveness, but it is not automatic. spiritual breathing is intuitive, it is an inspiration, not a discipline. The key to success at conscious breathing is softness and gentleness.” (Orr, in O&R, xvii)

⁶ O&R, pp. 20, 173-179; Albery, Chapter 4, pp. 84-120.

⁷ E.g. Sondra's does (O&R, p. xxiif) while Rick's (O&R, pp.115-123) and Gary's (O&R, pp.123-138) do not, etc.

I have argued against the use of hyperventilation, which I see as a way of raping the unconscious (see 1994, 1997, 1999).

Perhaps this identification with hyperventilation is the Janov element in Rebirthing's heritage: its Janov gene!

Of course neither Janov nor anyone else invented working with the breath. As long ago as ancient India, Buddhism and Yoga and other disciplines recognised the importance of the breath, and based their methods and techniques for spiritual development upon it. The famous Buddhist text that explains the traditional Vipassana exercise of attention on the breath is described as follows in the Pali Buddhist sutras. The Buddha is speaking:

There is one *dhamma*, Monks, which when developed and practised frequently is very fruitful and deserves great praise. What is this one *dhamma*? It is mindfulness of breathing. And how, Monks, is mindfulness of breathing developed? How does it become very fruitful and deserving of great praise when practised frequently?

This is how. A monk goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an uninhabited place and sits with his legs crossed, and with his body erect he generates mindfulness and being mindful he breathes in and being mindful he breathes out.

As he breathes in a long breath he recognises that he is breathing in a long breath; as he breathes out a long breath, he recognises that he is breathing out a long breath. As he breathes in a short breath he recognises that he is breathing in a short breath; as he breathes out a short breath, he recognises that he is breathing out a short breath.

He trains himself to breath in experiencing his whole body and to breath out experiencing his whole body. He trains himself to breath in calming bodily activity and to breath out calming bodily activity.

He trains himself to breath in experiencing joy and to breath out experiencing joy; to breath in experiencing happiness and to breath out experiencing happiness.

He trains himself to breath in experiencing mental activity and to breath out experiencing mental activity; to breath in calming mental activity and to breath out calming mental activity; to breath in experiencing mind and to breath out experiencing mind.⁸

He trains himself to breath in pleasing the mind, and to breath out pleasing the mind; to breath in concentrating the mind and to breath out concentrating the mind; to breath in releasing the mind and to breath out releasing the mind.

He trains himself to breath in observing impermanence and to breath out observing impermanence; to breath in observing freedom from passion and to breath out observing freedom from passion; to breath in observing cessation and to breath out observing cessation; to breath in ob-

⁸ Experiencing mind only experienced Rebirthers can do, who can watch the contents of their mind go past without being disturbed emotionally or physically or with regard to their concentration.

serving renunciation and to breath out observing renunciation.” *Majjhima-Nik~y~ III*, pp.82f, my translation.

Many people who have done Rebirthing will recognise some of the experiences described in this passage, such as recognising the type of breathing, breathing in such a way as to experience the whole body and breathing in such a way as to experience joy, etc. I have written more about this in my article ‘Only One Breath: Buddhist Breathwork and the Nature of Consciousness’ (1999) With regard to other ancient methods of using the breath, Gunnel Minett has written about Chinese breathing methods and about Kundalini in her book, *Breath and Spirit : Rebirthing as a healing technique*. (pp. 37-49)

Janov is one potential ancestor of Rebirthing. In the history of psychoanalysis, the importance of the breath as a tool for the release of tension was recognised already by Wilhelm Reich, once an orthodox Freudian,⁹ and by his student Alexander Lowen who created Bio-Energetics. Reich and Lowen are also potential ancestors of Rebirthing, at least with regard to the use of the breath in therapy, as are Georg Groddeck, Fritz Perls and other Gestaltists.¹⁰ The ancient Indian methods for spiritual development based upon the breath, which were becoming increasingly widely known in America at the time that Rebirthing was invented are other potential ancestors. Thus, with regard to the use of the breath in therapy, we may conclude that Rebirthing has a very respectable pedigree.

2. Rebirthing And The Birth Trauma

Rebirthing is particularly connected with recovering memories of the birth trauma:

The word rebirthing was originally used because we used redwood hot tubs to stimulate birth memories and people literally rewrote their birth scripts in the subconscious. A hot tub is a simulated womb. (Orr, in O&R, pp. xvii, xx-xxiv)

Rebirthing recognises the importance of the birth trauma in the formation of character and in its influence over the way people live their lives:

The purpose of rebirthing is to remember and re-experience one’s birth; to relieve it physiologically, psychologically, and spiritually the moment of one’s first breath and release the trauma of it. The process begins the transformation of the subconscious impression of birth from one of primal pain to one of pleasure. the effects on life are immediate. Negative energy patterns held in the mind and body start to dissolve. “Youthing” replaces aging and life becomes more fun. It is learning how to fill the physical body with divine energy on a practical daily basis. (O&R, p. 71)

⁹ Brown, 1964, p. 100.

¹⁰ See Abbondio, Chapter *Les Psychothérapies centrées sur le corps*, pp. 9 - 15.

The potential parent of birth trauma psychology is Wilhelm Rank, one of Freud's early followers, who had the theory that all neurosis originates in the trauma of birth.¹¹ Orr himself admits admiration for Nandor Fodor, a New York analyst influenced by Rank,¹² whose book, *The Search for the Beloved*, he describes as "the best book written so far about birth trauma."¹³ D. W. Winnicott also took seriously the influence of the type of birth a baby has upon her or his future life and problems.¹⁴ During the last fifteen or twenty years, research into the life, functioning and capacities of the baby from conception onwards has increased¹⁵ and goes on increasing.¹⁶ I do not know how it is possible for anyone who has read this research to have any doubt at all that conception, gestation and birth influence the life of the human being. On the subject of birth trauma psychology, Rebirthing has a respectable pedigree, and many brothers and sisters.

As among the practitioners of all therapies, there are black sheep in the family. These should not be the excuse to execute the whole family, nor - if you will forgive me - to throw the very promising, healthy baby away with the bath water! When Yapko refers to "a therapy called rebirthing and reparenting .. which involved guiding the individual back in time in order to relive the process of being born" (p. 62) or to "a therapeutic process commonly called #rebirthing' in which a therapist tells the client she "must have (had) a traumatic birth", he is scape-goating or gossiping and this is disappointing in an otherwise remarkably sensitive, intelligent and well-balanced book. All therapies that work with the birth trauma, or which "guide" clients back to their birth trauma or to anything else are not Rebirthing, or hypnosis, or Voice Dialogue, or Freudian analysis, etc., nor does every qualified Rebirther necessarily or invariably use Rebirthing to "guide" the client back to her/his birth trauma, or anywhere else for that matter.

3. Rebirthing And Regression

Regression, not only to the birth trauma but also to other childhood traumas is a fundamental part of the Rebirthing experience.

If people experience their birth in rebirthing, they may go on to re-experience various periods of infancy which are wrought with feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. These periods can last for weeks and are sometimes accompanied by symptoms ... (O&R, 95)

Regression is known to take place during psychoanalysis and during almost every other psychotherapy. Regression means going back to a painful event that took place in the past, and that has been forgotten or repressed, so that it comes back into consciousness on all levels and in full detail. The remembering can involve re-experiencing the event in detail including physical pain and other symptoms, hearing again the sounds that

¹¹ Rank (1924), see Brown, 1964, p.52-54.

¹² Brown, 1964, p.54.

¹³ Albery, 1985 p. 64.

¹⁴ Winnicott, 1958, cited in Abbondio, 1994, p.7.

¹⁵ See Albery, 1985, pp. 121-148. Abbondio, 1994, pp. 34-41.

¹⁶ See e.g. *Pre- and Perinatal Psychology Journal* and *Primal Health Research* among others.

are part of the memory, etc. Regression can also mean going back to an infantile way of functioning. Regression is an essential part of therapies that believe that painful experiences that are unconscious need to become conscious so that their influence can be integrated and the individual become free of it. Some therapies take a positive attitude towards regression and find it empowering. Others take a negative view and find it disempowering. One may deduce from this that judgements about the usefulness of regression as a psychotherapeutic experience depend upon the theories, the school and, above all, upon the competence of the practitioner to work with this phenomenon and the efficiency of the technique for dealing with it, rather than upon a solid theoretical basis.

There are therapies today which are abusing the capacity for regression by inducing it under unreliable conditions. The book *True Stories of False Memories* by Eleanor Goldstein, and Kevin Farmer cites examples of people being persuaded that they had been sexually abused i.a. during hypnotherapy or under the influence of a supposed “truth drug”. The memories that these particular forms of induced regression are supposed to give access to are increasingly considered unreliable due to their vulnerability to influence by the therapist.¹⁷

The ubiquity of the phenomenon of regression in therapy is one further element that puts the erstwhile orphan, Rebirthing, into a family of therapies, a family which, in the case of this subject too seems to include several black sheep!¹⁸

With regard to regression in therapy, the Rebirthing method has something important to offer. Historically, birth memories were induced in Rebirthing, either through the use of sleeping bags to stimulate the womb experience (O&R, p. xxi) or through reading Leboyer (O&R, p. 124) or through strong, connected breathing with a snorkel in a hot tub. This is quite unnecessary. In fact, all the client has to do is to put her or his attention on their breathing, in the neutral manner described in the Buddhist text cited above, i.e.,

As he breathes in a long breath he recognises that he is breathing in a long breath; as he breathes out a long breath, he recognises that he is breathing out a long breath. As he breathes in a short breath he recognises that he is breathing in a short breath; as he breathes out a short breath, he recognises that he is breathing out a short breath,

and feelings in the body, memories and thoughts will become conscious. They will become conscious of their own accord without the use of suggestion. Without any suggestion or coercion, the body will find the breathing rhythm that is most conducive to the integration of the experience that is coming into consciousness. I have called this minimal method of working with the breath *Gentle Rebirthing* to distinguish it from *Traditional Rebirthing*, which is how I describe the Rebirthing that is based on strong connected breathing and hyperventilation. (1994, 1997) Some clients have to be taught to be aware of what is going on in their mind and body, in the same way as people have to be taught to meditate. In these cases regressions do not take place until the client has competence in self-awareness. This makes this way of working very safe. When we trust the uncon-

¹⁷ There has been a discussion of this in *The Therapist*, Volume 2, Nos. 1 and 2, 1994. See also *New Scientist*, 23 July 1994.

¹⁸ See Yapko, 1994.

scious and do not try to manipulate or to coerce it, it will open up and reveal its secrets in a balanced and healthy way so that the integration that the client is capable of can occur.¹⁹

In the context of regression, Rebirthing, especially *Gentle Rebirthing* is solidly part of the family of therapies that work well with this phenomenon.

4. Rebirthing And The Repetition Compulsion

I have said that those of Freud's ideas that are good and useful are now so much a part of our way of thinking that they have become part of our psychological common sense. (1997) This is certainly true of aspects of his observation of the *compulsion to repeat*.

Freud noticed a compulsion to repeat in normal people,

“all of whose relationships have the same outcome: such as the benefactor who is abandoned in anger after a time by each of his *protégés*, however much they may otherwise differ from one another, and who thus seems doomed to taste all the bitterness of ingratitude; or the man whose friendships all end in betrayal by his friend; or the man who time after time in the course of his life raises someone else into a position of great private or public authority and then, after a certain interval, himself upsets that authority and replaces him by a new one; or, again, the lover each of whose love affairs with a woman passes through the same phases and reaches the same conclusion.” (Freud, 1920, p. 292)²⁰

In these cases the compulsion to repeat is related to active behaviour, but Freud noticed that it also occurs as a passive experience, over which a person has no influence. He cites the case of “the woman who married three successive husbands each of whom fell ill soon afterwards and had to be nursed by her on their death-beds.” (op. cit. p. 293)

The compulsion to repeat occurs in the transference. (op. cit. p. 291) This means – and I do not know whether Freud said this or not, but enough analysts of all descriptions have observed this²¹ – that it will also occur in the counter-transference except in those rare practitioners who have gone beyond projection.

We now know that the compulsion to repeat causes family problems such as sexual and other abuse to repeat over generations just as genes cause families to be predisposed to certain illnesses.

Rebirthing recognises the compulsion to repeat and takes a practical approach to it through the breathing method, through relationship work and through exercises. The way the theory is presented can be very clear, if simplistic, or it can belong to what Albery politely calls *The Wilder Fringes*.

The compulsion to repeat is explained in the Rebirthing maxim “Thought is Creative”. What this means in Rebirthing terms is that “*Your thoughts always produce results!* .. Your positive thoughts produce positive results for you, and your negative thoughts

¹⁹ “The unconscious – that is to say, the ‘repressed’ – offers no resistance whatever to the efforts of the treatment. Indeed, it itself has no other endeavour than to break through the pressure weighing down on it and force its way either to consciousness or to a discharge through some real action.” Freud, 1920, p.189.

²⁰ Freud discusses the compulsion to repeat in terms of the pleasure principle.

²¹ Myers, 1992; Siegel and Lowe, 1993.

produce negative results.” (O&R, p. 53) The compulsion to repeat is treated first of all through becoming aware of the negative thoughts that are causing the unproductive situations and events to repeat and then through the use of autosuggestion in the form of Affirmations:

“An affirmation is a positive thought that you choose to immerse in your consciousness to produce a desired result.” (O&R, p. 65, their italics.)

“An affirmation is basically a good thought to hold in your mind.” (Leonard & Laut, p. 76)

So, for example, Sondra Ray had a tendency to smash up her car once a month, a pattern which she was unable to stop. Leonard Orr gave her the affirmation : “I now have a safe driving consciousness” to work on. Sondra stopped smashing up her car. (O&R, p. 2f) Both of the early books contain abundant information on how to use affirmations.²² Affirmations do not have to be used in a superficial or simplistic manner, although they often are. Well used, they are a way of gently and finely performing archaeology on the unconscious and can productively reveal thoughts and beliefs that have been very deeply hidden.²³

The compulsion to repeat unproductive behaviour patterns that regularly spoil relationships is treated in Sondra Ray’s book, *Loving Relationships*. This book contains a great deal of useful information, good advice and exercises, and not too much *wilder fringe* material.

That what and how we think has a great deal of influence over our lives and causes us to repeat unproductive behaviour patterns has become common knowledge in the almost twenty years since the first Rebirthing book was published and it was not new then.²⁴ Combined with techniques like creative visualisation, affirmations are now used in almost all of the new therapies and also in medical circumstances: for example, to fight cancer.²⁵ In its recognition of the compulsion to repeat, Rebirthing has respectable ancestors and, in its way of dealing with it, many siblings.

5. Rebirthing And Spiritual Development

Rebirthing has from the beginning been connected with spiritual development. Leonard Orr is described by Sondra Ray as someone who read metaphysical books who, and from the beginning, gave his students books like *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East* to read. (O&R, p. 19)

The energy release is one among very many examples of moving spiritual experiences that happen through Rebirthing. It is described in this way,

²² O&R, pp. 65-69, etc.; Leonard & Laut, pp. 76f, 115-143.

²³ See Manné, 1997.

²⁴ See Albery, p.19. Orr's exposition of the notion that thoughts are creative also contains similarities to Kelly's Personal Construct Theory.

²⁵ Simonton et al, 1978.

“At some point in rebirthing there is a reconnection to Divine Energy and as a result you may experience vibrating and tingling in your body. It starts in different places in different people and, before rebirthing is complete, it usually is felt throughout the whole body. This energy reconnects your body to the universal energy by vibrating out tension which is the manifestation of negative mental mass. Negative mental mass can be permanently dissolved by continuing to breathe in a regular rhythm while your body is vibrating and tingling - experiencing your reconnection to the Divine Energy.” (O&R, p. 83)

All religions and spiritual practices that use the breath in any way in order to attain altered states of consciousness share the parentage of this aspect of Rebirthing. I have quoted from a Theravada Buddhist texts above simply because I happen to know these texts well. Experts on other texts could have found interesting and relevant material from their study and discipline.²⁶ With regard to its recognition of the importance and indeed the necessity of spiritual experiences, Rebirthing has both ancestors and a pedigree in the literature of many religions and spiritual practices.

What about ancestors in psychology?

Historically, As Luckoff et al say, “psychiatry, in its diagnostic classification systems as well as its theory, research, and practice, has tended to either ignore or pathologise the religious and spiritual dimensions of life. ... From Freud’s writings through the 1976 report on mysticism by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP), there has been a tendency to associate spiritual experiences with psychopathology.”²⁷ Luckoff et al’s article documents “the ‘religiosity gap’ between clinicians and patients,” and holds responsible “the inadequate training in religious and spiritual issues (of clinicians), and the role that biological primacy has played in creating insensitivity to these issues.” This religiosity gap could be the reason why so many people have turned to the new therapies, and are still turning to the new therapies, that have sprung up during the last twenty or thirty years: the established therapies were not and still are not meeting their needs. Luckoff et al proposed that a new category of “psychoreligious or psychospiritual problems” be included in the DSM-IV and this has now been done.²⁸ They also propose that professionals be adequately trained to deal with these problems. Rebirthing is an appropriate method for these people to learn and Rebirthers who have had a good training, which includes an adequate knowledge of psychology,²⁹ are competent to deal with many of these problems.

Despite a general incompetence on the part of psychiatry to deal with the spiritual aspect of human life, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* are now well established, and it is in this current that Rebirthing has its ancestors, siblings and descendants.

²⁶ See e.g. Minett, pp. 37-49.

²⁷ Luckoff et al, 1992, p.673.

²⁸ DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – IV), Section V62.89 *Religious or Spiritual Problem*.

²⁹ See Manné, 1997, Part VI.

REBIRTHING'S PEDIGREE

It is actually quite dangerous to be an orphan, as we all know. There is no-one to protect an orphan, and anyone can lay claim to it at any time!

Leonard Orr and Sondra Ray are certainly the literary parents of Rebirthing.

I have shown in this article that, whether its literary parents acknowledge it or not, Rebirthing has a respectable pedigree: it has respectable grandparents and other ancestors in psychoanalysis and in psychotherapy and belongs fully to the family of psychotherapies. Furthermore, it has ancestors in various respectable spiritual disciplines. It has enough family to protect it and to help it to grow up!

Albery said, "There seems to be very little that is original in the main bits that make up the Rebirthing package."³⁰ I have presented here some of the conceptual ancestors of Rebirthing: psychotherapies and spiritual practices that realise the importance of the breath, that respect the importance of the birth trauma, that acknowledge the importance of regression in the healing of the psyche, that recognise the compulsion to repeat and that appreciate the importance of the development of the spiritual aspects of the human being. In this way I have shown that at least in these aspects Rebirthing has connections to other psychotherapies. To say that there is "very little that is original", as Albery has done, seems to me, however, to be an exaggeration.

Rebirthing makes an original contribution to psychotherapy through its way of working with the breath: **not** the notorious use of hyperventilation which I reject entirely – although I accept that strong and deep breathing techniques, when well-used and brought in at the appropriate moment in the development process, can lead to important transpersonal experiences (1994, 1997, 1999) – but also, and particularly, its *gentle* uses.³¹ I have argued that Rebirthing is an *energy psychotherapy* (1997), and it is as an energy psychotherapy that it deals with the phenomena described above in an original, constructive and important way.

I will have more to say in future books and articles about how well Rebirthing deals with these phenomena, about Energy Psychotherapy, and about how the competent use of **Breathwork**, including Rebirthing, constructs an authentic process of psychotherapy which encompasses the full range of personal and spiritual development, from problems that we might call "freudian" through experiences that we might call "jungian", through the Humanistic to the Transpersonal.³²

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³³ Information at www.ibfnetwork.org.

MODERN (EARLY 21ST CENTURY-ISH) REBIRTHING BY CATHERINE DOWLING

INTRODUCTION

I began training as a rebirther over 10 years ago and have been in private practice for over 8 years. In that time one of the most difficult aspect of my work has been finding the words to define Rebirthing. What exactly is it? Every person I talk to seems to have a different definition and a different way of practising. Judging by the books that have been published on the subject over the past 30 years, not just the definition and practice but the basic tenets of rebirthing seem to have changed quite markedly. This, in my opinion, is as it should be. Deike Begg, in her book, *Rebirthing: Freedom From Your Past*, has pointed out that the person of the rebirther is his/her main tool. If this is the case, then of course, the practice – and the definition - of rebirthing is going to vary from person to person. And if a therapy is alive and vibrant, it is going to change and develop. Even Freud's basic tenets didn't stay unmodified for long.

When talking to potential clients this is not a big problem. The rebirther defines what he/she does in their own words and that suits the client or it doesn't. But when people begin to come together in associations and national registration bodies, when they begin to communicate as a body with other professions and become integrated into the general health care system, then it becomes important to have some form of definition of Rebirthing as it is currently practised. A definitive definition, even if it were desirable, would seem to be impossible. The vision and the practice varies from country to country, from school to school, from person to person, but some exploration of the issues might be of help to those of us who, for whatever reason, are currently trying to define what we do.

SOME DEFINITIONS

“The purpose of rebirthing is to remember and re-experience one's birth; to relive physiologically, and spiritually the moment of one's first breath and release the trauma of it.” Leonard Orr & Sondra Ray, *Rebirthing in the New Age* (p. 71)

“Rebirthing is a modern, holistic, self-help method...It utilises a precisely defined, wondrous breathing technique to give one a profoundly positive and detailed awareness of one's own mind, body and emotions.” Jim Leonard, & Phil Laut, *Rebirthing: The Science of Enjoying All of Your Life* (p. xii)

“The science of rebirthing is a personal process, using a breathing technique to clear out physical, mental and emotional blocks or stresses, especially those arising from birth and early life experiences.” Colin Sissons, *Rebirthing Made Easy* (p. 3)

“Rebirthing, or conscious breathing, is the name of a particular breathing technique.” Gunnel Minnet *Breath and Spirit: Rebirthing as a Healing Technique* (p. 19)

“Rebirthing is a direct and immediate means to breath and body mastery...The rebirthing process involves: 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.” Jim Morningstar, *Breathing in Light and Love* (p. xv)

“Rebirthing may be described as a form of therapy, a means of becoming more aware of what is happening in your life, so that the choices you make become more conscious, less dictated by old beliefs and traumatic events, and much more in tune with our present reality.” Karsten Bruun Qvist, ‘So What Do you Think? An Introductory Essay,’ in *Birth of a Rebirther* (p. 5.)

“Essentially, Rebirthing is a breathing therapy in which you consciously connect to the divine power of the universe so that it will cleanse and transform you. It is *not* first and foremost concerned with the birth process and reliving the birth trauma.” Deike Begg, *Rebirthing: Freedom From Your Past*, (p. 13)

“Rebirthing is a breathing technique...When people choose to do rebirthing, as with any other therapy, they are choosing to work through feelings, belief systems and past events they have, up to now, left unresolved.” Catherine Dowling, *Rebirthing and Breathwork: A Powerful Technique For Personal Transformation* (pp1, 37)

THE ISSUES

On reviewing the literature on Rebirthing some basic tenets or defining features emerge which could be used to help arrive at a definition of Rebirthing. The following framework for approaching this issue is by no means exhaustive or definitive:

1. What happens in a session
2. Is Rebirthing a therapy

3. Has Rebirthing got a body of theory
4. Spirituality
5. Image

1. What Happens in Rebirthing

At the moment, in Ireland, we are heading into a process of state supported regulation. Under that process each therapy will have to define itself on many levels but one level is a simple description of what happens in a session. This is not related to what happens inside the client but what physically, visibly happens during the time therapist and client spend together. Do they talk, do they touch, do they sing and dance, do they breathe, do they watch TV? What actually happens?

Breathing

I have heard many people say that they have ‘done rebirthing.’ When asked what they have done, they describe anything from the type of regression therapy that went so wrong last year in Colorado, to Cranio-Sacral Therapy, to listening to a shaman speak. What they have actually experienced is a birth memory or an epiphany or peak experience which has changed them. They have in some way become ‘reborn’ to use a term from the Bible. I have also heard rebirthers themselves speak in this way. If the word Rebirthing refers to the experience of remembering one’s birth, to an epiphany or peak experience, then anything can trigger it. The term Rebirthing then becomes meaningless as a description of the breathing technique developed by Leonard Orr. And if it is used to describe the experience of remembering birth which can be induced by a wide range of methods, then it can become associated with tragedies such as the one in Colorado.

If we wish to hold onto a problematic name like Rebirthing, then rebirthers need to define what they do clearly. Is it a breathing technique that can facilitate the emergence of birth memories/peak experiences or is it the experience of remembering one’s birth, or is it both – and a lot more besides?

In the case of Rebirthing a la Leonard Orr, it is very obvious from the literature as well as the practice that the principal activity is breathing. But what kind of breathing? *Rebirthing in the New Age* contains several case histories but little by way of describing the breathing technique. The most specific details are that the “inner and outer breath...merge...” as do the inhale and the exhale.³⁴ It is also described as hyperventilation³⁵ and some references are made to rapid breathing. In 1994, Gunnel Minnet, in her book *Breath and Spirit*, strongly refutes this connection between Rebirthing and hyperventilation and Joy Manné, in *Soul Therapy*, says that “Hyperventilation rapes the unconscious.”³⁶ In *Rebirthing: The Science of Enjoying All of Your Life*, Leonard and Laut are much more forthcoming. Here Rebirthing is described as circular breathing. It can be fast or slow, full or shallow, into the upper or lower part of the lungs depending on what is

³⁴ Orr & Ray, p.83.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 80.

³⁶ Manné, p. 167.

happening for the rebirthee at any given time. The breathing is done with awareness, or consciously, and the exhale is relaxed. Manné describes upper chest breathing. My experiences is also that the emphasis is on the upper chest and that the effect of breathing into this part of the lungs is markedly different from breathing primarily into the base of the lungs. Of all these characteristics, five seem to have remained unchanged up to the present day.

So it could be said that the modern rebirthing is:

- a) a breathing technique
- b) the breathing is done consciously
- c) the exhale and inhale are connected with no pauses between them
- d) the exhale is relaxed, unforced
- e) not hyperventilation, although the symptoms of hyperventilation such as tetany can sometimes happen during a Rebirthing session.

Talking

What goes along with the breathing is also crucial in a definition of Rebirthing. Is Rebirthing purely breathing, or is there a verbal interaction other than instructions on how to breathe? Is there touch, movement...is anything else involved?

Again the early books are quite vague about this. From the sessions described in *Rebirthing in the New Age* there seems to be very little verbal interaction between rebirther and client, and certainly nothing that might approximate a talk therapy session where the rebirther helps the client probe and explore their experience through talking.

Yet even in the early literature, Sondra Ray emphasised the importance of affirmations and the need to change thought patterns. This points the way to something more than breathing, a period where rebirther and client engage in developing affirmations. It isn't possible to develop an affirmation without first analysing one's psychological state. Affirmations are cognitive techniques, verbal techniques. Already rebirthing is moving beyond breathing.

Jim Morningstar, in his 1994 book *Breathing in Light and Love* says "My style is to combine counselling with rebirthing which allows one mode to assist the other...I often intersperse breathing with verbal sessions when doing a series."³⁷ Manné and Begg indicate that they also employ verbal techniques with clients to assist in the process of integration and Wilfried Ehrmann, writing in *The Spirit of Breathwork* about the relationship between breathwork and verbal counselling, says "...the issues can be condensed through verbalisation, and integrated and deepened through the breathing."³⁸ Some of the current Rebirthing websites, such as Rebirthing.com, also indicate that verbal interaction is an integral part of the Rebirthing experience.

Early Rebirthing seemed to emphasise catharsis, often dramatic emotional release. My experience of Rebirthing in general in the early 90's was that the mind or intellect was almost shunned as the enemy of personal and spiritual growth. Over the past few years writers on breathwork/Rebirthing such as Ehrmann and Manné have begun to emphasise the need to engage all aspects of the person, including the intellect. In my experi-

³⁷ Morningstar, p. 147.

³⁸ Ehrmann, Wilfried, 'Breath is Your Companion.'

ence both as a rebirthee and a rebirther, the intellect can be a powerful tool for integration, for moving beyond the release of emotion and bringing about change where it counts - in daily life. Outside of peer exchange, I have never experienced a rebirthing session without a space for talking, a period of 'talk therapy'. I have rarely worked with a client without devoting time to verbal exploration and *in Rebirthing and Breathwork* have described a rebirthing session as consisting of three parts, one of which is devoted to talk therapy. In this talking section, the approach varies very widely from person centred to gestalt to Voice Dialogue to whatever method the rebirther has evolved for themselves.

Many rebirthers seem reluctant to formally link talk therapy and breathwork in the one package and call it Rebirthing. For them, Rebirthing is breathing and any talking that is done within the time frame of a session is another technique, not Rebirthing. Perhaps this is the result of an aversion to defining Rebirthing as therapy, to a narrow definition of what constitutes psychotherapy or to a fear of incorporation into a medicalised system that would restrict the practice to a group of elite therapists.³⁹ Or it is simply the way they see it? However, even if the talking part of a session deals only with developing affirmations, rebirther and client are still engaged in a verbal exploration, they are working with cognitive functioning to facilitate change and integration. The efficacy and safety of taking novice rebirthees through breathing sessions without offering them the space to make sense of their experience cognitively would make an interesting subject for research.

It is probably safe, therefore, to say that modern rebirthing involves talking where clients are supported in exploring their lives and personal issues through verbal interaction with their rebirther. This may be a clearly defined period of time, usually at the beginning or end of the session, or it may take the form of short interactions dispersed throughout the time rebirther and client spend together.

Other techniques

It is not possible to make such generalisations in relation to any other techniques. Some rebirthers use gentle touch, some rarely touch, some use art work or music or burn therapeutic oils, some don't. In modern rebirthing other techniques are used, but they are adjuncts. They don't have the prominence given to breathing, which is the heart of Rebirthing, or even to talking.

And I have **NEVER** heard of rebirthers using blankets, sleeping bags or other props to simulate the birth canal or regress clients to a particular time or incident from their early life. This may be a form of therapy but it is **NOT** Rebirthing.

2. Is Rebirthing a Therapy?

The word 'therapy' is not part of the lexicon of early writing on Rebirthing. In the early books it was called a self-help process, a personal growth technique, a personal process, and so forth. In fact the 'T' word doesn't really make an appearance until the early to mid-nineties. In 1994 Gunnel Minnett describes Rebirthing as a tool of therapy but says that of itself, Rebirthing is not a psychotherapy⁴⁰. I recall naively repeating Gunnel's 'tool

³⁹ See review of *Rebirthing: Freedom From Your Past* in *Breathe Magazine*, Issue 78.

⁴⁰ Minnett, 1994, p. 91

of therapy' phrase in something I wrote for circulation among Irish rebirthers shortly after her book came out. The reaction was quick, strong and not favourable. In 1995 Joy Manné wrote an article that placed Rebirthing within its psychotherapeutic lineage.⁴¹ In 1999 Deike Begg described Rebirthing as a therapy and this one aspect of her book sparked a strong response in *Breathe Magazine*. My own book, a year later, also refers to Rebirthing as a therapy, although not as emphatically or directly as Deike's did. The reference seems to have gone unnoticed. In 2001, the registration body for Irish rebirthers was listed with the companies office in Dublin as The Rebirthing Psychotherapy Association.

There seems to be a definite movement among many rebirthers and writers towards defining Rebirthing as a psychotherapy. Others object to this trend. But before speculating on whether modern Rebirthing is a psychotherapy or not, it is worth trying to define psychotherapy or at least exploring some aspects of what constitutes psychotherapy. For this I refer mainly to what the registration bodies for psycho-therapists in the British Isles say about their professional practice.

The branch of psychotherapy into which Rebirthing fits most naturally is Humanistic and Integrative. In *A Guide to Psychotherapy in Ireland* published by the Irish Council for Psychotherapy, humanistic and integrative psychotherapy is described as having the following principles:

“- the individual is seen as a whole person living out their present level of integration through their *body, feelings, mind, psyche and spirit* (*emphasis is mine, CD*)

a person has responsibility for his/her life and for the choices they make
Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy is based on a phenomenological view of reality. Its emphasis is on experience.

The nature of the person is seen as dynamic. The person is seen as unfolding in different stages. There is always a thrust towards wholeness and life, but sometimes along the way, at any one stage, an overwhelming failure or frustration can be experienced as anxiety, depression or even a vague sense of an unlived life.”⁴²

The aims of therapy as outlined by the British Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners (AHPP) are “in part:

To bring oneself to a state of wholeness and completion in whatever way one experiences this;

To gain sovereignty over one's life, to be authentic;

To be emotionally competent and to further one's creativity and one's search for truth, meaning, love and relationship with oneself and with others;

To relate to others in ways that demonstrate awareness of and respect for difference;

To heal past and current wounds and traumas;

⁴¹ Manné, 1994.

⁴² *A Guide to Psychotherapy in Ireland*, The Columbia Press, Dublin, 1998, pp. 38-9.

To achieve integrity and autonomy while acknowledging mutual interdependence with others and with the environment.”⁴³

Are there many rebirthers who would disagree with these sentiments? Are there many rebirthers who do not incorporate these principles into their work? Probably not, but where rebirthers might take issue with the aims outlined above is that they are too limiting to fully describe the experience of Rebirthing, particularly the transpersonal or spiritual aspects. While these aspects are not specifically referred to in the underlying principles, a quick glance at the categories of membership of the AHPP makes it clear that psychotherapy addresses all aspects of the human experience. They are: art therapist, body-massive massage therapist, bioenergetic therapists, body psychotherapist, bodywork therapist, breath therapist, counsellor, counselling psychologist, dance movement therapist, drama therapist, family therapist, gestalt therapist, group facilitator/therapist, group psychotherapists, primal integration therapist, psychodrama therapist, psychosexual therapist, psychosynthesis guide/therapist, psychotherapist and transpersonal therapist. And Rebirthing is specifically named by the AHPP in one of its sub-categories. Everything from mind to body to spirit is catered to under the heading of therapist.

If we want to look more closely at the necessary elements of psychotherapy, Gerhard Stumm sets them out concisely in the pages of *The Spirit of Breathwork*, published in 2001. There are five.⁴⁴

“It should be based on a professional training that should have a certain quantity and a certain quality as far as self-experience, supervision and theory is concerned.”

Does Rebirthing meet these requirements? In some countries it does and in some it does not. However, the International Breathwork Accreditation Alliance being developed by Jim Morningstar and a range of other breathwork trainers is setting standards by which schools of Rebirthing can be accredited. The early findings for level 2 of the Alliance is summarised in the first 2002 newsletter of the International Breathwork Foundation and it indicates that schools affiliating at level 2 will certainly meet Gerhard Stumm’s first requirement.

2. “A certain scientific method should be applied.”

Is this a feature of professional rebirthing? It depends on what one means by scientific. If scientific means a systematic examination of how Rebirthing works, then here the profession falls down. Credible, reliable, objective research is very thin on the ground. The practice works and the anecdotal evidence is clear but for many reasons, rebirthers have not had access to or participated in substantial research projects, nor have they generally documented their anecdotal evidence in ways that are accessible to researchers. Whether it is possible or desirable to apply traditional scientific methods to work with the human mind and spirit is questionable. Whether it is possible to use current scientific measuring

⁴³ *Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners Handbook and National Membership Register*, 2000, London, 2000, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Stumm, 2001, p. 195.

instruments to pin down the essence of something as intangible, varied and non-ordinary as Rebirthing is equally questionable. However, were rebirthers to organise themselves in such a way that systematic data could be compiled from their experience, they might make a contribution to expanding the definition, scope and measuring instruments of traditional science.

“It should take place within a professional relationship and...should be based on certain theoretical perspectives and regulations.”

Please see below for an exploration of this

4. “Psychotherapy should have an indication; for example a behavioural or a personality disorder should be diagnosed.”

The language here is very impersonal and echoes the medical model more associated with psychiatry. Rebirthers don't generally deal in labelling 'disorders'. However, in my experience of Rebirthing in the early 90's and with the Loving Relationship Training tradition of Rebirthing in particular, rebirthers did diagnose and label. People were diagnosed according to their birth type or a particular “issue” they were deemed to have.

This phase seems to have passed and in its place is a more client-centred and respectful approach. But how many rebirthers work without forming a hypothesis about the material the client is revealing? A working hypothesis is an estimation on the part of the rebirther as to what the underlying cause of their client's difficulty might be. In a flexible, person-centred – as opposed to dogma driven – approach, the hypothesis can change from minute to minute, but there is usually a hypothesis whether we are aware of it or not. It is what guides our line of questioning, the choice of affirmations we might offer to the client to try out, the point at which we might suggest that the client lie down and breathe, etc.

So is there an ‘indication’ in modern Rebirthing? Yes, but it would not be phrased in the language of psychiatry or even in the language of some schools of psychotherapy.

5. “A goal or intention of where the psychotherapy should lead should be defined. This could be the reduction of symptoms, the healing of the self or the reorganisation of the personality structure. It can also be personal growth, emancipation and/or improved health.”

In Rebirthing as it is practised today, do clients discuss with their rebirther issues such as why they have decided to do Rebirthing and what they hope to get out of it? I think it would be quite a strange first session if this did not happen.

From these five ‘essentials’ modern Rebirthing seems to be shaping up to psychotherapy, but within the European Union some of the fears of Rebirthers around defining Rebirthing as a psychotherapy may be justified. National bodies representing psychotherapists within the EU states have long been working towards a trans-national certification process and it looks as if that will be in place within the next few years. It also looks as if access to psychotherapy training will be limited to those with university de-

grees. In spite of what Leonard Orr says in the British Rebirthing Society Newsletter⁴⁵ people with that level of credentialing can and do make very good rebirthers. And while a university degree may positively inform the practice of rebirthers who have them, that level of formal education is not even remotely necessary for the safe and effective practice of Rebirthing. It is not, and in my opinion should never be a requirement for becoming a rebirther.

3. Has Rebirthing Got a Body of Theory?

Gerhard Stumm's third criteria for defining psychotherapy refers to a body of theory and the nature of the relationship between therapist and client. These, in Rebirthing, are closely related because, for many years, the theoretical concepts precluded an acknowledgement of the importance of the rebirther-client relationship.

Rebirthing does have a body of theory and always had. In the early years the theoretical aspect of Rebirthing may have been rudimentary, poorly expressed and inadequately documented. There may have been some resistance to actually using the word 'theory' to describe the concepts that underpin Rebirthing; theory having scientific, academic and 'establishment' connotations. But the theory existed right from the start.

Orr and Ray described the Five Biggies of human experience as the Birth Trauma, Parental Disapproval Syndrome, Specific Negatives, Unconscious Death Urge and Other Lifetimes. These were further developed by Ray in her other books, and by Colin Sissons, Leonard and Laut and others. The mechanisms by which these events affect us have been taken from Freud, Adler and other early theorists: repression and suppression, repetition compulsion, basic beliefs which, in Rebirthing, were known as Personal Laws, etc. The psychotherapeutic roots of Rebirthing theory are well documented by Joy Manné in *Rebirthing: Orphan Therapy or a Member of the Family of Psychotherapies*.

Birthpsychology

Fundamental to early Rebirthing was the theory that birth lays down a blueprint for the rest of our life. "The purpose of rebirthing is to remember and re-experience one's birth;" Orr and Ray wrote in 1977. Birth was only one of Orr and Ray's Five Biggies. It was given undue prominence in the practice rather than the theory but this too has changed. In 1999 Deike Begg wrote "It is *not* first and foremost concerned with the birth process and reliving the birth trauma."

It is not that rebirthers have rejected birth psychology as a fundamental tenet of their work. Bob Mandell, Binnie Dansby and others continue to specialise in this aspect of human experience. It is more that the scope has broadened to the point where the focus is no longer so intensely on birth. This gives more opportunity for working with the client where they're at in the here and now and dealing with material as it is presented. Modern rebirthing can be about revisiting birth, but the range of experience made possible by Rebirthing is far wider than the birth script.

⁴⁵ Orr, Leonard, 'Attachment Therapy,' *BRS Newsletter*, Summer 2001, "In the 26 years of Rebirthing history I have noticed that the worst quality Rebirthing is usually done by people with credentials."

Thought is Creative

Other aspects of Rebirthing theory that have undergone very noticeable change are the concept that thought is creative and certain spiritual dogma such as physical immortality. In the early days there was a strong emphasis on the creative nature of thought. I remember having great difficulty comprehending this when I first came to rebirthing. I couldn't understand how I, a tiny speck of life in the great spectrum of the universe, could 'create' endless rain wherever I happened to be in Ireland but if I went to another country, the rain miraculously stopped. And when I protested that every fibre of my being longed for sunshine, the answer was that I had unconscious thoughts about rain. I just wasn't aware of them yet. The ultimate non sequeter.

The interpretation of the concept that people need to take responsibility for their actions and reactions, life experiences and feelings was quite literal. The concept was intended to empower but the result in some cases was disempowerment. The often strident language in which it was presented led vulnerable people into believing that they had *caused* very painful events in their own lives and the lives of other people. This can lead to guilt and shame, two things guaranteed to work against empowerment.

The approach has softened. For evidence of this one need only consult the current books, particularly *Breath and Spirit*, *Soul Therapy*, *Rebirthing: Freedom From Your Past*, *Breathing in Light and Love* and *Rebirthing and Breathwork*. These books present the same concept but from a very different perspective, one that is much more client-centred, supportive and empowering. However, one of the most interesting indications of a sea change in this area comes from Bob Mandel. Through the Loving Relationship Training, Bob Mandel was a prominent advocate of the old style "thought is creative." In the November 1999 issue of the IBF newsletter he wrote:

"Back in the beginning...thought created everything, it seemed. If it rained, it was your thought. If someone abused you, you were creating it. And if a burglar broke into your house and stole all your precious gems, your thoughts made it happen. No?"

No. Certainly, your thoughts, attitudes and decisions generate your emotional experience of reality...But to say that you are creating the behaviour of other people is somewhat farfetched. You may be attracted to an abusive mate if your father abused you, but you are not responsible for his/her abusive behaviour. Nor do your thoughts really seem to have much of an influence on the weather, moving mountains or earth changes."⁴⁶

The concept of self-responsibility is shared by most, if not all schools of psychotherapy. In modern Rebirthing, the understanding and expression of this principal has come more into line with the way it is approached in other psychotherapies. It is softer, more client centred, less simplistic. And it is empowering rather than guilt inducing.

The Rebirther/Client Relationship

Most schools of psychotherapy and counselling lay great emphasis on the role of the relationship between therapist and client. In traditional psychoanalysis the transference that

⁴⁶ *Breath & Inspiration*, The IBF Newsletter, November 1999, p. 13.

developed within this relationship was the mechanism of growth for the client. This was quickly modified by Rogers and others. However, research shows that across the spectrum of all psychotherapies, the relationship between client and therapist, more than all other factors including theoretical frameworks and techniques, is the most important catalyst for growth.⁴⁷ The non-judgemental, authentic and accepting relationship is the ground in which the human psyche blossoms.

Where does Rebirthing stand with this? As discussed above, there has been a strong emphasis in Rebirthing that the client “creates” his/her own experiences. This included the experience of Rebirthing itself. If this is literally the case, then the rebirther is of minor consequence. The relationship between the rebirther and the client therefore has been given very little attention.

Yet from the beginning Orr and Ray stressed the importance of working with a competent rebirther. The logical conclusion from this is that the person you choose to act as your rebirther is important in your experience of Rebirthing and, if this is true, then the relationship with that rebirther plays some role in the healing that takes place through Rebirthing.

In Rebirthing literature, the exploration of the nature of the client-therapist relationship is still in its early stages. It is mentioned in several books, particularly Deike Begg's but little is written about the relationship itself in detail. A start has been made by Wilfried Ehrmann in his article *Transference and Countertransference In Breathwork*.⁴⁸ In my experiences, there has always been an emphasis in rebirther training programmes on the personal growth of the rebirther, sometimes to the detriment of other aspects of training. This would indicate a realisation, be it acknowledge or not, that the rebirther affects the experience of the client.

From a quick survey of colleagues, I would say that in modern Rebirthing there is a growing awareness that the non-judgemental, authentic and accepting relationship between rebirther and client facilitates a productive session. Only most rebirthers I know would not use that language. Instead they call it ‘feeling safe’ with your rebirther.

4. Spirituality

From the earliest writings on Rebirthing to the most recent, spirituality is mentioned. Orr and Ray speak of a spiritual community and a concept of spirituality infuses every aspect of Rebirthing that they talk about. Other books followed suit. The word spirituality is often used expansively, sweepingly, even glibly – as is the word enlightenment – but rarely is anything approaching a definition of spirituality offered. It is difficult therefore to understand precisely what people mean when they use the word spiritual/spirituality in a Rebirthing context.

It would appear to refer to a dimension of existence beyond individuation, beyond personality, a dimension where all life is connected, often in ways which are invisible to ordinary perception. And indeed, anyone who has experienced Rebirthing knows that it facilitates an awareness of that dimension of existence. If spirituality is defined broadly,

⁴⁷ Yalom, 1975.

⁴⁸ Ehrmann, 1999.

then while a client is breathing, the rebirther is meeting that client in a spiritual plane. This makes the spiritual dimension an integral part of the therapeutic process in Rebirthing. But the waters of understanding are quickly muddied by references to spiritual functions which sound much more like psychological and psychic phenomena; to spiritual community which sounds like a good old fashioned, free lovin' commune; to Babaji who sounds like a good old fashioned saint; and to the concept of Physical Immortality which sound very like a religious dogma.

Is this emphasis on spirituality a feature of modern Rebirthing? Yes and no. Spirituality is an integral aspect of Rebirthing. The therapy facilitates spiritual experiences and supports people in developing a felt sense of connection, of being part of the greater scheme of things. These kinds of experiences can have a profoundly healing effect, mentally and emotionally.

The word spiritual is still used very liberally and without adequate definition but the tone of the literature in this area has changed. Early writings, generally American in origin, had an almost religious fervour. Spirituality, enlightenment and god were mentioned in almost every chapter. This was and is, perhaps, a reflection of the prominent religious tone to American society. The European writers, Begg and Minett in particular, discuss god, spirituality and so forth but the tone is reasoned, calm, not evangelical. And the shape this spiritual awareness takes is left up to the individual. "Some people define this experience in terms of Jesus. Others speak of a higher consciousness or a Great Spirit. Still more describe it as being at one with the ecosystem, all things."⁴⁹

So in modern Rebirthing spirituality is generally something that can inform the practice of the rebirther but emerges from clients in their own time and on their own terms - or not, as appropriate.

Physical Immortality

But where spirituality spills over into religion is where most change is evident. For the purposes of this article, religion is defined as having to do with set belief systems and practices of a spiritual nature, often shared by a group/community of people. This is also the area where, in a therapeutic setting such as Rebirthing, ethical concerns come into play. How ethical is it to present a belief system to a client as opposed to allowing that client the space and safety to arrive at their own belief system, or not, as appropriate? And the most obvious incursion of religion into the arena is with the doctrine of physical immortality (PI).

Rebirthers, psychotherapists, counsellors present alternative ways of looking at things to their clients all the time. This practice can be extremely helpful and only totally non-directive counselling can eliminate it. There is a fine line between presenting something as a possible alternative and imposing it on someone who, already vulnerable, may take it on without question. They may be trying to please their therapist or lack the self-confidence or sense of self that will allow them to reject something that is not right for them. There are several criteria that need to be considered here. Among them are the appropriateness of the information in relation to the material the client is presenting at the time; the words used to present; the frequency with which the information is presented; tone of voice; forcefulness; etc.

⁴⁹ Dowling, 2000, p. 168.

In reviewing the literature on Rebirthing, the early books devoted a lot of space to the doctrine of PI. And the language was not temperate. In my experience of the practice PI was presented with insistence and inappropriately and I was once told that because I did not subscribe to the PI doctrine, I was not as good a rebirther as those who did. The early books by Sondra Ray are very clear about exactly what PI means. “Physical immortality can be defined as endless existence; specifically, the endless existence of your physical body in perpetual health and youthfulness.”⁵⁰ However, this changed throughout the 80’s and 90’s to the point where LRT trainers who visited Ireland in the early ‘90’s were talking about PI, not so much as the eternal existence of the physical body but the transformation of the physical body into ‘light bodies’. (Could this transformation be called death?!) At the Global Inspiration Conference of 1996 Nemi Nath tackled the subject and concluded by saying “it is not about not eating, or not dying. It is only about being here now.”⁵¹ None of the more recent books deal with PI in any depth and in some the issue is not even mentioned.

So where stands modern rebirthing in relation to one of the big tenets of early Rebirthing, Physical Immortality? Obviously many rebirthers still find a value in some form of the concept/belief. Certainly Leonard Orr is still advocating it in his letters to newsletter editors, etc. But it no longer seems to be part of the literature and it doesn’t feature at conferences.

5. IMAGE OF REBIRTHING

Many years ago a well known talk radio host in Ireland did a piece on Rebirthing on his radio programme which is transmitted in a mid-morning slot and has a very large national listenership. His approach was to take the microphone into a group rebirthing session. I still meet people who heard that broadcast and talk about how horrific Rebirthing is. They based their judgement on the screams and cries of the participants in that group session and by all accounts it sounded pretty awful.

In the 1983 reprinting of *Rebirthing in The New Age*, Sondra Ray wrote “Rebirthing has changed dramatically since this book was written. It has become easier, less traumatic, more pleasurable, and much faster.”⁵² This change has continued to the present day. Rebirthees do cry, sometimes express themselves through a scream or other sounds, or they may thump the bed or mattress they are lying on. Occasionally people get a little dramatic, but in my experience, compared with the way it was when I began training, Rebirthing is now quite a tame affair. It is gentle, very calm considering the strength of emotions that it can facilitate, and just as effective if not more so.

In the early books, Rebirthing was a ‘movement’. *Rebirthing In The New Age* has sections on politics and economics and in it Leonard Orr set out his ideas for a more just political and economic system. The book is of its time, an era of aspirations for a different kind of society. Historically some of the ideals of the ‘60’s and ‘70’s helped shape the social and political structures of today. But the less substantial, less well developed and

⁵⁰ Orr & Ray, p. 153.

⁵¹ Nath (2001), p. 147.

⁵² Orr and Ray, p. vii.

unworkable faded away along with psychedelic clothing and brown and orange wallpaper. And so it is with Rebirthing. What Orr advocated was reminiscent of the anarchist communities of earlier centuries. These proved unsustainable and so too were Orr's ideas on social change.

Rebirthing is no longer a movement. It is a personal development process or a therapy, and the literature no longer refers to politics, economics, or social justice. This does not mean that individual rebirthers are not aware of social issues or that they don't work towards social justice. But the way in which it is put forth into public domain is less collective and more individualist. In Ireland, rebirthers used to speak of themselves as a community or a family. Very few continue to speak in this way. We are now colleagues. Reading the sub-text of newsletters from rebirthing associations in other countries, the idea of community or even family, is still alive. But it appears to be maturing. Structure, media savvy and public relations awareness are coming into the picture.

Separating modern Rebirthing from the burden of being a movement, makes it more sustainable, more accessible, more credible. It frees it to be embraced by a wider audience as the wonderful therapy it is. But all therapy takes place within a social context. It is informed by and informs society. This very important aspect of the work has not been examined in rebirthing literature. And sometimes, the passing away of idealism, however unsustainable it might have been, is something to be mourned.

THE LAST WORD

Rebirthing, ultimately, is undefinable. That undefinability is part of what makes it so effective. As long as the profession of Rebirthing continues to grow, there will probably never be a definitive definition of what it is. This article is not intended as a definition, more as the opening of a discussion that needs to take place on an ongoing basis among people who may hold diametrically opposed views on many aspects of the work they do. But I think the last word in this piece of the discussion should go to a rebirther who produced the most succinct and accurate definition of Rebirthing I've come across.

"It's the bucket and spade you use to clear out the shit."
(Laurence, a client, 2002)

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THE PSYCHOLOGY-OF-SELVES IN BREATHING SESSIONS

BY

PETER KANE

Keywords: Rebirthing, Voice Dialogue, Psychology of Selves, Sub-personality Theory, Resistance, Breathwork, Control, Protection, Vulnerable Child, Vulnerability.

ABSTRACT

It is valuable to make a paradigm shift away from “pushing through resistance” into a “being” based model where resistance is viewed as a protection and control issue and is gently discovered, embraced, and released when the client is ready to do so. A key thesis here is that to do deep and lasting work the client needs to create agreement from their inner protection selves.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELVES

I have found a psychology-of-selves perspective to be very helpful in working with a wide variety of rebirthing and facilitator/client issues. Specifically, I have added the process of Voice Dialogue to my practice. Voice Dialogue is the only tool other than rebirthing that I have valued enough to pursue ongoing training in.

Voice Dialogue, is a communication tool created by Hal and Sidra Stone and used by many counselors and psychotherapists to accomplish a wide variety of personal growth results. The Stone’s background includes extensive private practice including Jungian analysis and dreamwork. “It is impossible to separate Voice Dialogue from an understanding of dream work, symbolic visualization, a knowledge of energetics, training in interpersonal process, or a multitude of other approaches to understanding the evolution of consciousness. The richer the background of the facilitator in all of these approaches, the richer will be the quality of facilitation.” (Embracing Ourselves, p. ix)

In the end, Voice Dialogue is a specific tool of its own that is best understood independently of other subpersonality work.

In Voice Dialogue, issues are distilled down to the parts or sub-personalities that are operating or not operating in our lives or relationships. Sessions include various sub-personalities in turn taking up the position in the room where they feel most comfortable. The facilitator talks to them one at a time. The result is a clear and profound connection to the purpose and perfection of each part. Voice Dialogue does not seek to get rid of or change our parts. By listening to them one at a time, the strength of their role becomes clear and we become able to use the parts in an optimum fashion without resistance. Voice Dialogue helps people realize that all of their personality traits or energies have a good purpose and by embracing their good purpose people are more able to use their parts consciously and beneficially. The process of Voice Dialogue also gives deeper energetic contact with each self, which enables people to be more able to choose beyond their parts if they feel that a particular part’s role has become less necessary or habitual.

Voice Dialogue and Relationships

Voice Dialogue offers deep answers to the difficult question of what makes our life and relationships the way they are? Which sub-personalities are dominant within us? Which are underdeveloped? What results does this create? From a Voice Dialogue position relationships can be understood from the perspective of which parts of you are likely to attract what parts in another person? To examine these questions, Voice Dialogue first looks at an individual as being composed of primary-selves and disowned-selves.

The System of Primary- and Disowned-Selves

Primary-selves are those that we developed for the purpose of protecting our vulnerable inner child. This is a normal part of development. As we grow we develop ways of ensuring that we are successful in order to increase our feelings of security in the world. We may get our sense of security by being responsible and working hard, by being nurturing and caring for others, or by getting out of the way and learning not to need in order to avoid being a burden. As we grow, these ways of functioning become primary-selves: i.e. our primary way of being and expressing ourselves. They are also formed by our conforming to, or rebelling against, our parents' and society's primary-selves. Primary-selves shape us much the same way that family roles do. They become our inner value system and we view the world through their prejudices. One problem with this is that when one aspect of being becomes primary or favored, we create a resistance to the energies that are its opposite. This is what a disowned-self is: the energies that are the opposite of the primary-selves. They are the energies that we had to suppress to accomplish our primary way of being. So, if one were primarily responsible one would fear and disown one's irresponsible side and disown the qualities that go with it, like rest, leisure, selfishness, ignorance, or laziness. A person who was primarily nurturing would probably disown the same qualities but with an even greater concern against selfishness, greed, thoughtlessness, or meanness. A person who was primarily withdrawn so as to not be a burden would disown issues having to do with needing, asking for what they want, being expressive or dominant, or being visible.

Voice Dialogue, Multiple Personality Disorder and the Aware Ego

It is valuable to distinguish this perspective from multiple personality disorder. An individual with multiple personality disorder lacks the awareness that s/he is being controlled by a sub-personality and the sub-personalities do not have awareness of each other. In Voice Dialogue theory, awareness is described as originating from the Aware Ego and the purpose of Voice Dialogue is to develop the aware ego. The aware ego is the consciousness that orchestrates the selves: it's the conductor that picks which selves get to play; it's the driver of the car that contains the selves; it's the juggler that juggles the selves. In multiple personality disorder, neither awareness nor choice is present. The vast majority of the population needs not to concern itself with this, but it is a helpful distinction given that the fear of "being crazy" is so common. People who do not have multiple personality disorder may quite often experience the inability to consciously orchestrate their selves but they would also be able to understand what happened later and incorpo-

rate that awareness into future interactions. As they evolve in life and their work with this technique they would gain increased ability to use their selves consciously. This is a sign that they have an awareness of their selves and a developing aware ego. Counselors and therapists who use Voice Dialogue rarely use it with people who have multiple personality disorder. To benefit from Voice Dialogue a client must have at least some aware ego.

THE VOICE DIALOGUE RELATIONSHIP MODEL

The Voice Dialogue model simplifies relationships by looking at how the primary and disowned-selves in one person tend to relate to the primary and disowned-selves in the other. It explains relationships by identifying our reactions to people who hold our opposites, and it also explains how we attract people in our lives, who hold our opposites for us. In this model, a primary-self attracts its opposite.

“Holding our opposites” refers to how people are attracted to others who have something they lack. For example, someone with a strong responsible primary-self may be more cut off from their playful, spontaneous side, so they unconsciously crave someone who is more in touch with those qualities. Similarly, nurturers are cut off from their own needs and respond strongly to people who are more connected with their own needs; a withdrawn person craves the ability to come out and be seen, so s/he is more likely to be attracted to extroverted people. This same explanation can be expressed in more spiritual terms. Spirit or God links us up with people who have the energy we have disowned within ourselves because God wants us to be whole. For me, this explanation parallels the view that the purpose of life is to grow and evolve. I like to notice that whether we focus on the spiritual aspect or the more psychological aspect of these principals, both are essentially saying that we attract relationships that bring us qualities that we have suppressed or with which we are unresolved. Voice Dialogue has given me a greater experience of the purpose of relationships, which I believe, is to learn and to receive personal healing.

Bonding Patterns

In Voice Dialogue theory, the Stones have used the term Bonding Patterns to describe the interaction between the primary and disowned-selves in one person and the primary and disowned-selves in another. Generally speaking, bonding patterns exist between the primary-selves in one person and the disowned-selves in the other. This serves to further illustrate the issues I’ve explained above and it also gives a very concrete way of working through relationship conflicts. By identifying what our primary and disowned-selves are, we can begin to let go of our attachment to our primary-selves and embrace our disowned-selves. This will naturally lead to more harmony in our relationships because conflicts come from being attached to one way of being over another. By resisting and disowning an aspect of our personality we attract it in others and act out our resistance in relationship conflicts.

The term bonding highlights how the purpose of patterns is to create the experience of being connected, and it also reminds us that these patterns are natural and inevitable. For example, parent/child relationships are the most basic and general opposites

that mutually fit each other. It is therefore natural for your child parts to connect with and seek nurturing from another's parent parts and vice versa.

Here are more examples to further illustrate these points:

Harry, who has a strong adult part that could be explained as controller/protector might tend to attract a relationship with a Mary who is strongly connected to her vulnerable inner child. In this case, the person who is more aware of their vulnerability is attracted to the well-controlled person who helps them feel safe and secure. The more controlled person is attracted to the softness and the feeling nature of the more vulnerable person, as they then actually feel safer too because they feel the vulnerable person gives them relief from their rigidity. Well-controlled people actually feel more secure around people who are more spontaneous. It's as if their inner child feels more hope that it will get attention.

Another classic example is that the person with a strong pleasing part is likely to attract relationships with someone who is more impersonal or distant. Here, the pleasing person is attracted to someone opposite because they need a rest from being so nice all the time. Their inner child feels more taken care of when they stop working so hard to please the outside world. The person with more impersonal energy is attracted to the pleaser in the other person because it gives them a pathway for coming out and being more intimate. Their inner child feels more secure because they feel there is increased hope of letting go of isolation and having intimate relationships.

One more example: Someone with a strong drive to succeed will tend to have relationships with someone who is more relaxed, and less motivated. In Voice Dialogue this drive is often called the pusher. Here, the pusher in one person feels attracted to a more relaxed person because they're tired and crave a rest. It's as if the pusher isn't giving them a rest so they'll get one vicariously through another. Here again, their vulnerable side feels more secure when they integrate their opposite and can rest. The relaxed person is equally attracted to the pusher's drive. Vulnerable inner children need rest but they also like the money, food and security that the drive of the pusher creates.

As I said earlier, parent parts and child parts are one of the most basic pairs of opposites. It can also be helpful to see how all parts have some root connection to either our inner parent or power side of our being, or to our inner child or vulnerable side of our being. In the above examples, the controller/protector and the pusher are parental parts, and the vulnerable inner child and the relaxed person are considered child parts. In the example with the pleaser and the impersonal sub-personalities, both parts are likely to be parental/protective selves but they are still opposites. It is likely that the impersonal energy will take the parental role in that relationship.

These bonding patterns are just one slice of any relationship. In actuality, relationships switch back and forth very frequently, even in fractions of a second. It is important to be clear that in the examples above, the person I described as strongly connected to their vulnerability also has an inner parent who may be nurturing the other's vulnerable inner child just as frequently. In fact, it is inevitable that your parent or child parts will relate to the people in your life. What can be a problem is if your parts lead you to a role that is overly polarized toward one extreme. The key to successful relationships is to have a free flow between your parts so you are responding from both parent and child positions. This model is also extremely valuable for analyzing conflict patterns in relationships. If relationships become polarized with one individual taking on the parent role

more of the time and the other being more the child, the relationship is less likely to have intimacy and is more likely to have conflict.

Often when people hear of bonding patterns they get confused that the interactions are always between a parent part and a child part. There is a similar teaching that originates from Transactional Analysis (TA) that implies or states that the key to healthy relationships is to relate to each other from adult to adult. (See, e.g. *I'm Okay, You're Okay*, and *Born To Win*) For those of you who have been exposed to this vocabulary, I would like to make a valuable clarification. From a Voice Dialogue or bonding pattern perspective, we have our vulnerable child at our core and parental selves that protect it. Relationships are always going to have a flow between the child and parent parts, and to be in an adult part all of the time would be a control mechanism, like trying to balance your feelings on the head of a pin. Adult behavior can be defined as being in touch with all your parts and having a good flow between them. Adult energy does come from being in touch with the more relaxed, less defensive parental selves, but it would still technically be a parental energy.

Understanding bonding patterns gives a very clear and simple model to answer the essential questions of how, what, and why, am I in the relationships I'm in? If I am relating to you and I take a vulnerable, "I don't know" position, I almost force you to take the position of having the answer. If I take a strong, dominant, or parental position, I drive you into your vulnerable side. This explains how we bring out the best and worst in people. The energies we are primarily putting out induct the opposite energies in the other person. With this knowledge we can take a relationship conflict and distill it down to, "Are you upset at the other person because they're being too parental or too childlike?" If they're being too childlike, is it because you're being too parental? If they're being too parental, is it because you're being too childlike?

By becoming conscious of how our energy pushes others to our opposite we can then move our energy and embrace the selves that others are expressing and that we were "disowning". This will make it easier for them to do the same and accept our position. Relationships will be less polarized and there will be more flow to them.

Notice that all of this is similar to how a caretaker tries to stop taking care of people so s/he can open up the space to receive. Or, how a control freak tries to learn how to delegate. Or, how the lazy person tries to work harder so their partner won't be upset at their lack of productivity.

I enjoy Voice Dialogue because it leads to personal clarity and integration of all aspects of myself. Viewing relationships from this perspective gives clear answers to the questions: What am I creating in my life and relationships? Or, Why are my relationships the way they are? By taking a position, we are also pushing the world to relate to us from the opposite position. Our parental energy can be strong enough to induct people in the world to be helpless around us. Our fear or vulnerability can be strong enough to induct others to take control around us or invalidate us. This perspective has increased my flexibility and openness to all aspects of spirit.

INTRODUCTION TO BREATHWORK SESSIONS

I practice and teach rebirthing which I consider to be the most original form of breathwork other than Reichian therapy. Rebirthing is similar to most breathwork te-

cause most breathwork has been informed by, or adapted from rebirthing. While there are other kinds of breathwork and not all of them credit rebirthing as a source of their work it is my experience and opinion that most breathwork originated from or were adapted from rebirthing. Rebirthing has also been informed by Reichian Therapy and other yoga breathing techniques.

Rebirthing involves breathing in a full, free manner (as guided by a trained Rebirther); the result is an increase in the level of physical and spiritual energy in our body, thus cleansing the many tensions held there. The result of the physical cleansing is that the mental and emotional origins of tension come back into consciousness and can then be healed. By learning to breathe consciously and fully, we discover and release the core issues now held in our mind and emotions. It was named Rebirthing because when Leonard Orr developed it in the early 70s both he and his first clients relived their births, discovering the tremendous impact birth had had on them. Rebirthing has since undergone many changes to become a more holistic process, addressing our entire childhood and life experience; most Rebirthers have not changed the name because understanding the birth experience is one of the valuable results of Rebirthing.

Rebirthing sessions are about two hours in length and consist of counselling and the breathing process. The breathing process usually takes between an hour and an hour-and-a-half. The experience during the breathing portion varies from session to session, and from client to client. The most basic experience is usually described as tingling or vibrating. Rebirthers refer to this as an energy release, a cellular cleansing of tension stored in the body. This is a result of the breathing process increasing the level of physical and spiritual energy in the body, which washes away old tensions. This can feel like a subtle and peaceful cleansing, or it can be powerful and include tetany which is stiffness in the rebirthees hands. This likelihood of the rebirthee having physical sensations during sessions is central to issues I will be address later in this article: Although Rebirthing is blissful and empowering it can be physically intense. Historically, many rebirthers have labeled a client's difficulty in relaxing into the energy release or the physical process as resistance. Later in this article I will be discussing how the label "resistance" is unnecessarily shaming and I will be offering the term "protection" as a replacement.

Most simply, rebirthing begins by working with the physical body and as a result it cleanses the emotional and spiritual bodies. This almost always leaves the client in a state somewhere between peace and ecstasy.

Another key experience in rebirthing which is central to this article is that sometimes rebirthing makes a client drift away as if they were falling asleep. Rebirthers call this "going unconscious" and trace this phenomenon to unresolved chemical and emotional anesthesia. Chemical anesthesia refers to the reliving and release of trace elements of anesthesia that may be stored in the client's body. Emotional anesthesia refers to the fear of feeling that is associated with the fear of pain. These are complex issues, which are connected because chemical anesthesia gives the recipient the notion that the pain is real (and it is) and emotional anesthesia also creates numbness in the body, which can be viewed as a form of anesthesia. Because of the link that "going unconscious" has to emotional anesthesia rebirthers have a history of viewing a large aspect of going unconscious as the client being in a state of fear or "resistance" to the issues that the breathwork is stimulating. Here again a major purpose of this article is to offer the term *protection* as a replacement to the term resistance. If we view the issues of body sensations and uncon-

sciousness as understandable methods of protection then we have a more respectful way of helping the client work through the associated issues.

INTEGRATING BREATHWORK AND VOICE DIALOGUE

The first step in Voice Dialogue is to work with the primary-self system. The purpose here is to connect with the clients' primary way of being and protecting their vulnerability. A term that many clients use to describe their primary parent-self is the controller/protector. By talking to the controller/protector we usually discover that its job is to keep us in control and doing the right thing for the purpose of protection. A person who had a chaotic or scary childhood or family, usually has a controller/protector with a sophisticated psychic sensitivity that is often problematized in abuse recovery or codependency theories as being hyper vigilant. If you had the healthiest of childhoods you still needed a controller/protector for learning how to function safely in the physical universe.

By talking to the controller/protector and learning about how it protects us and what it is concerned about as potential threats, we can shift your awareness of virtually all resistance, defense, denial, or suppression issues and see them instead as appropriate methods of self-protection. By talking to the protection self/s directly we hear from them how protection was once needed and how they may or may not still feel the need to protect. This helps open the issue and it reveals the current protection mechanisms are warranted or if they are unnecessary, excessive, or operating habitually. By embracing their importance we gain the ability to use them consciously and almost always develop the ability to choose less control when we feel it is appropriate. Since I have studied Voice Dialogue, whenever I am tempted to use a word like "resistance," I replace it with the term "protection." I find this much more respectful to the selves involved. Negative labels can cause more resistance. Respect creates an opening and the possibility of becoming less protected if appropriate.

Getting Permission to do Breathwork

Using this approach one would technically not facilitate a process as deep as breathwork until one had permission from the client's controller/protector. Sometimes I do Voice Dialogue with the controller/protector before the first rebirthing if I feel protection is a big issue. Other times I do rebirthing first and add Voice Dialogue if I feel control or protection are getting in the way of the clients overall goals. There are of course, many other counseling goals that would lead me to suggest Voice Dialogue. In general, this awareness enables me to help clients discover how they might be conflicted between the part of them that wants to push toward emotional release and the part of them that would prefer not to be doing anything that would bring up any vulnerability.

If a clients' primary-self is cautious and controlled (which almost all of us are to a degree) virtually all psychological work has characteristics that the client has disowned. If a client had originally disowned feeling in order to remain safe and in control in the world, processes like breathwork, which the client perceives to be for the purposes of contacting deep feelings, will have mixed results. This would be an issue even if the client has, as a psychospiritual adult, developed a strong psychological-self, which wants to

contact deep feelings. Just because a client expresses enthusiasm for deep work doesn't mean that s/he doesn't also have a more cautious or protected side. Simply put, it will be beneficial to address the old primary-self issues of not wanting to feel in order to be able proceed with psychological processes that encourage the client to contact deep feeling.

In rebirthing/breathwork we have always sought to resolve "resistance", release old taboos on feeling, and develop the beliefs that it is safe to feel. Voice Dialogue has taken my understanding of this to a deeper level by helping me understand that when a client is having difficulty or mixed results it is as if their control-self is in charge of their sessions. This is not bad; it is something the facilitator can help the client become aware of so the client can choose how they want to proceed in sessions.

Previous attitudes to "Resistance" in Rebirthing

Resistance and leaving the body

The simplest, and perhaps the most important example of how resistance or protection effects sessions, is in the area of a client suspending their breath and leaving their body or "going unconscious". As I said earlier there is a history of some rebirthers shaming their clients for going unconscious because this was viewed as resistance. In my work, in addition to the issues of chemical and emotional anesthesia, I have also remained opened to the possibility that the client needed to go unconscious, either to clear something or just surrender to a being state.

Years ago, when clients would leave their body when breathing if I felt it was chemical anesthesia I would push them to breathe through it to cleanse the anesthesia from their body. If it felt as if it were emotional in nature, I would view it as resistance and seek to encourage them to contact the feelings or issues they were avoiding. I also taught, and I still do, ways that chemical and emotional anesthesia are connected and ways to work through them.

What the psychology-of-selves perspective has added to my practice is that now my first approach is usually to ask the client who is leaving their body what the purpose of leaving their body is. If they are drifting I might first ask, "Where are you?" Or, "what are you feeling?" After they answer, usually something to the effect of "I don't know, I went away", I ask them "What is the purpose of going away?". Often they will not have a very definitive response. My next question might be "What is the purpose of not wanting to breathe?" Whether they begin to contact their protection issues or not, my next step would be to ask them to contact the part of them that doesn't want to breathe. I might then have them exaggerate that part and express the protection or the "I don't want to" feelings. By doing this the issue will begin to become conscious and often the feelings underneath will come up and will immediately be dealt with.

This gives me increased ability to work deeply and respectfully with clients who have internal conflicts between wanting to go into deep feeling and at the same time wanting to remain safely removed from feeling. The awareness of this being two selves both of which need to be honored and respected has helped me greatly.

Resistance and Body Sensations

While the anesthesia or unconsciousness issue above is perhaps the most impor-

tant example of the confusion between resistance and protection another is with the energy release and body sensations.

With the tingling or vibrating of the energy release or with body sensations like tetany there has been a similar tendency for rebirthers to see this as resistance and shame their clients for having it. I have always been relaxed about tetany and have always seen it as part of clients getting comfortable with high levels of energy in their body. I have also taught ways to support clients in surrendering and letting go, and also encouraged them to contact the issues that they are holding on to.

In the past I have often referred to unconsciousness as “unconscious resistance” and to tetany as “conscious resistance.” I have always felt that tetany was less problematic than unconsciousness unless it is so painful that it creates fear of breathing in the client. So, shifting my view from resistance to protection has helped me relax further about tetany, and given me increased ability to not shame clients with painful tetany. So, the way this paper may influence the facilitation of a client with tetany would be that as you ask the client things like “What are you holding on to?” or “What is the thought that is making your hands hurt?” You could instead ask, “What feeling (or thought) are you protecting yourself from?”

The Clients Choice

As with any therapy issue I feel a key is for the facilitator to help the client make a conscious choice. The client is not doomed to be conflicted by these oppositions forever. By working with each self independently the client will gain greater ability to choose which self, need, or goal they wish to manifest. Again the goal in Voice Dialogue is to separate from the selves and develop an aware ego that has the ability to choose which self or energy best serves them in the moment. This is more easily accomplished when the validity of every self has been embraced.

Most good facilitators have long been aware of issues similar to this but have often made resistance wrong in a desire to push the client. This is the most important issue I intend to be addressing. It does not work to make resistance wrong. More subtly, it is helpful to realize that even the most emotive clients have older issues of fearing feeling and if these are not worked with they will undermine the process. Protection issues are likely to come up eventually and will need to be addressed. I also find that if protection issues are not worked with early in the process then when they do come up clients will more likely just dismiss counseling as not working for them, or that they are just “clear” and don’t have any issues that counseling could help them with, instead of identifying that they are working through some protection issues.

Ironically, I find by embracing control and protection issues that clients get greater intimate contact with their vulnerability more quickly. This is because by admitting and accepting the control and protection, they identify there are feelings underneath that which they are protecting. It actually takes them to the vulnerability quicker, but also in a more productive way because having the control and protection selves present is similar to having the inner-parent available to support the inner-child. They also go deeper because they are not unconsciously conflicted between the parts of them that want to surrender control and contact deep feelings and the parts of them that want to avoid feelings by remaining in control.

This brings me to another key issue that Voice Dialogue has helped me understand, which is that it is important to contact the inner-parent before working with the in-

ner-child. By having the inner-parent present the client can connect and begin to care for the child. Without the awareness of a strong capable parent-self, contacting the vulnerable child can lead to despair, depression, or further isolation. I will save a full discussion of this for another time.

Integrating the Controller Protector in Group Work

By incorporating this perspective in their work with groups, facilitators can also avoid what I call “The Weekend High”. By weekend high I mean that the results and personal growth of transformational experiences or workshops often do not last because they are not integrated when the client returns to daily life. I suggest this tends to occur because the controller/protector was not involved in the process of the counseling or workshop and when the client returns to daily life the controller/protector is in charge so the openness is not integrated. It is as if the openness created by the releases of counseling exists only within the culture of the counseling or workshops. If the counseling or workshops incorporate the controller/protector then the benefit of the transformations is linked to the controller/protector and will be available later in other environments where they are in charge.

I include the controller/protector in the beginning of my workshops by doing a guided meditation where I encourage the participants to embrace the controller/protector and let them control the workshop. I encourage them to only participate at a level that is okay with the controller/protector. The result is, as I said above, that people actually go deeper than usual.

How to Honor Protection Issues in the Practice of Counseling or Breathwork:

The first step is for facilitators to embrace similar conflicts within themselves and to become friends with their own protection issues.

Next, is to create a respectful counseling space where it is understood that the client has protection issues and that this is a good thing. It is like encouraging the client to have boundaries.

The third step would be to speak to the control or protection selves when they come up, and to address their needs. I do this with Voice Dialogue but you could get some benefit from this information without using the Voice Dialogue process.

Facilitator/Client Relationships

The issues of the controller/protector are by no means the only area in which the psychology-of selves or Voice Dialogue can inform breathworkers and rebirthers. The general relationship work of understanding how selves interact can give facilitators great insight into their relationships with their clients. Most models like the parental disapproval syndrome, the obstetrician syndrome, client/therapist boundaries, and the therapist as a co-dependant, are addressing similar issues.

Simply put, what these models have in common is that if the facilitator is holding too much parental energy then they will be pushing or inducting the client into a child energy. Ideally a facilitator operates only from their aware ego and never form a self, but

this is nearly impossible. Even the neutral adult space that many therapists develop is more aptly described as a psychological self or teacher, and it has some agenda. Also depending upon the client and their issues the facilitator will often be triggered into a reaction, which triggers another self of the therapist. Even if the therapist disguises their reaction by trying to remain in their “therapist self” the client will feel the energy and have a reaction of their own. This is basically the same as understanding when a client triggers you, but viewing it as a self-to-self interaction gives some concrete help for letting the relationship patterns go.

For example, if clients don’t work hard enough for your own “inner pusher” seeing this will help you let go and support them in their choices. If you feel you need to “please” your clients to remain employed, seeing how your “pleaser” is operating will help you let go of your co-dependency and stay connected to your authority. And, as mentioned above, if a client’s unconsciousness or tetany are triggering the investment of your “obstetrician” or “critical parent”, then identifying that investment, and letting go of it and returning to your aware ego, will help the client choose for themselves from their aware ego, instead of going into a self of their own which is a reaction to yours.

It is my feeling that this discussion also explains part of how being a facilitator is so enjoyable. Being a witness to the miracles of breathwork is a gift and a meditation, and the successful navigation of these issues increases the depth of the mediation. It is a relationship dance that is healing for the facilitator. While it is easier to remain in your aware ego with a client than it is with a friend, partner or coworker, it is still a powerful and rewarding experience.

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About the Author

Peter Kane was the director of Theta Seminars - the original rebirthing center in San Francisco from 1979-82 and was one of the original Certified Rebirthers. He was a trainer for the Loving Relationships Training 1981-1990, and was the creator and first director of the LRT Rebirthing School. He has facilitated trainings and workshops ranging from 10-500 participants in 30 cities around the world including Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the U.S. Peter is currently based in Seattle USA and is the director of Relationships Unlimited – a healing and transformational seminar business he created in 1989. Currently he is authoring three books, two of which are on relationships and one on rebirthing. For more information, articles, and upcoming events with Peter see his web page at www.rebirthing.com or contact him at peter@rebirthing.com or PO Box 3399, Redmond, WA 98073. or phone him in the US at 800/373-1718 or 425/868-3335.

NEW PARADIGMS FOR STANDARDS IN BREATHWORK: THE BIRTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL BREATHWORK TRAINING ALLIANCE

JIM MORNINGSTAR, PH.D.

For the last four years there has been a dialogue amongst breathwork schools about the merits of joining together to promote standards in breathwork training and practice. Is such an alliance useful or even possible in as diverse a field as breathwork?

I believe for it to be useful, new paradigms are needed which are appropriate to a technique which works directly with altered states of consciousness and a holistic model of client/practitioner interaction and organizational interactions. Since 1999, after working on a survey of breathwork schools regarding breathwork training standards for the International Breathwork Foundation (henceforth IBF), I have actively pursued this dialogue. In this article I will present the foundation for a new paradigm, the rationale for and progress towards this alliance.

Many schools have already expressed interest and are ready to begin implementation of cross-country and cross-program supportive relationships. For others this may not be timely. We are at a defining point in the evolution of the breathwork movement. The active dialogue started at the Seventh Annual Global Inspiration Conference (henceforth GIC) in Italy (July, 2000) regarding the formation of an International Breathwork Certification Alliance. There were thirty breathwork trainers and practitioners from around the world who participated in a presentation by myself on this initiative. Most wanted to take part in the ensuing efforts to formalize this organization.

NEED STATEMENT

Over the past 25 years there has been an explosion in the blending of ancient breathing techniques for health and spiritual awareness with contemporary growth and therapeutic practices. The result has been the evolution of powerful and incisive healing and consciousness changing modalities. This has given birth to the field of breathwork which has promoted significant advances in medical, psychological and spiritual domains. This is witnessed by the breadth of contributions to the field's peer review journal, *The Healing Breath: A Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*.

In the proliferation of techniques, there is great benefit to nurturing alignment amongst schools with a common philosophy and regard for quality in training and practice. When such an alignment can be honored and brought forth with a common purpose, the ensuing interchange and dialogue can strengthen all parties. This takes the courage to step beyond the fears of losing the integrity of what one has in isolation in order to join with others to incorporate a greater good. I believe the time is ripe for this to happen on a global scale - a bigger breath.

An alliance of breathwork schools can inspire the upholding of mutual standards for trainers, practitioners and students alike. Such an alliance communicates a clear statement to the public about breathwork as a valid, accessible and professional tool for

healing and growth particularly suited to this point in our world evolution. This also highlights the attractiveness to prospective trainees who seek the professionalism of recognized training programs based on a holistic paradigm.

This alliance also increases the possibility that breathwork students in the future might continue their education in various schools. This could eventually lead to interchangeable training modules similar to the transfer of credits between universities with common educational standards.

NEW PARADIGM

Mutual recognition of one another's certification process is critical if breathwork schools and programs are to advance beyond feudal competitiveness.

Certification has in human history occasionally been negatively associated with policing and control and therefore has created an aura of the defensive, exclusive and punitive. This has been founded on a consensus reality of "right vs wrong" and a system for enforcing the preservation of this reality. Consequently this kind of certification has not promoted creativity or exploration for fear of censure.

Breathwork by its very nature induces altered states of consciousness and its successful practice requires blend of the intuitive and the scientific. It also is avowedly spiritual and cannot be contained by fear-based interpretations of its limits.

Clearly a new paradigm for certification is needed if it is not to become another repressive tool for control. Like any tool, however, it must be recognized that it is only as good and useful as the loving intentions of those who participate in its creation and implementation.

Models of breathwork certification, I believe, will incorporate these kinds of tenants if they are to be mutually respected among schools and programs:

- 1) integrity in practice starts with an inner commitment to use breathwork in one's highest service to self and others,
- 2) certification is ultimately an agreement between practitioners and the Spirit of Breath which is an evolving form of sharing values and standards amongst the mselves and with the world,
- 3) training standards are guidelines as to which forms breathworkers currently know best help students develop their awareness and skills in linking the physical breath with spiritual purpose in themselves and others,
- 4) participation in certification is a commitment to honoring the Spirit of Breath and one's growth in awareness of the spirit in all,
- 5) all certification is essentially self-credentialing - a voluntary dedication to a growing self knowledge of who one is, why one is here and how breathwork serves one's deepening awareness of both while helping open the door for others to do the same for the mselves,
- 6) a professional breathworker accepts that this dedication is the highest intention as a breathworker and supersedes other motives and commits oneself and one's work to holding this priority,

- 7) a professional breathworker invites honest feedback from colleagues concerning how one lives this priority in serving themselves and others,
- 8) a professional breathworker renews certification and engages in continuing education as a periodic reopting for this standard,
- 9) certification is not meant to be exclusive or restrictive or comprehensive, but supportive and suggestive in using the highest united intention of the collective consciousness of a dedicated planetary breathwork community,
- 10) breathwork involves non-ordinary states of consciousness and requires a high level of personal integrity in its use and respect for the sacredness of the client's process.

TRAINING FACTORS IN BREATHWORK CERTIFICATION

Movement towards schools and programs mutually acknowledging each others' certification of breathworkers will be enhanced if common factors in training are recognized and agreed upon.

Since heading a committee several years back for the International Breathwork Foundation to survey existing schools of breathwork about their training requirements, I have noted a wide variety of standards. I think this because there is a diversity of factors that go into the training of a breathworker and divergent attempts to address or not address them as the part of training school.

The four broad categories of factors that stand out for me in the training of professional breathworkers are:

1. Skill acquisition.

Theory and practice of techniques in the healing arts and in breathwork in particular are needed. I believe we can come to some consensus on areas of theoretical content and type of supervised practice that are needed to qualify for different levels of Certification. We offer those areas that came out of our IBF surveys and have solicited other areas from additional schools. This might be put these in terms of competency based learning which is most easily communicated to the world of professional education at present. This means dividing skill training into modules that have objective outcome criteria e.g. by the end of this course a student will be able to: a) name types of current breathwork b) identify common inhibited breathing patterns, etc. We do not have to agree on all content. One school might teach three blocked breathing patterns and another might teach six, but this style of communicating our content is quite useful in demonstrating credibility.

2. Integrated holistic perspective.

Since breathwork is by its nature a mind/body/spirit oriented practice, one who teaches, models and uses it as a healing art, does so most effectively if she or he has incorporated holistic principles into their lives. I have conducted research in the area of consciousness over the past thirty years and know that this is not just a subjective science. There are

quantifiable differences in practitioners' values and behavior ('Spiral Dynamics: Breathwork and Social Evolution,' J. Morningstar, *The Healing Breath: A Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*, Vol. 2, # 1, 2000, pp. 36-48, www.i-breathe.com/thb21/index.htm and Gunnel Minett (ed.) *The Spirit of Breathwork: Lectures from Global Inspiration 1949-1999*, pp. 319-333. UK: International Breathwork Foundation). However, we have few objective techniques with which to measure this at present. This is complicated by the fact that we do not grow in all areas of our psyche at once. A breathworker may demonstrate competence with one type of client, but have great difficulty with others or revert to less healthy patterns themselves under certain kinds of stress. This is why many trainers prefer to work with students over a long period of time and in a variety of situations. Some trainers like myself have schools that teach personal growth and leadership besides breathwork skills. We often feel more confident in students who have done both under our supervision. Herein lies a challenge. How confident must I as a trainer be on the student's integration of a holistic perspective before I think they are qualified to handle clients on their own? And secondly, must I be the one who has trained them in these values?

I have had some students go through my three year School of Spiritual Psychology and receive breathwork training in whom I do not have as much confidence as a breathworker as others who have just taken several breathwork courses, either from myself or others. This is because there are many who have already integrated a holistic perspective in their life and simply needed to learn breathwork skills. They might well have already been quite competent in other holistic healing arts before they started with breathwork. I cannot get attached to their needing my personal growth training, but I must be assured they have enough integration to practice holistically before I can endorse them. Trainers vary here from trusting God to handle whatever goes on beyond one week of breathwork training to needing trainees under their personal supervision for four years.

This I see as the biggest challenge to a Breathwork Alliance. Clarity is needed on what we are certifying. I believe both skill acquisition and an integrated holistic perspective are necessary, but trainer's diverge in their emphasis on how much of each. Old paradigms of certification or credentialing require uniform standards as measured by training hours and objective tests to insure quality. This then would have to be backed up by a judicial branch or ethics committee to adjudicated who was violating the spirit of the law and impose sanctions or removal from certification.

A new paradigm would allow for individual schools' certification with a range of standards agreed upon to open the door for working trusting relationships and a responsible message to the public about practitioners' training and values.

3. Personal and Social Responsibility.

The third factor I see important for a breathworker is responsibility to themselves and their community. This usually comes under the heading of ethics. In a holistic model, ethics is more than protecting the rights of others. It involves self-care as a commitment. I cannot truly serve others if I am not caring for my own body, mind and spirit. That is why on the proposed ethical Standards Agreement (Appendix B), breathwork practitioners must make a commitment to self care. In addition continuing education is a requirement for continued professional as well as personal growth. This is a new model of profession-

alism and must include training in conventional ethics and professional practice as well as the holistic perspective. This also involves an agreement to giving responsible feedback to fellow practitioners and receiving it from them.

4. Commitment to Breathwork Practice.

A student may have all of the first three factors, but still not be really called or committed to what it takes to be a successful breathwork practitioner. Schools requiring updated Attestation Forms and Continuing Education (Appendix C) will help to make it clear to the practitioner as well as the public who is committed to practice and growth in their profession.

THE BIRTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL BREATHWORK TRAINING ALLIANCE

One of the major Forums at the Global Inspiration Conference, June 2001 in the US, was “New Paradigms for Standards in Breathwork: Toward an International Breathwork Certification Alliance,” which I moderated with Gay Hendricks, Tav Sparks and Jessica Dibb.

Particularly gratifying was the gathering of over 30 breathwork schools and practitioners during this Forum and subsequent meetings giving birth to the beginnings of a working Alliance. Consensus amongst the schools was to focus on the promotion of training standards and interchange amongst schools rather than universal credentialing of breathworkers. Over the course of many meetings at the GIC 2001, a structure for this new paradigm began to emerge which provides for three levels of school/program/practitioner participation. This allows for shared promotion of breathwork, mutual recognition of training programs’ intent and principles, and a variety of Forms of interchange:

The structure entails three Forms in which breathwork programs might participate in this alliance:

The first Form (the most inclusive) involves participating through subscribing to a common vision, operating principles and ethics for breathwork. This involves contributing to a common website which states these principles and ethics and publishes the contact information for the participating programs.

The second Form includes those programs who agree to the principles and ethics and, in addition, specific standards for the training of professional breathworkers.

The third Form of participation includes the programs agreeing to the aforementioned plus more delineated levels of training, content modules exchangeable among schools, and leading towards shared certification.

BinnieDansby (BinnieDansby@compuserve.com) agreed to coordinate those working on the first Form to define the alliance, create a vision and purpose statement, and delineate principles and ethics.

Catherine Dowling (cmd2@gofree.indigo.ie) agreed to coordinate those working on the second Form to develop detailed guidelines to train competent breathwork practitioners to work independently. These will be a starting points for Alliance consensus, the preliminary agreed upon method of decision making.

Dan Brule (danbrule@breathmastery.com) volunteered to coordinate those

working on the third Form starting with collecting and collating more information on the methods and procedures of existing training programs.

Our goal is to have a working Alliance during 2002.

I, Jim Morningstar (transformationsi@aol.com), received a vote of confidence to serve as coordinator of the International Breathwork Training Alliance in these its nascent stages. Jessica Dibb (awakening@essence.org) volunteered to assist me in this coordination. Other schools and programs which have interest in this venture who were not at the conference are invited to contact me, Jessica or one of the Form coordinators if they want to have input into these goals. I plan to continue printing the e-mail Breathwork News and will include updates on the Alliance progress. Contact me or Cathy Gawlik (cgawlik@wi.rr.com) if you would like to be on this list. Others who volunteered to work on the Alliance formation include: Tamara Penn (Canada), Marga Paradella (Spain), Harrison and Blanche Tanner (Canada), Peter Kane (USA), Robin Lawley (Italy), Judy Gee France), Tilke Platteel Durr Holland), Layla Edwards (Venezuela), Nemi Nath (Australia), Franceen King (USA), Jane Okondo (England), Leonard Orr (USA), Ann Harrison (Australia), Jonnie Lee (Australia), and Denise Burgess (Australia).

Since the GIC 2001, Catherine Dowling has collected more data from schools to begin making recommendations for minimum training standards for Form 2. Our next step is to publish these standards on an official IBTA website (in progress) and solicit schools/programs/practitioners who wish to: Form 1) subscribe to a common vision, operating principles and ethics for breathwork or Form 2) voluntarily commit to self regulation regarding specific standards for the training of professional breathworkers or Form 3) join with other schools/programs/practitioners in an interchange of training modules, trainers and students.

APPENDIX A

Preliminary Purpose Statement International Breathwork Training Alliance

The IBTA is an international association of breathwork schools, trainers, practitioners and trainees who agree to uphold common standards and ethics in the practice of breathwork. The purpose of the IBTA is to promote integrity and peer review among breathworkers to help define their scope of practice, self-monitor the quality of their work and communicate their commitment to the public to provide service based on mutually accepted principles.

Definition: Breathwork is the art and science of teaching the use of breathing techniques for healing, maintenance and improvement of the human physical, mental emotional and spiritual condition.

APPENDIX B

Sample Ethics Form

International Breathwork Certification Alliance Ethical Standards Agreement

Given that an ethical code is essentially an agreement in good faith between a professional and the public she/he serves, I, _____, as a professional breathworker do endorse the following standards and pledge to practice in adherence to them. At any time I am not in compliance with them I agree to voluntarily withdraw from professional practice and to return and rescind my Practitioner certificate from the school in which I have been certified.

I agree to:

- Practice within my scope of training, to make this clear to my prospective clients and to not make claims for my service that can not be substantiated or to guarantee results,
- Establish clear contracts with my clients regarding the number and duration of sessions and financial terms,
- Refer clients to appropriate resources when they present issues beyond my scope of training or when my service would present a detriment to their health or well being,
- Maintain clear practitioner/client boundaries, eliminating any exploitative relationships, and respecting the rights and dignity of those that I serve, as well as protecting their confidentiality within local legal regulations and other professional codes to which I have pledged,
- Seek consultation if issues arise that jeopardize the welfare of my client that I cannot resolve with them in a reasonable period,
- Give constructive feedback to other certified practitioners who we believe have failed to keep one of these agreements,
- Continue to develop personally, practicing the techniques that I offer to others, pursuing self examination and peer feedback and/or supervision,
- Enrich myself professionally through continued education, while maintaining reverence for my calling and keeping a balance in my work and self-care,
- Practice social responsibility through integrating breathwork into my community and on my planet,
- Provide community networking and educational opportunities and resources for my clients as well as have a supportive relationship to my own breathwork community.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20____

APPENDIX C

Sample Attestation And Continuing Education Forms

Breathworker Attestation Form (Peer Review)

I, (trainer's name), as a (encircle one Level III Level IV) Breathworker attest that (print name of trainee), a current (encircle one pre-certification candidate, Level I Level II Level III) Breathworker, upholds in theory and practice our school's ethical principles. I further attest that this breathworker has met the Training standards of the Certification Level to which s/he is applying. I endorse this breathworker as fully qualified to practice at his/her appropriate Level of Certification.

Document would be signed and dated and a section would be left for Qualifying Comments.

Continuing Education Requirements

In order to maintain one's active breathworker certification, it is necessary to demonstrate continued interest and growth in breathwork training and practice commensurate with one's level of certification.

To qualify as Continuing Education a training must confirm to one's training school standards. The training, cannot be one which is self led but may be one which is led by other qualified school teachers (Level III or IV or equivalent).

The original school certificate is valid for two years.

A renewed Certificate will be issued every two years thereafter based on the submission of a renewal Breathwork Application (CEU), Ethical Standards Agreement and Breathworker Attestation forms as well as remittance of the Certification renewal fee.

The following Continuing Education hours are required every two years for:
(hours given here are suggestions only)

Level I Entry Level Breathworker, (15)

Level II Apprentice Breathworker, (20)

Level III Professional Breathworker Practitioner, (30)

Level IV Professional Breathworker Trainer, (40)

About the Author

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Services and the Transformations Breathwork Training Program. He has had extensive training in psychophysical techniques, notably breathwork and bioenergetics. He is the past vice-president of the International Breathwork Foundation, as well as, the former U.S. National Coordinator. He is the author of three books and an audio tape in the field of breathwork. He currently coordinates the International Breathwork Training Alliance.

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OBITUARY

JACQUES DE PANAFIEU (16.6.1930-17.3.2001)

BY

IRÈNE ABBONDIO

BREATHWORKERS LOST A BELOVED MASTER AND PIONEER

Jacques de Panafieu breathed his last and left this level of existence on Saturday, March 17th 2001, in his 71st year. He did it silently and quite unexpectedly for most of us, as well as for himself I think, as he was in the middle of many new plans both for his personal life and for the further development of his extended work as a charismatic, beloved and highly active trainer for psychotherapists, breathworkers and clearers.

We could not believe that we would never again see his tall silhouette and venerable face crowned with its silver hair or look into his loving eyes. We could not imagine going further without him towards the vision we shared with him which was to help humankind towards greater inner growth and consciousness, to free people and enable them to become closer to each other, meet and be creative. When many of us came together near Strasbourg for the general assembly of European Association of Clearing, few knew that he had been suffering from a return of cancer since September 2000. His first attack happened in 1996. He was then operated on and his health was considered restored. Jacques did not pay too much attention to his age and physical weakness and went ahead as before, powerfully pushed by his creative spirit. Rather than slow down his rhythm of activity, he started two new training cycles for Clearing and Rebirthing. On the sad 17th of March 2001, while he was at the hospital for a treatment, he was struck to the floor with a heart attack. Did he prefer to go to heaven by this short route rather than to stay a long time suffering from his disease? We will never know. This loss is painful. The blank he leaves is enormous.

With Jacques a pioneer of all the new therapies that developed since the early seventies has disappeared.

Jacques was the eldest son of the great family of a French ambassador. He spent his childhood in several foreign countries, including the Magreb, and, during the world war, in the United States. During this period he was separated from his father, an officer who participated in the liberation of Rome. After studying philosophy he became a painter and then the director of ARTL (Atelier de création d'information et de publicité) as a trainer in creative methods. He married Marie and they had three children.

In 1974 he became open to experimental methods of self-development. At that time he worked with Dr. Jérôme Liss, a psychiatrist also trained in bioenergy and with Jean Ambrosi, a Gestaltist. Then he met Dominique Levadoux, the first psychologist trained in body-centered methods. It was she who first brought Rebirthing to France. She had been trained by Leonard Orr when he was first invited by Stan Grof to the Esalen Community on the Californian Big Sur Coast. Her book *Renâitre* is the first on this sub-

ject in French. Dominique started a training in France and Jacques, who participated, re-experienced his birth. He was immediately enthusiastic about this method based on breathing and was convinced he had found his vocation: to help people to become fully themselves. So at forty-four he decided to change his profession. He was not tempted by the offer to double his income if he remained at his previous position, but started to work with Dominique, leading therapy groups and creating training cycles for people who wanted to become Rebirth Therapists at the Centre de Développement, rue des Saintes Pères 14, at Paris. In nearly 30 years of career, Jacques gave or supervised over 30,000 Rebirthing sessions. Every year he started a new three year training with Dominique. About 300 Rebirthers were trained by both of them, and later by Jacques alone. In 1986 they founded the Association Palingènèse. In this time Jacques wrote his book *Rebirth Therapie* (Paris: Retz, 1989). He gave many public conferences in France and Switzerland, and he participated in numerous professional conferences to promote Rebirthing..

Jacques was a recognised practitioner and certified trainer of S.N.P. Psy Paris, a syndicate for psychotherapists that are not medical doctors. In this pioneering association he was part of the committee that worked out criteria for the recognition of this new profession. Later, he and Dominique hoped to get official recognition for their training school but this was refused for internal political reasons. This was hard for them both. It also became more and more difficult for them to co-operate in a harmonious way during the trainings as their individual personal development led them in different directions: Dominique increasingly followed the psychoanalytic way and entered the orthodox church; Jacques felt more attracted to Zen Buddhism. Another encounter had deeply influenced his work was with Jeff Love and the Enlightenment Intensive seminars. Jeff was trained by Charles Berner, called Yogeshwar, a therapist and spiritual seeker from California. Jacques wrote a book about this very elaborate method: *L'illumination intensive pour découvrir sa vraie personnalité* (Paris: Retz, 1979). This method consists of meditation on three fundamental questions "Who/what am I?" "What is another?" and "What is life?" The technique consists of offering a very structured environment so that participants are able to concentrate on the instructions without any distractions. The questions are asked during 14 separate 40-minute periods each day. Participants are to communicate what comes up as openly as possible to a partner. Jacques considered this work on one's identity as a necessary complement to Rebirthing. The Rebirthers he trained were to follow at least two of these workshops during their training. Jacques organised more than one hundred Enlightenment seminars and trained about 30 masters in this method in France and Switzerland. The most famous event was the 100th one he led with a hundred participants near Toulouse. Mostly these were three-days workshops, but he also organised several two-week seminars.

From the early nineties he was in contact with Laurence Noyes and Satja, two of Charles Berner's disciples who lived in his community and were active in his dyad school in Australia. Jacques invited them to France to hold workshops in this dyad technique. In 1993 he travelled with a group of trained Rebirthers to meet Yogeshwar and several of his community members in Australia. Yogeshwar had undertaken profound studies on the nature and functioning of the mind. After his return Jacques started immediately to share these new concepts with his trainees. Clearing is a very structured communication technique based on completed communication cycles and the understanding of others as individuals. Jacques was a born communicator and in his natural generosity he wanted to

share what he felt to be an extremely efficient method to free people from fixed attitudes and limiting mental programs that made people feel stuck and unhappy in their life. He felt that the simple affirmation techniques created by Leonard Orr and Sondra Ray, the creators of Rebirthing, needed to be further elaborated. Jacques had been in touch with Orr and Ray but did not entirely agree with certain of their short-circuit methods. This is what decided him to prefer his own originality and independence.

But these new developments were the beginning of the end of his co-operation with Dominique Levadoux and of the Association Palingenèse which was dissolved in 1993. The separation was painful for Jacques and Dominique themselves and for all of us: it was like the divorce of our spiritual parents.

Jacques, who was always a spiritual inventor, initiator and builder, now needed to build the necessary professional structures for a two year training cycle for future professional Rebirthers and Clearers that he led as master trainer and supervisor, together with several partners. Simultaneously he made efforts to create associative structures for networking. He became the driving force for the creation of the European Clearing Association and was its first president. His final goal – a very hard job – was to develop and bring Clearing up to standard so as to become a psychotherapeutic technique officially recognised on a European level by the new European Association of Psychotherapy. As he has now gone in the middle of this rather complex work, we now have to do it by ourselves. It will not be easy without his harmonising energy and enormous efficiency, but hopefully we can be sure of his help, “from the other side.”

In his last years Jacques created another network for alternative new therapies : Les Ateliers du changement. In his enthusiasm for the spread of the new ideas about personal development to the largest possible audience he wrote three brochures: *La Clarification du mental*, *Qui suis-je*, and *Le Rebirth* (Bernet Danilo 1997/1998).

Jacques had lived separately from his wife Marie (sophrologue) since the early eighties. With Marie and his younger brother Guillaume, he had created their Centre, named Hêtre, in the Castel at Verderonne, near Paris. Until the nineties, Jacques gave most of his workshops there, but later, as he often had Swiss participants and, consecutively, several Swiss girl friends and partners – all former trainees – he often went to Geneva and the Lyon area. It is true that Jacques was surrounded by a large feminine court. Women liked him, loved him, and venerated him as a master, father, partner or friend. He had qualities that are rather exceptional in men: an openness to welcome and listen to people; the ability to understand emotional states; and the gift of acting in a positive and non-judgmental way. He was kindness personified as he could acknowledge the best in everybody and thus awake their potential resources. His authority was loving and encouraging. He was at the same time superior and modest. Men looked to him for an example of male identity which included the ability to communicate. They felt esteem for his wisdom and strength and admired him. Jacques certainly enjoyed this admiration in a certain way. It made him feel secure and gave him the distance he needed to protect his privacy as he was a rather discrete person with regard to personal intimacy. Although he knew perfectly well and accepted that conflicts are the daily bread of community living, and was even able to use his powerful – and sometime even provocative – communication skills coupled with his huge sense of humour, in a very subtle and respectful way to manage them he was not fond of these kinds of situation and rather tended to avoid them.

But he could not avoid his death. He was taken away much too early, leaving be-

hind some of his dreams, leaving some planned work unaccomplished. He, like God, doesn't have other hands, eyes, or heads than our own to complete what needs to be done.

The following text was read on his funeral ceremony :

La mort n'est rien. Je suis seulement passé dans la pièce à côté.
Je suis moi, vous êtes vous.
Ce que nous étions les uns pour les autres, nous le sommes toujours.
Donnez-moi le nom que vous m'avez toujours donné.
Parlez-moi comme vous l'avez toujours fait.
N'employez pas un ton différent, ne prenez pas un ton solennel ou triste.
Continuez à rire de ce que nous faisait rire ensemble.
Priez, souriez, pensez à moi, priez pour moi.
Que mon nom soit prononcé comme il l'a toujours été, dans emphase d'aucune sorte,
Sans une trace d'ombre.
La vie signifie tout ce qu'elle a toujours signifié. Elle est ce qu'elle a toujours été.
Le fil n'est pas coupé.
Pourquoi serais-je hors de votre pensées simplement parce que je suis hors de votre vue ?
Je vous attends. Je ne suis pas loin, juste de l'autre côté du chemin.
Vous voyez, tout est bien.

BOOK REVIEWS

[McTaggart](#), Lynne (2001), *The Field: The Quest for the Secret Force of the Universe*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers.

[Kravitz](#), Judith (1999), *Breathe Deep, Laugh Loudly*. CT: Free Press Ink.

[Minett](#), Gunnel (ed) (2001), *The Spirit Of Breathwork: Lectures From Global Inspiration*. Holland: The International Breathwork Foundation.

[Bays](#), Brandon (1999), *The Journey: An Extraordinary Guide for Healing Your Life and Setting Yourself Free*. London: Thorsons

McTaggart, Lynne (2001) *The Field: The Quest for the Secret Force of the Universe*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers.

McTaggart is the editor of *What Doctors don't Tell You* and *Proof*, two eminently respectable journals. She found that she could understand the terminology of the alternative community, including concepts like 'subtle energy,' intuitively, but she had many questions: "Where was this energy coming from? Where did it reside? ... Were there such things as human energy fields? And did they account not only for these alternative forms of healing, but also for many of life's mysteries that couldn't be explained? Was there an energy source that we didn't really understand?" (p. viii) She set out to find proof in the scientific community that could support these ideas. Now she is convinced that we are standing at the brink of a scientific revolution, and that the new science will be 'the science of the miraculous.'

In her Prologue, McTaggart summarises what scientists have discovered:

"At our most elemental, we are not a chemical reaction, but an energy charge. Human beings and all living things are a coalescence of energy in a field of energy connected to every other thing in the world. This pulsating energy field is the central engine of our being and our consciousness, the alpha and the omega of our existence.

There is no 'me' and 'not-me' duality to our bodies in relation to the universe but one underlying energy field. This field is responsible for our mind's highest functions, the information source guiding the growth of our bodies. It is our brain, our heart, our memory – indeed, a blueprint of the world for all time. The field is the force, rather than germs or genes, that finally determines whether we are healthy or ill, the force which must be tapped in order to heal." (p. xiiiif)

There are some equations in quantum physics that stand

"for the Zero Point Field – an ocean of microscopic vibrations in the space between things. If (it) were included in our conception of the most fundamental nature of matter, ...the very underpinning of our universe was a heaving sea of energy – one quantum field. If this were true, everything would be connected to everything else like some invisible web."

The scientists also discovered that

“we (are) made of the same material. On the most fundamental level, living beings, including human beings, were packets of quantum energy constantly exchanging information with this inexhaustible energy sea. Living things emitted a weak radiation, and this was the most crucial aspect of biological processes. Information about all aspects of life, from cellular communication to the vast array of controls of DNA, was relayed through an information exchange on the quantum level. Even our minds, that *other* supposedly so outside of the laws of matter, operated according to quantum processes. Thinking, feeling – every higher cognitive function – had to do with quantum information pulsing simultaneously through our brains and body. Human perception occurred because of interactions between the subatomic particles of our brains and the quantum energy sea. We literally resonated with our world.” (p. xvii)

... They had demonstrated that there may be such a thing as a life force flowing through the universe – what has variously been called collective consciousness or, as the theologians have termed it, the Holy Spirit. ... They offered us, in a sense, a science of religion.” (p. xviii)

I have quoted these conclusions at length, because, as McTaggart herself says, this book is not always easy read, and what she has discovered is extremely important. She has made a great and successful effort to convey the science and the results. Her work deserves being read.

This book is written in three parts. Part One is called *The Resonating Universe*. In Chapter One, *Light in the Darkness*, describes an experience of connectedness which Edgar Mitchell, the sixth man on the moon, had, and how that had effected him. Mitchell set up the Institute of Noetic Sciences. Chapter Two, *The Sea of Light* is about Hal Puthoff's interest in the Zero Point Field and his discovery that “we and our universe live and breathe in what amounts to a sea of motion – a quantum sea of light.” (p. 21) McTaggart explains forefront research in quantum science. She points out the implications of Puthoff's work: “If matter wasn't stable, but an essential element in an underlying ambient random sea of energy, then it should be possible to use this as a blank matrix on which coherent patterns could be written, particularly as the Zero Point Field had imprinted everything that ever happened in the world through wave interference encoding.” (p. 35) Also, if we were all connected through The Field, then it just might be possible to tap into this vast reservoir of energy information and extract information from it.” (p. 36) Chapter Three, *Beings of Light*, describes Fritz-Albert Popp's experiments with light and discovered that “some light in the body responsible for photo-repair,” and that “a cancerous compound must cause cancer because it permanently blocks this light and scrambles it, so photo-repair can't work anymore.” (p. 40) We ingest the light from the sun stored in plants when we eat them, and this energy becomes the driving force for all the molecules in our body. These “biophoton emissions” could provide a perfect communication system, to transfer information to many cells across the body.” (p. 44) Popp discovered biophoton emission was related to health maintenance, and that different diseases did different things to the photons. He discovered that healthy beings exchanged photons. He discovered that certain plant extracts could change biophoton emissions and managed to cure someone's cancer through finding the right plant to regulate her photons. He thought of homeopathy as functioning as a resonance absorber: absorbing wrong oscillations.

Chapter Four, *The Languages of the Cell*, explains Jacques Beneviste's work on the memory of water as an explanation for how homeopathy works. McTaggart recounts the shameful way he was treated by John Maddox, editor of the erstwhile prestigious journal *Nature*, which published Beneviste's results and then went to no limits in their attempt to prove them fraudulent – ultimately without success. Chapter Five, *Resonating with the World* describes Karl Pribram's work on the brain, namely that memory is holographic and that the brain functions according to the weird world of quantum theory." (p. 84) We don't "see objects *per se*, but only their quantum information and out of that we construct) our image of the world. Perceiving the world (is) a matter of tuning into the Zero Point Field." (p. 90) From this and further research came the thought that "Consciousness is a global phenomenon that occurred everywhere in the body, and not simply in our brains. Consciousness, at its most basic, was coherent light." (p. 94) This generated further ideas like that "memory is stored in the Zero Point Field," and that "the brain is simply the retrieval and read-out mechanism of the ultimate storage medium – The Field." (p. 95) This means that our brain is a receiving mechanism. This raised questions about individuality. "If living things boil down to charged particles interacting with a field and sending out and receiving quantum information, where did we end and the rest of the world begin?" (p. 96)

Part Two is called *The Extended Mind*. Chapter Six, *The Creative Observer* is about parapsychological research, especially whether humans could influence randomness and found that "human consciousness could indeed order random electronic devices." Studies by Robert Jahn and Elizabeth Dunne suggest that "reality is created by each of us *only by our attention*. At the lowest level of mind and matter, each of us creates the world." (p. 122) Chapter Seven, *Sharing Dreams* concerns William Braud's studies of extrasensory perception. "A model of consciousness that was not even limited by the body, but was an ethereal presence that trespassed into other bodies and living things and affected them as if they were its own" (p. 128) was building up. Braud discovered that "ordinary humans had the ability to influence other living things on many levels: muscle activity, motor activity, cellular changes, nervous system activity" and "the influence increased depending on how much it mattered to the influencer, or how much he or she could relate to the object of influence." (p. 133) Also, "people were more likely to succeed if, instead of believing in a distinction between themselves and the world, and seeing individual people and things as isolated and divisible, they viewed everything as a connected continuum of interrelations – and also if they understood that there were other ways to communicate than through the usual channels. (p. 134) What, then about being able to make bad things happen to people? Braud discovered, "that you could visualise a safe or protective shield, or barrier or screen, which would prevent penetration of the influence." (p. 136) Past life recall could perhaps be explained by being open to more information from The Field. (p. 138) In Rebirthing breathwork the notion that our thoughts create our reality is a dogma. I had thought it was exaggerated until I read Larry Dossey's work on prayer. Braud's model of the universe supports this view. It is a universe

"more or less under our control. Our wishes and intentions create our reality. We might be able to use them to have a happier life, to block unfavourable influences, to keep ourselves enclosed in a protective fence of goodwill. .. Braud began testing out this idea. .. it only seemed to work when he used gently wishing, rather than intense willing or striving." (p. 138)

Braud's work proves that "our natural way of being is a relationship ... a constant state of one influencing the other." (p. 138)

Chapter Eight, *The Extended Eye*, is about psychic power, in particular remote viewing, including for spying purposes. The conclusions drawn were that "at some level of awareness, we (have) all information about everything in the world." (p. 159) Chapter Nine, *The Endless Here and Now*, concerns seeing the future. It presents interesting conclusions about time and space: "the universe exists in some vast 'here' where here represents all points of space and time at a single instant." (p. 164) Dean Radin "had some of the first laboratory proof that our bodies unconsciously anticipate and act out our own future emotional states." (p. 169) Helmut Schmidt asked the question whether we can influence the past, i.e. what has already happened and discovered that this was possible. Braud wondered whether one could influence disease this way, and whether this was the cause of spontaneous remissions.

Part Three is about *Tapping into the Field*. Chapter Ten, *The Healing Field*, is about healing at a distance. To the investigator, Elizabeth Targ's surprise, this effect was shown and worked no matter what method was used, as long as "the healer held the intention for a patient to heal." How this worked was interesting. Most of the healers "claimed to have put out their intention and then stepped back and surrendered to some other kind of healing force, as though they were opening a door and allowing something greater in. Many of the more effective ones had asked for help – from the spirit world or from the collective consciousness, or even from a religious figure such as Jesus. ... Much of their imagery had to do with relaxing, releasing or allowing the spirit, light or love in." (p. 193) Many breathworkers start sessions in this way too, surrendering the process to a higher power. If that works in healing, it must be part of the success of breathwork too. There are interesting implications: that "healing is a collective force. ... that "Information in The Field helps to keep the living healthy. It might even be that health and illness of individuals is, in a sense, collective. Certain epidemics might grip societies as a physical manifestation of a type of energetic hysteria." This leads to explanations of illness that it is "a disturbance in the quantum fluctuations of an individual" so that healing is "a matter of reprogramming individual quantum fluctuations to operate more coherently." Illness might also be "isolation: a lack of connection with the collective health of The Field and the community." (p. 194) Other experiments validated the idea that consciousness "may live on after we die." (p. 195) Chapter Eleven, *Telegram from Gaia*, has as its theme "We think, therefore we affect." Experiments have shown that "when attention focused the waves of individual minds on something similar, a type of group quantum 'superradiance' occurred which had a physical effect." (p. 205) Experiments in sacred spaces have shown that "the spirit of the place itself appeared to register effects." (p. 206) Other experiments suggest the Zero Point Field "account for emotional and intellectual synchronicity in the world." (p. 214) The final chapter, *The Zero Point Age*, points to where this research is leading, in terms of energy, medicine, nutrition, and human potential, as well as how it has validated religious belief and ancient wisdom. "Far from destroying God, science for the first time was proving His existence – by demonstrating that a higher, collective consciousness was out there." (p. 226)

The references and bibliography in this book are excellent.

Interesting things happen in breathwork. Past lives are accessed, healing occurs, insight and intuition are regular occurrences. Many of the experiments in this book could

be used to explore what happens during breathwork sessions. Then, perhaps, it might be shown how good a method breathwork is for entering The Field, and influencing it.

Joy Manné, PhD

Kravitz, Judith (1999), *Breathe Deep, Laugh Loudly*. CT: Free Press Ink.

Judith Kravitz is an ordained minister – we are not told in what context or belief system – and has a doctorate degree in Metaphysics – we are not told its subject. She practices and teaches Transformational Breathing, which she has trademarked and which she defines, as “expanding on the foundations of Leonard Orr’s Rebirthing ... it also shares some fundamentals with Dr. Stanislav Grof’s Holotropic Breathwork.” She gives her credentials, “My own doctorate degree in the science of metaphysics and unique blend of experience and training in Kundalini Yoga, sound healing, body mapping, and more, has certainly been instrumental in bringing Transformational Breathing to the forefront of breathwork today, however I truly feel that it is God’s gift to the world and I am just the messenger.” (p. xii) The last is a the typical claim of our time for self-help books where the writer wants prophet status and promises miracles.

Kravitz first experience with breathwork was with rebirthing and this book is about rebirthing under a different name. The tone is the same as in the first rebirthing books as is the author’s claim to specialness and the hype that pervades the book. It has no mention of where breathwork is inappropriate or does not succeed, while all experienced breathworkers know of such cases: is it possible that in the 100,000 people Kravitz claims to have worked with there is no-one for whom her method did not lead to a miraculous cure? No opportunity is missed for self-promotion or name-dropping of celebrities who Kravitz knows or has worked with. The accounts of successful sessions read like publicity; they are not informative case histories and little can be learned from them with regard to practice or technique. As I have freely admitted, when I started rebirthing in 1984 I felt so unhappy that I needed the impossible promises of the first rebirthing books simply to be able to hope that I would come to a just little happiness through this method, and surely there are others today who need the same and for whom this book that will respond to that need.

There are, however, some treasures for breathworkers interested in the science of their art. Chapter 4, “A Breath Session,” contains a very clear account of Kravitz way of using rebirthing. Like many breathworkers, she uses invocations. (p. 31) I have noticed that these are fashionable these days. To what extent the guides really exist or are a figment of the clients’ imagination, and whether this is a beneficial way of working or a way of avoiding self-responsibility is a good subject for a research article. I have noticed that it can also be a way of avoiding personal pain and suffering.

Like many breathworkers Kravitz uses imagery. She has a concept of an ideal breath and breathworkers trained by her model this for their clients. She defines it, “The ideal inhale is long and full-bodied and the exhale is quick and relaxed. Again this is a subject for a research article to answer questions like: does such a thing as an ideal in- or exhale exist? What makes it ideal? She avoids the issue of tetany and refers rather to the tingling and dizziness that may happen in a breathwork session, explaining these to be the

result of increased oxygen to the brain. She may be right, but there are no references, so readers cannot check up, or follow the research that led to this idea and decide for themselves whether they are convinced.

Kravitz-trained breathworkers use positive affirmations during the session (see the review of Duncanson in the previous number of THB). They use toning systematically (p. 33). As experienced breathworkers know, many clients spontaneously tone during breathwork sessions. Like most breathworkers, they use touch: "Using a technique called body-mapping, facilitators learn the correlations between specific points of tension in the body and their corresponding emotional repressions. Applying pressure to the point, while giving appropriate affirmations, encourages the breather to safely express the emotions." (p. 34) Unfortunately there is no reference to help the reader find out more about this touching technique. The development of the breathing session is well explained, including the "activation" – "the breath will suddenly seem very easy. You might feel like the breath is breathing you." The term "activation" is more usually used to refer to painful emotions and memories becoming conscious, and later indeed she says, "while activated ...you may begin to notice some tension in the back of your neck and some feelings of anger ..." She rightly says, "the breath appears to take on an intelligence of its own, knowing exactly where to go and what to do." (p. 35) Physical expression such as kicking or punching can happen in the sessions. The importance of continuing with the breathing rhythm is emphasised. Integration cycles are well explained. The role of the facilitator is clearly set out. If it were not for the unfounded claims for originality (which I have set into context above), this would be an excellent chapter on the typical development and use of techniques in certain types of rebirthing session.

Chapter 5, "Breath Analysis: Mapping the Subconscious," begins, Your current breathing patterns provide a kind of map to your personality. By illustrating both conscious and unconscious behaviour patterns, your breathing presents literal and metaphorical information about how you see yourself and how you perceive and respond to life. To the trained eye, in fact, what you do with your breath clearly reflects what you do with your energy. (p. 39)

This is succinctly put and is the essence of the power of breathwork for healing. This chapter provides ways of diagnosing the breath and is very interesting. Kravitz has very interesting ideas and it would be an outstanding project for Breathwork to test these through research. I would call this part of this chapter (pp. 39-49) essential reading at all levels in a breathwork training.

For the rest, there are chapters on the typical subjects in Breathwork: "Breathing into Body, Mind, Spirit," "the Electromagnetic Body," "Sex and Intimacy in Relationships," birth, breathing with children, and breathing with the dying, and from "Healing Respiratory Conditions on p. 145 to Opening to the Infinite on p. 191 there are endless claims of miraculous cures. There is a directory of facilitators trained by Kravitz – some listed with photographs and others just as names and addresses.

There is today a body of breathwork knowledge, gradually growing and expanding. Similarities in practise abound, no matter who is trade-marking what! Weaving the fabric of this knowledge increases the reputation of Breathwork. Claiming that one has invented the Breathwork wheel is detrimental to Breathwork's image in the world, as well as untrue – it simply shows that one has not bothered to inform oneself about the work of one's colleague's in the field or to read their books.

. I experienced Kravitz' work at the last International Breathwork Foundation conference (June, 2001). I am very impressed by her knowledge and technique. I like and respect her very much as a person and a teacher. Somewhere inside Kravitz there is an excellent breathwork book waiting to be written. One finds traces of it here when the hype, propaganda and self-publicising stop and the text becomes truly informative with wisdom, humour and simplicity shining through. I am waiting and hoping for that book.

Joy Manné, Ph.D.

Minett, Gunnel (ed) (2001), *The Spirit Of Breathwork: Lectures From Global Inspiration*. Holland: The International Breathwork Foundation.

This book is a collection of lectures from the Global Inspiration Conferences 1994-99 which is sponsored annually by the International Breathwork Foundation (IBF). The conference brings together breathworkers from over 20 countries. It is a forum for leading breathworkers from around the world to share their skills, knowledge and research, thus supporting the development of breathwork professionally.

Breathwork as a therapy is relatively new in the realm of mental health in western society. Due to its experiential nature and the history of its development, it has (with the possible exception of Holotropic breathwork) suffered from a lack of theoretical development and a scarcity of good literature. A body of well presented literature grounded in clinical practice would help explain breathwork to the world in general as the incredibly effective psychotherapeutic technique that it is. It would also help the profession to grow and evolve. A part of the IBF's brief is to promote the development of breathwork, and this book is its first foray into publishing.

The book is divided into six sections which correspond to the six conferences covered by the volume. Each conference has a theme which heads each chapter and they make an interesting guide to the direction breathwork has taken over the past decade as well as illustrating the improving quality of literature in the field. The contributions vary widely in quality and style from the purely personal, through new age woolly headed, to well-written, well-researched essays that make a valuable contribution not just to the field of breathwork, but to psychotherapy in general.

The opening lecture is an attempt to liken the history of the world to the process of birth, something which makes no sense to anyone with a reasonable knowledge of history. However, the contributions move on fairly quickly from this. The author, Sergi Gorsky PhD, makes other more valuable contributions in his later lectures on subjects such as the role of carbon dioxide in making breathwork so effective, and on the limitations of breathwork and its unsuitability for certain people. The first lecture is followed by a purely personal account by a Swedish clinical psychologist, Ingrid Wallin, of how she uses breathwork with her clients. This is the first in a small number of personal accounts of how some breathworkers practice their craft. These essays are interesting because they give glimpses into the potential for breathwork in a variety of fields, including the invaluable part it could play in mainstream psychotherapy. It would be nice to see them expanded with a greater level of detail.

As the years progress, the contributions in general begin to focus more and more on psychotherapy, breathwork's relationship with mainstream psychotherapy, and the realistic contribution breathwork can make to social integration. These essays place breathwork within a context, bring it in from the lonely landscape that is the home of the maverick, the rebel, the outsider. Breathwork takes place within a social structure and within a long established system of mental health care (Dr. Joy Manne, *Rebirthing: An Orphan Therapy or a Part of The Family of Psychotherapies?*, Dr. Wilfried Ehrmann, *Sharing the Breath*). These essays acknowledge that fact and begin the examination of the place of breathwork in society. There are very interesting and well thought out contributions on ethics from Holotropic Breathworker, Kylea Taylor, on the relationship between breathwork and psychotherapy from Manne and Ehrmann as well as from Dr. Gerhard Stumm and Dr. Alfred Pritz from Austria. There are also valuable contributions on how breathwork relates to social and economic life; the role it can play in social integration (Bo Walstrom from Sweden) and as a model for a new kind of business structure (Dr. Steve Minett from the UK). There are also interesting contributions on meditation from Eirik Balvoine from Norway who explains meditation simply but not simplistically, and on aspects of psychology such as the psychology of sub-personalities from Tilke Patteel-Deur from Holland.

This book has its faults. It is replete with typographical errors, most notably on the cover itself. Many of the contributors were not writing in their native language. There are gaps in some of the theories put forward. Some ideas are either not adequately explained or not fully thought out. This could be caused by language difficulties and if so, more stringent editing could have helped. Or it could be the result of careless writing. Whatever the reason, the result is that, in parts, this book can be quite irritating.

The contributions are transcriptions of lectures. At the time of giving the lectures contributors were not asked to write them up in acceptable academic format with references and a bibliography. Very few of the contributors submitted references and bibliographies for inclusion in this book. It is a great pity. For a long time breathworkers have been making claims for their therapies without supporting their ideas with research or reference to documented clinical practice. This does not do justice to a wonderful and invaluable therapy, and in fact, it may have done harm. The inclusion of references would lend credibility to these often very valuable contributions, would support the development of the profession, and would allow readers whose interest has been stimulated by these very interesting lectures, to explore the literature further. If there is to be another volume of Global Inspiration Conference lectures, these flaws need to be rectified by both the contributors themselves and the editorial team.

It would be nice if this book could be reprinted paying attention to its weaknesses. However, it is worth reading. It is stimulating, thought provoking and an important step in documenting the contribution breathwork is making in the field of mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Catherine Dowling

Bays, Brandon (1999), *The Journey: An Extraordinary Guide for Healing Your Life and Setting Yourself Free*. London: Thorsons.

This is a beautifully written, truly inspirational book. Its thesis is that “we start this life as a pristine, pure, flawless diamond.” Life’s problems cover our brilliance, but if we realize this, we “spend the rest of our life journeying homewards into this beauty and freedom.” Whatever way one expresses this message – Bays also calls it “the soul’s incessant call for us to recognize our greatness,” (p. ix) – I believe that the only way to live this life well is to undertake our journey home, whichever way we choose to do it.

This book is the story of how Bays discovered a way to heal a tumour and made that way into a method that others have benefited from. She is obviously a very special person. When her tumour was diagnosed, she took it as a challenge, a test of what she had learned in the fifteen years she had been in natural healing and alternative health. “I realised that the same part of me that had been responsible for creating the tumour would also be responsible for *un*-creating it. And in this recognition I felt a childlike innocence and trust that somehow I would be guided to discover what it was this pelvic mass had to teach me.” (p. 5)

Bays decided that “if there was just *one* person who had been successful in healing at a physical-cellular level, that it meant that every human body was capable of cellular healing.” (p. 6) She had an immediate inner conviction that she would heal, and determinedly trusted in her guidance as a key to her approach. She decided only to tell supportive people who would support her with confidence in her ability to heal. Through a belief that diseases and physical blocks are there to teach us something, she chose to use the tumour as a means to learn about and heal the “past unresolved emotional memories and patterns (that) were residing in the cells). (p. 9) She went on an optimal diet. She followed leads that friends gave her to excellent practitioners and began with sessions of cranial-visceral massage, colon therapy, massage with healing visualisations. It is worth studying the account of the last treatment, with someone called Surja, whose guidance was so good and apposite. One really sees Bays commitment to learn and to surrender to the necessary learning no matter the pain. (pp. 20-27) This account shows how important it is to discipline the chattering, intellectual mind in this kind of work.

When after four weeks she saw her doctor, her basket ball size growth was reduced to a cantaloupe size growth. The doctor was only interested in the diet she had followed, and not in the inner work she had done. Two weeks later, intensive internal examinations showed the tumour completely gone. At the next Mastery programme, where teachers like Deepak Chopra speak to inspire 1000 people, someone suggested Bays tell her story. The reason I believe one can have confidence in her story lies in the wisdom of her reply. “That would be such a disservice to people. You can’t say ‘Do A, B and C and you’ll be healed.’ It’s not like that. In fact *I* didn’t even heal myself – the infinite intelligence inside did all the healing. I just got the incredible blessing of being allowed to *participate* in the experience. So, I wouldn’t feel right getting on stage and talking about the experience.” (p. 43) Bays is clear. It was not a mind over body experience, it was a healing journey that enabled her cure. She asked herself, how to guide others to access the source from which her healing came.

A spiritual teacher's guidance inspired her to let herself be completely present to her intense emotions. "What a radical idea," she thought. Everything in the self-help movement is teaching us to change our thoughts, make them more positive. Or if you don't change your thoughts, then change your physiology – do anything you can to *avoid* the pain. ... 'Act as if' – do everything you can to make sure you *don't* allow yourself to *really feel* what's coming up." (p. 54) The approach that inspired her is the essence of Vipassana meditation. She did that and thus developed her method which consists of an Emotional Journey Process (case histories chapters 12-16) and a Physical Journey (case history chapter 17). Chapter 19 explains how to do the work with children. The rest of the book explains the process well, so that if one were an experienced enough therapist, one could do it with a colleague. The Buddha insisted he was an open-handed teacher, and so is Bays, which is why her book is inspiring.

She says, "The Journey doesn't end with one Physical or Emotional Journey process. In fact, usually, doing the process is just the *beginning* of a lifetime of letting go of emotional layers, and an ever-deepening experience of yourself in Freedom. Freedom has no boundaries. It's not like you arrive in Source and you are established in it. Rather, it's more like you start living in Source, as an expression of it, and Source reveals all the remaining veils, wounded patterns and old issues that are ready to be let go of. And yet, this that you truly are, Source, remains still, pristine and untouched by the whole dance of life." (p. 140)

Bays went through several great life tests, losing her house and then her husband, and came out of them wise and gentle, and quite free of bitterness or blame. She has this quote on her fridge door, "KNOW WHATEVER COMES TO YOU *UNEXPECTED* TO BE A GIFT FROM GOD, WHICH WILL SURELY SERVE YOU IF YOU SEE IT TO THE FULLEST. IT IS ONLY THAT WHICH YOU STRIVE FOR OUT OF YOUR OWN IMAGINATION, THAT GIVES YOU TROUBLE." (p. 152) Her book is an inspiration for living life that way. Put it next to your bed to read from when you don't feel great, and give it to friends. Her message glows golden in the dark!

The Journey Cassette

There is a set of two cassettes available on which Bays explains her technique and guides the listener through the process. The cassettes are to be worked with after reading the book and do not replace it. Bays voice is very pleasant. I have not yet had the time to work through the guided exercises on the tape, but I intend to!

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