

## CREATIVE DYNAMIC BREATHING

A core exercise of VestAndPage's theory and practice

### AS IT BEGAN

During the years of rehab, Andrea was introduced to **Transpersonal Rebirthing** — a powerful autogenous technique based on a repetitive breathing action, which he has been practicing thenceforth.

Transpersonal Rebirthing differs from the classic Rebirthing methods and schools of American origin. It has a precise scientific foundation, which stems from transpersonal psychology and biochemistry; it aims to bring the practitioner to acknowledge his/her *transparent self*; it improves intuitive self-knowledge, as “the transpersonal approach that works for the realization of the self, the awakening of the spiritual nature of every individual and its most genuinely human qualities” (Charles Tart) is merged into that powerful catalyst that breathing itself represents.

Rebirthing has been spread to the United States in the 1970s, although its origins are ancient and linked to the Pranayama of Kundalini Yoga and ancient practices of Taoism. In the mid '80s, Dr Filippo Falzoni Gallerani developed this technique as a specific method in line with the principles of Transpersonal Psychology. Transpersonal Rebirthing is both an effective catalyst of great therapeutic potential, and a powerful tool for getting in touch with non-ordinary states of consciousness, meditative states, hyper-lucidity, and non-ordinary conscience dimensions, favouring the development of awareness and self-intuition.

From 2004 to 2008, Andrea has been practicing TR under the professional guidance of one of the most reputed Italian rebirther, Dr Alfredo Arisi, alumni of Dr Falzoni Gallerani. At first, the purpose was to reduce and effectively solve anxieties, cravings, chronic depression, existential disorders, emotional and physical aches, but gradually — in addition to its therapeutic benefits — Andrea began to realize how TR was contributing to expand creativity and enforce the artistic drive. After a required period of five years of constant practice and parallel apprenticeship, in 2009 he was licensed to hold sessions alone, as well as for groups of practitioners.

Being an artist, Andrea is mostly interested in continuing and exploring how the breathing technique adopted by TR can be developed to stimulate creativity and enforce an artistic practice, regardless of TR's therapeutic potential and the variety of psychological and physiological aspects that it implies. There also is no interest in dwelling into or applying Oriental philosophies, which too often are exhumed in their essence and derivation by Western New Age and Post-New-Age currents and trivialities. The fascination lies in exploring the power of the breathing— the process of exchanging oxygen and carbon dioxide between our body and the outside environment.

What does actually happen in the body and the mind during the process of inhaling / keeping / exhaling the air, and what are body, mind and spirit physiologically able to produce throughout this process in a state of hyper-lucidity (the extreme consciousness of surroundings, thoughts, feelings, visions, sensations and actions).

During a TR session, the prolonged, repetitive and powerful breathing action can enhance perceptual intelligence and self-intuition. Some of the effects of the oxygenation obtained through breathing detoxify the blood and hit blocks of energy, which reside inside the body and the mind, bringing benefits to the whole body and spirit. Yet, Andrea was looking for a way to awaken — in a state of hyperconsciousness — that magmatic material of life experience that each of us carries within his/her very own self, and that is inscribed into it: an inner library of information, an archive of data that originates from relics and fragments of memories sedimented inside our very own being, splinters of time skewed and prepared into our genes, which the rational mind can't grasp – creativity.

The wish was to come to touch this intimate place inside the self, said to be the most humble and harmonious, but fervent of thin energies. This place where inspiration rises, visions originate to come to life and that what there is triggered is not conditioned by external influences and rational processes yet. Finally to shape this magmatic material produced by the body and activated through the breathing into living images, movements, actions, stories, and finally performances.

Andrea asked both his Rebirthing master and theatre directors to follow him in this process. He needed trustworthy professionals with whom he was already collaborating to advise him and confirm the validity of a new process stemming from Transpersonal Rebirthing, which later was called **Creative Dynamic Breathing**. We experimented to breathe in different positions, with different rhythms, and in different environments, indoor and outdoor, in nature and in the water. The more we tuned our listening to our breathing and natural sounds, the more visions and sensations implemented. The indoor sessions use evocative tribal, classical and experimental music at high volume, for tuning the breathing constantly to the different sounds. The results were quite astonishing.

Andrea and Verena together then developed this technique for application within their artistic workshops, in which art participants are theoretically introduced to VestAndPage's main artistic concerns and methods, and later guided through physical exercises towards and through the Creative Dynamic Breathing. Out of these breathing sessions, we directly transform the experienced into material for art in movement, space, sound, objects, therefor into a matter of art sourced from within, produced without any a priori conceptual intent if not the one of just *being – all that there is*. As tea becomes stronger simply by *steeping inside itself*, so does our artistic practice.

Breathing is composed of ventilation, with which the air in the alveoli is renewed; and the diffusion of oxygen from the capillary blood vessels and the release of carbon dioxide. However, when we breathe normally, we tend to have a short and weak breathing, which causes our body, blood, brain and

consequently our mind to remain filled with toxins. In fact, when we inhale, we tend to not fill properly the lower parts of our lungs with new air, nor we empty them properly when we exhale, as this is only possible by expanding the thoracic diaphragm while breathing. Therefore the lower parts of lungs are in a state of inertia most of the time — we do not make them work as we could, keeping toxins sedimented inside them. The result of having a short breathing is that our sensorial spectrum is reduced, the rational part of the brain is over-stimulated, and the mind is hardly released because it doesn't receive the needed amount of oxygen. Consequently things are often not seen as clearly as they could.

Everyone, through the simplicity of a dynamic, profound and conscious breathing, has the possibility of extracting visions, pictures and stories from the depths of one's soul and from the most remote corners of the mind, drawing from that reservoir of innate creativity which is surely within every human being. Memory, even genetic memory, is a very rich mine of information, power and beauty, asking only of ourselves the right key to open it: each one in his/her own way. In our artistic practice, we want to open closed boxes and reveal what resides inside – as this is the matter of our art.

A CREATIVE DYNAMIC BREATHING SESSION

A VestAndPage session usually lasts from one hour to two and a half hours.

We follow the participants through the whole session and help with the breathing.

The participants are invited to observe **silence** during this day, as this provides a safe zone for every one in his/her experience, as no justifications are needed and chatter prevents real communication. Many people use words simply to fill the void that they feel inside themselves or between each other, but this is the place where we go today, and we give each one his/her space. Silence also helps to later express the experienced through physicality, instead of ruining or lowering the experience through the conditioned perception and preconceived pictures of the spoken word. A final spoken sharing at the end of the day can be provided, in case participants want to share their Creative Dynamic Breathing experience, or ask questions – but this should happen only at the end of the day, once the entire experience has been lived through, digested and finally transformed into an artistic act. This developed distance helps to speak about the necessary instead of the momentarily.

After 15 minutes of softening, warming and **ground-connecting bodywork**, the participants are invited:

- To lay down comfortably on their back on the floor.
- To stay with the eyes closed for the entire session, in order to become the watcher of the inside (at open eyes, the structure of the eternal environment can cause distraction and distress to the senses).
- To not lay on the belly during the session (for avoiding breath constipation and closure).
- If one feels the impulse and urgency to move, sit up, stand or even dance during the session, they are free to do it.
- If someone experiences physical sensations of blocks (expressed through pressure, cramps or tingling in certain area of the body), we advice to accept and let go off if with time. We sometimes assist with a soft massage of the affected area – usually the hands, wrists, throat, ankles and feet – though it is better for the participant to live through the block in his/her own. The hyper-oxygenation of the blood causes physical or energetic blocks to manifest during the session, but they will resolve once the oxygenation through breathing is lowered again.
- We start with warming up the **breathing**: about 10 long, profound, circular inhaling/exhaling, only with the mouth or only with the nose, possibly expanding the thoracic diaphragm at each inhalation and exhalation.
- After the warm-up, the music starts with a 20-30 minutes track of shamanic tribal drums. This sound helps t to keep a rhythm of breathing, allowing the oxygenation of the blood, body and brain. We — by breathing ourselves very powerfully — assist the participants *in taking off like an airplane*.
- When the drums track ends, the music that follows is more quiet, so then also the breathing can soften – *the airplane is in the air now*.

- Any kind of vision, sensation, emotion, feeling that the participant experiences during the session has just to be watched and let go.
- When the session ends, the participants can take all the needed time to resurface, but please observing silence, and stay for a while with what they have lived.
- The participants are asked to write down in whatever form what they have experienced: visions, physical sensations, emotions, feelings, or even nothing – that they have produced, and has not been affected by the external world.
- This **written text** will be used as material for the next exercises. We ask to choose 3 to 7 **keywords** of the written.
- In a next step, we ask to find one simple movement for each word.
- These 3-7 movements from words then turn into a sequence, a **movement vocabulary** for each participant.
- The movements are being individually repeated and refined, and each of it executed at the slowest possible and the fastest possible pace. We observe how the meaning of the movement (and therewith word) changes, if the rhythm in which it is executed changes. Therewith, the participants have a vocabulary of at least 3x3 / 7x3 movement versions.
- Participants are now guided to **communicate** to each others in groups of 2 or more through their movement vocabulary, to establish relations of movement, time and space, to interlace their movement with one other and create a physical dialogue.
- Sounds, words, or objects might be added to the vocabulary later on.

All the originating movement compositions originate only from the participants' personal libraries of most inner knowledge and vision. Creative Dynamic Breathing is a gift that an artist gives to him/herself.

#### MOTIVATION

Coming from a background of philosophical studies, visual arts militancy, and theatre adhering to Grotowski's precepts of *Via Negativa*, where to perform is "not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks, where the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses," we inquire performance art not just as an artistic practice to express our most profound ideas and concerns, but rather as a possibility to search for **authenticity** (the authentic being), a **free spirit** (un-conceptualized mind) and **intuitive relationships**, prior to concept and beyond any conceptualization.

With the term *authenticity* we intend the quality of being genuine with ourselves in the nowness of the performance (therefore presenting, rather than representing) and the way of dealing with our very own urgencies faithful to internal drives rather than external ideas. In fact, in our performances, our aim is not to translate a concept or an idea into a statement, but to reach the full embodiment of a concept or an idea, where the rendering of that concept or that idea is given by the embodiment itself, and not by

the statement. To reach authenticity, we privilege physical, mental and spiritual training based on endurance, conditioned or constrictive situation, prolonged lasting and efforts, which require deep concentration. It is a training that consists of several exercises and practices (among which Creative Dynamic Breathing is a mainstay). It allows us to overpass the hindrances of the mind. It reduces the mind's chattering and its exertion of power on the body and spirit. We practice in order to produce actions and images during a performance not because of an intention, but because of a decision – where our bodies are the tools to offer/express a tangible, visible form in image of the quality of a concept, feeling, or abstraction – either ideas, facts or events.

#### REBIRTHING - A POSSIBLE DEFINITION

From a series of texts collected and resumed by Andrea Pagnes (VestAndPage)

Even today there are difficulties in replying to the question “What is Rebirthing?”

There are those who define it as a technique, others as a therapy, others again as an instrument for achieving wellbeing. None of these definitions is wrong, but taken singularly each one is incomplete; in the end, uniting them one to the other, one might define Rebirthing as a method of personal growth. To grow means to learn to know your own self more profoundly, to be able to find responses in complete autonomy (responsibility), to express oneself in a clear and free way without any conditioning. It is thus evident that in the final analysis all of these elements contribute to creating an emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing and to stimulating the most profound creative processes in each of us, without external influences which could corrupt the genuineness.

Rebirthing is a method which can accompany anybody's life journey, and is always suitable because it changes with us and supports us, helping us to feel ever more the protagonists of our own daily lives and all in a way as simple and natural as breathing. Leonard Orr is recognized as the founder of the movement called Rebirthing. By his own admission (the story of Rebirthing told by its founder) this was not a sudden discovery, but the result of a series of experiences and intuition. It took in fact, about 13 years although in the years 1974-75 this process had a decisive acceleration and reached the first and orthodox form of the Rebirthing method. Orr had his first experiences of spontaneous breathing immersed in warm water, during which moments he underwent strong physical sensations and intense emotional reactions. These experiences often provoked the emergence of memories related to being born. Orr noticed that after these breathing exercises such memories did not reappear and that in their place was a feeling of great freedom, which is why this method came to be called by the name of Rebirthing, which literally means being born again.

Having become quite familiar with the respiration cycle, he began to teach it to others. Thus he observed in others manifestations of the same reactions that he had felt. As an observer he realised that the memories related to being born and the trauma related thereto, were common elements amongst a majority of people. The first Rebirthing experiences were undertaken in warm water. Orr maintained in fact, that this was a fundamental element in making the birth memories emerge. “In water people find themselves in the womb and instantly regress to their birth or to a prenatal condition of awareness.” The water was at a temperature of about 38°, similar to that of the human body. Subsequently he realised that some people had to be taken away from water to be able to follow this experience and thus was born the so-called dry Rebirthing. While at first people immersed themselves in water lying on their backs or face down and using a snorkel to breathe, now it was sufficient simply to lie down on a mattress. In this way with the correct breathing one could abandon oneself to the same sensations but in a situation of greater safety. The practice of dry Rebirthing also gave a person the possibility of experiencing other memories, other visions, beyond those related to his birth. Orr sensed that this breathing was capable of reviving emotional and energy blocks and allowing them to be resolved definitively.

In 1977, Leonard Orr undertook his first journey to India where he encountered yogi Hairakhan Babaji. This man defined Rebirthing as “the yoga of the west.” The encounter with Babaji increased Orr’s interest in the concept of physical immortality, a subject which had fascinated him since 1962 and which he still today, studies and develops at the same time as the practice of Rebirthing.

The human being is afflicted by several causes of suffering which Orr himself defines as the “five greats” and which are:

1. The trauma of birth
2. The disapproval of the others (beginning with the parents)
3. The death instinct
4. Past experiences effects / specific negativities (determined by one’s background and the social environment in which one lives)
5. Former lives

The development of the theoretical system and of profound studies on Rebirthing would be the work of his followers, while the principal merit of Orr himself was to have brought to the western world a powerful technique of awareness and to have contributed to its evolution from its initial stages to its first evolved expositions.

Among his first followers was Sondra Ray who took up the theories proposed by Leonard Orr, developed them and for the first time also expounded them outside the circle of the Rebirthers. For the first time one began to be able to read texts in which there was discussion about various methods of birth and the relationships which exist between these births and human behaviour and the relationships between all these things and Rebirthing. She had worked for a number of years as a nurse and during her career had felt the importance, which traumatic events had on physical and mental health. She noted that usually following a divorce, the death of a loved one, and economic collapse or something similar, the health of the person who had lived this experience underwent a change for the worse. Sondra came to know Rebirthing in a particular period of her life. She had just been divorced and this episode signalled a fundamental step in her personal development. The meeting with Orr and the discovery of the “five greats” cast a new light on her insights. From her background as a nurse and a graduate in sociology, as well as constant practice of circular and conscious respiration, she developed theories about these relationships. In particular she described the effects, which different types of birth could have on the character and behaviour of persons.

Initially her research was based simply on collecting the experiences of her clients. During client sessions she noted how people born in the same method had a similar breathing pattern. In speaking to these people it came to light that they presented the same characteristics in their behaviour in the face of similar events.

In 1987 Sondra Ray wrote, together with Bob Mandel, birth and personality, which presented numerous experiences of people who recounted episodes in their own lives seen again in the light of their births. This could certainly not be considered a scientific text, but it surely has the merit of having spread the knowledge of an important aspect of this experience that is common to all human beings and moreover it provides a help to being able to overcome the trauma of birth. Her work then concentrated on the study of relationships and the method that she adopted to reach a major understanding was Rebirthing. In effect she did not develop the technique, but by promoting it in her seminars as an instrument of healing, she contributed to its spread.

Rebirthing spread also to Europe, thanks to inspired people who had decided to go to the United States in order to follow the seminars presented by Leonard Orr, Sondra Ray and other well-known rebirthers. The theoretical system proposed by Orr thus began to undergo the changes, which would make it more acceptable to the European mentality. Today Rebirthing is in continuous evolution and is well adapted to whosoever chooses to practise it. It helped patients with cancer and HIV. Beside the many benefits I had, I also healed from a wrist dislocation without having to go to doctors. If we think for a moment of how many techniques give an important place to breathing: Yoga, many types of medication, other breathing techniques, not to speak of the different approaches of Rebirthing

itself, from breath work, Vivation, olotropic breathing, each person has the possibility of choosing a way, which seems most adapted to his or her personal evolution.