

Holotropic Breathwork as Process Psychotherapy

Although Whitehead does not address the topic of psychotherapy per se, his ideas have inspired the development of Process Psychotherapy. Besides this explicit development, other effective psychotherapeutic procedures exemplify Whiteheadian concepts. Examining these procedures can further the development of Process Psychotherapy. Also, the efficacy of these procedures attests to the usefulness of Whitehead's concepts. Holotropic Breathwork, a therapy conceived by the psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, bears such examination.

Several important ideas respecting Whitehead are discussed here:

- Self-creation.
- Modes of perception.
- Mental and physical polarity.
- Process of becoming, value.
- 'Life and motion', Psyche, soul.
- Peace.

Part I— Introduction to Holotropic Breathwork

Grof developed Holotropic Breathwork as an alternative to psychedelic therapy, which he had practiced extensively first at the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, Czechoslovakia and later at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center. In Prague Grof worked with normal experimental populations and mentally ill populations; in Maryland he worked with terminally ill cancer patients and normal populations. Subsequently, as Scholar-in-Residence at Esalen Institute in California Grof turned to writing that has yielded extensive publication. Later at Esalen, Grof returned to therapeutic practice, deploying his research with the help of his wife Christina to design Holotropic Breathwork. Holotropic Breathwork avails numerous aspects of techniques they had observed at Esalen, which had become a proving ground of the human potential movement during their tenure there.

Holotropic Breathwork has five aspects: group process, intensified breathing, evocative music, focused bodywork, and expressive drawing. A group process of support and sharing provides the basic context of the work. It begins with an informal lecture that sets forth some of the theoretical background and the practical aspects of Holotropic Breathwork. The process opens into an opportunity for the participants to speak to personal concerns, which fosters group rapport.

After participants have achieved some familiarity with each other, they are paired for "breathing" sessions. In the first session one person "breathes" and the other "sits." (In a second session the roles reverse.) The "breather" lies on a mat under the attention of the "sitter." The session begins with a brief relaxation exercise, after which the breathers are instructed to accelerate their breathing, making it gradually deeper and faster until they are moving as large a volume of air they possibly can, which clinically is similar to hyperventilation. Recorded music plays and continues for the entire session. The music is non-specific, but evocative. It follows a trajectory that begins with activating music that avails rhythm, percussive quality, etc. The trajectory moves through successive phases such as a movie sound track might, supporting the session but not leading it. The "breathers" keep their eyes closed or covered during the session.

By twenty to forty minutes into the session most breathers begin to experience non-specific magnification of their psychic processes. Breathers' experiences are varied and idiosyncratic.

They may range from simply an intensified aesthetic sense to floods of imagery to visions. Experiences may include enhanced ideation, vivid recall of events from personal history, mystical transport, descent into underworlds, boredom, or trapped 'no exit' feelings. Breathers may experience bodily feelings of unknown provenance, ranging from indistinct to vivid. The workshop facilitators (leaders) may offer the breathers opportunities to express their bodily feelings in harmless physical ways, such as pushing against resistance that the facilitators provide. After two to three hours of non-ordinary experience the breathers gradually return to more ordinary experience. Often facilitators' work with a breather's body assists the return.

During the breathing session the other of each pair "sits" for the one who breathes. Sitters are charged primarily with focusing whole attention on their breather. Sitters also serve mundane needs such as providing the breather with drinking water and tissue, or guiding the breather toward a restroom. All of this is done non-verbally. Sitters may help with bodywork.

Breathers conclude their sessions at varying times, according to their own inclination. A facilitator inquires to ascertain that issues and bodily concerns that arose during the session are reasonably resolved. The sitter then ushers the breather to a secluded area furnished with art paper and pencils, markers, chalk, paints, etc. and provided with drinks and snacks. The breather draws and/or writes according to whatever motivation obtains.

The entire session transpires with a bare minimum of talk, although breathers' vocalizations, even screams and shouts are expressly allowed. External sensation is also minimized by darkening the room, in addition to the breathers' keeping their eyes closed or covered with eyeshades. The drawing is done in a lighted area, but even there talking is discouraged.

After all the breathers have concluded their session, and perhaps after a meal, the group convenes for a "sharing" session. The breathers are encouraged to share thoughts and descriptions about their experiences and their drawings. Sitters also are encouraged to share their own thoughts and observations. The facilitators may offer some observations on what participants share or on some features of the breathing session, but they refrain from interpretive comments on the sessions or drawings. The participants are urged to put their drawings up at home, so they can reflect on them and on their experience in the Breathwork session.

After refreshment or on the following day the whole Breathwork process is repeated, with breathers from the first session taking the role of sitters and vice versa.

Part II—Self-Discovery and Self-Creation in Holotropic Breathwork

Holotropic Breathwork focuses centrally on the process of self-discovery and self-creation. This process has important analogies to the process of becoming central to Whitehead's thinking. Holotropic Breathwork addresses the process in several ways that compare usefully with Whitehead:

- (1) It encourages inwardness, starting on the most basic mechanical level of having breathers keep their eyes closed or covered during a session.
- (2) On a broader experiential level Holotropic Breathwork urges people to flow non-judgmentally with their feelings, deeming no feeling to be unacceptable, shameful, etc.
- (3) The Grof program for training people to conduct Holotropic Breathwork workshops aims to produce facilitators, not masters or experts. To facilitate Holotropic Breathwork successfully requires skill in some procedural matters, but not expertise in applying a method to subjects. Mostly, capable facilitation requires learning from one's own travails

- to be a humble companion to the travails of others. Holotropic Breathwork training, as its central requirement, insists that facilitators put themselves in the roles of breather and sitter over and over again.
- (4) At the heart of Holotropic Breathwork is the view that the psyche manifests an inner wisdom which moves the soul toward wholeness. (“Holotropic” derives etymologically from the Greek *holos* and *trepein*.)

(1) **Inwardness.** Breathers are instructed to keep their eyes closed or covered and to focus inwardly. Verbal communication is discouraged during both the breathing session and the time for drawing afterwards. In Whiteheadian terms, this diminishes and interrupts perception in the mode of symbolic reference by (a) cutting down on external visual sensation, which minimizes external reference for the ideation that underlies perception in the mode of presentational immediacy, and (b) emphasizing bodily sensation, which brings to the fore perception in the mode of causal efficacy.

Interrupting perception in the mode of symbolic reference is a hallmark of many “technologies of the sacred,” (Grof, 2000) including shamanism generally and specific practices such as yoga, Sufi whirling, Voodoo, *Lectio Divina*, meditation, chanting, flagellation, fasting, blood letting, Mandan (American Plains Indian) Sun Dance, Witches’ Cradle, Gabriel Roth Power Dance, San (Kalahari Bushman) Dance, and numerous other techniques. These methods all involve means of disrupting ordinary perception and/or focusing perception in non-usual ways. Some cultivate intense focus on perception in the mode of causal efficacy, as a way of minimizing perception in the mode of symbolic reference. Others cultivate intense focus on a stream of ideation or a set of ideas or a single idea, and thereby seek to divorce presentational immediacy from symbolic reference.

Use of these sacred technologies facilitates entering the “other world,” i.e., leaving the ordinary world dominated by externally oriented perception and entering the non-ordinary world of inner perception. Inwardness is the fundamental aspect of the process of becoming. As a person moves from externally oriented to inwardly oriented experience, the sense of the ‘life and motion’ that operates fundamentally in the process of becoming becomes more pronounced, and a person’s sense of value¹ deepens toward the crux of “inner wisdom.”

Music, particularly rhythm, is common to many of these technologies. Although music is in many respects a sensory phenomenon, its perceptual presentation (auditory) differs significantly from the extended, instantaneous world of vision, the epitome of presentational immediacy. Melody requires duration, and musical “space” is very different from visual space. Music excites feeling and emotion much more certainly than does visual perception. Musical perception has the sort of visceral quality Whitehead identifies specifically with perception in the mode of causal efficacy. Holotropic Breathwork uses music similarly to other technologies of the sacred, to enhance causally efficacious perception and cultivate inwardness.

(2) **Non-judgment.** Holotropic breathers are encouraged to go with the flow of their feelings and internal ideation without judging whether their feelings and ideation are good or bad and without concerning themselves about their physical well-being. The facilitators’ most important role is ensuring both physical and emotional safety so that breathers can let themselves go even to the most frightening places.

¹ “Value” here compares with what Whitehead calls “the intrinsic reality of an event” (*SMW* 89)

Facilitators provide emotional and physical safety to workshop participants in several ways:

- Facilitators are extensively trained in providing non-judgmental support for workshop participants.
- Holotropic Breathwork Workshop settings are secluded or otherwise insulated from disruptive intrusion.
- Ample mats and cushions, plus the attentions of facilitators and sitters, allow participants' spontaneous bodily movement without the risk of physical harm.

Participants also play an essential part in making the workshop safe. Securing participants' concurrence in providing safety also enhances their sense of agency, which complements their inner wisdom. Participants are asked to do two things: (i) respect each others confidentiality, and (ii) see the workshop to its completion. Participants' agreeing to confidentiality reinforces everyone's sense of emotional safety. Participants' pledge to complete the workshop forestalls their acting out paranoia or mania. Either difficulty can readily be resolved in the workshop setting, but could be problematic if a participant were to leave the workshop precipitously.²

From a clinical perspective it might sometimes seem that breathers have dissociative experiences, but in Holotropic Breathwork such experiences are considered without clinical prejudice.³ In fact, these experiences are understood as conducive to health. The operative Holotropic concept is the "inner healer." Freed of the constraints of symbolic reference, inner experience becomes drawn to instances of past difficulties, instances that can range from experiences of physical danger to emotional threat— in clinical terms, psychological trauma and conflicts. In a breathing session one revisits these instances without the external danger that originally obtained, and the revisit becomes cathartic, an opportunity for grieving or some other full expression that was not available in the original instance. Bodies, psyches, minds want to heal, grow, develop. The subject intends the fully realized superject. Problems arise when things get in the way.

(3) **Training.** Holotropic Breathwork harks to the ancient meanings embodied etymologically in the term psychotherapy, "attending on the soul." Holotropic Breathwork training educates facilitators in terms of a rubric that emphasizes self-discovery and spiritual understanding. Holotropic Breathwork does not offer training as a clinical program. It does not purport to be clinical psychology, nor does it claim to be a medical procedure.

² Grof suggests that both paranoid and manic moments may become "frozen" into long-lasting states if the process in which they occur becomes blocked or truncated. They will resolve if the process is allowed to continue to resolution.

³ Holotropic Breathwork's alternative to clinical perspective finds support in a number of sources. The psychoanalyst Ernst Kris, for instance, distinguished "regression in service of the ego" from pathological states of regression. Grof calls the phenomenon "positive disintegration" (Grof 2000, p. 10).

"Anti-psychiatrists" such as R. D. Laing have advocated and demonstrated a supportive, non-medical approach to dealing even with people deemed clinically to be schizophrenic. John Weir Perry, a Jungian psychiatrist, is one of the corroborators of Laing's work. Perry founded an experimental residential facility called Diabasis, in Berkeley, California, during the 1970s. This was designed as a comfortable home where young adults, who were experiencing the initial days of their first "acute schizophrenic break," could live in a supportive atmosphere and be empowered to go through the experience without any treatment by medication, electroshock or locked doors.

While these examples support Holotropic Breathwork's disregard of clinical prejudice, Holotropic Breathwork practice undertakes work only with "normal" populations, because of the sophisticated facilities and numerous staff required to accommodate extended, extreme experiences. Holotropic Breathwork training equips facilitators to screen for a normal population.

To facilitate Holotropic Breathwork successfully does require skill in some procedural matters, but not the sort of application of professional expertise to patients that characterizes psychotherapy conceived as a clinical endeavor. For instance, facilitators are especially cautioned to exclude from participation in Holotropic Breathwork people who have any unresolved psychiatric history as well as any medical problems that would interfere with normal living, such as engaging in occasionally vigorous exercise.

Stanislav Grof, the creator of Holotropic Breathwork, pointedly questions not only whether psychotherapy is a medical procedure, but whether it is a science at all.⁴ Psychotherapy's claim to science derives from psychology, but psychology has little in common with disciplines like physics, chemistry, biology, etc. These established disciplines exhibit relative coherence of theory, but psychology has a plethora of competing schools propounding competing theories.

The core of Holotropic Breathwork training is a requirement that facilitators put themselves in the roles of breather and sitter over and over again. To become a capable facilitator one must learn from one's own travails to be a humble companion to the travails of others. This echoes an understanding found in some psychotherapies that eschew the medical, clinical orientation. Carl Rogers's non-directive approach, with its emphasis on unconditional positive regard, provides one example. The way Holotropic Breathwork training values learning from one's own travails also echoes the shamanic understanding that the experience of the wounded healer provides spiritual awareness. The basic principle of training facilitators of Holotropic Breathwork is that one's fully engaging the process of self-discovery will ultimately yield profound comprehension of the capacity for self-creation--the essence of spirituality.⁵

(4) *Inner wisdom*. The concept of inner wisdom is fundamental to Holotropic Breathwork. From it derives the central principle that by cultivating inner wisdom through the process of self-discovery one can overcome the psychic, social, and ontological fragmentation inevitably procured by the vicissitudes of finite human life. Through the process of self-discovery one can come to realize that the self's basic activity is its own creation, and that self-creation embodies innermost wisdom.

The terms 'self' and 'soul' too easily interchange. Here, however, let us use 'soul' in Whitehead's technical sense of a series of occasions with personal order and 'self' to point to the central spark of creation which is an individual occasion's choice of its own becoming. Inner wisdom in its most fundamental sense manifests in the individual occasion's capacity for choosing to become in a way that maximizes its intensity. To get to the full sense of what Holotropic Breathwork calls "inner wisdom" requires (a) first extrapolating from the basic process of an actual occasion to the becoming of soul in a series of occasions with personal identity and (b) then extrapolating further to the scale of human psychology. Scaling up in this way can connect the concept of inner wisdom to Whitehead's metaphysic.

Whitehead himself suggests this scaling up by characterizing Plato's notion of soul as the "agency whereby ideas obtain efficiency in the creative advance." Whitehead continues:

Such a living intelligence [agency] with its 'gaze fixed upon ideas' was what Plato termed a Psyche, a word we can translate as 'soul'. We must, however, be careful to divest the associations of the English word from the accretions due to centuries of Christianity. He conceives of a basic Psyche whose basic grasp of ideas conditions

⁴ Grof echoes the seminal work of Thomas Szasz (1974).

⁵ Cf. The "ultimate fact...is the human being, consciously alone with itself, for its own sake." (RM, p.16)

impartially the whole process of the Universe. This is the Supreme Craftsman, on whom depends the degree of orderliness which the world exhibits. There is a perfection in this Psyche, which Plato finds out of his power to explain. (*AI*, p. 188-9)

This “perfection” in the Psyche is another rendition of the notion of “inner wisdom,” expressed on the level of soul, rather than the level of a single occasion. Holotropic Breathwork associates inner wisdom with a capacity of the psyche to heal itself. There is a practical analogy with the process of bodily healing: Physically, the doctor cleans the wound, stitches the skin, and removes any other impediments to healing, but healing finally depends on the intrinsic power of the organism.

Analogously, the psyche depends on its intrinsic intelligence to heal. That intelligence may have been blocked in an instance by physical circumstance or social constraint, and consequently psychic intelligence sealed over the difficult experience as the best available tactic at the time. Given safety and reassurance, however, the intelligence can rework and resolve the difficulty.

The notion of inner wisdom also finds support in Buddhist psychology. The Dali Lama describes Buddha nature as “the natural potential for perfection that lies in all sentient beings.” He illustrates with some metaphors from Nargarjuna:

[Nargarjuna] likens the natural [potential] to the butter lying unextracted in the unchurned milk, to an oil lamp concealed inside a vase, to a pristine deposit of lapis lazuli buried in a rock, and to a seed covered by its husk. When the milk is churned, the butter is revealed; holes may be made in the vase so that the lamp’s illumination is released; when the gem is dug out, the brilliance of lapis lazuli shines forth; when the husk is removed, the seed can germinate. (Dali Lama 2005, pp. 148-9.)

Part III—Holotropic Breathwork and the Birth Process

Stanislav Grof’s major contribution to the development of depth psychology is his theory of Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPM) (Grof, 1985, pp. 102 ff). Breathwork as a therapeutic process reflects the theory in a number of important ways that yield additional useful comparisons with Whitehead’s thinking.

Grof’s BPM theory first characterizes four stages of the normal physiological birth process. The first stage is late intrauterine existence, the last phase of gestation before the onset of delivery. The second stage is the period from the beginning of labor (contractions) until the cervix opens sufficiently to permit the baby’s passage. The third stage is the baby’s passage through the birth canal. The final BPM stage is the baby’s emergence.

Grof associates a matrix of possibilities with each phase. Each matrix includes a range of possibilities, including the potential mechanical and medical exigencies of the phase, varieties of both normal and abnormal emotional experience, and archetypal themes. Interactions between the possibilities potentially influence (as ingredients in Whitehead’s terminology), but do not determine, life developments throughout its course.

Space permits only one example here. Consider the second phase (BPM II). It finds the baby in a very tight situation: The musculature of the uterus is contracting, pressing in, and the way out is not passable, because the cervix is not yet open. The relative normality or abnormality of this experience depends partly on its duration, but a variety of non-normal medical and physiological factors also come into play. Emotionally the baby might experience feelings of being trapped or

stuck. Classic literary examples of relevant archetypes include Sartre's *No Exit* or Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*. Grof suggests that trauma concerning BPM feelings of no exit may subsequently play a role in respect to what is clinically described as endogenous depression (Grof 1985, p. 103).

Three considerations about the therapeutic process of Breathwork in comparison to Whitehead's thought bear discussion here:

- (1) The conjunction of mental and physical aspects in Holotropic Breathwork bodywork.
- (2) The trajectory of the Holotropic Breathwork therapeutic process.
- (3) Transformation and spirituality.

(1) **Bodywork.** Whitehead's conception of mental and physical as polarities avoids dilemmas that arise from failing to see that that mind and body are abstractions, rather than concrete actualities. Whitehead calls this failure the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. Grof recognizes a variety of this fallacy in psychotherapy that operates exclusively in the realm of verbal abstractions. In some psychotherapeutic situations the therapist is even explicitly forbidden to touch the client under penalties of ethical transgression.

In a Holotropic Breathwork session a person may find them self feeling stuck emotionally. Inquiry will often reveal that these feelings are accompanied by bodily discomfort. Finding this, a facilitator will hold against that place in the body or buttress it. The facilitator will then ask the person to take a few concerted breaths and then push as long and concertedly as possible against the facilitator's resistance. The results of this simple procedure can be remarkable. A breather upon exhausting the stamina of pushing and letting go mechanically may experience a profound sense of emotional release and be flooded with memories of past trauma.

Holotropic Breathwork understands the witness of the body in emotion and trauma to be as important as the witness of the body in perception that Whitehead recognizes in *Symbolism (S)*. For Whitehead it is the key to unraveling Hume's dilemma about causality. Therapeutically Holotropic Breathwork can break open a conventional course of psychotherapy that is stuck, providing a bounty of new material and ideas and insights to work with. Bodywork compliments other aspects of Holotropic Breathwork (such as music and inner focus) that enhance perception in the mode of causal efficacy, which is deeply important to the working of sacred technology.

(2) **Trajectory.** The significance of trajectory in Holotropic Breathwork compares to Whitehead's emphasis of process. An entire Holotropic Breathwork workshop has a trajectory. A Breathwork session within a workshop has a trajectory. Even a bodywork instance within a session has a trajectory. In each case these trajectories reflect the birth process, which seems to exemplify the process of becoming that Whitehead describes. The process of becoming, in its most basic description, begins with a compass of all that has come before and all that might be, succeeds to forge a unique individual, and then perishes into an immortal possibility for all that can henceforth become. The trajectory of a workshop constantly appeals to causally efficacious perception. The important role of perception in the mode of causal efficacy plays out not only in the overall context of the workshop, but it also operates in various aspects of it.

The workshop's trajectory begins with gathering the participants into a group process. The process elicits the causally efficacious perceptual mode underlying social behaviors, which engenders feelings of comfort and community. Communal coherence helps participants feel support that assures them of safety, so they can let themselves go as deeply into their inner reaches as they will.

In the Breathwork session itself the music describes a trajectory that supports inner journeying. Played at quite high volume, the music also provides a sonic density that envelopes random noises and spontaneous vocalizations participants sometimes make. It works to minimize distraction due to these sounds. The music is chosen to be evocative, but not evocative of any particular feeling. The music also is only instrumental or without recognizable words.

The music begins with activating pieces that heighten and intensify experience through drumming, pronounced rhythm, and the like. After the first phase of music has energized the session, the music takes a turn further out, to some strangeness, the slightly unusual, etc. Following this phase the music becomes energetic, emotionally open, and invigorating. Finally the opening continues and broadens to beauty, relaxation, and resolution.

The trajectory of the music reflects aspects of the birth process: developing intensity, a time of tensioning uncertainty, then opening and resolution. Individual episodes of bodywork also exhibit this trajectory: Building, pushing, then letting go and relaxing. The trajectory mimics the peristaltic contractions of labor and also the movement of the overall birth process from quickening to tightening, squirming and pushing, and then finally opening.

With respect to the Breathwork session's process music functions in two ways: (i) as a vehicle of beauty, seeking to promote "the internal conformation of the various items of experience with each other, for the maximum production of effectiveness," (AI p. 341) and (ii) as a means of emphasizing perception in the mode of causal efficacy, which plays an important role in procuring the internal conformation Whitehead speaks to.

The process of becoming of the actual occasion from an external point of view is temporally finite and objective, but internally it is timeless. We can describe the trajectory of process objectively as we have done here, but it is interesting that one of the common reports people make when they are approached at the end of a Breathwork session that may have lasted three or four hours is that they thought perhaps an hour at most had elapsed.

(3) ***Transformation and spirituality.*** To describe the process of an actual occasion as only a process of becoming is elliptical. Fully spoken to, the process is becoming and perishing. On the scale of human life the process is birth and death. But within the macro process of human life the micro process of human birth is an analogous process of becoming and perishing. To be born into the common human world is to die to the womb. One of the fundamental spiritual events is rebirth--to be born again: The old self perishes and the new self is reborn. The idea that rebirth echoes birth provides one of the basic underpinnings of Grof's perinatal (BPM) model, namely that a person later in life can again have an experience comparable in force to the original impact of birth.

Holotropic Breathwork aims at self-transformation through self-discovery. The most important aspect of self-discovery is uncovering the experiences in one's history that constrain one's life. The discovery can be aided by intellect, but the crux of self-discovery is re-experiencing the emotional nature of past experiences.

Holotropic Breathwork theory does not propound any dogma about particular places one must traverse on the path of self-discovery. The theory maintains that the singular expertise regarding the traumas that constrain a person is the person's own expertise. Analogously, an actual occasion could be said to be the unique expert in its own becoming. Holotropic Breathwork theory suggests that a person's present behavior and feelings could not be affected by past trauma

unless the person were in touch with that trauma in some causally important way. The person's contact with past trauma may be called unconscious, but that term must not be taken to imply that the trauma is not really availed in each repetition of the person's process of becoming.

Whitehead stipulates that each actual occasion is not passive in its process of becoming, but it actively derives itself from its history:

The individual, real facts of the past lie at the base of our immediate experience in the present. They are the reality from which the occasion springs, the reality from which it derives its source of emotion, from which it inherits its purposes, to which it directs its passions. (AI 361)

The basic therapeutic strategy of Holotropic Breathwork is simply to facilitate a person's turning inward. Turning inward, one can experientially uncover one's entire history, and even the entire experiential history of the universe. From the ordinary point of view this is an extraordinary claim, but it parallels the claim Whitehead makes for the process of every actual occasion.

Holotropic Breathwork facilitates revisiting trauma, among other aspects of one's history, but there is an important difference between suffering the original trauma and revisiting it in the context of Holotropic Breathwork. In the original traumatic situation the person experienced real danger. In the therapeutic setting of Holotropic Breathwork revisitation takes place in context of profound emotional and physical safety. This is the essence of catharsis and the fundamental tool of transformation.

The transformation Holotropic Breathwork aims to facilitate ultimately leads to the kind of experience Whitehead calls Peace,

... a positive feeling which crowns the 'life and motion' of the soul. It is hard to define and difficult to speak of. It is not a hope for the future nor is it an interest in present details. It is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, un verbalized and yet momentous in its coordination of values. Its first effect is the removal of the stress of acquisitive feeling arising from the soul's preoccupation with itself. Thus Peace carries with it a surpassing of personality.... Its emotional effect is the subsidence of turbulence which inhibits. More accurately, it preserves the springs of energy, and at the same time masters them for the avoidance of paralyzing distractions. (AI 367)

Conclusion

Although Whitehead does not write about psychology directly, his critique of the materialist program in science has important relevance to psychology and psychotherapy. The psychiatrist Stanislav Grof has also developed a critique of materialism in science. Grof's point of departure is clinical experience. Though their critiques develop from different bases, they intersect on central points: the fundamental reality of process and self-creation, the intrinsic reality of value, the limited nature of sense perception and the error of mind/body dichotomy, the critical role of purposive aim, and its ultimate goal of wholeness and Peace. Whitehead and Grof both profoundly criticize lifeless materialism and affirm an ensouled actual world.

The chief irony of mainstream psychology, which has been built on the platform of materialist science, is its exclusion of psyche as key to the life and motion of human existence. The saddest consequence of this irony is a proliferation of psychotherapies with limited, insignificant, or even deleterious effect. The therapies of mainstream psychology disagree basically on methods of

treatment, and in so doing belie psychology as a genuine science. Therapies erected on the platform of materialist science pale in comparison to the power of indigenous methods and other sacred technologies, but ironically mainstream psychologies disparage the sacred technologies.

The effectiveness of Grof's Holotropic Breathwork intrinsically involves his profound critique of the materialist program in science and the psychology spawned by it. Holotropic Breathwork focuses on inwardness, self-realization, and the correlated process of becoming. Its non-judgmental and facilitative method reflects the aim of the process towards wholeness. Holotropic Breathwork recognizes that aim as the primary means of psychological healing. It regards psychological healing as a spiritual process that intimately involves, rather than excludes the body. Holotropic Breathwork, though not of Whiteheadian lineage, is exemplary as Process psychotherapy. The effectiveness of Holotropic Breathwork provides a clear endorsement of the value of Whitehead's systematic thought when applied to the psychology of human behavior.

Abstract

Whitehead does not address the topic of psychotherapy per se. Nonetheless, his ideas have inspired the development of Process Psychotherapy. Besides this explicit development, other effective psychotherapeutic procedures exemplify concepts Whitehead speaks to. Holotropic Breathwork, conceived by the psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, bears examination under this rubric. It will be considered as both technique and theory in terms of Whitehead's concepts of self-creation, modes of perception, mental and physical polarity, process of becoming, 'life and motion,' Psyche, soul, and Peace.

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