

# Three Levels of Cosmological Perception

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## Introduction

Our teachers tell us there are deeper levels of the Tide and the stillness. There are. The Tide of Primary Respiration (PR) exists superficially with its rate of 6 cycles per 10 minutes. Gradually it become timeless in practice and allows us to see its beauty, wisdom and grace. Some practitioners and clients experience its love. It is similar with the stillness. The stillness deepens into a void that can fill all of space in our perception. The stillness is the midline. It is deep pervasive peace. The Cranial Concept developed with these insights gained by its founder William Garner Sutherland that he attributed to Judeo-Christian cosmology. He called it the Breath of Life. The contemporary client needs to be held in a therapeutic container that has deeper levels of perception available in the practitioner. In this text I explore three levels of perception found in Eastern cosmologies that complement Dr. Sutherland's insights.

## Three Visualization Levels

The three levels of perception in biodynamic practice are: *ordinary, subtle, and very subtle*. These correspond to similar levels of perception in Tibetan Medicine and other Eastern traditions. They refer to:

1. The physical body of anatomy, physiology and metabolism,
2. The subtle body as depicted in a wide variety of Eastern images of colorful chakras-channels-energies,
3. The very subtle body of pure light.

This is the basis of medical visualization practice involving color with the triune nature of the human body. In clinical practice these visualizations can occur spontaneously as they did for Dr. Sutherland or the practitioner can deliberately initiate a visualization to create a spark for ignition of the three bodies. These visualizations recapitulate the origin of the universe experienced and expressed in the very subtle body as it radiates into the appearance of the subtle body like a rainbow and finally the ordinary body. That is why we integrate visualization work because in the ancient Eastern cosmologies pure light, clear light, crystal clear light and white light were the metaphors for the experience of origin in both theistic and non-theistic traditions. Dr. Sutherland experienced a spontaneous visualization of a bright sharp light in his practice and called it the Breath of Life referring to the Book of Genesis. Osteopathy from its beginning was grounded in cosmological principles of perception.

## The Breath of Life

There are three levels of meaning associated with Dr. Sutherland's spontaneous visualization of the Breath of Life based on his writings. This includes commentaries on the Breath of Life from Drs. Becker and Jealous.

1. The *first* meaning is the metaphor of light, liquid light, the light coming from a lighthouse beacon.
2. The *second* meaning is movement associated with potency and ignition of the breath of air. As he said it is the Breath of Life not the breath of air. Rather it ignites breathing by its potency observed in the cerebrospinal fluid. Such ignition includes the entire physiology and metabolism of the human body. We become animated by the Breath of Life and physical movement is initiated.
3. The *third* meaning is his use of the term *intelligence*.

Over his lifespan he could sense a deeper intelligence likely because of being a devoted Christian in the lineage of the founder of Osteopathy A.T. Still. The intelligence of the Breath of Life became equated with the sacred and its God like nature manifesting in the human body. Sutherland said in 1943 that you could consider the Cranial Concept to be religious in nature. Nowadays that means spiritual in nature with a direct connection to the sacred regardless of which tradition and religion you might have grown up with. There is less identification with religion and a deeper inner development of one's heart as the spiritual center. Renunciating thoughts, feelings and emotions are the difficult and block the deeper perception of the potency of the Breath of Life and its spiritual intelligence. This spiritual intelligence is equated with the term awareness in Eastern traditions that I will speak to shortly.

## Perception

Perception itself can be problematic because it is composed of subject, object, and the machinery connecting the two. Neurological perception is similar to that of a flight simulator used by pilots to practice flying. Our brain is simply making predictions from enormous amounts of sensory input about what's necessary physiologically in the body to manage its energy and safety needs. We must really learn to embody our senses and stop mentally labeling and interpreting our

sensory perceptions. All the senses need to relax without so much mental ideation and that leads to more accurate responsiveness empathetically as opposed to a greater potential for spontaneous over reactivity. The brain needs a whole lot more time to sort out input to make the flight simulations much better for smoother landings.

There is linkage between the Eastern cosmological origin of the human body as it appears in an array of rainbow colors associated with the *subtle body*. These colors generate forms consisting of lines of axial orientation and points of radial orientation similar to embryonic development. The embryo in this way is the subtle body. Light (photons) is refracted through the fluid body of the embryo and organizes around canalization zones of embryonic fluid. Eastern descriptions of a subtle midline channel and two side channels are defined in conjunction with whatever system of chakras are used in a particular spiritual school including Eastern medical systems. These midlines and fulcra of the subtle body then have linkage and manifest in the ordinary body as the heart, the aorta and descending aorta, the neural tube, and the glands associated with a variety of anatomical structures. And importantly in the East, our anatomy is constructed of five elements, a denser refinement of the colors and light.

### **The Five Indo-Tibetan Elements**

The biodynamic fluid body is composed of the water and earth elements together in the Indo-Tibetan system of elements. It is the container for the interaction of the five elements. The five elements become the linkage between levels of perception from *pure light to colored form to five elements of the ordinary body*. These are three levels of perception of one thing appearing three different but interrelated ways. In the East the colors and elements are also infused with wisdom and so we can see the similarity with the osteopathic notion of an innate spiritual intelligence.

### **Perception and Palpation**

The three levels of perception are scaled down for biodynamic cardiovascular palpation.

1. When your fingers are in contact with parts of the vascular tree the *ordinary* is the musculature protecting the artery wall,
2. The *subtle* is the endothelium, a masterpiece of nature and creation regarding homeostasis in the human body.
3. The *very subtle* layer is the center of the spiral of the blood flow in the arteries and capillaries.

Doppler radar studies show that the center of blood flow is dynamically still. I doubt if it could be estimated what the exact diameter of that zone of stillness is in the middle of the flow. It's better to know where the center of blood flow is approximately with buoyant touch and not overstaying your visit. The three springs palpation is a buoyant non-static contact. The blood is moved by the deep wisdom wind of PR residing in the heart and in this way the artery is a wind instrument of incredible beauty. Palpation is a constant attunement synchronized with perception of the whole. The intention is integrating the other springs within the vascular tree to support homeostasis and the metabolism of the vascular system. The therapist attunes to Primary Respiration moving back and forth from their heart to the client and the cosmos. It seems like a juggling act at first and then the mechanics of subject-object perception gradually dissolve into one single unified state extending to the origin of the universe however briefly.

### **Three Levels of Mind**

Attunement with these levels of the vascular tree involves synchronizing your inner perception with panoramic stillness outwardly. Inwardly it involves attending to one's mind and thoughts until they are quiet enough to be aware of gaps in between thought streams which is mental stillness, however fleeting.

1. Thoughts are ordinary mind.
2. Gaps between thoughts and resulting stillness are subtle mind.
3. Awareness is very subtle and notices both the thoughts and the stillness as a unified whole.

These are the three basic levels of mind for biodynamic practice. Visualization practice whether it is deliberate or spontaneous is much more effective when the therapist can reduce ideation and discursive thinking. It's very easy for a thought stream to build a concept and to lose awareness. When I'm treating a client, if my mind is very active, I know I cannot visualize (perceive and experience deliberately or spontaneously) colors effectively to have a therapeutic effect on the client's metabolism. Conscious awareness which is non-local and non-referential is enhanced by having less thoughts or more periods of stillness. At the same time such awareness is self-cognizing or self-knowing. This is nothing short of Dr. Sutherland's perception of the intelligence of the Breath of Life. It is our innate capacity to knowingly rest in wholeness and clearly see or experience color both in our own body while treating and also in and around the client. This is the spiritual formation of biodynamic practice. And in this way, we are synchronizing our whole

perception mentally and somatically to explore for example, the *eyes of wisdom* open eyed gazing skill. We look at the center of space literally and perceive the stillness and Primary Respiration beyond the horizon. Sky gazing this way enhances our ability to see the subtle and very subtle layers of color in the universe inside and outside the ordinary body. Colors are not static. They move and we can synchronize our perception of PR and color together just as Dr. Sutherland did.

experience the Breath of Life so can everyone else. What a gift to practice biodynamically.

### **The Element of Space**

Stillness, thoughts, and awareness can also be described as the three levels of the element of space. Sensory perception includes the element of the wind mixed with space. It is the wind that makes all things alive move including our thoughts. This is a deeper level of PR. Being able to switch back and forth on a moment's notice is valuable because space and wind are interchangeable elements. As described in the osteopathic literature there is a rhythmic balanced interchange between the elements of space (stillness) and wind (PR). They are more closely associated with the cosmological origin in Eastern medical systems and cultures because of their relationship with the five elements. We need to develop that level of sensory flexibility and discriminating awareness as a contemplative art form.

This is especially accurate in Tibetan medicine that at the moment of death the five elements dissolve sequentially until finally we get to the wind element and once the wind element is extinguished, breathing stops and the animating elements of the ordinary body dissolve into the element of space. This process starts with the subtle body of colors and sounds and so forth in one's perception right after death. New research about death and dying indicates that even when the heart stops the brain activity continues for many hours. These brain waves are consistent with cognitive activity. The death and dying process is developmental because then there is an opportunity to dissolve into the very subtle body of clear light, home base.

There are multiple levels of consciousness at death as in life, and Eastern literature says that there can be many stops on the way after death. Some of those stops go on for other lifetimes. Apparently, it's a long process for some folks to reach clear light, the Breath of Life. And we all have our own spiritual aptitude based on our belief systems and religious upbringing. Biodynamic practice is about spiritual formation for both the practitioner and client. Formation means that we develop our heart space over a lifetime with the help of the Tide and the stillness. Visualization practice occurs either deliberately or spontaneously and if Dr. Sutherland can