

Jill Robinson

IN PRAISE OF LEONARD ORR'S REBIRTHING -

A Reply to Nicholas Albery

On receiving my Sept/Oct edition of *Self and Society*, I was delighted to discover an article on Leonard Orr's *Rebirthing 1)* in which I have been involved for almost three years. However, by the middle of the first page, I was feeling decidedly angry and not sure whether I wanted to carry on reading the rest of it, but eventually I did. In order to attempt to verify whether Nicholas Albery was merely 'plugging' me into some subconscious 'negatives' about rebirthing, I asked a number of other people I know who have been connected with rebirthing to comment upon the article and, without exception, they all responded in a similar fashion. Our conclusion has been that Nicholas Albery has read a couple of books on rebirthing but has not yet experienced it. We recommend that he change this as soon as possible.

Whilst I would not claim that rebirthing holds the only key to the mystery of life, I nonetheless believe that it is a powerful tool for personal transformation. I know that it has made a real difference to my life and to the lives of a number of other people whom I have met through rebirthing and whom I have 'grown' with.

According to Jo Ann Hongslo, a lady who has been connected with rebirthing internationally for several years and who leads *Rebirther Training Seminars*, rebirthing is

... one of the greatest adventures you can make in the discovery of yourself. A safe, powerful and direct key to the deepest level of awareness of yourself, rebirthing is recognised as a most effective life-improvement technique by Western doctors and Eastern mystics alike.

Rebirthing is a technique for building and monitoring energy for the purpose of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual purification.

Breath is the physical connection to life energy itself and can be used to free all sorts of imagined limitations such as poverty, sickness and even death - as well as being one of the greatest healers of your mind and body.

This simple technique of breathing can take you back to the moment of birth and beyond. At the time of birth, we were all

floating in a pleasurable, warm water environment. Then most of us were suddenly thrust into a contorted birth canal with painful contractions and out into a cold hospital room with bright lights, loud noises and a sense of emergency. The mind automatically associates and generalizes these experiences into painful, fearful thoughts, form, attitudes and makes non-verbal decisions about life. This results in what we call 'birth trauma' and is experienced and dissolved through the breath. You become aware of negative thought structures that you made then and continued to validate throughout your life since, and are now able to transform them into positive thought suggestions known as **affirmations**'. 2)

In Eastern mysticism, the breath (prana) is considered to be the 'life force', our connection to the 'power' of the Universe. In 'Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism', Govinda suggests that:

"The most important result of the practice of 'mindfulness', with regard to breathing, is the realization that the process of breathing is the connecting link between conscious and subconscious, gross-material and fine material, volitional and non-volitional function and therefore the most perfect expression of the nature of all life.

Breath is the key to the mystery of life, to that of the body as well as to that of the spirit'. 3)

Evidence appears to be starting to accumulate which indicates that birth and even pre-natal experiences have a profound effect on our lives. For example, see Verny and Kelly's 'The Secret Life of the Unborn Child'. 4) As Nicholas Albery points out, Frederick Leboyer has been very influential in this field 5) along with others and R.D. Laing has also attempted to explore this area. 6)

Affirmations are an important aspect of rebirthing as is positive thinking in many other 'growth' techniques. The review of Dorothy Rowe's book 'Depression - The Way Out of Your Prison' 7) in the same edition of Self and Society, quite clearly shows the kind of negative thinking which can ruin people's lives. Affirmations are a powerful way to change such thoughts.

Unconscious death urge may perhaps be the most 'startling' concept in rebirthing as Albery suggests (p.270). However, many other therapies believe that our thoughts about death affect the way in which we live our lives now. See, for example, the Wilber-Lacan-Southgate model for personal transformation in the Nov/Dec. edition of Self and Society. 8) Orr is merely questioning the idea that physical death is inevitable. Since rebirthing is premised on the idea that thought

is creative and that, therefore, "what mind thinks, it produces", 9) "the idea that death is inevitable has killed more people than all other causes of death combines". 10) Orr has spent some time studying the Yogis of the East, some of whose lives are documented in such books as 'Autobiography of a Yogi' 11) and 'The Life and Teachings of the Masters of the Far East'. 12) As Orr points out:

"Even if death is inevitable, it won't hurt you to believe in physical immortality. It is the safest belief there is. If you are going to die anyway, the idea of physical immortality won't make a difference. So you might as well believe in it; it might have the practical benefits of making you feel healthy and wonderful while you are here. When you give up your mortal mentality, you will feel a wonderful difference". 13)

I was interested in Albery's appendix referring to Janov and Primal Therapy following this article. Dr. Eve Jones, a prominent member of the international rebirthing community, received her scientific training at the University of Chicago where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry, a Master of Science degree in Physiology and General Biology, and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. She has also done extensive post-graduate work in endocrinology and neuropharmacology. She taught psychology at the University of Chicago for eight

years and then moved to Los Angeles where she has been teaching college for the past twenty years, in addition to maintaining her private practice in psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapy, including seven years of primal therapy with Dr. Janov. However, for the past six years or so she has been involved in rebirthing which she believes is a gentler technique than primal therapy. She is also the mother of four grown children and one granddaughter as well as being a well-known writer on parent-child interactions. She believes she is uniquely qualified to examine rebirthing and in an effort to present a considered introduction to it to scientifically-oriented individuals, she has published a small booklet entitled 'An Introduction to Rebirthing for Health Professionals'. 14) I would be happy to supply copies of this booklet to anyone interested in the rebirthing technique. (Enquiries c/o 89 Fairgarth Drive, Kirkby Lonsdale, Via Carnforth, Lancs., LA6 2DT. SAE appreciated).

Finally, it is true that some rebirthers have experienced a connection with an Indian 'guru' known as Babaji. In the same issue of Self and Society there is an article by Ma Anand Savita on her experiences of taking Sanyas and devoting herself to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. 15) In the same way that Rowan 16) suggests that Bhagwan represents the infinite for Sanyasins, so, I believe, Babaji represents the infinite for some rebirthers.

My purpose in writing this reply to Nicholas Albery's article on Leonard Orr's Rebirthing has been an attempt to redress the balance of what I perceived to be a biased and somewhat negative article, although it is a succinct review of Leonard Orr's book 'Rebirthing in the New Age'. I believe it is difficult to really understand anything unless we

have experienced it for ourselves.

All new therapies have a tendency to stretch the mind, that is part of their function, and rebirthing is no exception. Allowing integration of the concepts of rebirthing may revolutionise your life and your relationships as it has done for countless others.

References

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 - 7) Self and Society Book Review - Vol XII No.5 Sept/Oct, 1984 - pp.284-285
 - 8) Southgate, John - Inner and Outer Group Dynamics - Self & Society - Vol XI No.6 - Nov/Dec. 1983 - p. 302
 - 9) Orr, Leonard and Ray, Sondra - Rebirthing in the New Age - Celestial Arts, 1977 - p. 152
 - 10) Orr and Ray - Ibid - p. 148
 - 11) Yogananda - Autobiography of a Yogi
 - 12) Spalding, Baird T. - Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East - Devorss & Co. (5 volumes)
 - 13) Orr and Ray - ibid - p. 155
 - 14) Jones, Dr. Eve - An Introduction to Rebirthing for Health Professionals - 1982.
 - 15) Savita, Ma Anand - Ecstasy and the Psychology of the Buddhas - Self & Society, Vol XII No.5 - Sept/Oct. 1984 - pp. 244-249.
 - 16) Rowan, John - Some Comments on Ecstasy and the Psychology of the Buddhas - Self & Society, Vol. XII No.5 - Sept/Oct. 1984 - pp. 249-251.
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NICHOLAS ALBERY comments on

Jill Robinson's 'In Praise of Leonard Orr's Rebirthing'

Jill Robinson does not actually pick out any inaccuracies in my article, but her main animus seems to be against my lack of enthusiasm for Leonard Orr's beliefs about physical immortality etc., which have grown up around the simple breathing technique. I do believe that these unnecessary accretions put off many normal and sensible people and thus do Rebirthing harm.