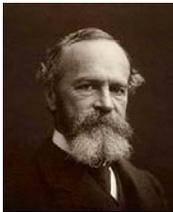


## Extraordinary Experience and the Psychology of Human Potential

Holotropic Breathwork development and discussion is mostly around the theme of psychological healing. Another aspect of Holotropic Breathwork and other sacred technologies is their potential for enhancing creativity, because of the extraordinary experiences they foster.

The origins of Holotropic Breathwork trace to Albert Hoffman's accidental discovery of the extraordinary experience that LSD can promote. The road that Stanislav Grof traveled toward Breathwork began with his first LSD experience, in a psychiatric research laboratory of Charles University in Prague. Although much of Grof's psychedelic work focused on psychiatric patients, some focused on artists and other creative people. Grof's own artistic talent, which he had set aside to pursue psychiatry, plus his and later Christina's interest in the creative realm feed Stan's continuing curiosity about the potential of sacred technologies to enhance creativity.

Since Freud developed psychoanalysis in terms of his training as a neurologist, the dominant focus of psychiatry has been on disease. Classically the purview of psychology extended far beyond disease. From this perspective Aristotle was the last comprehensive psychologist. He spoke especially to matters of human excellence, purpose and goals. Although Aristotle's work suffers ignorance of the many later discoveries in human physiology and experimental psychology, it still has important implications for human potential.



William James

At the same time as Freud, William James began to develop a psychology that looked beyond disease to human potential, laying beginnings that fostered Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology and ultimately the broad field of transpersonal psychology. This workshop will consider the psychology of human potential, in contrast to the disease model of mainstream psychology. It will explore the significance of Holotropic Breathwork and other sacred technologies for enhancement of creativity. We will begin by looking at the Eleusinian



Abraham Maslow

Mysteries and other ancient sacred rites, survey later sacred practices devoted to extraordinary experience, and look at the modern discoveries of William James and psychedelic research.

Psychological healing shares a common ground with creativity. Both involve removing constraints. Traumas constrain free psychological functioning. Holotropic Breathwork provides catharsis that lessens the force of traumatic psychological constraints, but it goes further and provides the possibility to see the world in ways unconstrained by various cultural conventions, including habitual ways of perception and mainstream materialism.

The ultimate extension of Holotropic Breathwork is toward a spiritual perspective that represents a broadening of conscious interest beyond the narrow confines of ego to a felt awareness of what Zen calls "suchness," the apprehension of things exactly as they are, without interpretation or emotional overlay. Zen says to paint bamboo, one must become bamboo; to throw a pot, one must become the clay; to dance the night, one must become the moon and the stars.

The full extension of human potential is the peak experience of oneness that avails the creativity at the heart of the universe. Breathwork provides an opportunity to take a step on the path toward that experience.