

On the Breath and the Cry

Twelve Propositions

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1. In the beginning was the breath. Then came the cry.
2. When the newborn baby first meets air (greet the world), the midwife makes sure the baby cries. Like all other later cries, that first cry is borne on an outbreath.
3. In order to have the strength to cry, the baby must have lungs full of air. The reason the midwife gets the baby to cry is to make sure that the baby has already drawn breath. A healthy cry means healthy inbreath and outbreath. That cry is evidence (sign, signal) of prior breath. Breath (is what) has priority.
4. Once out of the mother's guardian body, that involuntary taking (sucking) in of air is the first independent nourishment the baby gets (receives) from the world. Inbreath is needed (drawn in, got, received, taken), so that (and so long as) the baby is to live (to be). Breath is the world's first birth-gift and air is the baby's birthright. Before milk.
5. That cry is a call (to) and a claim on the whole world. On and to the whole of mothering and fathering creation.
6. That first human cry is the universal prototype of all speech sounds and archetype of speech in all languages. The first vowel. The first syllable.
7. What the cry says is I am. What it utters is Here Now. What it voices is World. What it calls is I greet you. What it announces is Being. What it predicts is Life, Death. What fills it is Spirit.
8. That cry is the governor and founder of all language and ground of all poems and songs. It is the proto-word that contains (holds within it) and foretells (predicts, prophesies, presages) all linguistic forms (shapes, figures) – from phonemes to syllables, from 'parts of speech' to entire grammars
9. And that cry is bounded by nothing but breath (inbreath). It hangs on breath. Built on breath, made on breath, standing on breath, it's bounded (limited, contained, constrained) by nothing but breath.

10. The length, rhythm, strength, pitch and stress of that first cry cast out into, through and across space-time are the living formants of poetic necessity. Its wave form is the first pattern for the poetic line. Its periodicity is predecessor alike of the elegant phrase and the abrupt exclamation, the modulated and articulate paragraph and the polite request or snappy command, the curse and blessing, statement and question, speech and paragraph, plea and prayer.
11. Breath is what happens to air through creatures in experienced space-time. That is: breath is the wave-form-and-motion taken by air moving in and out of the living animal, as (while, so long as) that creature lives and moves.
12. First comes the Breath and then the Cry. That cry, this cry. Long before the Word.