

OVERCOMING DEFENSIVE REACTIONS

The Battle for inner freedom with Psychophonetics

By Yehuda Tagar

"...he (man) can act freely, when he obeys none but himself".

Rudolf Steiner, Philosophy of Freedom chapter 10: Freedom – Philosophy & Monism, 1894

*".....I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul".*

William Ernest Henley (1849–1903).

*".....Everything belonged to him—but that was a trifle. The thing was to know **what he belonged to**, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. That was the reflection that made you creepy all over".*

from 'Heart of Darkness' by Joseph Conrad, 1900

*".... For the heart with no companion/ For the soul without a king
For the prima ballerina/ Who cannot dance to anything".*

'Heart with no companion', Leonard Cohen, 1984

The struggle for freedom has many fronts. From times immemorial human being have been fighting for freedom from outer suppression, from domination from others, from slavery, from discrimination, from being ruled by other classes, from inferior rights, from segregation, from the domination of the new world from its European colonial masters, from the domination of women by men, freedom from poverty, from ignorance, from hunger. This struggle continues today in many places and we do not see an end in sight: Hong Kong against Mainland China, Rohingya people against the Myanmar government, Amazonian people against the Brazilian government, the Kurdish people against the government of four countries, economic migrants everywhere against border restrictions.

But there is an inner frontier in the struggle for freedom: the freedom from being controlled by various parts of my own soul who tend to dominate my moods, my behaviour, my decision making, my actions – against my own better judgement, against my higher values and principles, against my own individual freedom. This is the frontier of the struggle to the freedom to be the master of my own soul.

In this struggle for inner freedom the major obstacle to overcome is the compulsive power of habitual defensive reactions. They are the real puppet-masters that control us from the inside. To be free individuals have to overcome these reactive patterns that choose for them their own course of action, and to become in themselves, free of reactions, the source of action. I can have no real freedom as long as my actions are controlled by my compulsive, automatic, defensive reactions.

Psychophonetics processes for overcoming repetitive defensive positions are aiming above the prevention of the on-going damage of reaction, which is noble in itself. It aims at the developmental, transformational potential of overcoming reactions, the development of higher self-awareness, and the unfolding of higher human faculties by the transformation of instinctive habitual patterns. For us overcoming a reaction is more than solving a problem, it is an opportunity for personal development.

The Latin term Reaction has different meanings in different languages and many different meanings in the same language. In English the term *reaction* can be contrasted with the term response, which is a chosen form of response. In Czech and Slovak the term reaction covers both defensive reaction and response. Therefore for the sake of this article I will define what I mean in this context by defensive, unfree reactions:

- Not chosen consciously
- Happening very fast
- Repetitive
- Compulsive – not free
- Defensive – meaning offensive to the receiver
- Aggressive
- Destructive both for the receiver and for the giver
- Destructive to the relationship
- Toxic – there is always an unclean element involved in them
- Heartless, especially when directed at loved ones
- Involving the anti-human in oneself
- Diminishing one's self-worth
- Contrary to one's own high values
- Cause for regret
- Cause for shame and guilt

These are the kinds of reactions we are striving to overcome, not only to improve human health, stress and relationships, but because overcoming these reactions is a unique opportunity for self-awareness, personal development and transformation. In human relationship, parenthood, family, friendship, teamwork and collegueship – the commitment and the ability to overcome defensive reactions dictate the quality and the sustainability of all relationships. Relationships rise and fall on the question of overcoming or not overcoming reactions.

Defensive reactions have a primal power, which is why they are so difficult to overcome. They are much more deeply established and stronger than all civilised, learned, conscious activities because they are connected to the basic bodily functions and to the basic instincts of survival. They really belong to the animal kingdom in nature and in all of us human beings. On the bodily level – the whole physiology of living beings is based on automatic reactions: insulin is secreted to meet sugar in the bloodstream; The white blood, immune cells phagocytes, neutrophils, lymphocytes and killer cells get activated in the presence of bacterial and viral pathogens; digestive enzymes are produced and released to meet food intake; adrenaline and cortisol are being secreted in response to danger and stress; the production, administration and distribution of warmth; the adjustment of heart rate to the need of oxygen. All these and thousands more are reactive bodily functions without which life would not be possible.

On the instinctive level of behaviour of all animals, including human beings, reactions *are* instincts: fight and flight, attractions and repulsions, the balancing activity in standing and walking, response to danger, prevention of injury – on this our survival depends. We want to keep all these reactions.

But on the emotional, relationship, developmental level – repetitive, habitual, automatic defensive reactions are destructive. Usually constructed unconsciously at an early stage of development as primitive strategies of survival in the face of perceived danger – they become prisons of defensive patterns for the rest of one's life, unless consciously changed, limiting the expression of one's human potential. Because these defensive patterns are created unconsciously – changing them requires making their existence and formation conscious – before they can change. These are the reactions that concern us today. On overcoming them depends on the development of personal freedom on the internal front.

Defensive reactions involve intense emotions and feelings. But it is important to distinguish feelings from emotions, although a lot of this differentiation is a matter for semantics: feelings are healthy for the life of the soul, even sad feelings, because they enable the body and the soul to breathe. Enabling and deepening

of feelings are developmental. Emotions on the other hand are not pure feelings, they involve the will, desire, frustration, metabolic disturbance, disruptions for the breathing process. Emotions and reactions activate and stimulate each other, with a complete mixture of cause and effect. Penetrating the complexities of emotionality is essential to penetrate the mechanism of defensive reactions. Emotions are the most accessible level of reactions.

And we have to penetrate the mechanisms of reactions in order to dissolve them. In each reactive pattern there are typical three characters interwoven: the perceived danger, the vulnerable threatened part of me, and the defence position itself. Entering this internal drama is essential for the dissolving of the repetitive pattern of reaction: the perceived danger could be a projection from the past into present situation, not a reality; the endangered vulnerable part of myself could be available for a new kind of non-reactive protection, and the automatic defence position could be obsolete, outdated, not needed any more. But in order to create these alternatives to the three invisible characters of defensive reactions – we have to enter the defence mechanism first. In order to do that we have to distinguish between four different kinds of reaction:

1. **Explosive reaction** – when the reactive mechanism completes its full cycle and is expressed outwardly, in words or in action, always aggressively, in the face of the perceived danger. That creates an inevitable environmental/human interactive damage.
2. **Implosive reaction** – when the reactive mechanism is interrupted by a constructed block on the border of being exploded, mostly for fear of the painful consequences of explosion, and the force of the reaction is being bounced back into the organism. An immediate environmental/interpersonal damage is being prevented on the surface – but real damage is being created inside of the organism. That is the cause of many internal diseases.
3. **Secondary reaction** – imploded reactions that did not go all the way to the body but glided underneath the surface of it, seeking points of indirect exit, becoming toxic on this path: gossip, negativity, sarcasm, cynicism, putting people down, chronic criticism, wishing people ill.
4. **Somaticize reaction** - when the imploded reaction goes right into the physical body, making it sick, creating a chronic state of inflammation, paralysis, systemic cellular, tissue, organ and systemic damage. My impression is that the long and growing list of ‘syndromes’, from chronic fatigue to auto-immune – for which there is no medical underlying cause and therefore no mainstream medical cure – are results of imploded and then somaticized reactions.

Each of these types (or developmental stages) of reactions requires a different kind of therapeutic/developmental process. In Psychophonetics we developed a whole range of ‘Overcoming Reactions’ processes to address this diversity, all with the aim of overcoming these repetitive, pathological patterns, and, by doing so, to grow personally into one’s higher potential.

In all types of Psychophonetics Overcoming Reactions processes the initial aim is the same: to turn one’s consciousness from the immediate **trigger/provocation** of the reaction – to the real cause of it. We have established a long time ago that the real cause of a reaction **is never** the immediate provocation of it. Never. The present provocation triggers an inevitable change-reaction that leads to the reaction, because it activates a mechanism that is hidden from consciousness. That mechanism is not in front of one’s awareness – but behind it, and it does not change in time. A person could easily have 50 years of being a slave to the same reaction, always blaming those in front of him/her for his/her reaction, never looking inwardly to discover the real, old, unchanging patterns that are being triggered again and again. Our processes come to change it, to ‘turn around’, to shift from the trigger *in front* of one’s consciousness – into the hidden mechanism *behind* one’s consciousness. We call this place in the soul from which the reaction emerges: ‘The Inner Room’. There, once we enter, we find old patterns, often very old, of desperate form of defence in the face of a perceived danger, which is, in all cases of automatic reaction – a projection of past situations into a present one. The entrance and the discovery of that ‘Inner Room’ of reaction is therefore our tactical aim – on the way to dissolve the reactive pattern.

What do we discover once we enter that Inner Room? Without exception what lives and acts there are various combinations of two basic elements: 1) unhealed wounds from the past and 2) unspoken personal

truth. The combination between these two factors become a chronic state of 'Soul Inflammation'. That is the chronic reactive state.

The healing/developmental process of these patterns consists of 1) starting the process of healing the wounds. And 2) expressing and hearing the unspoken truth that got stuck in the system so long ago. As it is in all Psychophonetics healing processes - that healing process is, at the same time, a personal developmental process: a new reality is being created here when the 'victim' of the old pattern becomes the healer of it; when the wounded child gives rise to the understanding, safe adult in oneself; when the person becomes one's own witness of one's truth. the person, the client, becomes one's own effective parent, often the parent that one has never had before.

But first one has to 'enter' consciously into that mysterious 'Inner Room' and the practical challenge is how to penetrate that inner place where the reactive pattern is living? The starting point is always a clear 'Wish' indicating that the person really wants to come to grips with the core of the problem and to look at themselves practically. The next step is to choose a typical moment, from recent time, in which that reaction took place. That moment has to be re-lived and re-experienced in its full bodily reality, and expressed through a spontaneous bodily gesture. From that point onwards - different processes are required for different kinds of reaction:

For overcoming Explosive Reactions – the 'Slow Motion' process.

For overcoming Imploded Reaction – the 'Unravelling Imploded Reaction' process.

For overcoming Secondary reaction – the 'Exposing the nature of Secondary Reaction' process.

For overcoming Somatized Reaction – the process of 'Detoxification' of the body from the effect of somaticized reaction is required.

The Slow Motion process for overcoming Exploded Reaction:

The first tool for this transformation is called "*Slow Motion*". The time span between trigger and reaction, normally very minimal or even instantaneous, is artificially extended by conscious repetition, *in bodily gesture*. Talking about it is at best an introduction. We slow-motion what in normal life takes in splits of a second, and the repetitive, conscious slowing down process enables us to glimpse into that previously unconscious 'Inner Room' in which a typical trigger becomes a typical reaction. Once inside it – the person can see the specific combination of Hurt Feeling or Blocked Truth that form that repetitive pattern, and find a new, helping adult solution for these old troubles.

The 'Unravelling Imploded Reaction' process for overcoming Imploded Reaction:

This is more complicated. In an explosive reaction it is possible to trace the explosion back to the trigger, as the explosion is right in front of the person to observe. In an imploded reaction the explosion is happening inside, and a process is needed to get into that Inner Room without a clear entry point. Three specific sub-processes are required for that:

- 1) Induced Reaction – creating an explosion artificially: bringing the same internal pressure without any external restrictions or limitations, in a safe environment – and the blocked explosion becomes exploded. Then it is to be treated like an Exploded Reaction (above).
- 2) 'Russian Dole' or Matrioshka – 'entering' deeper and deeper into the centre of the source of the reaction, in gesture, exiting and entering again - until reaching the place where the reaction is hidden. Entering the Inner Room, and taking care of whatever is being discovered there.
- 3) 'Inverted Guardian' – discovering the nature of the block that prevented the original reaction from being exploded: it could be fear of parental punishment, fear of being rejected and excluded, fear of damaging someone else. These fear lead to an unconscious block to prevent the explosion from exploding, like putting one's hand over the mouth to keep a scream inside

and not be heard. Entering 'negotiation' with this 'Inverted Guardian' and offering a better protection mechanism than this old one. The block normally dissolves without a fight.

These are the major processes created through Psychophonetics to help people overcome their automatic, destructive defensive reactions. All these descriptions could be tried by the individual reader *on oneself*. In order to practise it a therapist or counsellor professionally on clients or other people – a professional training is required¹.

Defensive reactions can be either a destructive process for personal development, health and relationship – or a powerful opportunity for healing wounds from childhood, personal development and transformation. The second option requires conscious effort, commitment and some skills. The worst part of each human being, the human Double – can use defensive reactions in order to destroy us. The best in the human being, the part of us that wishes to grow and evolve one's humanity - can emerge through our struggle to overcome personal defensive reactions.

I hope that this article will support the hope and the practical ability of readers to transform their reaction into personal awareness and conscious action.

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¹ 3 year professional Psychophonetics training course is being offered in Bratislava and Kosice, with a new group starting every year. For more details visit www.pace.sk