



## SILENCE AS A METHOD OF INITIATION INTO SPIRITUALITY

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**Abstract:** *Silence, the Inner Silence or Hesychia, is the legacy of the desert fathers. As essential elements of the Hesychast spirituality, it can be mention the awareness and the sense of grace. When prayer is from the soul, words are not necessary, a complete silence and tranquility reigns in the soul and a complete peace filling the body, which halts any movement and agitation. Inner silence is the absence of any inner movements either of thoughts or emotions, being in a state of full alertness. The aim of the study was to demonstrating the effectiveness of individual strenghs activation techniques by applying somatic and psychic techniques of Hesychast-type and the detection of the most appropriate ways of implementing them. There is a statistically significant effect of them on the human being. This effect translates into greater memory capacity and a more significant ability to keep focus on a goal. The multi-variated analysis applied has resulted in the fact that the respiratory technique is decisive in obtaining the effect, while the manner in which it runs, with mental focus on counting and with mental focus on a structure with special spiritual semantic elements, does not have a statistically significant effect.*

**Keywords:** *Hesychia, Inner Silence, spirituality, respiratory technique.*

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### 1. THE SILENCE OF HESYCHAST PRAYER

Silence, Stillness, the Inner Silence or Hesychia, is the legacy of the desert fathers. Happily they were inspired by the Phylokalia in the practice of discipline in the evolution of the inner life by invoking diligently, unceasingly, the name of Jesus. This is the “Prayer of the heart”, also called “the Jesus prayer” or “pure Prayer”.

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“Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner” (Ware, 1995) as a technique, has its origins the urges:

- “The kingdom of God is within you”
- “Pray continually”
- “Persevere in prayer” (Ware, 1995)

Saint John of the Ladder (+ 649) founded the art mono-logical technique reduced to a single word “Jesus” in his work “The Ladder to Paradise”. He points out that the state of inner quiet, emotional and cognitive produced by action of meditation in silence on the name of Jesus it is not an end in itself. Hesychia, through the purity of heart, repentance and sobriety, wakefulness or heart attention creates the premises for practicing these virtues.

Hesychasm was organized in Athos, in the 12th-14th centuries and it’s intrinsically tied to theology, to “uncreated character of taboric light” and direct experimentation of the glory of God (Tomoioagă, 2015). As essential elements of the Hesychast spirituality, Saint Symeon the New Theologian emphasizes the awareness and the sense of grace, and Saint Gregory Palamas, on direct contemplation of the Uncreated glory.

When prayer is from the soul, words are not necessary because then we pray in a complete silence and tranquility reigns in the soul and a complete peace filling the body, which halts any movement and agitation. In those moments, time disappears and it stands before the Lord, completely open to the end in the act of worship.

Inner silence is the absence of any inner movements either of thoughts or emotions, being in a state of full alertness and opening up to Divinity. This silence, called by the ancient Fathers as Hesychia, is the starting point and a crown of life in prayer (Sheldrake, 2007). In this respect, the Inner Silence is a state in which both the powers of the soul and the body are in complete peace, tranquility and silence. It is a state of complete vigilance, in a freedom beyond any agitation and movement.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES**

### **2.1. OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the study was to demonstrating the effectiveness of individual strengths activation techniques by applying somatic and psychic techniques of Hesychast-type and the detection of the most appropriate ways of implementing them, in order to optimize the human performance improvement process.

### **2.2. HYPOTHESES**

1. Subjects whose own potentials have been activated by applying specific techniques record significant increases in concentrated attention levels and visual and auditory memory measured by FVW test.

2. Applying the Hesychast-type techniques results in significantly better performance in concentrated attention levels and visual and auditory memory measured by FVW.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1. PARTICIPANTS**

The experiment was attended by 24 subjects aged between 18 and 23 ( $m = 19.8$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ), students of the University of Bucharest.

#### **3.2. INSTRUMENTS**

The FVW Test - Continuous visual recognition, for assessing the performance of memory and attention of each subject (Puhr, 2003), was used to measure human performance. Pictures of concrete objects, numbers, words, meaningless syllables, letter or number combinations or hard-to-verbalize shapes are displayed. Half of the images involve verbal material and half non-verbal material. The respondent's task is to decide whether he is seeing an item for the first time or whether it has appeared previously. The following main variables are scored:

1. Number of hits: The number of correctly recognized items.
2. Number of false positives: The number of "yes" answers for distractors – i.e. an item that has so far only been presented once is classed as having been presented twice.
3. Mean reaction time hits (in seconds).

Statistical processing was done with the SPSS 20 package.

#### **3.3. PROCEDURE**

Two activation techniques were used each in two ways. These were:

1. Lower pelvis muscle contraction exercise (LPM)

The technique was studied in 1994 at the Institute of Applied Biocybernetics and Feedback Research from Vienna (Eggetsberger and Eggetsberger, 1994) where the energy currents generated during this exercise were highlighted.

The state of vitality and health requires good circulation at the level of the energy system. It also implies a good circulation of the energy in the lung, which in the physical plane implies a correct and complete breathing. It can be said that, in order to stimulate energy circulation, a special effect has the contraction exercise of the lower basin muscle. The work phases of the exercise are as follows:

A relaxed, straight attire is adopted to create the possibility of good energy circulation.

To feel the work area repeatedly strain the lower pelvis muscle. It feels very good as it raises the respective muscle.

Strain the muscle and maintain it during inspiration.

Keep tense in the interval after the inspiration (about two seconds inspirational apnea) and become aware of this pause.

Relaxes during the expiration.

Keep the muscle relaxed during the break after exhale (expiratory apnea).

Become aware of this pause.

Continue by contracting the muscle during the inspiration.

Work at least ten respiratory cycles.

The visible effects of the LPM contraction exercise are: progressive improvement of physical and mental health, thinking works more complex, enhancing intuition, creativity, learning capacity, balancing, synchronizing the functioning of both cerebral hemispheres in the alpha state with the whole context of beneficial effects resulting from such a state of consciousness (Eggetsberger and Eggetsberger, 1994).

After a period of practice you can feel different manifestations in the physical body, such as: tingling or pressure, sometimes even mild pain in the spine and on the forehead, in the intraocular area. These are the physical signals of energy stimulated by the activation of the lower pelvis muscle (LPM). Thus, the fundamental energy circulation is achieved at the physical body level (Manolea and Manolea, 1998).

2. Exercise to achieve abdominal breathing by running the pelvis forward-backward

Seated in the chair with the your back straight, a rotating movement of the pelvis from the back to the front is performed with the movement origin in the coxo-femoral joint. Through this movement is obtained the running of the pelvis on the gluteus muscles, the strong emphasis of the lordosis (curvature of the lumbar area of the spine), inflate the abdomen, the diaphragm descends and a very profound inspiration is obtained. Once the maximum possible to the front has been reached, the same movement is performed but this time in reverse backwards (Manolea and Manolea, 1996).

The entire spine is curved emphasizing the lordosis and the kyphosis. A total air discharge is achieved; the back area is round. The head keeps up always vertical. The process is resumed; inspiration and expiration are done on the nose.

If the basin is running with a small amplitude, but through a faster movement, it is observed that the upper part of the respiratory system is more active, which is reflected in the stronger energization of the upper body.

The techniques were applied in four ways, each experimental group (of six subjects) addressing one way:

Manner A: The exercise was performed on cognitive concentration with mental counting of the times corresponding to the stages of respiration.

Manner B: The exercise was performed on mental focus on a linguistic structure with particular spiritual significance – the Hesychast prayer.

Manner C: The exercise was accompanied by the running of the pelvis and the cognitive focus on the mental counting of the times corresponding to the stages of respiration.

Manner D: The exercise was accompanied by the running of the basin and the mental focus on a linguistic structure with particular spiritual significance - the Hesychast prayer.

The FWV test was applied in a test-retest manner, before and after performing Hesychast techniques.

### 3.4. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The experimental design was the 2x2-type, factorial plane-type with two factors, applied in two levels. It was thus possible to determine both the effect of applied techniques taken separately (the main effect) and how they interact.

The independent variables (factors) were Respiratory Technique (with contraction of the lower pelvis muscle (RLPM) and with the contraction of the lower pelvis muscle and the running of the pelvis (RLPM - RP)) and the Application Manner (with mental focus on counting (MFCounting)) and with mental focus on a structure with special spiritual semantic elements (MFSSSE).

The modalities presented in brackets are the levels in which the factors apply. Hence the name of the factorial plan 2x2, i.e. an experimental plan in which two independent variables are studied, each with two levels. Thus, four unifactorial experiments are actually contained in this experiment.

The dependent variables were obtained by applying the FVW test, being the following: Number of hits, Number of incorrect positive, Mean reaction time hits.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For testing the first hypothesis a t test for pair samples was performed. The test result had statistical significance for the variable Mean\_reaction\_time\_hits ( $t(23)=-0,449$ ,  $p=0,00<0,05$ ) and had no statistical significance for the variables Number\_of\_hits ( $t(23)=1,54$ ,  $p=,014>0,05$ ) and Number\_of\_incorect\_positive ( $t(23)=-0,62$ ,  $p=0,54>0,05$ ). So it can be said that the subjects of the experiment became faster in reactions on average by 0.13 seconds, and hypothesis 1 was partially verified.

To test hypothesis 2, a multivariate analysis was performed to test whether there is any difference between the groups of subjects created by the interaction of the two factors Respiratory Technique and Application Manner.

Following the application of the MANOVA test (table 1) it resulted that the variability of dependent variables is given by the Respiratory Technique variable ( $F=4.54$ ,  $p=0.19<0.05$ ), while the Application Manner ( $F=2.00$ ,  $p=0.165>0.05$ ) does not have a significant effect on dependent variables.

At the same time the cumulative effect of the two independent variables is significant ( $F=6.94$ ,  $p=0.00<0.05$ ).

The multi-variates analysis applied to the growth techniques of the human performance has resulted in the fact that the respiratory technique is decisive in obtaining the effect.

Table 1 The results of the multivariate analysis

Multivariate test results						
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	1,00	30642,58 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,000
	Wilks' Lambda	,00	30642,58 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,000
	Hotelling's Trace	49794,19	30642,58 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,000
	Roy's Largest Root	49794,19	30642,58 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,000
Respiratory_Technique	Pillai's Trace	,88	4,54 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,019
	Wilks' Lambda	,12	4,54 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,019
	Hotelling's Trace	7,38	4,54 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,019
	Roy's Largest Root	7,38	4,54 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,019
Application_Manner	Pillai's Trace	,76	2,00 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,165
	Wilks' Lambda	,24	2,00 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,165
	Hotelling's Trace	3,25	2,00 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,165
	Roy's Largest Root	3,25	2,00 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,165
Respiratory_Technique* Application_Manner	Pillai's Trace	,92	6,94 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,00
	Wilks' Lambda	,08	6,94 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,00
	Hotelling's Trace	11,28	6,94 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,00
	Roy's Largest Root	11,28	6,94 <sup>b</sup>	13,00	8,00	,00

While the manner in which it runs (with mental focus on counting (MFCounting) and with mental focus on a structure with special spiritual semantic elements (MFSSSE)) does not have a statistically significant effect. Thus we concluded that the hypothesis 2 was rejected. Anyway, these techniques were effective, registering positive changes in the human performance by improving the performance to the FVW test, which measures the skills of memory and attention

and their interaction. By applying a complex of Hesychast-type techniques to increase human performance, we have shown that there is a statistically significant effect on the human being. This effect translates into greater memory capacity and a more significant ability to keep focus on a goal.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Therefore, we found a set of Hesychast type techniques for activating the potential of the human being. They improve the level of awareness of subjects through increased skills related to memory and attention that can lead to increased human performance. By studying the difference between the techniques applied by testing using the variance analysis of the dependent variables MANOVA, we have shown that there is a difference between them as regards the independent variable, Respiratory Technique, while from the point of view of the variable the Application Manner has not been recorded any significant difference. This implies the use of the simplest method of application of the more effective breathing technique, namely breathing with the contraction of the lower basin muscle and running the pelvis with the mental counting of the times of respiration.

It can be said that without the presence of awareness, we would not even know that our own perceptions exist. But this does not mean that we are always aware of each of them, because this is dictated by the phenomenon on which we are pointing our attention, or focusing our minds. The sensations detected by the body, the thoughts and the mental images appear in the mind and we can become aware of them only by directing our attention to them. Therefore, awareness is like a screen on which all thoughts and sensations appear, and the mind becomes aware of them by focusing on them. The mind is a tool for solving problems, storing, extracting and processing information, as well as evaluating the data provided by our senses. It achieves this by focusing on certain sensations, thoughts and mental images that are present in memory and process them. Therefore there is a very strong link between awareness and the qualities of attention and memory.

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