

8-7-2016 Readings: Rhythm & Balance in Daily Life/Nature

The Whole Elephant Revealed: Insights Into the Existence and operation of Universal Laws and the Golden Ratio, by Marja de Vries, excerpts from Chapter 8, The Law of Rhythm

Everything flows and nothing stays the same (Panta rei kai ouden menei) –Heraclitus of Ephesus (540-480BC)

Everywhere in nature we find the smaller and larger cycles of the process of growth through being born, perishing and coming into existence again. . . .Everything in creation goes through a cycle; everything comes into existence in order to develop itself and after completion of the cycle returns to the source. We know many cycles of different lengths, all characterized by a period of relative decline followed by a turn around and a period of renewal.

If according to the Law of Rhythm everything continuously comes and goes, is created and broken down, this means that creation itself is an ongoing process as well. In many wisdom traditions they speak of the existence of one very large cyclical movement within the universe as a whole. In Vedic literature this cycle is described as the Outbreathing and Inbreathing of Brahm. This process is a multidimensional cyclical process. During the outbreathing – also known as involution – the manifestations begin as non-physical forms. Thereafter the creation gets a more and more denser form and finally appears at the level of the physical reality as matter. This outbreathing is followed by the inbreathing – also known as evolution – whereby a retuning movement in the direction of the level of Oneness begins.

An evolution of consciousness is the main motive of earthly existence. The evolutionary workings of nature exist in a two-part process: an evolution of forms and an evolution of the soul. –Sri Aurodindo (1872-1950)

Most wisdom traditions tell us that humanity as a whole also knows a cycle of involution and evolution. After humanity first is created on the non-physical level of reality, the process of involution follows, meaning the process where consciousness involutes into matter. After the manifestation of life in the form of consciousness into matter, the process of evolution of consciousness begins. While we can see the evolution of our physical body as part of the biological evolution, the evolution of the human consciousness concerns the evolution of humanity on the soul level. . . .In this context, the life of each one of us, as a soul in a physical body, is a part of a larger whole of experiences, in the form of cycles, which occur through birth, life, death, and rebirth.

To fully understand this process it is important we realize that we are multidimensional beings. As an individualized soul we are in essence a shapeless spirit-body, from which the *force*-body comes forth and finally the physical body. During our life in a physical body, we exist with these different bodies – our physical, our *force*-body and our spirit-body – simultaneously at the different levels of reality. From this perspective we can understand the concept of ‘reincarnation’ as a part of the cyclical process of life and death and development, which takes place on the different levels of reality. The mystics tell us that while during many cycles our mortal physical bodies come and go as manifestations of *maya*, the world of illusion, our soul aspect is immortal. It is this immortal soul aspect of ours, which passes through all these cycles. When our physical body dies and we let out our last breath of life, our breath of life joins again with the life energy from which it is a part. . . .and the focus of our consciousness shifts from our physical body to our non-physical aspect. In other words, our immortal soul aspect joins again our spirit-body or Higher Self which exists permanently in the world of the spirit beyond space and time. Most wisdom traditions tell us that this non-physical aspect of each of us continues to exist there in the period between death and rebirth.

The large cycle of life and death occurs in this way through an endless succession of physical bodies and does not solely concern an endless repetition of the same cycle, but in accordance with the Law of Rhythm as spiral development process. In other words, each of us has lived many past lives and will live many more lives, while our consciousness continues to develop based on the experiences gained during this mystery of our own existence. The wisdom traditions tell us that it is our soul, our personal vital essence, which is the driving force behind our development process. We can regard this vital essence – our soul – as a dynamic pattern, which has its own direction. It is the nature of our soul to aspire to an even greater awareness and consciousness. The big challenges for growth and change of our consciousness are in the everyday physical reality. Our experiences and the lessons we learn during our life in a physical body shape our non-physical aspect in the world of spirit.

The growth and development of this Higher Self can be seen as the evolution of the consciousness of the individual as a result of the experiences gained during many physical lives.

This development of our consciousness, however, is not a linear process, but has – consistent with the Law of Rhythm – a spiral-shaped growth pattern which consists of larger cycles and smaller cycles, whereby periods of gradual development alternate with sudden leaps in growth. During this cyclical process of personal growth we eventually develop a more and more conscious contact with our soul, with our vital essence. By becoming more and more aware of the original essence of our soul, we can finally fuse with it entirely.

Most wisdom traditions tell us that this spiral growth process takes place on the level of someone's personal self as well as on the level of humanity as a whole. Through their study of nature of the many cyclical periods, some ancient cultures were able to understand more about the development of humanity in the past. In correspondence with the Law of Rhythm, they were able to recognize the development of humanity as a whole spiral-shaped growth pattern, which consists out of larger and smaller cycles. These cycles appeared to coincide with the repeating patterns in history. In the patterns of relative stability and gradual growth, alternated with periods of chaos and sudden big changes, they recognized periods of increasing spiritual darkness and periods of increasing spiritual enlightenment, alternating each other. Those ancient cultures concluded that during the duration of one of these cycles there is constantly a period in which humanity, as a whole, sort of falls asleep spiritually, much like we do during the much smaller cycle of 24 hours at night when we fall asleep. These periods are followed by a spiritual awakening, comparable with how we also awaken each morning from our sleep. During these 'long nights' of spiritual sleep, humanity is less conscious of the existence of other levels of reality. Such a period usually ends as a time of chaos and confusion, after which a period follows wherein humanity again becomes more conscious of the existence of the other levels of reality and is able to make better contact with it. In other words, this pattern of spiral evolution of humanity appears to have periodically chaotic periods, from which a new order comes forth, so that eventually every following cycle can show a certain amount of development, compared to the previous cycle. This insight is found in the stories orally passed down within the many wisdom traditions.

This is the great task that lies before us: to achieve great knowledge and transform it through compassionate thought, feeling, and action into wisdom. –Hank Wesselman, anthropologist

The Law of Rhythm teaches us that growth and development do not take place gradually. We can observe the cycles of appearing and disappearing all around us, for example in the form of periods of success, in which we feel good and everything runs smoothly, followed by periods of where things fall apart or lose their meaning. These fluctuations do not only take place continuously all around us, but also *within* us, for example in the form of the rhythmic fluctuations of our moods. Once we are aware of the operation of this law, we can choose to go against this movement or to let this movement work to our advantage. When, for example, at a certain moment we hold on tight to something which asks for transformation, we go against the rhythmic waves of the growing process of our lives. The more severely we resist against this movement of growth and development, the more we will experience inner dissatisfaction. If we prefer instead to remain in harmony with the process of rhythm, change and growth, then we can choose to recognize this rhythmic pattern of growth around us as well as within ourselves. From the center of silence within ourselves we can observe our self and determine where we are in the rhythmic cycle.

This way we can recognize periods of apparent chaos as situations, which play an essential role in the process of our own growth and evolution. Once we recognize these situations as chances or challenges for the emergence of something new, we can recognize the cyclical pattern of our growing process and consciously let go of old things that are no longer useful. This will create space in which new things can begin to grow. The more we are able to recognize the rhythmic waves of our process of growth, the more we will be able to go 'with the flow' and feel supported in our growing process by the working of the universal laws. We can learn to develop a feeling for the 'right time' and with ease join in, without forcing anything, but instead by following the path of least resistance. The Tao is described as the life path of a human who handles changes that present themselves with flexibility and ease. This is how evolution proceeds, changing from one state into the next, from moment to moment, and from life to life.

Western Science and the Law of Rhythm

Not only is everything changing, but all is flux. That is to say, what is is the process of becoming itself, while all objects, events, entities, conditions, structures, etc., are forms that can be abstracted from this process. –David Bohm. Physicist

The Law of Rhythm resounds in the newest findings in Western science, especially the moment the step was taken to no longer consider reality and everything as linear and static, but instead to see it as processes with a nonlinear dynamic. In particular the developments in the context of Chaos Theory during the past 20-30 years have rendered many new insights in which the principles of the Law of Rhythm become visible. Dynamic systems are described as a dynamic whole, which is made up of many different rhythms and cycles with a great variety in duration, which are all in harmony with each other. On this basis, the essence of the evolutionary process is indeed seen as a nonlinear, spiral development process.

Every system that changes during the course of time is a dynamic system. With the arrival of Chaos Theory a new science emerged which instead of static things studies *processes* within these dynamic systems, with the result that for the first time many other aspects of the Law of Rhythm were recognized. That is, they discovered that patterns of continual change are not an aberration but rather fundamental to nature. . . For nonlinear dynamic systems a different kind of mathematics was needed and it wasn't until the 1970's that a breakthrough was made in all the disciplines due to the growing possibilities offered by computers. With the aid of new computer technology, now also a new kind of mathematics for nonlinear dynamic systems could be developed. By no longer assuming linear systems but instead studying the dynamics of nonlinear systems, scientist made the surprising discovery that within the apparent irregular and random patterns of nonlinear systems, there were aspects which appeared identical for all these dynamic systems.

In other words, this theory about chaos seemed to reveal that the phenomenon of movement has *universal characteristics* and that complex systems behave according to relatively simple laws. Systems too complex for traditional mathematics now appeared to behave according to relatively simple and universal laws, regardless of the details of every specific situation. Findings based on Chaos Theory made it clear that such laws did indeed exist. . . Behind the seemingly random fluctuations, not only did impressive patterns become visible, but also a wholeness, in which everything influences everything else, because in reality all the parts appeared to be aspects of one great dynamic whole. Through these new perspectives for studying nonlinear systems . . . aspects of the Law of Rhythm were discovered.

In Chaos Theory, which is the first theory in science, which focuses on the phenomenon of sudden and dramatic changes, revealed that an important characteristic of dynamic systems appears to be that a development process is not a slow and gradual evolution. Instead, periods of stability appear to alternate with occasional chaotic periods which seem to function as a necessary condition for the emergence of a new order. During such chaotic periods the development can go in different directions; but which one of the new directions the system will take is, based on mathematical models, unpredictable. Instead, at such critical points, small causes can have great consequences. That is why the route of development can appear to have an erratic character.

However, even though such a process shows that within dynamic systems developments do not happen gradually, but instead, changes occur in the form of sudden leaps, the whole appears to remain stable. For the surprising thing is that the Chaos Theory shows that in complex systems chaos and order can exist simultaneously, because while such systems can appear locally to be chaotic and unpredictable, these systems *as a whole* have a stable dynamic. Besides this, it has become clear that the new stable structure, which emerges after a chaotic period, often shows an increasing degree of organization as well as surprising new properties or characteristics.

Instead of invoking competition as a means of survival, the new view of nature is one driven by cooperation among species living in harmony with their physical environment. –Bruce Lipton, cell biologist

These new understandings based on Chaos Theory have also shed a totally new light on the mechanisms behind the process of evolution. Based on this, an evolution process becomes visible which – conforming to the Law of Rhythm – is indeed a nonlinear, spiral development process, characterized by abrupt changes. . . The process of evolution goes through a cycle in which periodically chaotic periods occur, out of which finally a new order emerges, so that every following cycle shows a certain progress in relation to the previous cycle. According to Elsabet Sahtouris [evolutionary biologist], such a cycle of evolution starts when from a situation of unity a process of individuation arises, for example in the form of specialization. At some point this specialization leads to some tension and possible conflict, which will eventually lead to a period of 'negotiation'. Finally, the negotiation will lead to a new creative resolution, through which a new form of cooperation becomes possible. This cooperation leads to a situation of unity again, but now on a new level. In this spiral cyclical evolution, competition and cooperation can be seen as different phases of the cycle.