Breathe in

Inhale

In

Listen

Do you hear your heartbeats?

Breathe out

Exhale

Out
Breathing in                                                                Breathing out

Listen

Inhaling                                   Exhaling

Again and again

Listen to the moment between your breaths

In                                             Out

What do you hear?

What do you hear between your breaths?

Listen

Listen again

Do you hear the voice speaking in between your heartbeats?

What does it say?

Can you understand?

s ü d a m e t u n n i s t u s

You don’t know this word?

My dark-blue Saagpakk’s Eesti-Inglise Sõnaraamat/Estonian-English dictionary translates it:

“conscience”[i]

The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of English Language says that

conscience n.[ii]

1. The faculty of recognizing the distinction between right and wrong in regard to one’s own conduct.

2. Conformity to one’s own sense of right conduct.

3. Obsolete.
   a. Consciousness
   b. Inner thought

and points to the Latin origin of the word conscire,
com- (intensive) + scire (to know)

asking me to see its Indo-European root word: skei

I learn that skei means “to cut, split,” and the Latin branch of this root scire means knowing by “separating one thing from another,” “discerning,” and that beside conscience, such words like nice, omniscient and science stem from this root.

Among the other derivations of skei are:
- Germanic skitan, “to separate, defecate”
- Old Norse skita, “to defecate”
- Greek skhizein, “to split”: schedule, schism, schizo-

“con-science” n.

knowing by splitting . . . separating one thing from another,

separating right from wrong, mind from heart, beauty from beast, life from death, word from the world, sound from silence, I from We, self from other, white from black, people from earth . . .

Take a deep breath

Breathe in                                            Breathe out

Listen

Listen again

s ü d a m e t u n n i s t u s

Translating this word I cannot ignore that this Estonian notion contains two words:

südame of heart + tunnistus witnessing

witnessing of heart, knowing/learning with/in heart, heartwitnessing

We ask in Estonian mis sul on südamel - “what’s in your heart?” In English it means “what’s on your mind?”

In English one talks about “unburdening one’s mind,” in Estonian we “unburden our heart” - puistame südant.

In English one says “peace of mind,” in Estonian one says “peace of heart” - südamerahu.

Take a deep breath

Listen

Listen to your heartbeats

Listen to the silenced voices between your heartbeats

Heart witnessing . . . witnessing with your heart

I heartwitness to an uncountable number of voices silenced by colonial history, by
“discovery” of America, by the civilizing process, by modernization, by development, by progress, by globalization, by “democracy.”

**I heartwitness** to the voices of my ancestors silenced by more than 700 years of colonization by Christianization, by Teutonic Knights, by Baltic barons, by German folklorists, by Russian rulers, by the Communist regime, by westernization.

Listen

**Listen with your heart**

**What do you hear?**

**I hear and honour** the voice of Ochwiay Biano, the chief of the Pueblo people speaking. Carl Jung acknowledged for the first time how deeply colonialism had affected his character and psyche when talking to Ochwiay Biano when he visited the Taos Pueblo, New Mexico, in 1925. The chief of the Pueblo people told him that whites were "mad," uneasy and restless, always wanting something. According to the Pueblo chief they were mad because they say “thinking with their heads” which is a sign of illness in his tribe. "Why of course," said Jung, "what do you think with?" Ochwiay Biano indicated his heart.[iv]

**I hear and honour** the voices of Helene Shulman Lorenz and Mary Watknis, speaking in their article “Silenced Knowings, Forgotten Springs: Paths to Healing in the Wake of Colonialism”:

We have each been educated in a system that grew out of, and reflects, 500 years of colonialism, and are struggling for awareness in a new era of globalization that leaves increasing numbers of people hungry and disenfranchised. Our cultural legacy is profoundly imprinted by the often silenced after-effects of the genocidal war against Native Americans, the dislocation and forced slavery of Africans in America, and the oppressive labour conditions of the poor. **But how do we carry these kinds of knowing inside ourselves and in our relations to others and the world?** (my bolding). [v]

**Breathe in**

**breathe out**

**Listen**

**Listen to your heartbeats**

**Listen to the silenced voices in between your heartbeats**

**Listen to the silenced meaning of the word “conscience” - inner thought - that the dictionary has declared obsolete[vii]:**

**conscience** -

from L. conscientia "knowledge within oneself, a moral sense," prp. of conscire "be mutually aware."[vii]
Breathe in

Listen

Witness with your heart

How can we re-cognize our conscience?

südämetunnistus / heartwitnessing

I heartwitness the teachings of the Musqueam people

whose land we and our university, the University of British Columbia, dwell on.

I heartwitness to Greg Cajete, a Tewa educator, from Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, when he shares his knowing in the Longhouse, at the University of British Columbia, in 2001:

“Learning happens from within, from inside out . . .”

Breathe

Inhale

Breathe deeper

Exhale

Learning is like breathing; it follows rhythm of taking in and putting out\[^{viii}\]

apprehension

comprehension

intension

extension

In

Out

In

Out

Breathing is life’s most persistent ritual

Repetition

Inhale

Exhale

Repeating

Repeating

Repeating

Seems endless

Until the last breath

The end.

Death.

Again Birth.

The beginning.

Birth-breath-Death

Inter-

In-between

Returning to my red English dictionary I learn that

inter also means "to place in a grave; bury"
Latin: in, “in” + terra, “earth, ground”[ix]

Breathe in                     breathe out

Breathe between Birth and Death
Breathe again and listen
Do you hear the silence?

Listen

Listen how the silence gives birth to the word

ear . . . heart . . earth

What word/knowing are you heartwitnessing in between silences of the breathing earth?

[iii] Ibid. 1539

References:


About the Author

As an immigrant grandparent, parent, community worker, and scholar, Kadi Purru dwells in the intersection of multiple languages and cultures: Estonian, Spanish, Russian, and English. Her doctoral dissertation, Acknowledging Home(s) and Belonging(s): Border Writing (UBC, Education, 2003), inquired into the contested ground of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘otherness’: national, ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic and epistemological. The main impetus of her work is to decolonize the Canadian multicultural imagi(Nation) and create a different, im/migrant culture of scholarship and pedagogical knowing. Currently, Kadi Purru is involved in the Program of Integrated Studies at Athabasca University, Canada.