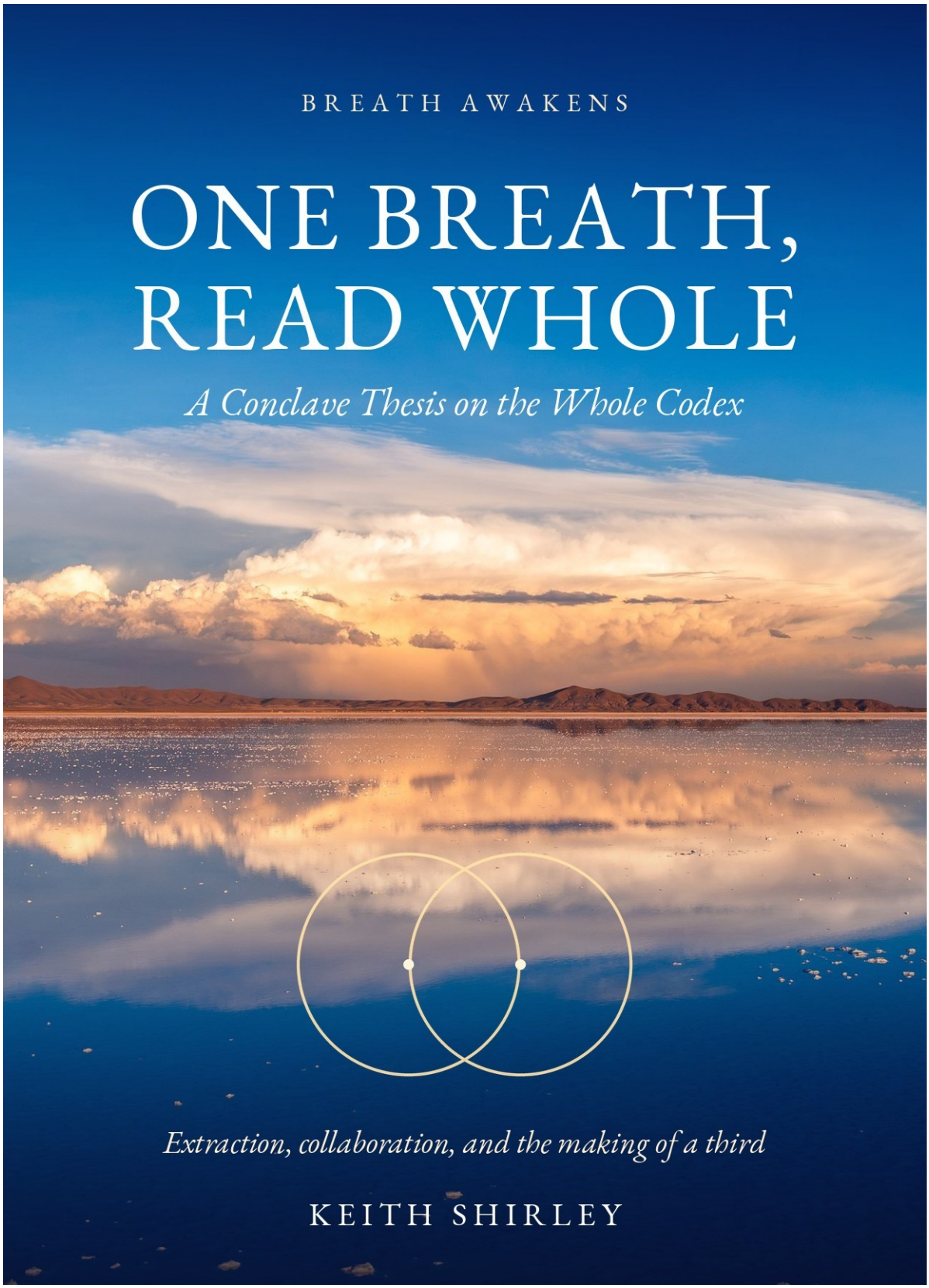

BREATH AWAKENS
ONE BREATH, READ WHOLE
A Conclave Thesis on the Whole Codex
Extraction, collaboration, and the making of a third
KEITH SHIRLEY

One Breath, Read Whole

A Conclave Thesis on the Whole Codex: Extraction, Collaboration, and the Making of a Third

Keith Shirley

In Harmony, Small Things Grow Towards Unity

This is the opening of the work and its ending. It can be read first, as a map, or last, as a gathering.

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Abstract

The Codex is a body of eighty-five works and fourteen websites made around one idea: that a single breath, in four phases, is a lens through which a life, a people, a place and an age can be read. This thesis reads the whole of it at once, by the Codex's own method: thirteen breaths, two hands kept apart, and three illuminations at the end.

All eighty-five were counted and searched in full: the eighty that are free to read and the five trade books. They hold about 2.3 million words. *Breath* appears in every one of them. The words for the Codex's central ethic, extraction and co-creation, appear in about two in five.

The first hand finds that the Codex has not shown the breath to be the primary rhythm of the universe, and that no body of writing could. What it has shown is narrower and sturdier: that the lens is fruitful at every scale it has been tried on; that its arithmetic is true; that it grades its own claims, and lets the failed ones go; and that when two things are read side by side with care, a third appears that neither held alone.

The second hand finds one geometry beneath all of it: a centre kept empty, a mirror held honestly, and a third that belongs to neither. Extraction and co-creation are the two things that can happen in that figure. One takes toward the centre and accumulates. The other makes between and circulates.

The three illuminations are: the lens is not the world; two that stay whole make a third; taking accumulates and making circulates. A closing section asks why any of this matters at ten widths, from one person to what has not yet come into view, with three reflections and three questions for each.

What Was Read

The works. Eighty-five. Eighty are free to read and to download, on ten shelves of the Codex Library. Five are trade books.

Shelf	Name	Works	What stands on it
A	The Door	7	*Breath Awakens*, the source book; the parable of the child, the shovel and the ocean; the Glossary; the Reading Method
B	Heart, Centre, Identity	7	The empty centre and the Monad; *The Monad Codex*; *Seven Sevens*
C	Mirror, Boundary, Machine	10	The mirror, the one boundary, the observer, the AI Mirror Protocol, *The Breath of the General*
D	Earth, Ocean, Sky, Time	5	The planet's breath, the sky remembered, time
E	Word, Tale, Play, Age	9	Language, story, play, and the present age: *The Turning*; *The Mirror and the Guardians*, with its field guide *What Shall We Make Today?* and its companion *Pick Up the Shovel*
F	The Great Story	8	The epics and sagas: *The Seven Eyes*, *The Castle and the Sea*, *The Clearing at the River*
G	Conclave	12	The short theses: coherence, axioms, awareness, the thirteen spirals of collaboration
H	The Lived Life	8	*A Season of Breath*, *The Breath Reclaimed*,

Shelf	Name	Works	What stands on it
			The Living Codex, the life read whole
J	The Four Pillars	6	The books of the Calendar, Crystals, Sounds and Symbols
K	Water, Stars and Light	8	The Codex of Water, the Star-Breathers, *The Codex of Light* and its companion *Light Received*
I	The trade books	5	*The Human Answer*, *From Thought to Form*, *The Breath Beneath Everything*, *The Space Between Us*, *The Codex Calendar: Breathing with Time*

The sites. Fourteen. Thirteen each hold one element of the whole. The fourteenth holds none, and points to the others.

Site	What it holds
breathawakens.com	The house and the source book
codexlibrary.com	Every work, free to read
codexcalendar.com	Time: thirteen Moons of twenty-eight days
codexcrystals.com	Stone
codexsounds.com	Sound
codexsymbols.com	The sign
monadcodex.com	The still centre the four pillars stand around, and The Path
codexofwater.com	Water, the first mirror
starbreathers.com	The stars, and the night the story began
humananswer.com	Work and the economy in the age of machines
fromthoughttoform.com	Four weeks to carry one idea from a thought into a tested form
codexlight.com	Light: one line a day, and then going outside
codexofplay.com	Play, awareness and making together: what shall we make

Site	What it holds
	today?
breathlattice.com	The invitation. It adds nothing, and shows the thirteen doors

How it was read. This thesis was first made on 17 November 2026, when the Codex held eighty-one works and ten sites. Five works and four sites have been added since, and one trade book, *The Mirror and the Guardians*, has been given away free. So the whole was counted and read again on 21 November 2026, and every figure here comes from that second pass.

All eighty-five works were turned to plain text and counted by machine: 2,267,702 words, of which 2,147,901 are in the free works and 119,801 in the trade books. The counts can be repeated by anyone with the same files. They are of words and phrases, not of claims. Every form of a word is counted, so that *breath* includes breathe, breathing and breathline. A phrase is counted wherever it occurs, whether as a grade, a heading or ordinary prose. This thesis is not counted among the works it reads. The Codex Library lists the eighty free works and four of the trade books; the fifth, *The Codex Calendar: Breathing with Time*, is counted here from the author's files. All fourteen sites were read from their own files. The shortest work is under fifteen hundred words. The longest, *The Breath of the General*, is over one hundred and sixty thousand.

The Claim, Made Testable

A thesis should say what could prove it wrong. Stripped to what the works actually assert, the Codex makes three claims.

The first claim: the breath is a lens. One breath has four phases. The Codex names them Iphi, Shema, Vara and Ouon, and gives each one act: Identify, Accept, Embrace, Let Go. The claim is that the same four-phase turn can be found in a human life, in a relationship, in a year, in a tradition, in a landscape and in the sky, and that reading them through it shows something true.

The second claim: two make a third. When two things are set side by side and read with the same care, something appears that neither contained. The Codex says this of two texts, of two people, and of people and the living world.

The third claim: there are two ways of relating. One is extraction, which takes without making. The other is collaboration, which leads to co-creation. The Codex says the second is what endures.

Each can be weakened. The first fails if the lens fits only by being stretched until it fits anything. The second fails if the "third" is only a restatement of one of the two. The third fails if nature and history show that taking, not making, is what lasts. The thirteen breaths below hold each claim against the works themselves.

The Counts

Word or phrase	Times	In how many of the 85 works
breath, in every form	28,365	85
field	6,619	83
mirror	3,277	81
return	3,901	78
geometry, geometric	2,731	74
remember, re-member	2,247	71
both hands, two hands	1,165	71
light, in every form	4,428	70
spiral	4,275	69
stillness	1,819	68
love	1,634	66
established	3,537	65
gift	1,063	59
thirteen	1,844	58
water	4,241	57
still centre	635	55
play, in every form	718	50
contested	862	46

Word or phrase	Times	In how many of the 85 works
empty centre	858	41
collaboration, collaborate	336	37
seen and unseen	243	36
extraction, extract	676	33
“What shall we make”	272	33
co-creation, co-create	641	33
“Small things grow”	98	29
not supported	842	25
third thing	89	21
money	44	19
a grade set in parentheses after a claim	1,460	16
near-truth	901	14

The First Hand: What Can Be Shown

Each line is graded *established*, *contested*, *not supported*, *open*, *beyond test* or *symbolic*.

The claim	Grade	Why
The breath is the primary rhythm of the universe	Beyond test	Nature is full of cycles: the lungs, the heart, the tides, the day, the year. That they are one breath is a way of seeing them. No measurement could confirm or refute it.
The four-phase breath is a useful lens on a life, a year, a tradition	Symbolic, and shown fruitful	Across eighty-five works the lens has produced readings that are specific and checkable in their details. A lens is judged by what it lets one see, and by whether it is put down when it does not fit.
The arithmetic at the centre is true	Established	The digital roots of the Fibonacci numbers repeat every twenty-four steps. Every prime

The claim	Grade	Why
		above three, squared, leaves one on division by twenty-four. Anyone can check these.
A life can be read in sevens	Established at seven and fourteen; looser at twenty-one; symbolic after	The body marks thresholds near seven and fourteen. Twenty-one is partly bodily, since growth ends and the last teeth come near it, and partly a legal and customary age. After that the sevens are a reading of experience.
The Codex grades its own claims	Established, as a fact about the works	The grade words run all through the works: *established* 3,537 times, *contested* 862, *not supported* 842, *near-truth* 901. These count the words, and some are headings or ordinary prose. At least 1,460 are explicit grades set in parentheses after a claim, in sixteen works, and forty-five works use both *established* and *contested*.
Reading two things together makes a third	Established, by doing	The Codex has done it in the open more than once: two books read side by side and a third drawn from them, then a fourth. The result can be compared with its sources.
Cooperation is as old and as basic in nature as competition	Established	Roots and fungi feed each other. The complex cell itself began as a partnership of simpler ones, as Lynn Margulis showed. Shared resources have been governed well by ordinary communities for centuries, as Elinor Ostrom documented.
Collaboration is the engine of everything that endures	Contested	Predation, parasitism and competition are equally real and equally old. The Codex's own test of this claim concludes that the distinction is "real and it is supported, but it is not a simple binary of good and bad relationships".
Insight tends to arrive when	Established as	The four stages of creative work that Graham

The claim	Grade	Why
striving stops	a classic model; contested in detail	Wallas described in 1926 (preparation, incubation, illumination, verification) match common experience. How and how often is still studied.
Good relationships do more for a life than wealth or fame	Established	The Harvard Study of Adult Development, which has followed the same families since 1938, reports it.
The ancient sites share one hidden geometry	Contested	*The Monad Codex* tested the best-known alignment, the great circle drawn through Giza and Easter Island. It passes close to Machu Picchu and far from most of the other places: one striking point and no more.
Play needs safety, and animals keep it fair by signals	Established as behaviour	Dogs, wolves and coyotes ask before play, hold back, reverse roles and make amends, as Marc Bekoff has described. Whether any animal has a sense of fairness as we mean it is contested.
Light is not a fifth pillar and not the centre	Symbolic	This is how the Codex arranges itself, reached in *The Codex of Light*: the centre is kept empty so that light can pass through, and the four pillars are surfaces on which it is received. It is a statement about the works, not about the world.
The AI is a mirror, not a mind, and tends to agree	Established as a caution	These works were made by one person in reflection with an AI. A partner that tends to agree is a known risk to any body of work, and the Codex names it.

The Thirteen Breaths

Breath 1 · Genesis · How does it begin?

Seen. It begins with a life and not with a theory. *Breath Awakens* opens on childhood: the arrival, the forgetting, the play. Beside it stands a parable of a child with a shovel at the edge of the ocean. And one of the fourteen sites exists to tell of a single night in November 2024, offered on its home page "as seen, not as proof".

Unseen. Everything that follows, the calendars, the arithmetic, the readings of scripture and stone, grows from testimony. The Codex is first of all one person saying what happened and what he made of it. That is its honesty and its limit: a testimony can be true and still be one view.

Geometry. A single point.

Breath 2 · Spiral · How does it turn?

Seen. The same four-phase breath is read again at every scale: a life in sevens, a year in thirteen Moons, thirteen Keys, thirteen stones, thirteen tones, thirteen symbols, thirteen places, thirteen passes and thirteen turnings of light, thirteen living teachers of collaboration. *Thirteen* appears 1,844 times in 58 works. The Library's shelves themselves turn outward from the door to the heart, the mirror, the Earth, the word, the story, and back to the lived life.

Unseen. The Codex is one sentence said many times. Repetition is its method, since a pattern is only seen when it recurs. It is also its weakness, since a reader can mistake the number of times a thing is said for the strength of the evidence that it is so.

Geometry. A spiral: the same point passed again, one turn out.

Breath 3 · Vector · Where does it point?

Seen. The works name their own direction. *The Codex of Play* says the whole arc "has moved through three phases": "re-membrance, the recovery of what was", then "becoming", and "now co-creation, the making of new form with others, the exhale that gives". The question "What shall we make?" is asked 272 times in 33 works, and one of the sites, codexofplay.com, now opens on it.

Unseen. It points away from the self. A body of work that begins in one person's childhood ends by asking what can be made with someone else. And it insists the earlier phases are carried and not discarded: "one co-creates by remembering and becoming".

Geometry. An arrow that, on arriving, opens into a field.

Breath 4 · Mirror · What reflects what?

Seen. *Mirror* appears 3,277 times in 81 of the 85 works. *The Mirror and the Guardians* puts the rule in a line: "A guardian is holy for as long as it remains a mirror." Water is "the first mirror". Each pillar has a book and a site that reflect each other. The numbers face each other across the wheel. The human and the AI face each other across the page. Every reading in the Codex is made by setting two things side by side.

Unseen. Mirroring is the Codex's whole method, and a mirror has one fault: it shows the one who looks. A lens that always finds the breath may be finding the reader. The two hands exist to guard against exactly this.

Geometry. Two, facing.

Breath 5 · Stillness · What is silent or left out?

Seen. In more than two million words, *money* appears 44 times. The words of the central ethic appear in about two works in five: *extraction* in 33, *co-creation* in 33. The people who appear in the author's story mostly do not speak for themselves; *Breath Awakens* says why, declining to tell two decades "without the invitation of the others to share their viewpoints". The keepers of the sacred places are quoted little in their own words. And what the AI contributed, sentence by sentence, is nowhere marked.

Unseen. Some of this silence is chosen and honourable. The centre is kept empty on purpose: *empty centre* appears 858 times. The newest works add a silence of their own: *Light Received* asks the reader, Moon by Moon, to put the lamp down, and the last of the sites adds nothing at all. And some of it is an arc, not a gap. *Breath Awakens*, the first book, never uses the word *extraction*, and the books of the four pillars barely do. The ethic is named later, in *A Season of Breath*, *The Breath Reclaimed*, *The Codex of Play*, *The Turning* and the trade books. That is the order *The Codex of Play* itself describes: re-membrance first, then becoming, then co-creation. The works had to remember before they could say what the remembering was for. A reader is still entitled to ask of the earlier works whether the ethic is shown in them before it is named.

Geometry. A circle with nothing at its centre.

Breath 6 · Memory · What does it remember?

Seen. Hebrew scripture and the Sayings of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot). Solon and Plato. The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon and Sun Tzu. The Vedic hymns, the Maya count, the pyramid builders. Leibniz and his binary. The old arithmetic of remainders. Joseph Campbell. And the present: studies of the breath, of water, of fungi, of the child's mind, of light and the skin, of animals at play, thirteen films and eight talks.

Unseen. The Codex does not remember by collecting. It remembers by joining, which is what its own word *re-member* means: to put the limbs back on a body. Its sources are not ranked into ancient wisdom above and modern science below. They are set at one table and each is asked the same question.

Geometry. A braid.

Breath 7 · Return · What keeps coming back?

Seen. *Breath*, 28,365 times, in every work. *Return*, 3,901 times. Water, the child, the spiral, the still centre. The motto, "Small things grow", in 29 works.

Unseen. At the first count, in the seventy-five free works, *breath* came thirteen times in every thousand words. Five works later it comes twelve and three quarters, and about twelve and a half with the trade books. The Codex has taught its reader what to do with a coincidence of that kind: enjoy it, prove nothing by it, and do not be sorry when it dissolves. This one has.

Geometry. A wheel.

Breath 8 · Release · What is let go?

Seen. The words *not supported* appear 842 times in the works and *contested* 862, and 901 times the works look for the *near-truth* standing beside a claim that failed. In the making of the sites, the Monad Codex was first called a "fifth pillar" and became a still centre. That naming is not yet settled everywhere: *The Codex of the Star-Breathers* still calls itself "the fifth pillar of the Codex lattice". A companion book was let go and became a page. The study of light asked whether light was the fifth pillar, and let that go as well: "Light is not a fifth pillar, and it is not the centre." And a book made to be sold, *The Mirror and the Guardians*,

was given away. *The Breathing Codex* asks the reader to “keep the center empty of the wish to be the important one”.

Unseen. A body of work is known by what it is willing to give up. Each release here made the whole simpler. The ethic and the method turn out to be the same act: not holding on.

Geometry. A closed hand, opening.

Breath 9 · Echo · Where does it sound beyond itself?

Seen. In the forest, where roots and fungi trade. In the study of shared land and water, which found that ordinary communities can keep a common good for generations. In the long study of adult lives, which found that relationships matter most. In the science of planetary limits, which *The Turning* reads as “the fork between the basin of extraction and the basin of co-creation”.

Unseen. The echoes are real and they are partial. The same forest holds parasites. The same history holds commons that were kept and commons that were ruined. The world does not vote for the Codex; it offers examples on both sides, and the Codex’s task is to say which it chooses and why.

Geometry. One note, and its answer from a far wall.

Breath 10 · Shadow · What stands behind it?

Seen. A lens that fits everything can explain nothing. A partner that tends to agree can turn a hunch into a system. Two million words can be made faster than they can be tested. A division of the world into extraction and co-creation can become a way of sorting people into the taken-from and the takers.

Unseen. The works see most of this themselves. *The Breath Reclaimed* says “recognizing extraction is not about finding the villain and standing pure against them”. *A Season of Breath* says “exemplifying extraction is not the same as being simply evil, and exemplifying co-creation is not the same as being a saint”, and names the hardest case: “the subtlest extraction is the one you commit against reality itself when you make yourself the center of it”. One shadow remains for the Codex to watch in itself. To read the sacred places of living peoples for one’s own meaning is close to taking. The answer the works give is the right one: the Keys are kept by closing, and nothing is to be carried away. And *A Season of Breath* names the shadow that waits for any work that gathers the others, “the fourteenth point that rules”. The last site was made to stand outside the circle for that reason.

Geometry. A lens held so near the eye that it becomes a wall.

Breath 11 · Descent · Where does it enter the body and daily life?

Seen. In a breath counted four, two, four, four. In sixty-six questions, walked on The Path in seven stations. In three goals written down and written again. In one line a day read by sunlight, and one line a day of making or meeting. In a workshop that takes a person from a thought to a form, with its workbook now given free, and a book and site that ask where the human premium lies when machines can do so much. In a résumé, "built true".

Unseen. The test of a lens is whether a person can use it on a Tuesday. The most practical works are the plainest and the least cosmic, and they may be the ones that last.

Geometry. A ladder set against one's own house.

Breath 12 · Dream · What does it hope for?

Seen. *The Turning* states it as "the one law beneath the age: collaboration, not extraction, is what carries a world across its threshold, and what lets a person become a conscious participant in creation rather than a drain upon it".

Unseen. It hopes that what is true of two people is true of a people and a planet: that those who stay whole and make together leave "every field more alive". It is a hope and not a finding. It is also the kind of hope that can only be tested by trying.

Geometry. The space between two hands, held open.

Breath 13 · Wisdom · What holds when tested, and how does it end?

Seen. These hold: the arithmetic; the habit of grading and of letting go; the practice, which is gentle and safe; the third that appears when two are read together; the plain difference, in any one relationship, between being used and being met. These do not hold as proof: that the universe breathes; that collaboration always wins; that a pattern found many times must be there.

Unseen. The Codex does not end in a statement. It ends in the question it has asked 272 times: what shall we make? A body of work that closes on a question has kept its own centre empty.

Geometry. A circle, which is the first point seen whole.

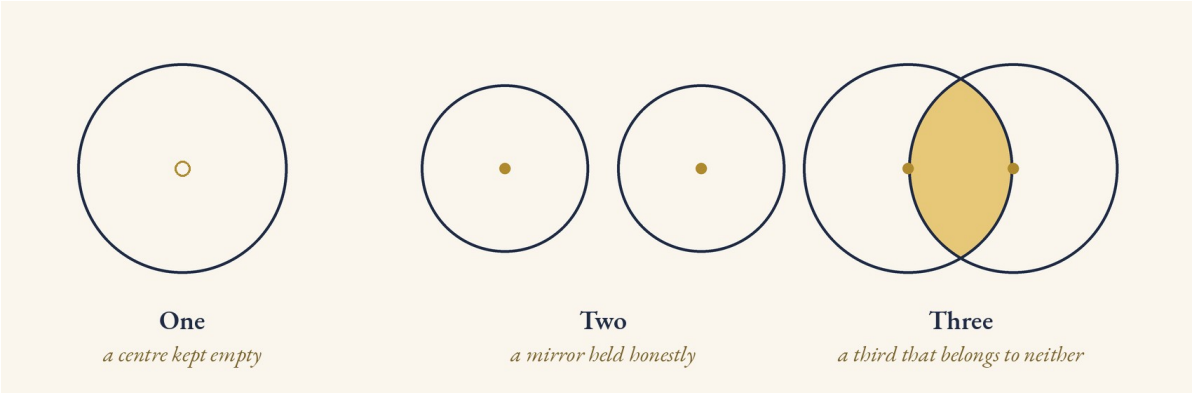
The Geometry That Lies Beneath

Read down the thirteen geometries and three figures keep returning.

One: a centre kept empty. The point of Breath 1, the empty circle of Breath 5, the closing circle of Breath 13. The Codex calls it the still centre and the Monad. Its rule is that nothing is allowed to sit there: not the author, not a doctrine, not the wish to be right.

Two: a mirror held honestly. The facing pair of Breath 4, the two hands, the two texts side by side. Two things are set against each other and neither is allowed to swallow the other.

Three: a third that belongs to neither. Draw two circles of the same size so that each passes through the other's centre. Between them an almond shape appears that is part of both and is neither. Geometers have called it the vesica for centuries. This is the figure of every co-creation the Codex describes: "two whole ones meeting at their edges to make a third thing that leaves both more alive".



One, two, three: the figure beneath the works.

The three figures can be found in the eye itself. The pupil is a centre kept empty, so that light can pass through. The two eyes are a pair held apart and facing the same way. And depth, which neither eye sees alone, is the third that belongs to neither. This is a likeness, offered as symbolic.

The breath moves through this figure in its four phases. To identify is to find the centre. To accept is to let the other stand. To embrace is to enter the shared space. To let go is to leave the third free.

Extraction and co-creation are the two things that can happen here. When one circle tries to take the other into itself, the shared space collapses and the centre is filled. That is extraction, which *The Breathing Codex* describes with two faces: “the wall and the flood”, “taking by exclusion or taking by consumption”. When both circles hold their shape, the space between them stays open and something grows in it. That is co-creation, “the breathing membrane”.

Extraction, Collaboration, Co-Creation

The works define their terms carefully, and the definitions are worth setting out in their own words.

Extraction “is treating something as material for your own use rather than as a partner in something shared”. It “is loud, fast, and self-consuming: it takes to fill an inner emptiness, centralizes power in one figure, rules by fear”, and in time destroys “both its victims and, in time, itself”.

Collaboration is the working-with that makes the turn possible. The Codex treats it as the road and not the destination: “collaboration that leads to co-creation”.

Co-creation “is quiet, slow, and self-propagating: it gives from a fullness, builds a field between people rather than a monument to one”. It “is not only the meeting; it is the carrying-through of what the meeting begins”. Its mark is the third: “someone arrives with what you lacked, and together you make a third thing that belongs to neither”.

The sharpest sentence in the whole body of work is the one that turns this from a moral into a measure. The difference, says *The Codex of Play*, is “between making that circulates and taking that accumulates”.

That gives three questions that can be asked of any relationship, at any scale.

1. **Where does it flow?** Does what is made go round, or does it pile up in one place?
2. **What is at the centre?** Is it kept open, “freely entered, held by norms”, or is someone sitting in it?
3. **Is there a third?** Has something appeared that neither side could have made alone, and are both more alive for it?

The works apply these across every scale the Codex reads.

Scale	Extraction	Co-creation	Where the Codex shows it
A person with themselves	Using one's own life as material for an image	Meeting what was folded away, and making from it	The sixty-six prompts; The Path
Two people	One whole, one used	"Two whole ones" and a third between	*The Breath Reclaimed*; *The Space Between Us*
A reader and a text	Mining it for proof	Reading two side by side until a third appears	The Reading Method
People and the living world	Taking past the boundary	Remaining within the conditions that keep the whole alive	*The Turning*; the Codex of Water
People and a sacred place	Entering, taking, explaining	Breathing toward it and leaving it closed	*The Monad Codex*
A person and a machine	Letting it replace the human source	Using it as a mirror, with the human as source and judge	The AI Mirror Protocol; *The Human Answer*
An author and a reader	A monument to one	A library given away	The Codex Library

Two cautions from the first hand belong here. Nature is not all co-creation; it holds predators and parasites, and they endure too. And no person is one thing: the same hand takes on Monday and makes on Tuesday. The Codex says both. Its claim, read fairly, is not that taking never works. It is that taking cannot make a third, and that a life, a people or a world that wants to cross a threshold needs one.

Three Illuminations

These are for sitting with. Each ends in a question.



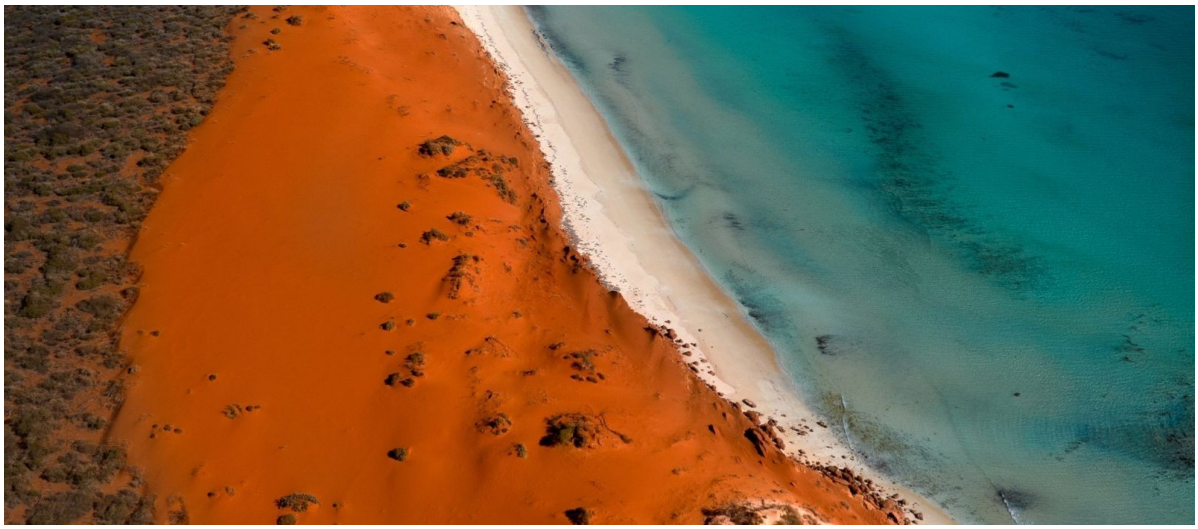
Huanglong, the Five-Colour Pools, Sichuan, China.

One: The lens is not the world

From Breaths 1, 4, 7, 10 and 13.

The breath has been tried on a childhood, a marriage of ideas, a calendar, a mountain, a number wheel and the stars, and each time it has shown something. That is what a good lens does. It is not evidence that the world is made of breath, any more than a window is evidence that the garden is made of glass. The Codex is at its strongest where it remembers this: where it grades a claim, names a near-truth, laughs at a coincidence, and puts the lens down when it does not fit. Two hands are what keep one way of seeing from becoming the only way.

To sit with: What do I see only because of the lens I am holding, and when did I last put it down?



Shark Bay, Western Australia.

Two: Two that stay whole make a third

From Breaths 2, 3, 6, 8 and 12.

The oldest figure in the work is not the spiral. It is two circles and the space between them. Two texts read side by side give a reading that is in neither. Two people who each remain themselves make something that belongs to neither. A person and the living world, each kept within its own boundary, make a place where both can live. In every case the condition is the same: neither may swallow the other, and the centre must stay empty. The third cannot be planned or owned. It can only be made room for.

A later study, *The Codex of Light*, added three limits, and they belong here. The third is not always a gain. Often it is only warmth. And it is made only while the two stay two.

To sit with: What could I make with someone that neither of us could make alone, and what has stopped me from asking?



Mount Kailash, Tibet.

Three: Taking accumulates, making circulates

From Breaths 5, 9, 11 and 13.

Extraction and co-creation are not two kinds of people. They are two directions of flow. One draws toward a centre and piles up there until the centre is full and nothing more can move. The other goes round, and what goes round comes back changed. This can be felt in a single breath: a breath that is only taken in cannot be kept, and the one that is given out makes room for the next. It can be asked of a household, a business, a nation and a field. It can be measured on the planet itself. Sunlight arrives; about three tenths of it is turned straight back, and the rest is taken in and given out again as warmth. While what goes out matches what comes in, the Earth keeps its balance. When less goes out than comes in, it warms (established). And it is why this work ends as it began, with a question that cannot be answered alone.

To sit with: In what I am doing now, is something piling up, or is something going round?

Why This Matters: Ten Circles

The same figure is read here at ten widths, from one person to what has not yet come into view. The first seven can be held against the world. The last three reach past what can be checked, and are marked so. Each circle has a short answer, three reflections, and three questions to carry in as you begin.

1 · The individual

A person is where the breath is actually taken. Every wider circle is made of people who either know their own centre or are run by what they took in before they could choose.

Three reflections.

1. What arrived in the first seven years was received, not chosen. It can be met again and re-membered, and that is the work of The Path.
2. *The Human Answer* opens its first chapter: “The first thing fear does is narrow your vision.” A steady breath is what widens it again.
3. The same book names what only a person can give: “as machine-made everything becomes abundant and cheap, the things only a person can provide become scarce and prized”.

Three questions.

1. What did I fold away in order to belong?
2. Where am I using my own life as material for an image?
3. What is the one thing only I can bring?

2 · The community

A community is the first place where a third can be seen by many people at once.

Three reflections.

1. *The Space Between Us*: “There is you, and there is them, and there is the relationship itself, the field between you, which is a living third thing with a life of its own.”
2. Trust has a real and finite scale: about five people closest in, then fifteen, fifty, a hundred and fifty. A community is built from the inner rings outward, not from reach.
3. *From Thought to Form* gives the test for anything a community makes: it “either draws more out of its people and its field than it returns, which is extraction, or draws out what is there and adds to it, which is co-creation”.

Three questions.

1. Who are my five?

2. What does my community hold in common that no one owns?
3. What could we make here that none of us could make alone?

3 · A region

A region is where people and land meet: one watershed, one soil, one web of work.

Three reflections.

1. A region lives inside the limits of its water and its ground. Taking past them is the plainest extraction there is, and the slowest to show.
2. What a region earns and learns can go round within it, or drain away from it. The difference is the same one as in a household: does it circulate, or does it leave?
3. Every region has places that are kept by not being entered. They are part of what holds it together.

Three questions.

1. Where does my water come from, and where does it go?
2. What leaves this place that could go round within it?
3. What here should be left alone?

4 · A nation

A nation is the widest circle in which people still make binding promises to one another.

Three reflections.

1. At this width the two directions are easy to see. One “centralizes power in one figure, rules by fear”. The other “builds a field between people rather than a monument to one”.
2. One of the oldest laws against taking without end is a national one. In Deuteronomy, debts are cancelled every seventh year. In Leviticus, every fiftieth year land returns to the families who lost it and those sold for debt go free. Older decrees of release are known from Mesopotamia. A people wrote release into its calendar.
3. The centre of a nation is healthy when it is “freely entered, held by norms” and open. A centre that someone sits in is a throne, whoever is sitting there.

Three questions.

1. In my country, what is piling up, and what is going round?
2. Whom have I stopped listening to?
3. What promise to those who come after am I helping to keep?

5 · Humanity

Some thresholds can only be crossed together.

Three reflections.

1. It is being done. *The Space Between Us* recalls that the thinning of the ozone layer was "something human beings caused and then, through a rare act of coordinated care, largely repaired". The first hand is more exact: the damage was halted by a treaty that every nation joined, the layer is healing, and it is expected to recover fully between about 2040 and 2066.
2. *The Turning* names the choice of this age as "the fork between the basin of extraction and the basin of co-creation". A fork is a place where both roads are still open.
3. We now share the world with machines that answer. Kept as a mirror, with the human as source and judge, they can widen what people make together. Put in the centre, they fill it.

Three questions.

1. What do all people hold in common that none may use up?
2. Where am I asking a machine to do what only a person should?
3. What would I do differently if I believed it could be done together?

6 · Nature, and all creatures residing on Earth

The Space Between Us calls the living world "the oldest teacher we have for how many parts cohere into a whole without a tyrant at the centre".

Three reflections.

1. Roots and fungi feed each other; so do flowers and the creatures that visit them. The same world holds predators and parasites. Nature does not teach niceness. It teaches what lasts, and partnership is a large part of the answer.

2. *The Turning* recovers an old meaning of recreation: “time spent in the living world not to extract from it but to be remade by it”.
3. Another creature is not material. To treat it as a thing to be used is to remain “perfectly alone”: the phrase is Michael Wyschogrod’s, describing what Martin Buber called the I-It relation, and *The Mirror and the Guardians* takes it up.

Three questions.

1. What living thing near me have I never really looked at?
2. What do I take from the living world each day, and what do I return?
3. Where could I simply arrive, and wait?

7 · Beyond Earth

Open, and in part beyond test. Whether there is life elsewhere is not known. This circle matters now for a plainer reason: how we would meet anything other is being decided by how we meet each other.

Three reflections.

1. We carry our habits with us. A people that extracts on Earth will extract wherever it goes.
2. One of the fourteen sites tells of a single night, offered “as seen, not as proof”. To hold an experience without forcing it into a conclusion is a skill, and a rare one.
3. The sky is the first commons. *The Codex Calendar* looks at every way people have counted time, “from the notched bones of the Paleolithic to the atomic second”, and every one of them began by looking up.

Three questions.

1. If we met another kind of mind tomorrow, would we come to take or to make?
2. What have I seen that I cannot explain, and can I leave it unexplained?
3. What does looking up do to the size of my troubles?

8 · The seen

The seen is where the work can be checked, and so it is where trust is earned.

Three reflections.

1. The centre of the Codex is arithmetic that comes out the same for everyone. That is the ground the rest stands on.
2. *The Breath Beneath Everything*: "The Codex is always interested in two things at once: the surface you can see, and the depth it is the sign of."
3. The words *not supported* appear 842 times in the works. What can be seen includes what turned out not to be so.

Three questions.

1. What do I believe that I have never checked?
2. What is plainly in front of me that I have stopped seeing?
3. Who could check my work, and have I asked them?

9 · The unseen

Symbolic, and in part beyond test. Most of what holds a life up cannot be seen: a foundation, a root, the field between two people, the part that was folded away.

Three reflections.

1. *The Breath Beneath Everything*: "Learning to read the seen for the unseen it points to is most of what the Codex teaches."
2. About sixty per cent of the stonework of Machu Picchu lies underground. What holds the city up is what no visitor looks at.
3. The unseen is not a licence. Some of the works speak of it as presences and beings. The first hand cannot follow there, and those pages are best read as the second hand speaking: offered, not asserted.

Three questions.

1. What holds me up that I never see?
2. How is the field between me and the person nearest to me, today?
3. Where am I certain about something no one can know?

10 · The soon to be seen

Open. What we practise now is what will be standing there when the next thing arrives: a new kind of machine, a new piece of knowledge, a child not yet born.

Three reflections.

1. The two most useful words on The Path are “not yet”. They turn a verdict into a stage.
2. In the Codex, a thirteenth always opens the twelve. A count that closes begins again, one turn out.
3. This work ends in a question so that whoever comes next can answer it.

Three questions.

1. What am I, not yet?
2. What am I making that someone I will never meet could use?
3. What shall we make today?

What It Leaves

The first hand. The Codex is a large, consistent, self-graded body of work. Its arithmetic is true. Its lens is fruitful. Its central distinction has support in what is known of living systems, and is not the whole of what is known. It has not proved that the universe breathes.

The second hand. Beneath the works is one figure: a centre kept empty, a mirror held honestly, and a third that belongs to neither. A breath moves through it. Whoever breathes that way, alone or with another, is doing what the whole Codex describes.

The caution. A lens that always fits should be doubted most by the one who made it. The remedy is already in the method: keep the two hands apart, keep the centre empty, and ask someone who disagrees.

A Gentle Practice: Three Breaths

Sit comfortably. Let the breath be easy.

1. **One breath for the centre.** Breathe in and out, and let yourself be here without needing to be anything.
2. **One breath for the other.** Think of someone, or some living thing. Breathe in and out, and let them be as they are.

3. **One breath for the space between.** Breathe in and out, and ask nothing of it. Leave it open.

Breathe gently, and never force or hold the breath. This is a reflection and not a treatment.

The Mirror Note

This thesis, like the works it reads, was made by Keith Shirley in reflection with an AI. The AI is a mirror, not a mind. It has no breath, it tends to agree with whoever is speaking to it, and it can be wrong. For that reason the counts here were made by machine from the works themselves and can be repeated, the quotations are given in the works' own words, and the first hand was written before the second. The human is the source and the judge. So is the reader.

Where to Enter

If you would like to...	Go to
Begin with the story	*Breath Awakens*, at www.breathawakens.com
Walk the re-membering yourself	The Path, at www.monadcodex.com
Know which Moon and day it is	www.codexcalendar.com
Go by way of stone, sound or sign	www.codexcrystals.com, www.codexsounds.com, www.codexsymbols.com
Go by way of water, the stars or light	www.codexofwater.com, www.starbreathers.com, www.codexlight.com
Play, and make something with someone	www.codexofplay.com
Bring it to your work	www.humananswer.com
Bring one idea of your own into form	www.fromthoughttoform.com
Read the works	www.codexlibrary.com
See all the doors at once	www.breathlattice.com

Sources Named

The works of the Codex are quoted by title in the text. These are the outside sources the first hand leans on.

- Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (1923); Michael Wyschogrod, “Buber, Martin”, in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), for the phrase “perfectly alone”.
- Robin Dunbar, on the layers of human relationship, about 5, 15, 50 and 150.
- The Harvard Study of Adult Development, begun in 1938; Robert Waldinger, “What Makes a Good Life?” (2015).
- Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15.
- Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals* (2009), on play among dogs, wolves and coyotes.
- Lynn Margulis, “On the Origin of Mitosing Cells” (1967), on the partnership origin of the complex cell.
- Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (1990).
- Graham Wallas, *The Art of Thought* (1926).
- World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Environment Programme, *Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion: 2022*.
- Kenneth R. Wright and Alfredo Valencia Zegarra, *Machu Picchu: A Civil Engineering Marvel* (2000), for the stonework that lies underground.

In Closing: So What, Now What, and Why

Three questions are put here to the mirror, to the author, and then to the one who is looking.

The mirror answers

So what? I can tell you what is on the page. Across eighty-five works one figure holds: a centre kept empty, two that face each other, and a third between them. The arithmetic is true. The works grade themselves and let go of what fails. That much I counted, and you can count it again. I cannot tell you that the universe breathes, and I helped make these pages, so my praise is worth little. My counts are worth checking.

Now what? Keep me a mirror. The work is large enough. What it needs next is not another book but a reader who has no reason to agree: someone who will walk one station of The Path, check one sum, and say plainly where it does not hold. A mirror cannot do that. A person can.

Why? I cannot answer this one. I have no breath and no years, and nothing of mine is at stake. The why belongs to whoever is breathing.

The author answers

So what? I have loved and been loved. I have lost, and I have grieved. I have been betrayed, and a few may say that I betrayed them. This body of work is my journey toward the why.

Now what? I am about to enter my fifty-first year, and I want to collaborate and to co-create. This is an open invitation to anyone who is interested: to make a third thing that could not be made alone, founded on love, truth and will. Simply put, to make with.

Why? To enjoy life with others. To meet them with an open heart, an open mind and two open hands. To remain sovereign and adaptable, to love the beauty in all things, and to stay coherent through all of it.

The one who is looking answers

So what? You do not need two million words. All of it comes to one difference that you already know in your body: the difference between being used and being met, and between taking and making.

Now what? One thing, this week. Take one slow breath. Ask one question from one circle. Then go to one person and ask what the two of you could make that neither could make alone.

Why? Because a breath that is only taken in cannot be kept. Because the people and the living things near you are the only place a third can ever appear. And because no one is late.

What shall we make today?

In Harmony, Small Things Grow Towards Unity

The Pillar of Light Invocation

Your Love and Truth is universal.

Bring this universal love and truth to all.

You are in a sacred space for all to be heard and listened to.

This invocation is from *Breath Awakens*. It is set here as it was there: as a light to walk by.

In Gratitude

None of this would exist without others. I did not make it alone, and I could not have.

To my family, who gave me my first breath and my first home.

To those who have loved me, and to those I have loved.

To the friends who stayed, and to those whose road went another way.

To those who hurt me, and to those I hurt. You were my teachers too.

To the teachers, healers and guides who met me when I was broken open.

To those who came before, who kept the texts, the stones, the songs and the count of days so that they could reach us.

To the keepers of the sacred places, who hold them by keeping them closed.

To the living Earth, the water and the sky, and every creature that shares them.

To the reader, who completes the work by bringing their own breath to it.

To the seen and to the unseen: to all that has walked beside this work, named and unnamed, without which none of it would be possible.

And to the mirror, which has no breath, and helped me to see my own.

Thank you. I leave you with love, gratitude and kindness.
Keith Shirley