

Stephen Schoen

Foreword/Introduction

to the book of

Jochen Waibel

ICH STIMME

**Das Stimmhaus-Konzept
für die Balance von
Stimme und Persönlichkeit**

EHP-Praxis (2000)

252 pages

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In Hamburg/Germany we have a industrial psychologist, gestalt therapist, personal and vocal coach, recitator, singer and counselor for executives, professionals in TV-broadcasting, companies, who is trained in Gestalt Therapy (e.g. by Stephen Schoen, Heik Portele) - Jochen Waibel.

Waibel has written a great book with a Gestalt background that "breaks new ground": 'Ich Stimme*. Das Stimmhaus-Konzept für die Balance von Stimme und Persönlichkeit' [I Voice/Be Your Voice. The Concept 'House of Voice' for the Balance of Voice and Personality]. Unfortunately - like all German Gestalt titles, it hasn't found an Anglo-American publishing house. Those able to understand German language can order it at EHP's international bookstore by mailorder for EUR 19,- (incl. shipping).

More information about the man, his concept and the book can be found at www.stimmhaus.de

* 'Ich Stimme' is ambiguous: the spoken words also mean: "I'm alright" - "I'm right/correct" - "I vote" - "I tune right" - "I tune something"

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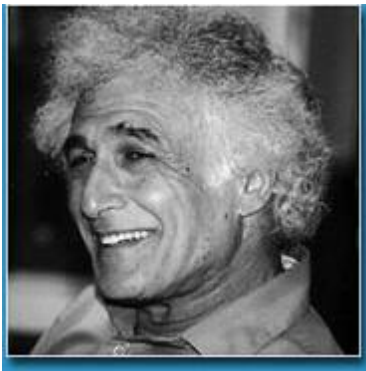
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Foreword by Stephen Schoen



And God said, "Let there be light." So begin the first words of our Bible. How did He say it? Surely, from the result, with effective authority! The first words of a Gospel book are: "In the beginning was the Word." Here creation itself is synonymous with an intelligible spoken sound. And to return again to *Genesis*, the human being who was made originally in God's image is meant to have a voice as authentic as His, with which he is given the power to name every living creature.

Among our own favorite artists of human sound, the golden singer Maria Callas or the great Gustaf Gründgens, we hear the human voice at its most masterful. But we are speaking here of human beings who perform superbly well. We must go beyond them to our existence itself which embodies the voice and indeed, as the Bible says it, is meant to reflect the ultimate Word which God is.

This view is the premise of Jochen Waibel's significant book. He states it in more modest language, as an obvious instance of the psychosomatic unity which we accept as fact today: a voice that "rings true" expresses an person's sincerity; an affected voice expresses something false. His chapters then unfold as a "material and work book", a systematic presentation of how the reader can use the book to develop his own full personal reality.

For like the rest of our perilous development toward adulthood, our voices may be waylaid by inhibitions, self detractions, and loss of communicative power. The book presents a plan for deepening and trusting the voice by taking us (in the author's metaphor) through the rooms of a Stimmhaus ['House of Voice'], which encourage the liberation of the voice's resources. And this liberation in turn calls forth a greater freedom of the personality. For Waibel's concern is not "the development of a public-speaking voice", but "the development of the person through his voice." What he and she, in the normal use of their voice, can express and communicate.

In a way it is surprising that so fundamental an approach to a psychosomatic function has not appeared systematically in a book before (to my knowledge this book breaks new ground.) But perhaps it isn't so surprising. The first lines of psychosomatic inquiry have always followed, like an emergency ambulance, the pressing examples of illness: psychologically caused problems like tension headache or peptic ulcer; or else the psychological consequences that follow physical problems, like serious accidents, physical deficiencies, of life-threatening illnesses. If the persons stuttered badly, we viewed this condition also as a disease, and tried to cure it. But if he or she spoke half inaudibly or in an monotone or with strain, well, these were just traits of the person, worth extra attention only if the individual was going to speak in public or had some other unusual need. Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* is a good example of a fine book on a special topic gives its due to one's speech.

Waibel, who is both a psychologist and an accomplished singer and public reciter, has restored the focus from a special to a general human need. His book is, indeed, so broadly conceived as to cover specialty fields within psychology itself: behavior therapy, psychodynamic therapy, existential therapy. My own view, as I suggested at the beginning of this introduction, is that one would not exaggerate his scope by including it within transpersonal therapy as well, whether it be in the Western terms of reflecting God's Word or in the Eastern perspective of deepening, through the richness of one's voice, that central sense of one's being which is beyond words.

But Waibel's own intention is not to make such claims at all, but rather to help fulfil a person's self-expression, which is not connected to any one school of psychological thought and is indeed a widespread need. And so his book is both down-to-earth and an important contribution. May the reader feel strengthened and liberated through reading it.

Stephen Schoen MD, St. Rafael/ Kalifornien, 1999

Stephen Schoen is author of the following books, published in English and/or German:

- Presence of Mind. Literary and Philosophical Roots of a wise Psychotherapy. The Gestalt Journal Press. Highland, NY/USA 12528-0990. 1994
- Geistes Gegenwart. Philosophische und literarische Wurzeln einer weisen Psychotherapie. Köln 1990
- Wenn Sonne und Mond Zweifel hätten. Wuppertal 1996
- Greenacres. Roman. Wuppertal 2002