

Common Ground and Different Approaches in Psychotherapy Biosynthesis: a Somatic Psychotherapy

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Part I: Historical Background and General Principles

1.1 Background information

Biosynthesis is a particular form of Somatic Psychotherapy. Somatic psychotherapy works with the principle of „mens sana in corpore sano" as developed by Pythagoras and Hippocrates. Somatic Psychology developed gradually based on principles established by Spinoza, Leibniz, Goethe and the early hypnotherapists who followed Mesmer. In the last quarter of the last century, in the decade before Freud developed psychoanalysis, Pierre Janet in Paris established many of the bases of a psychophysical approach in relation to emotion, muscle tone, breathing, and the vegetative nervous system. Body-psychotherapy is thus over a hundred years old. This work was extended by Georg Groddeck in Berlin, who was a strong influence on the active method of Sandor Ferenczi. Janet's work on the body image was followed by the important work of Paul Schilder in the early nineteen twenties.

Paul Schilder was a teacher of Wilhelm Reich, and Sandor Ferenczi was a close colleague of Reich. Reich studied character in relation to the energetic of pulsation in the organism, and the blockages to this pulsation in the form of muscular armoring. He developed his method of vegetotherapy, which involved direct work on the body to release muscular blockages and restore free energetic streaming, from 1933 onwards. He presented his work on

vegetotherapy at the 13th International Congress of Psychoanalysis at Lucerne, Switzerland, in August 1934.

Many directions of body-psychotherapy have been developed on the basis of vegetotherapy. David Boadella was trained in vegetotherapy in the early nineteen fifties, and began work as an individual therapist in 1957. After thirteen years of practice he founded *Energy and Character*, the *Journal of Biosynthesis*, in 1970. Courses in biosynthesis were taught in over thirty countries between 1975 and 1985. From 1986 onwards the Centre for Biosynthesis has been based in Switzerland, and organizes international training in psychotherapy from its centre in Heiden in the east of the country.

Body Psychotherapy is recognized by the European Association of Psychotherapy and by the World Council of Psychotherapy as an independent mainstream of psychotherapy. It is represented by the European Association for Body-Psychotherapy, based in Geneva.

1.2 Origins and Development of Biosynthesis

Biosynthesis is a method of psychophysical therapy emphasizing the formative process. It has had four stages of development:

a) Pioneering work into psychophysical synthesis was carried out by Pierre Janet, who emphasized the development of body-mind unity in the embryonic stage of development; and who laid the bi-polar basis for the understanding of somatic process as it is understood in Biosynthesis (1885-1947). Janet's work was also the foundation of the biosystemic concepts used in Biosynthesis, as later developed in the organismic theories of his student, Henri Ey, and in the profound and extensive studies of Professor Henri Laborit in Paris (see below).

b) The work of Wilhelm Reich on the basic antithesis of vegetative life, which developed this polarity into a comprehensive biophysical and biosystemic understanding of organismic processes in stress and relaxation (1920-1957). This understanding has been greatly enriched by the biosystemic synthesis carried out by Henri Laborit, in Paris. (1939 onwards). Laborit is holder of the Albert Lasker prize from the American Public Health Association, Director of Research Laboratories at Boucicaut Hospital, Paris, and author of over 15 scientific books and over 150 research articles. Henri Laborit was until his recent death a member of the scientific committee of the Biosystemic Institute in Rome, under the leadership of Dr. Jerome Liss, which is affiliated to the Centre for Biosynthesis.

c) Early work in pre- and perinatal psychology by Francis Mott, a configurational psychologist, who used the word „Biosynthesis“ to describe the integration of dimensions of life within the person. Mott’s work was inspired by Otto Rank, and his Hungarian trainee, Nandor Fodor. Mott focused intensively on the understanding of umbilical affect and fetal skin affect, related to two of the three embryological layers in the body. Mott’s work in biosynthesis was a major inspiration to the English clinician Frank Lake, who worked deeply with pre and perinatal issues, and also was one of the first to develop the bipolar characterology used in Biosynthesis (1948-1983). Neville Coghill, inspired by the work of Mathias Alexander on connected movement, studied the third embryological layer, related to kinaesthetic affect. Alexander’s work on movement was a direct inspiration for the integrative work of Moshe Feldenkrais on motility, posture, and emotional attitude.

d) The modern developments within and connected to Biosynthesis by David Boadella and his colleagues have refined and extended the early embryodynamic model, and linked it to a clearly articulate bio-systemic viewpoint which understands somatic-emotional events as aspects of self-formation (1970 onwards). In this period there was extensive collaboration with Stanley Keleman at the Centre for Energetic Studies in Berkeley. Keleman’s work was strongly influenced by Nina Bull’s attitude theory of emotion, and by the functional integration studies of Moshe Feldenkrais. In addition Professor Dr. Jerome Liss and I have been in intensive collaboration on common psychotherapeutic projects for the past thirty years at the Laboratoire d’Analyse Medicale and other centres in Paris, London, and Rome.

There is also an ongoing mutual enrichment between the psychotherapeutic concepts of biosynthesis and the biospiritual synthesis approach of the contemplative psychologist, Robert Moore, and his colleagues Jes Bertlesen from Aarhus University, and Ole Vedfelt, at the Institute for Cybernetic Psychology in Copenhagen (1975 onwards).

Andreas Wehowsky, the director of the German Institute for Biosynthesis brings to our work his deep interest in the imaginal body, with its roots in the dynamic social psychology of Professor Hans Joas, grounded in the phenomenological tradition of Merleau-Ponty and the body image work of Wilhelm Reich’s teacher, Paul Schilder.

2. What is Biosynthesis?

2.1. Biosynthesis means integration of life and refers to specific processes of self-formation, which guide organic growth, personal development and spiritual emergence. Biosynthesis was founded by David Boadella in the early

seventies. Biosynthesis" stands for the goal of our therapeutic work: the connection of the three fundamental areas of our humanness:

our bodily, somatic existence,

our psychological experience,

our fundamental essence.

Biosynthesis emerged as a differentiated therapy form in three specific contexts.

I) Firstly body-therapy, derived from Wilhelm Reich, had begun to become reductionistic, and to resemble the manipulative muscle pushing which contrasted with Reich's emphasis on the primacy of the contact function in relationship. When we work with the body we use as a basis principles from functional embryology. We integrate and co-ordinated patterns of breathing, of muscular tonus, and of emotional expression.

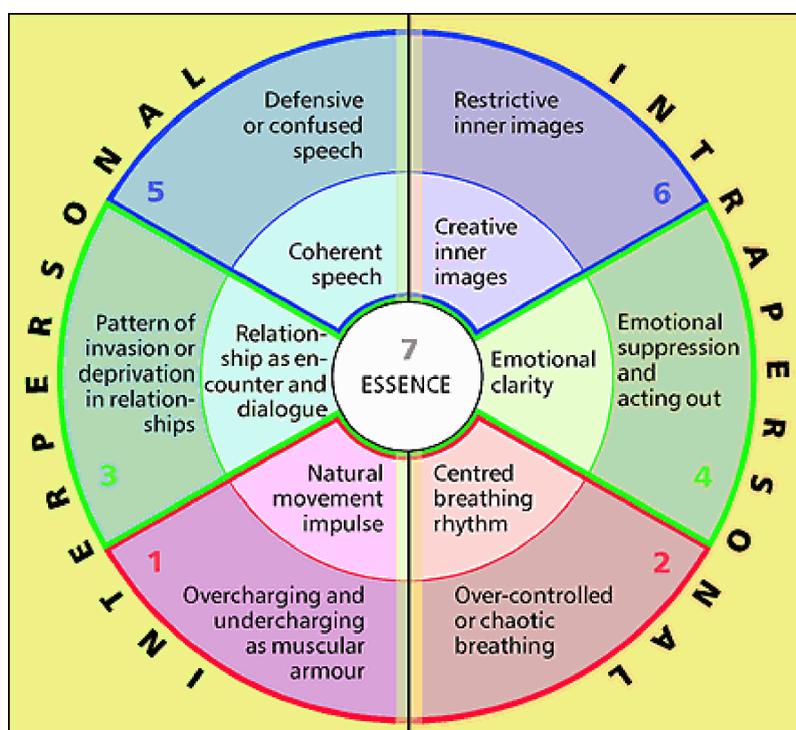
Biosynthesis uses process methods of organic emergence to work with movement tendencies linked to wave-forms of rhythmic breathing, so as to free blocked intentionality, creating a shape-flow which liberates new postures of the soul. Secondly the psychodynamic legacy of character-analysis had become over-limited to the problem areas of the transference relationships, derived from past trauma.

II) Biosynthesis emphasize, in addition to the human resources latent within the trauma, and the function of interpersonal resonance, organic presence and contact-transmission in the therapy encounter. When we work at the personality level we integrate feeling as communication, perception and cognition as forms of understanding, and actions as committed decisions. Feeling, action and thinking are mutually interactive and are related to the flow of intentionality in the body.

III) Thirdly, spiritual approaches to human development have been confused by the excesses of the guru-phenomenon, often associated with the tendency to form cults and sects. The biospiritual approach emphasizes, by contrast, the centrality of compassion for others, rooted in a clear contact to the need to ground the qualities of our essence in the realities of daily existence.

2. 2 Biosynthesis is a process therapy, which recognizes the uniqueness of the individual and the variety of developmental paths that underlie our self-formation. The human being is understood to be multi-dimensional, and the

distinct levels of impression and expression are understood to be interconnected life-fields of experience (e.g. physical, vital, emotional, mental, spiritual). These life-fields occur in two forms, which we can see as forming a choice between closed and open systems within the person. The closed system represents character traps, bodily blockages, and spiritual contractions. The open system reflects psychic contact, energetic liveliness and a contact to the qualities of the heart. The life-fields disclose seven key therapeutic modalities, which we use, and which are illustrated in the diagram below.



In each of the six outer segments of the diagram a different life-field is expressed. The closed position is shown in the outer circle; the open position is seen in the intermediate circle, which is connected to the essential self of the person at the centre of the diagram. The art of biosynthesis therapy is to enter the intermediate circle where all the segments are more connected, by overcoming the blockages in the most accessible segment of the outer circle. This yields seven possible areas of work in total: motoric work on muscle tone and movement expression; energetic work on vital and subtle rhythms of breathing; work on the resonances and interferences in the bi-personal

field of the relationship; work on the spectrum of containment and release in regard to the expression of emotion; transformative work on the restrictive images that limit our vision; and work to clean and clarify our language from its communicative distortions. In the central area of the diagram lies work to connect us, through somatic meditations, with the voice of the heart.

The diagram can also be seen horizontally as having three zones: a lower zone of connection (somatic-energetic bridges); a central zone of contact (channels of relationship and emotional expression); and an upper zone of context (symbolic and imaginal matrices of experience). Looking at the diagram vertically we can differentiate between more interpersonal segments on the left and more intrapersonal segments on the right, each affecting the other, surrounding a transpersonal core-self.

When we work with the essence of the person, we contact the subtle energy level of experience. We contact the processes of the inner ground, and the qualities of basic resources. In our work we connect to three ways of approach:

- The way of transmutation: working with emotional clarification, the release of blocked energies and the containment of emotional reserves.
- The way of transformation: working with the manifestation of our essential qualities in daily life.
- The way of transcendence: working with disidentification with character-processes and closer contact to the inner ground of embodied spirituality

2.3. Because polarity is a central concept in biosynthesis, one person's nourishment can be another person's poison. Therefore in working with the variety of human individuality the therapist sees a range of polarities in his choice of approaches, and is guided by the client's responses as to which side of each polarity to give preference to at any particular time.

The principle polarities are: inner work versus outer work (impressions versus expressions); rising or sinking energies (standing versus lying, levity versus gravity, earth focus or light focus); active-leading versus receptive-following; regressive versus progressive directions (immersion in or emergence from the events of the past); and the play of interaction between verbal and non-verbal communication systems.

The therapist tries to respond intuitively to the client's languages of intentionality, yet to do so within a structured framework of energetic and biospiritual understanding that provides fundamental underlying laws of

form, without becoming in any sense normative or prescribing how a person should become.

In the energetic dance between therapist and client, self and other, the personal bio-drama of the person seeking help becomes highlighted so that latent meanings become embodied, and a person gains help to respond to the dynamics of the inner ground guiding his incarnational journey.

2.4. Biosynthesis therapy has been used with the normal population as a form of self-development; with neurotic characters; with psychosomatic clients; with borderline and pre-psychotic persons, and in several clinics has been applied to addictive clients to strengthen their body image. It is not suitable for persons seeking only symptomatic relief and not interested to work on their underlying somatic-emotional states. The cost of individual sessions ranges between 100-150 swiss francs according to the level of experience of the therapist.

3. Structure of the Training

The training in Somatic Psychotherapy-Biosynthesis is a special Psychotherapy training . It consists of a three year Foundation Training, and a two year further Education in Supervision.

Trainees are normally professionals who have completed a first academic degree or exceptionally those who have rich experience in the field of psycho-social work.

Foundation training in Switzerland

In the foundation training the theory and practice of somatic psychotherapy and the concepts and methods of biosynthesis are taught. It lasts three years and consists of 30 days a year, divided into four blocks of seven and a half days. In addition to the course program, the members meet in each training year for the equivalent of 20 evenings in regional peer groups, where the work in the main course can be further developed.

After completing the foundation training, the participants receive a Certificate over the course: The training consists of 760 hours of tuition and 300 hours in the Peer groups, totalling: 1060 Training hours divided into 500 hours of theory and method training, 320 hours of self-experience and 240 hours of supervised therapeutic practice.

Supervision Training in Switzerland

The two year supervision training consists of 200 hours and is concentrated on clinical cases presentations, with theoretical and diagnostic discussions based on these. After completing a sufficient number of hours of personal therapy, and individual supervision, trainees become eligible for the award of the Diploma in Biosynthesis.

Part II: Fundamentals of Biosynthesis in theory and application

1. The formative principle, life streams, and the three modalities of therapeutic work

Biosynthesis means integration of life. This term was first used in a psychotherapeutic context by Francis Mott, an English configurational psychologist, half a century ago. Mott was working with body-imagery, in a tradition going back to Paul Schilder, at the University of Vienna, in the early nineteen twenties. Schilder's work was partially inspired by the groundbreaking work of Pierre Janet, at the Salpêtrière Hospital, in Paris, in the last decades of the previous century.

Pierre Janet was the grandfather of our approach. His psychophysical insights into the relationship between emotionality, breathing, and movement established the bases of body-psychotherapy, forty years before the work of Wilhelm Reich. Janet focused, like Francis Mott after him, on the formative processes of embryogenesis as laying down the deepest roots of our psychophysical existence. For the past third of a century I have been depending and developing these insights, and have developed a special form of body-psychotherapy which I call „biosynthesis“.

In biosynthesis a crucial concept is that of three life streams of affect which are called uterine affect, kinaesthetic affect, and foetal skin affect which are closely related to the three germ layers in the developing embryo. These affect streams in postnatal life are closely related to specific morphological regions of the body, and to the three fundamental processes of emotionality, motility and perception, as well as to the three fundamental germ layers of endoderm, mesoderm, and ectoderm. When we are working with the reconnection of these three areas of our experience and expression, we have developed three principal therapeutic modalities, which I call „centering“, „grounding“, and „facing“. Centering is related to the rebalancing of breathing and to finding a more centred position between emotional acting out (hysteria) and emotional apathy (the affect block, or the schizoid position). Grounding is related to the rebalancing of muscle tone between the extremes of hypotonus related to resignation and collapse, and hypertonus related to strain and stress. Facing is related to the balancing of perceptions between the over-focused position (tunnel vision) and the under-focused position (scatter-vision).

2. Energy, contact and world view: affect and the spectrum of life-fields

In biosynthesis we work energetically with expression, in the form of emotional expression, the unfolding of movement possibilities, and the development of creative insights. Potential energy stored up in emotional stasis, or in muscular contractions, is liberated in the kinetic energy of inner and outer connectedness. Similarly where there is a lack of energy charge, a person can be helped to increase their energy storage.

This energetic work is never a question to be measured in quantities of expressiveness, but in terms of the quality of expressiveness, in other words in terms of contact.

The emphasis on contact in Biosynthesis is an emphasis on the nuances of the relationship in the bipersonal field between therapist and patient. As in all psychodynamic therapies there is an awareness of transference and counter-transference as basic tools among others, but this awareness of the transference is deepened and broadened by the inclusion of the non-verbal components. We speak of organic presence, somatic resonance and vegetative identification as different aspects of the shared embodiment between the two human beings in the therapy room.

A person's worldviews include his belief systems, character attitudes, expectations, thought patterns, and memories, which include both historical events and constructions of experience.

Worldviews are partly an expression of character structure, which can be understood as our frozen history, physiologically rooted in breathing patterns, and movement restrictions.

The therapist in biosynthesis works to related energetic connection, relational contact, and the context of a person's worldviews, to overcome the disconnections expressed by neurosis.

A person's experience and expression can be understood as a spectrum of life-fields, containing physical, energetic, emotional, relational, cognitive, imaginal, and spiritual components. Some of these components have been identified in affect-theory as aspects of an integrated human expression. The concept of life fields has also been developed in body-image research to express the multi-dimensionality of human experience. In infant research a similar understanding is shown in the concept of the „affect-to-motoric-scheme

Shape flow and postures of the soul: regression, progression and affecto-motor schemas

In biosynthesis we work with specific patterns of movement intentionality, such as flexion and extension, traction and opposition. These patterns have a number of functions: firstly they are deeply involved with developmental sequences such as are found in prenatal life, during birth, in early postnatal steps such as crawling and standing, and in the somatic developmental psychology of ego formation. The motoric fields, as we call them, also form a basic movement vocabulary which is part of our legacy as primates, but when the movement patterns become one-sided or over-exaggerated, we have the somatic basis of fixated character attitudes, shrinking away from the world, over-extending into it, pushing it away in a paranoid spirit, or manipulating it according to ego-compulsions.

In working with the body, as Darwin pointed out over a hundred and twenty years ago, changes of posture can release buried feelings, or evoke new ones, just as strong emotional states can fixate postures. The Biosynthesis therapist is trained how to work with benign regression, as Michael Balint called it, and to avoid malign regression. The function of regression as we understand it is not to relive trauma for its own sake, but to return to a time in a person's life when traumatic experiences occurred and discover the healthy responses to the trauma that could not be activated at the time. In this sense the therapeutic goal in regression is to make possible a new progression, unfolding missing links in the developmental sequence, and freeing blocked energies that were deactivated by the traumatic experience.

Studies of the affecto-motoric-schemas in infancy have shown that the capacity to respond in a healthy way to appropriate life events is biologically provided, but negative life events will not actualize these healthy response patterns, but will elicit distorted motoric fields, which are adaptive to the sick environment, but maladaptive to a healthy environment. The original affecto-motoric schemas are neither destroyed, nor lost, but remain as a potential, which can be reactivated and returned to full usage in therapeutic work in biosynthesis.

Many years ago Donald Winnicott emphasized the importance of the holding environment, and introduced the term „grounding into the body" for the need to regain our somatic roots.

Grounding is related to the holding environment which the person has available around him, and to how he can internalize this holding environment so that the body becomes a true home.

Strategies of stress reduction: trauma, stress, and the holding environment

An example of this process can be seen in a case example involving a schizophrenic woman. The schizophrenia developed in the context of many double bind situations and negative emotional pressures during infancy. The contactlessness this woman experienced became reflected in her own contactlessness. She avoided all eye contact with other persons, and her muscle tone was a mixture of tremendous hypotonia on the surface, and extreme tension beneath the surface. She suffered hallucinations, heard voices, felt persecuted, and oscillated between extreme acting out on the social environment and extreme acting in to a rather closed autistic world. In the course of therapeutic work over several years she made considerable progress out of this disturbed state, and gradually resumed her foothold in the world, beginning studies, and starting a relationship. Her dormant capacity for health was being reactivated by her therapist. Finally she conceived a child, and those who knew her feared a relapse, as it is well known that the stress of bringing up a baby, can decompensate a post-psychotic person. She did not decompensate, nor did she repeat the contactlessness that she had experienced in her own infancy, and repeated in her previous body structure and character structure. She conceived a second child, and is now the mother of two healthy infants, with shining eyes, vital bodies, and healthy contactfulness. Such an evolution in a previously very disturbed woman, stimulates our faith in the possibilities of reawakening healthy motility and healthy emotionality, of the re-emergence of long dormant and previously unused affecto-motoric-schemas, the adaptive life patterns.

Channels of contact and elements of touch: soma semantics and the two tracks of transference and transmission

In biosynthesis we are working with two communication systems, in dialogue with each other, verbal communication and non verbal communication. Communication without words was the theme of a conference at the British Psychological Society thirty years ago, and the World Council for Psychotherapy has accepted a working party on this theme, which I am presiding over. I call this theme the theme of „Soma semantics“, the meanings of the body. It is a huge area of interdisciplinary study involving ethology, infant research, dance choreography, psychosomatic medicine, and the hermeneutics of intentionality. In biosynthesis we work with four separate but related channels of contact, between therapist and patient, the channel of sound, which includes not only language but all the para linguistic aspects of voice tone and rhythm as well as styles of listening, with the channel of eye-contact and gaze, which is a whole research field in its own right, with the channel of contact through the legs to the ground, and the

support system and postural basis we adopt, and with the channel of contact through the hands.

Appropriate touch, with respect for the patient's boundaries, and with the holding of the spirit of the abstinence rule, namely that what takes place in the session is for the benefit of the client and not for the satisfaction of the therapist's needs, is a basic human need, and has been part of psychotherapy for two hundred and twenty years, ever since Mesmer worked with his hands to affect energy flow in the body of patients, Johann Reil worked with revitalizing muscle tone, and Pierre Janet worked and Georg Groddeck worked with massage to release breathing, and free blocked movement. In biosynthesis we work with four principal elements to touch related to the exchange of messages around support and stability, freeing blocked impulses, connecting to organic rhythms of breathing, or providing reassurance and security.

Our trainees need to learn how to move between the verbal and non-verbal communication systems, translating not only what the client says within each system, but also translating between systems. Michael Balint wrote on the need for this translation between systems, which Thure von Uexkull calls a form of „semiosis", signalling between signal systems. This is essential to provide the reintegration of head and body, which is frequently interrupted by the double bind situations which neurotic states often contain at their core.

Essential qualities and spiritual grounding: actualizing potential and developing resources.

In biosynthesis we see the person as more than their conditioning. We understand that a person comes into the world with qualities waiting to be actualised, discovered as well as developed. These qualities are part of our evolutionary potential as human beings, and are connected to the capacity to feel from the heart, which is restricted and defended against in neurotic character states. This connection to the heart is the goal of all spiritual paths, but much mystification and deformation has occurred on many of these paths, so that spiritual grounding is related to the connection between being centered in the heart, and being able to focus on the everyday tasks of the day, be present within the complexities of human relationships and responsibilities, and be embodied on the planet, as a social, sexual, and spiritual being.

In our therapeutic work it is easy for the therapist to be overwhelmed by the gravity of the client's problems, and to feel depressed by the enormity of the task before him. The more massive the problem the more vital it is that the therapist is focussed not only on the problem, but on latent or dormant

resources , within the client, or outside him, waiting to be actualized.

These resources may come from non traumatic islands in childhood, from a new contact to a part of the body, from a new perception within a relationship, or from contact to nature in a way that can symbolize renewal, hope, or the possibility of transformative re-embodiment.

Learning how to contact these resources, and deepen the contact to essential qualities is a central task in biosynthesis therapy. This theme is further developed in Part III below.

Part III. Spiritual Grounding in Biosynthesis.

Grounding is our contact to the body, to the earth, to sexuality, to nature, and to human relationships, our rootedness in our own history and culture, our connection to the other.

Spirituality is our contact to the heart, to a source deeper than ourselves, to our trans-somatic nature, and our roots in the cosmos beyond time and space: our sense of eternal being.

These two aspects of ourselves, our groundedness and our spirituality, can be deeply interwoven with each other, or divided from each other and set against each other.

Groundedness without spirituality becomes pseudo groundedness: we find that our roots are in materialism, functionalism, physicalism. We work hard, earn well, and use sports to stay fit, until one day we break down from over work, and begin to wonder what is the meaning of life. This is pseudo groundedness.

Spirituality without groundedness becomes pseudo spirituality: a flight from the real towards the ideal, an esoteric fantasy trip, driven by narcissistic wishes to become a messianic leader, or a devotee of a new age cult. We engage in all sorts of false surrender, give up responsibility for our own lives, trust in the untrustable, and try to transcend the world before we have learned to incarnate on it. This is pseudo spirituality.

True spirituality is the grounding of our essential qualities in the minutiae of daily life. It is a twenty-four hour encounter with reality where inner and outer seek ever to remain in communion with each other.

True groundedness is the contact not only to the outer ground of our home and work and partnership and planet, but to the inner ground of our being,

our meaning, our values, our long body of destiny.

In a spiritual body psychotherapy, such as biosynthesis, our interactive field is the life space where essence and ground are in dialogue with each other, where problems are illuminated from a level of mystery (Gabriel Marcel), and where the source of healing for distress is both discovered from within the resources we bring with us, and developed by interactions that enhance our self-formation (Wehowsky).

The following section attempts to outline some principles of this work.

The soul of the muscle and the shape of a person

Our intentionality is expressed in our motoric readiness for specific actions.

This readiness is physiologically rooted in the gamma nervous system signals to the muscle spindles, which are the organs within the muscle which prepare it for specific actions. The muscle spindles can be conceived as the soul of the muscle. The shape of our lives is anchored in the patterns of intentionality, and the associated postural states that we move through.

Between hypotonus and resignation, and hypertonus and stress, lies a balanced muscular state which Moshe Feldenkrais called the „erect stance“, a eu-tony, which is linked to grace, coordination, feeling centered in one's self and grounded in the world. In a healthy state of tonus outer actions reflect inner intentions, there is no splitting between internal and external, the experience within and the expression without are congruent with each other. In working with the rebalancing of muscle tone we are trying to free a person from the conditioned reflexes of his character-moulding, and to help him to a state where his bodily expression is conforming to his present context and contacts. Pierre Janet spoke of this as a work of „presentification“. Four thousands of years spiritual cultures have sought to integrate the physical body with the spiritual. The Greeks had the concept of mens sana in corpore sano.

The Indians developed hatha yoga not just as the physical gymnastics, which it has become, but as the practice of „asanas“, postures of the soul, which reflected the feeling of union („yoga“) between inner and outer, self and cosmos, body and world. The Chinese developed their martial arts not on the battlefield, but in the monastery. The supreme development of the martial arts, in aikido, is the practice of the way of the energy of love: every bodily gesture is related to an inner spirituality, and the art of combat is not to kill the enemy, but to transform him so that his wish to attack us is seen as ultimately pointless, self-defeating, and unrealizable.

Postures of the soul in biosynthesis are specific body shapes, which can arise organically by following the latent impulses in the body, and freeing the trapped intentionality, until new pathways of movement are created which are integrative, archetypal, and which provide an embodied symbol of an inner purposiveness and life value. In ancient Egypt and in India and China body postures were named after specific animals which they resembled, and the animals were felt to be gods, („neters"), that is incorporations of essential qualities that were of deep meaning and importance to the human being. Postures of the soul unify the bodily shape, the inner intention, the depth of feeling, and a context which is both personal and transpersonal,

Breath and spirit: from respiration to inspiration

Spirit means breath. The first act of postnatal life is to breathe in. The last act of premortal existence is to breathe out. In Becket's play „Breath", the only action is the action of breathing. The movements in and out of respiration, inspiration and expiration, mean more than breathing in and breathing out, for expiration means dying, and inspiration can mean being filled with hope and meaning and creativity. Inspiration is not only a respiratory movement but a spiritual process.

Working with breath is working with the bridge between energy and consciousness, between body and spirit, between the physical dimensions and the essential dimensions. How we breathe is how we feel. Wilhelm Reich showed that every neurotic state shows a diaphragmatic block, an interruption in the flow of life between ground and sky. Breath states are part of our bonding, as Andreas Wehowsky has shown. Breath is the key to our energy.

Cut off the air for a few minutes and we are dead: expiration is final. Breath is the key to our consciousness that is why so many meditative and consciousness-raising methods are so often concerned with breathing. Breath is the environment of the heart, nestled between the two lungs, riding on the diaphragm, sucking in the oxygen, pulsating with the inspiratory qualities of the breath waves.

Wilhelm Reich said to interfere with the breathing is to perform emotional surgery. So breathing exercises can be dangerous. Hyperventilation can push us towards convulsive tetanus and rigidification: rigor mortis. Hypoventilation can space out into a coma. Life itself is balanced between the acid and alkali states of the blood, which are modulated by our breathing rhythms. But neurotic breathing is interfered with anyway: neurosis is an unbalance of the breath, an imbalance of energy, and imbalance of consciousness.

Breath work in biosynthesis seeks to join breathing and feeling, breathing and intentionality, breathing and vitality, breathing and charge, breathing and joy of life, breathing and a sense of the life flow between organism and atmosphere, the fragile boundary in the inner membranes of the lungs, between the air of the body and the air of the world.

Well springs of emotionality and life streams of feeling.

Emotion means moving out. Emotion is as old as the amoeba, which moves out in pleasure, and "remotes", moves back in anxiety. This was Reich's conclusion in his studies of the „Urgegensatz des vegetatives Lebens"- Emotion is deeply connected with the vegetative nervous system, and its two branches the sympathetic, for emergency responses, and the parasympathetic for quieter levels of responsiveness. The strongest nerve ganglia in the vegetative system is the solar plexus ganglion, the second brain at the top of the abdomen, the emotional centre linked to the guts, where strong sympathetic feelings of anger and anxiety are concentrated.

Anxiety is the inverse of pleasure, it is the feeling, which warns us of danger, and prepares us to run to a safe place. Anger is the emotion when our movement towards pleasure, joy, security, is blocked by some outside force. It is inverse to aggression, our constructive energy of moving forwards strongly in the direction we need to go. So flight and aggression can both be healthy. Both are related to joy: the joy of moving away from danger into safety, and the joy of advancing vitally towards our life goals.

The energies of anxiety and anger, when bottled up, become destructive. These energies need to be creatively liberated and transmuted so that the heart can be freed for love. The heart is not free to love when it is sitting above a cauldron of unresolved negativities in the region of the solar plexus. Yet the heart is needing the energy transmuted from the solar plexus as part of its vital circulation. The transmuted anxiety becomes the pleasure available as commitment in loving. The transmuted anger becomes the aggressive forward moving energy at the back of the heart, the will of the heart.

Emotions are linked to inhibited actions (Laborit). Feelings are linked to congruent intentions. Robert Moore, in Denmark, defined spirituality simply as „the feeling for what you are doing". Emotions are energetic processes, containing strong motoric drives. Feelings are related to our state of contact with ourselves and with others. Emotions can be acted out or acted in ways that block and disturb feelings, or emotions can be expressed or contained in ways that enable feelings. Emotional release may bring a sense of reduced pressure, and still not make any space for new qualities of feeling. So we must distinguish between emotional release, an energetic output, and

emotional clearance, as a transmutation from the emotional level to the feeling level, where qualities of contact are enhanced.

Energies of sexuality and the heart: connecting Eros and Cosmos

In sexuality we are dealing with an intense primal force, which drives us to fusion with another human being. Sexuality is a form of trans-sensus, expanding our energy, and extending our consciousness. The sexual act is known as the „primal scene“, it is the archetype of coupling immortalized in Indian sculptures, a human superimposition that reflects, according to Wilhelm Reich, a cosmic superimposition. The coupling of humans is a process, which Paul Ritter described as one of attraction, fusion, liberation, but this process describes the dance of particles, and the formation of spiral galaxies. Sexuality is a cosmic force moving through mucous membranes. Orgasm is described as the little death. Francis Mott described the journey of the first arc of life as the journey from the foetal to the coital state. Birth, orgasm, and death are the most intense processes that punctuate our incarnation. Eros joins us to the cosmos.

The energies of sexuality move along the surfaces of the body, skin, lips, breasts and genitals, but arise from the depths. Wilhelm Reich showed that orgasm is most deeply satisfying when it is connected to the whole person, when it is total and not merely local, and this involves the connection between the heart, as the deep blood centre of the human being, the source of the blood that extends outwards in tumescence, -- and the genitals.

In the Nahua teaching about the heart, the purpose of life is allowing the blood to flower.

We can think of sexuality as the flowering of the blood from the heart: instead of discussing the sexuality of flowers, we can focus on the flowering of sexuality from the heart.

In the history of spirituality we find two viewpoints on sexuality: the first viewpoint is that sexuality is a temptation from the devil, it corrupts us into sensuality, and diverts us from our spiritual path. As St. Paul wrote, however, it is better to marry than to burn. In this viewpoint the flesh and the spirit are polarized against each other, the body is a trap for the soul, and sex was the creation of the devil when God was not looking. Such viewpoints are characteristic of what Adrian van Kaam has called the deformative traditions of spirituality, which turn sexuality into an evil. The word „evil“ is spelt from the same letters as the word „live“, but it is spelled backwards. The deformative spiritual traditions have inverted the reality that sexuality and spirituality are intended to be superimposed with each other,

they are the root and the crown of the same tree.

The formative traditions in spirituality are deeply respectful of sexuality as a fountainhead of creativity, a well spring for spirituality, and the erotic force that draws us into relationship. From the psychodynamic perspective sexuality is not limited to genital intercourse: it is our whole libidinal flow: sexuality begins in the womb as the foetus nestles inside the membranes of the mother, it continues with the coupling of infant and breast with its possibilities for oral orgasm. Infant and breast is the archetype of Jesus and the Madonna, self and matrix, and yet this archetype is one of the wellsprings of our developing sexuality. In the tantric and taoistic traditions of India and China, the deep connectedness of erotic life and spiritual life have been part of the formative teachings of their religion, for millennia, and religion itself is a synonym for coupling: it means reconnection.

From knots to coupled images: a person and his experience.

When the child learns to speak he learns the language of his culture, and with some inherited sense of deep structure he begins to create his own first sentences. In the beginning was the word. Language has an enormous power that can be used to create or destroy. With language a society can create propaganda, brain washing, and ideology: the control of minds through the power of the word. We have only to remember Mein Kampf, the ideological formulations that prepared for and made possible the holocaust.

At the individual level language can be used to control and condition: it is the basis of scripts, double binds, knots, injunctions, prohibitions, and indoctrinations. But language is also the door to freedom: through words we can learn to articulate our own personal meanings, to define our identity, to counter the scripts, to untie the knots, to formulate a personal idiom, which becomes our song in the world. The Australian aborigines kept their connectedness to each other through song lines, stories and myths that were told and retold to establish the meanings of places and peoples. The process of therapy includes the process of how we tell the story of our life, the words we use for our constructions, how we symbolize, and the word symbol comes from „symballein“, to throw together. Arthur Koestler described bisociation as the basis of art, science, and humor: bringing together creatively what has not been associated before, that is forming new associations. The double bind is the meanings that have been thrown together upon us, rather than the meanings we construct through ever developing new associations. Personal history is the evolution of the story of the self.

The story we tell of our life, when it is freed from the dictations of others, becomes the articulation of an identity, so that character conditioning becomes transmuted into the poetry of self expression. In an exercise

created by Ira Progoff, and developed in our Institute, a person is helped to form personal mantras, or seed phrases, for key formative experiences from his life (often the most positive experiences are also deeply repressed) and to use these as a meditative input, linked to the rhythm of his breathing.

A woman who could neither talk nor write came to body psychotherapy to help her with her deep seated autistic problems. The therapist helped her with all he knew. At the end of her work she presented him with the story of her therapy, thousands of words differentiating the facets of her soul. A woman in Sweden presented herself for therapy with one problem: a writing block. The therapist agreed to take her on the condition she kept notes on her sessions. After two years therapist and client published a book together on the therapeutic journey. One of my first clients had the problem that she did not remember her experiences, she was so hysterically overactive in the present, that she burned her tracks behind her and never looked back, or digested her own life. Her therapy with me was accompanied by letter writing, and at the end of a few years she published the story of her therapy with the title „Room to breathe“.

Symbols of transformation: incarnating the inner ground

In Australia the memory of the race is called the dreamtime, the collective mythology of a people. In dreams our unconscious is active, as Freud and Jung demonstrated in different ways, but our dreams are more than this: they can contain an inner wisdom waiting to be decoded, as has been known since the days of Joseph in exile in Egypt.

Caron Kent, the Australian psychologist, understood the dream as an incarnation of growth forces in the body. The dream contained, he believed, an energy capable of somatic transformations. Whereas the dream occurs in sleep, waking life can be accompanied by waking images. We can divide these images into images of the self, and images of the world. Grove and Panzer call the self images „metaphors“ and the images of the world „symbols“.

The imagery of a person can exist at three levels: at the most superficial level we create images to satisfy needs: a few hours in front of a television set can establish this fact fairly quickly.

We have the possibility for an active fantasy life, which can generate our own virtual reality. It is possible as Arthur Janov pointed out to get lost in this symbolic labyrinth.

A second level of imagery is what Caron Kent called the restrictive image.

This is a pain-charged distress laden image, which constricts our breathing, fills us with anxiety, and is associated with trauma and stress.

The third and deepest level of imagery is the imagery of what is possible, a reflection of a quality or resource within our self or within the world, which is source of nourishment, renewal or transformation.

In Jungian psychology there is talk of archetypes, but the archetypes of the second and third level are completely different. -The second level archetypes lock us, until they are worked with, into neurotic patterns and restrictions. The third level archetypes open up pathways of liberation. Therapeutic work can seek to ground the restrictive images into associated body contractions, and open up the transformative images by appropriate work on deconstricting the body, and inviting a person to evolve his restrictive images in a process of symbolic immersion and emergence, until they transform spontaneously into the transformative form.

There are three associated forms of body-imagery:

- body-fantasy, our narcissistic dream of some ideal body;
- restrictive body-image, the sense of distorted or deficient connectedness to specific areas of our embodied self;
- and the transformative body-image, which is the evolving and emergent image of our potential life-direction. By grounding a person in his body and unfolding a dialogue between image and body and between body and image the resources of the body can be helped to generate trans-somatic images of incarnational states that can be deeply helpful to people in trouble.

The earthlight connection: presence, essence and somatic meditation

The connection between essence and ground, spirit and body, I call the earthlight connection. We work with the assumption that consciousness is not reducible to the body, an assumption supported by Christian Sharfetter, in his textbook on psychopathology at the University of Zürich, and much of modern consciousness research. We work with the viewpoint that the being, or essence, of a person is more than his physical existence, and that there are subtle life- fields surrounding a person that are not reducible to his physical form. A person is born with certain potentials, coded in his genetic structure, and in his incarnational fields, which remain latent until developed. This is the dialectic between what is innate, and what is environmental. Andreas Wehowsky has shown how this is also the dialectic between the qualities of a person waiting to be discovered, elicited, and manifested, and

the new skills in manifesting potential, that need to be developed. Education, meaning drawing out, needs to be in balance with teaching, the communication of new learning. This is the dialectic also between self-dependency and other dependency, in therapeutic work, and on spiritual paths. The true spiritual master seeks to bring his pupil in touch with his own inner teacher, and to communicate skills and practices, which may never evolve or be discovered without his specific teachings. Education and teaching need to be congruent with each other.

Meditation has the same root as medicine, it comes from the word „medius“, the middle, the centre. Medicine tries to restore physical health, which means wholeness, the ability to function from the centre of oneself. Meditation works with spiritual health, also meaning wholeness, and also related to the centre of oneself. The physical heart, the centre of organic life, is cared for by the doctor, when necessary. The spiritual heart, the centre of what Spinoza called eternity, is cared for by the meditation teacher, when necessary. The work of the therapist straddles the divide between organic and spiritual, the medical and the meditative.

Some forms of meditation can lead people to space out. Some forms of meditation were used during the Vietnam war to allow American pilots to drop their bombs in tranquility. Meditation is like sunlight, you can overdose on it, it can be lethal, or you can use it to get a healthy tan, and to keep you alive. All depends on the context. In biosynthesis we use meditation forms, which connect people to their own bodies, to their qualities, to their relationships, and to the purpose of their life and inner and outer directions.

Conclusion

The seven areas of spiritual grounding that I have described are only introduced in an elementary way. The background to this work lies in somatic developmental psychology, in depth psychological understanding of character, and in the formative spiritual tradition of the West. A full bibliography of references for further readings in each of these domains of knowledge is available from our Institute.

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