

The History Of Body-Psychotherapy: Part 2: The Legacies of Reich and others

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In the first essay on the history of Body-Psychotherapy, I explored how society's rejection of the body, personified in the last decades of the 19th century by Freud, ignored the earlier work of Pierre Janet and his fascination with how the mind and body interacted, and focused almost exclusively on the client's unconscious mental processes and aspects of the client's psychodynamic history. In the 50 or so years between Janet's first publications in 1885, the role of the body in psychoanalytical therapy became increasingly marginalized, until it was eventually excluded. Freud slowly moved away from the biologically-based libido theory towards his later development of the thanatos theory, and this finally coincided with Reich's effective expulsion from the Psychoanalytical Association in 1934. Let us now examine some of these developments in body-oriented psychotherapy and how they developed further.

Eighty-five years ago, in 1919, at the age of 22, a young Austrian-Hungarian, Wilhelm Reich, having already served on the Austrian-Russian front in the First World War, was then in training in Vienna as a medical student. He became enthused by the 'new' science of psychoanalysis and tried to integrate Freud's original concepts of the libido with his own observations, and with his interests in his patients' somatic experiences, disturbances and sexuality. The next year, he was admitted to membership of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, unheard of before this for an undergraduate. In 1922, he proposed, and in 1924 he took over the direction of, a series of seminars (the Vienna Seminar for Psychoanalytic Therapy). These examined in-depth clinical problems and, for these seminars, he drew on his extensive clinical work as First Clinical Assistant at the Psychoanalytic Dispensary, under Edward Hitschmann, where he worked with a wide variety of manual labourers, students, farmers, and people with low earnings.

Psychoanalysis, at that time, was still experimenting: trying to find its feet, so to speak. Freud had abandoned the use of cocaine, hypnosis, and other methods and was concentrating on free association, and was till open to suggestions. Reich realized that the fairly chaotic methodology of psychoanalysis led to a great wealth of memories, dreams and unconscious ideas being unearthed, but that no strong feelings were evoked, and further that most of the patients did not get significantly better. Instead, he advocated that the fortnightly:

*"... clinical discussions of the Seminar should be devoted exclusively to a close look at the day-to-day appearance of typical patterns of resistance experienced in actual practice. Such searching analyses of the process of analysis was a startling novelty and involved great demands on the ability of those participating to be self-critical. Reich led the way in this respect by freely admitting to having made many mistakes in the way he handled cases over the previous five years and by basing discussions on examples of characteristic failure situations. ... Increasingly Reich was able to show, by clinical examples, that the resistances appeared in the transference as a latent hostility, suspiciousness and mistrust felt towards the analyst. He reasoned that if this hidden layer of negativism was not interpreted relentlessly until the patient became aware of it (and experienced it directly as anger towards, or fear of, the analyst), all other interpretative work aimed at resolving the patient's infantile conflicts was bound to fail."*¹

¹ Boadella, David: *Wilhelm Reich: The evolution of his work* (Vision) 1973: p. 39

This was an attempt to systematize psychoanalysis according to the content of material that was being presented, rather than just chronologically, which formed the foundation of his major work on Character Analysis, and he presented these ideas systematically in a seminar in June 1926.

Freud had already had difficulty with Reich's point of view saying: "*Why should you not interpret the material in the order in which it appears? Of course, one has to analyze and interpret incest dreams as soon as they appear.*" It appeared that few analysts were then prepared to venture into any form of direct confrontation with the patient's repressed negativism.

In 1927, Reich presented his first major paper on Character Analysis, which is what he called a "therapy of character" (rather than a "therapy of symptoms"). This was a structured attempt to try and alter a person's typical mode of behavior and expression by systematic interpretation of its defensive functions. It was very well received and, for many, represented an important development in psychoanalysis.

Reich's theory centered around his observations that the defensive 'armouring' of a person's character are both the repressed emotions and the embodied tensions that make up their strategy for survival of their childhood conflicts. In energetic terms, it is their "frozen history". Reich asked two questions in this paper: "*To what extent is an alteration of character necessary?*" and "*To what extent can it be brought about?*"

Over the next few years, he worked on refining the answers to these questions, and published his first major, and still very significant, book, *Character Analysis*, in 1933. This posited that the cause of a person's neurotic disturbance was in the repression of their natural libido, and that a significant indication of the success of any therapy was in the restoration of the person's capacity for joy in their love life and their work.

This book also described in detail the various factors that determine the type of character-defense that a child would have to adopt to survive emotionally: the timing of the repression; the extent and intensity; which impulses were frustrated; the ration between permission and frustration; who was the main agent of frustration; and several possible contradictions in these different frustrations to it's own unique life impulses. Body-Psychotherapy, though it was not called that until more than 50 years later, had now just begun to emerge out of a previous 50 years of frozen history into a major treatise. Whilst this book is generally acknowledged as a classic by many different branches of psychotherapy, most forms of psychotherapy have also studiously ignored most of the implications of this work.

*By 1933, Reich's theoretical conclusions on the relation between sexuality and anxiety, and his clinical work in dissolving the character rigidities, had pushed him to the boundaries of the psychological realm. With the concept of the 'vasomotor response', which he had advanced in Die Funktion des Orgasmus, he was on the edge of a complex field of psychosomatic phenomena which most analysts preferred to leave alone. ... Reich's characterological work had taught him that the function of the rigid character formation was to bind anxiety. Only those analysts who worked consistently with character-analysis were able to reverse the process and to release the dammed-up anxiety from the character armour. As the techniques of dissolving the armour grew more proficient, the effective release became more pronounced.*²

After his expulsion from the Psychoanalytical Society in 1934 and the beginnings of his European wanderings, especially after the publication of the 1st

² Ibid: p. 102

edition of the *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, also published in 1933, Reich went on to explore many other aspects of his work. Most significantly he began to teach other people in his methods of Body-Psychotherapy (though he called it firstly 'Character-Analysis' and later 'Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy'), The first main person to be so trained in Norway was Ola Raknes, who later directly influenced A.S.Neill, Peter Jones, David Boadella, Gerda Boyesen, and many others.

It was perhaps unfortunate that Reich's work on character analysis, using active interpretations of the patient's patterns of negative transference, directly contradicted and almost coincided chronologically with Freud's abandonment of the libido theory in favour of the theory that the person's resistance to therapy was a part of their "death instinct". This formed part of the background for the split between Freud and Reich; then other splits occurred, mainly due to his socio-political (communist) views not being compatible with or acceptable to the Psychoanalytical Society at that particular time in Germany. They effectively excluded him, which Anna Freud described as 'a great injustice' and the separation became complete when he moved to Norway and decided not to join the Norwegian branch of the Society. Body-Psychotherapy had started on its second exile from psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. However his original theoretical work on character analysis has significantly influenced psychoanalytic ego psychology and treatment methodologies. However the nature of his clinical work needs a mention here as this 'style' influenced' (positively or negatively) many of the people trained in these methods.

*"... by this time Reich was experimenting with rather powerful, often confrontational, interventions. Once one accepts Reichian theory, it tends to direct one toward a style of working that is similar to his: it is typical to have the client breathe and make expressive movements or sounds. Meanwhile the therapist makes various manipulations to help release the muscular armor. It is often a challenging and invasive process."*³

It is also often extremely painful, possibly humiliating, can generate feelings of great anger very suddenly, as well as being potentially, eventually therapeutic. All this is nicely illustrated in the example quoted from Orson Bean's book, *Me and the Orgone*, about his Reichian therapy. The theory predicated that muscular armour contains these locked-up 'energies' and that, by 'breaking down' this armour, they can be released. The theory, as expressed, determines a powerful confrontational approach, typical of the time (and maybe of the man). As we shall see, the application of this theory has been modified considerably.

Other aspects of Reich's work included human character, socio-political forces, natural energy, weather control, nuclear physics, and (through the influence of A.S. Neill) the healthy education of children. These are all more or less directly connected to his starting point in psychotherapy, in a clear developmental sequence, with far-reaching consequences. For more detail about these developments, please refer to David Boadella's excellent book, *Wilhelm Reich: The evolution of his work*,⁴ and Myron Sharaf's excellent biography of Reich, *Fury on Earth*⁵, is also very well worth reading. There are several other books that give good and different personal insights into this remarkable man.⁶

³ May, John: 'Body Psychotherapy Under the Rashomon Gate' In *USA Body Psychotherapy Journal*: Vol. 4, No. 1, 2005

⁴ Boadella, David: *Wilhelm Reich: The evolution of his work* (1987) Routledge, Arkana

⁵ Sharaf, Myron: *Fury on Earth* (1983) Andre Deutsch

⁶ Reich, Peter: *A Book of Dreams* (1974) Barrie & Jenkins, London. Also: Reich, Ilsa Ollendorf: *Wilhelm Reich: A personal biography* : (1969) Elek, London.

What is significant for Body-Psychotherapy is that, after about this time in the mid-1930s, Reich seems to have made very few further direct contributions or developments to the clinical aspects of his therapeutic work. There were many refinements as he developed his 'orgone' theory and later the Orgone Energy Accumulator. But his main interest and energies in clinical work seem to have stopped around about this time, and certainly by 1939, when he left for America.

Later, in America he started training people in his therapeutic methods as well as in his newer scientific discoveries, and this period certainly represented a flowering of his work, but the actual clinical methodologies and treatment methods in psychotherapy remained fairly static. One could argue that there is no point in re-inventing the wheel, or in developing something that works effectively, and there would be some truth in this. Fascinating as the scientific work on the "bions", his "orgone work", the developments into weather control, and his understandings about the "emotional plague" are, they are not directly related to the clinical practice of Body-Psychotherapy, though there are many connections. Developments in his clinical work were left up to the people he trained, mainly in America, though I will return to the work of Ola Raknes later.

As a direct legacy, Reich left us the concept of character analysis, discussed here in a little detail; the concept of a life or body energy, the free flow of which is essential to good health, and which can be blocked by unresolved psychological and emotional traumas that are physically manifested in chronic muscular holding patterns; and thus is developed the concept of muscular 'armouring' and armouring in various 'segments' of the body. These build up to form our basic 'character' type depending on how and when the traumas occurred and this resides largely in our unconscious. Systematic analysis of this character pattern, and direct (body) work techniques on the muscular holding patterns, especially with the breathing, can bring these traumas to consciousness, where they can begin to be resolved. His later development of the orgone energy accumulator was additional to this, as an adjunct to the therapy, as this device was designed to 'accumulate' free flowing life energy into the body of the person sitting in it and this then helped to stimulate that person's life energy, in their body and soften their pattern of muscular armouring.

The Neo-Reichians in America:

Reich's most significant American 'second-generation' students, in terms of general Body-Psychotherapy, were Alexander Lowen, Myron Sharaf, John Pierrakos, Reich's grown-up daughter Eva, and Charles Kelly.

Elsworth Baker⁷ and the more formalized students of "Medical Orgonomy"⁸ tended, since Reich's death, to plough pretty much the same furrow as Reich did clinically, keeping Reich's central concepts very clearly in focus, to the point of being quite purist, though their work in the several of the other fields that Reich delineated expands steadily.⁹ Whilst some of their developments are quite exciting, they have had relatively little influence outside their own small close circles.

The other 'Body-Psychotherapists', as I shall call them, mostly all went on to train many others; and they became essentially "neo-Reichians" though labels such as Bioenergetic-Analysis, Core Energetics, Radix, Gentle Bioenergetics, etc. were more commonly used. David Boadella once produced a "genealogy" of Body-Psychotherapy showing the main lines of influence of all of these people. These are the people who

⁷ Baker, Elsworth: *Man in the Trap* (1967) Collier Macmillan

⁸ There is a general requirement to be a medical doctor and psychiatrist, before training in orgonomic therapy.

⁹ See Journal of Orgonomy: www.orgonomy.org/bookstore/listing_complete.html

trained more or less directly with Reich and who passed down his legacy to us. I want to pick up, not on the actual history, but on what developments in Body-Psychotherapy resulted from Reich and these people that he trained, both those in America, and also those in Europe.

Many people know of, and have been significantly influenced by, the work of **Alexander Lowen**, his development (with John Pierrakos) of Bioenergetic Analysis, his prolific writings,¹⁰ and his long dedication to excellent clinical work. The sexual repression of the 1940's and 1950's suddenly opened up in the 1960's and 1970's and this helped considerably in the re-establishment of Reich's original 'orgasm theory', where he maintained that the orgasm was the main regulator of emotional tension, Lowen developed the concepts of "grounding" in therapy, working standing up, rather than lying down on the couch, opening the breathing, using a padded stool to bend the back over, and the idea of self-help exercises. He helped publicize and 'normalize' Reich's clinical work and opened the way towards Body-Psychotherapy being considered reasonably respectable, especially after the bad publicity around the newspaper campaign and Reich's trial and imprisonment, but much of modern Body-Psychotherapy reflects these early developments, even if the people involved have not trained specifically in Bioenergetics, for it has set very high professional yet acceptable standards.

After splitting from Lowen, **John Pierrakos** became increasingly influenced by the spiritual work of his wife, Eva, which she called 'Pathwork', and after her untimely death, he developed a synthesis of his neo-Reichian therapeutic work from Bioenergetics, this type of spiritual growth work, his capacity to see the human aura, a focus on the pleasure of living, and working in a community setting, that he called Core Energetics: facilitating the liberation of the core self.

*"... Lowen and Pierrakos altered Reich's therapeutic paradigm by de-emphasizing the concept of orgasmic potency and omitting the connections between Reich's therapy and his studies of orgone energy."*¹¹

Reich's daughter, **Eva Reich**, trained initially as a paediatrician, married, had a daughter herself, and then went on to develop her own therapeutic work, with both adults and babies. Much of this centred about promoting home births, working with premature babies in incubators, and teaching the mother of such babies to work with them as well to help the disturbed bonding process, by giving the baby "butterfly massage" – a very light touch, much as you would touch a butterfly's wing – to prevent an early energetic contraction from tactile abandonment setting in and becoming chronic. This she calls "Gentle Bioenergetics" or "Gentle Baby Massage". Apart from keeping the spirit of Reich's work very much alive and inspiring many others with her accounts of his work in America, this is perhaps her unique contribution to Body-Psychotherapy.

Charles "Chuck" Kelley was originally an academic, who became interested in the work of ophthalmologist, William Bates. Bates had developed method utilizing a number of eye exercises to help people see better without glasses. Kelley became very interested in Reich's work, when he was studying for his PhD in psychology and particularly the work on the ocular segment, around the eyes. He found many parallels and complements between the Bates Method and Reich's deep emotional release techniques work (experienced through therapy with William Thorburn and

¹⁰ Lowen, Alexander: *Betrayal of the Body; Bioenergetics; Depression and the Body; Fear of Life; Joy; Language of the Body; Love and Orgasm; Love, Sex and Your Heart; Narcissism; Spirituality and the Body; The Way to Vibrant Health; Honoring the Body* : Bioenergetics Press:
www.bioenergeticspress.com

¹¹ Sharaf (1983); p. 481

later Philip Curcuruto, who had trained with Reich) and then went on to develop his own type of therapeutic work, which he called Radix, Education in Feeling and Purpose, combining Reich's concepts, the work of vision psychologist Samuel Renshaw, the Bates Method, and also the work at Synanon¹² and of Ayn Rand. He started working clinically and training people in the late 1960s with his wife Erika.¹³ He does not refer to Radix as a form of psychotherapy, but more as an education, though many other Body-Psychotherapists use his methods and theories.¹⁴ Sadly we have just learnt that he died recently.

Stanley Keleman trained with Alexander Lowen and also Ola Raknes, in Oslo. He had also studied at the Center for Religious Studies in Germany, led by Durckheim, as well as receiving a more traditional psychoanalytical training. Of all the neo-Reichians that I have described, he is perhaps the one that I regret not having had more direct contact with, though he influenced David Boadella considerably. Like many of the later neo-Reichians, there is an acknowledgement of spirituality, but this is also not significantly emphasized.

*"The essence of the work is to remove the blocks to our split-off parts and help us to deepen our contact with ourselves and the world, and to learn how to live with our heightened experience. ... The function of the blocks ... is to be constricting to the available energy. Strange as it may seem, the most serious problem does not turn out to be to bring more aliveness to people, but to educate them to deal with the aliveness that they have."*¹⁵

However Keleman's much more massive contribution to Body-Psychotherapy has been to understand and demonstrate how the concept of blocks and armouring, of energetic flow and constriction, extends also into the soft tissues of the body, and is not just muscular, which is where he differed from Reich. These concepts he illustrated beautifully in his book *Emotional Anatomy*.

"Life makes shapes. These shapes are part of an organizing process that embodies emotions, thoughts, and experiences into a structure. This structure, in turn, orders the events of existence. Shapes manifest the process of protoplasmic history finding a personal human shape—conception, embryological development and the structures of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Molecules, cells, organisms, dusters, and colonies are the beginning shapes of life's movement. Later on, a person's shape will be molded by the internal and external experiences of birth, growth, differentiation, relationships, mating, reproducing, workout this process, shape is imprinted by the challenges and stresses of existence. Human shape is marked by love and disappointment. ... Emotional anatomy is layers of skin and muscle, more muscles, organs, more organs, a bone, and the invisible layer of hormones, as well as the organization of experience. ... Emotional anatomy is somatic education, a tool to learn the geography and the archetypes of personal history. Emotional anatomy shows the relationship between shape and the genetic and social forces that inhibit or facilitate the

¹² A drug treatment center near Santa Monica, California.

¹³ Kelley, Charles R. 'New techniques in vision improvement' in Boadella, D. (ed) *In the Wake of Reich* (1976) Couverture.

¹⁴ Glenn, Linda, Müller-Schwefe, Rudolf: *The Radix Reader* (1999) Heron Press

¹⁵ Keleman, Stanley: 'Bio-energetic concepts of grounding' in Boadella, D. (ed) *In the Wake of Reich* (1976) Couverture.

shaping of a life. The experience of complex emotional patterns as somatic configurations gives a basis for living a richer somatic and emotional life.”¹⁶

Ron Kurtz became interested in Body-Psychotherapy through Gestalt therapy and his work in the Human Potential Movement in California. He was a statistical psychologist, teaching at San Francisco State. After being initially attracted by Janov’s Primal work, he then experienced work in Rolfing, Bioenergetics, and with Pierrakos, Al Pessa and Moishe Feldenkrais. He began to mix all these influences and then developed his own unique style that he called Hakomi.¹⁷ Hakomi is a Hopi Indian word which means “How do you stand in relation to these many realms?”, or “Who are you?” A very poor description of Hakomi is that it helps the person evoke who they could be, or should be. It does not interpret character or body position, tensions or holding patterns; but it helps reveal the emotional construct behind these patterns. Just one technique is for the therapist to ‘take over’ the tension, or holding pattern, so the client can relax and experience another aspect of them selves.

Malcolm Brown and his wife Katherine Ennis Brown, both also influenced by Gestalt psychotherapy, developed a style of body-oriented psychotherapy they called ‘Organismic Psychotherapy’. Other influences on the Browns were Charlotte Selver’s Sensory Awareness (on Katherine), Carl Rogers, Reich, Lowen and also Boadella and Boyesen in London, England. The Browns, more than most, have bridged the transatlantic gap between America and Europe, living and working in England and Italy for several years, and incorporated some of the ‘softer’ European body-contact methods and working as a couple with groups.

More so than many others, they ‘discovered’ the touch of the therapist is not neutral and that there are profoundly different effects, depending on whether the therapist is a man or woman. Malcolm Brown also focused on different types of grounding, originally identified by David Smith¹⁸, vertical grounding and horizontal grounding: Lowen’s work being more vertical, and horizontal grounding allowing undirected states of feeling and awareness.

Ilana Rubinfeld, a student conductor at Julliard, had person work on her posture with an Alexander Technique therapist, then studied with Fritz Perls in Esalen, where Virginia Satir, Will Schultz, and others were beginning to do significant work in the Human Potential Movement and in developing therapies. She later adapted a lot of Moishe Feldenkrais’ exercises and wove these together, with some influences from Selver, Jung and eastern philosophies, into a gentle form of Body-Psychotherapy she calls “Rubinfeld Synergy Method (RSM)”. This involves a “listening touch”¹⁹ type of hand contact and is similar in some ways to Gerda Boyesen’s biodynamic massage work, though coming from completely different sources and directions. It is also the clearest amalgamation of work from the field of body therapy and a recognized psychotherapy to form a Body-Psychotherapy. She is now beginning to explore self-care for the therapist; an often neglected area. “*People are interested in theory and technique. They are taught technique, how to touch, how to lift, what to do where, to take care of others, but not to take care of themselves.*” In RSM training, a lot of the training is now on practitioner self-care.

Al Pessa, and his wife Diane, developed a Body-Psychotherapy from an entirely different source; dance. From studying movement and emotional expression, the Pessos developed such concepts as ‘accommodation’, an expression that might satisfy

¹⁶ Keleman, Stanley: *Emotional Anatomy* (1986) Center Press.

¹⁷ Kurtz, Ron: *Body-Centered Psychotherapy: The Hakomi Method: The integrated use of mindfulness, non-violence and the body* (1990) LifeRhythm Press

¹⁸ Boadella, David & Smith, David: *Maps of Character* (1986) Abbotsbury Press

¹⁹ Rubinfeld, Ilana: *The Listening Touch* (1998) Piatkus, London

the emotions, and 'the structure', where an ideal parent is created to fill the person's emotional need: they realized they were doing emotional therapeutic work. From this point in the early 1960s, Psychomotor work was created, and from this point onwards they have developed mappings of consciousness and resistance, and the shape of the work is now a form of inspirational body-oriented psychodrama.

A slightly fuller description of many of these people's work can be found in the first issue of the USABP Journal of Body Psychotherapy,²⁰ and there are, of course, many others in this second generation of Body-Psychotherapists influenced by Reich: Myron Sharaf, Richard Blasband, to name just two. However these others have not trained many other people and therefore their influence is more limited in terms of numbers, though they do, of course, carry many other significances. Several other psychotherapists were also influenced by Reich, his writings, or had some sessions with him, particularly Fritz Perls (Gestalt Therapy) & Arthur Janov (Primal Therapy)²¹, though neither give Reich much credit.

Other people not really connected to Body-Psychotherapy but influenced by Reich's work include Frank Zappa, William Steig²², Norman Mailer, William Burroughs, Orson Bean²³ and even Kate Bush²⁴.²⁵ However, these people are not Body-Psychotherapists, although they may have helped to popularise his work. Perhaps one of the most significant amongst recent influences is in the development of more modern theories of 'natural childbirth'. Here, Ina May Gaskin²⁶ & Eva Reich have pioneered these in America, and Sheila Kitzinger and Michel Odent²⁷ in Europe have been very influential. This is an example of a neo-Reichian influence, but not a direct psychotherapeutic one, as Reich himself, whilst openly loving children and being passionate about their healthy upbringing, also 'persuaded' or insisted that both Elsa Lindenberg (in Norway) and initially Ilse Ollendorf (in America) should have an abortion, though Ilse later bore him a son, Peter.²⁸

A final word on Reich's work in America has to be about the Wilhelm Reich Trust. A couple of years after his death in prison in 1957, Eva Reich handed over the trusteeship of his home at Organon and all his writings and papers to Mary Higgins, who has since interpreted a clause in Reich's will, that his papers should be 'stored' for 50 years, to mean that no-one should be allowed to see them except her.²⁹ However, to her great credit, she has ensured that all Reich's early and important work has been re-published (by Farrar, Straus & Giroux) and remains publicly

²⁰ Goodrich-Dunn, Barbara & Greene, Elliot: 'Voices: A History of Body Psychotherapy': *USA Body Psychotherapy Journal*: Vol. 1, No. 1, 2002

²¹ Janov, Arthur: *The Primal Scream* (1970) Putnam's Books.

²² Artist for Reich, Wilhelm: *Listen, Little Man!*

²³ Bean, Orson: *Me and the Orgone* (1971) St Martin's Press, NY.

²⁴ Song "Cloudbusting" on "Children of the Night" album

²⁵ www.psychcentral.com/psypsych/Wilhelm_Reich

²⁶ Gaskin, Ina May: *Spiritual Midwifery* (1980) Book Publishing Co.

²⁷ Odent, Michel: *Birth And Breastfeeding: Rediscovering The Needs Of Women During Pregnancy And Childbirth; The Caesarean; Farmer and the Obstetrician; Birth Reborn; The Scientification of Love; Primal Health: Understanding the Critical Period Between Conception and the First Birthday; Childbirth without Fear : The Principles and Practice of Natural Childbirth.* www.amazon.com

²⁸ Reich, Peter: *A Book of Dreams* (1974) Barrie & Jenkins

²⁹ Sharaf (1983); p. 480

available and has recently started publishing collections of all his earlier correspondence.³⁰

Body-Psychotherapy in Europe:

Ola Raknes, trained by Reich, had stayed in Norway, and after the end of the war, started to give Character Analytic psychotherapy or analysis and to train people. Some of the recipients of his therapy, significant to this account, include A.S. Neill, Paul Ritter, Peter Jones, David Boadella, Malcolm Brown, and Gerda Boyesen. However the influences of Reich's work and theories extended much further outside of the therapy room.

A.S. Neill, founder of the radical Summerhill School, had met Reich in Norway in 1936, and a few times subsequently in America, and there developed an unlikely, albeit considerable and close, friendship with Reich that lasted well into the 1950s. Much of this friendship is reported in the excellent record of their correspondence.³¹ Neill was not a psychotherapist, though the work that he did with difficult children in his school could be certainly be considered as psychotherapeutic. He considered Reich a genius, and also influenced Reich considerably in turn, especially in his views about children and education.

Paul Ritter was an English architect and city planner and was heavily influenced by Reich's work. He and his wife, Jean, applied a lot of Reich's (and A.S. Neill's) theories to bringing up their children³², having home births³³ and with Paul training as a 'Reichian analyst'. They started an early Journal on Reich's work in the UK and later emigrated to Western Australia.

Peter Jones studied vegetotherapy with Ola Raknes between 1969 and 1971. He lived in Manchester, practised as a psychotherapist,³⁴ and trained a number of northern English body-psychotherapists during the 1970s.

At that time, in the early 1970s, most of the Human Potential Movement and therapy work that was happening in the UK was happening in London. Some of the encounter group workshops were part of this and an early attempt at alternatives to humanise mental health, "People, Not Psychiatry" (PNP), was inspired by the work and writings of R.D. Laing, David Cooper, Gurdjieff and Reich.³⁵ There was also a strong 'home birth' movement developing in the UK, as well as a strong 'home schooling' movement, "*Education Otherwise*", and these occasionally overlapped with Body-Psychotherapy, primal therapy, Gestalt therapy, human growth work, the development of 'community' life-styles and organic small-holdings.

Jenny James perhaps is one the most significant person to synthesise many of these, and after doing some training with David Boadella and working in the PNP movement, she moved to Ireland and started a radical 'primal' therapeutic community called 'Atlantis', putting many of these ideas into daily practice.

³⁰ Reich's letters and journals collected by the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust have been published in 3 volumes so far: Reich, Wilhelm: *Passion of Youth* (Pre 1934), *Beyond Psychology* (1934-1939), & *American Odyssey* (1940-1947) Farrar Straus & Giroux, New York.

³¹ Plazek, Beverley R.: *Record of a Friendship: The correspondence of Wilhelm Reich and A. S. Neill* (1981) Farrar, Strauss & Giroux

³² Ritter, Paul & Jean: *The Free Family* (1959) Gollanz, London

³³ Ritter, Paul & Jean: 'Self-regulation in birth' in Boadella, D. (ed) *In the Wake of Reich* (1976) Couventure, London

³⁴ Jones, Peter: 'The use of vegeto-therapy in childbirth' in Boadella, D. (ed) *In the Wake of Reich* (1976) Couventure, London

³⁵ Barnett, Michael: *People, Not Psychiatry* (1973) Allen & Unwin, London.

*We used to have a therapy room at Atlantis. Now we have the kitchen, the bathroom, the peatbog and the vegetable garden. We still have a therapy room. But we never use it. We keep it as a kind of showpiece for visitors and reporters. They expect it you know. But the real therapy takes place in our living rooms. What is the use of therapy if you can't live with it?*³⁶

David Boadella has been a huge influence in Body-Psychotherapy in Europe, and world-wide, throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. He was an English schoolteacher, who had come across Reich's work in the 1950's and was referred by Reich to Ola Raknes. He also worked with Paul Ritter, and was further strongly influenced by the work of Frank Lake. Lake had expanded Francis Mott's work in psychoanalysis and the life of the child in the womb into a pre-natal psychology, using a Christian perspective, and practiced a form of regressive psychotherapy, using LSD in the 1950's and early 1960's, and then, rather like Stanislav Grof, using a special type of breathing to get a similar effect later on. Lake was also associated with Fairburn & Guntripp's Object Relations School, and his analysis of early traumas and the effects on the body and character is seminal.³⁷

Another strong influence on Boadella, besides the writings of Wilhelm Reich and later the work of Stanley Keleman, was the work of Gerda Boyesen (see below). Boadella started working with people and training others throughout the 1970s, until he settled in Switzerland in the 1980's and started his Institute of Biosynthesis. He developed his own psychotherapeutic work into what he calls "Biosynthesis", a particular feature of which is an understanding of how the three embryological layers, endoderm, mesoderm and ectoderm, affect the current structures in the body. He also works with the concepts of both vertical grounding and horizontal rounding, which he calls 'facing', as well as many other concepts.³⁸

Boadella edited an excellent book on the work of many neo-Reichians, *In the Wake of Reich*, and wrote one of the best accounts of Reich's actual work, *Wilhelm Reich, The evolution of his work*. However one of his major contributions has also been the dedication that he put into editing *Energy & Character*, one of the first journals on Body-Psychotherapy, that has come out almost continuously now for over 30 years. This journal acted as a publishing base for many early Body-Psychotherapists, weaving their work together to form a unique sense of this particular field. Boadella also helped found and became the 1st President of the European Association for Body-Psychotherapy (EABP).

Gerda Boyesen was a Norwegian physiotherapist, trained by Bülow-Hansen, in a method which involved relaxing the Autonomic Nervous System, through a very gentle massage, the parasympathetic effects of which were listened to through a stethoscope. She had some therapy/analysis from Ola Raknes and combined these two main inputs in her "Biodynamic Psychology". This method became very popular in England, Germany, France and the Netherlands in the 1970's. Her grown-up children, Mona-Lisa, Ebba and Paul all taught and wrote about, or in Paul's case, developed aspects of this work. She also influenced Malcolm Brown and David Boadella. The aspects of her that are particularly contributory to the rest of Body-Psychotherapy are the realisation that the system of (self-)regulation of emotional tension is not only in the orgasm reflex, but also in the day-to-day digestive system: so she speaks of

³⁶ James, Jenny: *Atlantis Is* (1980) Caliban Books, Sussex. She also wrote, *Room to Breathe; They Call Us the Screamers*; and *Atlantis Alive*.

³⁷ Lake, Frank: *Clinical Theology: A theological and psychiatric basis to clinical pastoral care* (1966) Darton, Longman & Todd, London

³⁸ Boadella, David: *Lifestreams: An introduction to Biosynthesis* (1987) Routledge & Kegan Paul, London

'emotional digestion' and 'psycho-peristalsis'. Working extensively with positive transference, different forms of massage and body work (drawn mostly from other sources), and some neo-Reichian techniques, Biodynamic Psychology is a collection of gentle, caring, expansive and affirming methods. "The client is always right."; "Less is more"; "Let the body speak", are all maxims of this style of work. Her son, Paul, developed his own synthesis of Body-Psychotherapy and Analysis that he calls "Psycho-Organic Analysis."

Lillemore Johnson was another Norwegian therapist, strongly influenced by Freud and Reich, who developed an inspired way of working with breathing, light touch and 'body-reading,' with a precise diagnostic process, from a "body-existential" view rather than a body-oriented view, that she called Integrated Respiration Therapy (IRT). Unfortunately her work is little known outside of Norway, despite an American translation of her book.³⁹

Nic Waal was one of the foremost psychiatrists in Norway and had trained with Reich at the Berlin Institute of Psychoanalysis in the 1930s. She was one of the few therapists that understood his development from character-analysis to vegetotherapy. She worked as a child psychotherapist, training others, in both Copenhagen and Oslo, and lectured extensively on muscular tensions and respiration, developing her own method of muscle tests as a form of personality diagnosis. Unfortunately not much of her work was translated into English.⁴⁰

Jacob "Jay" Stattman was the founder of 'Unitive Psychology', a branch of Body-Psychotherapy particular to him and people who have followed his work in Germany and Holland. He based his work on unifying aspects of Humanistic Psychology with the theoretical work of Wilhelm Reich and some of the psychodynamic aspects of character analysis. He tried to go beyond the normal polarities, constantly working towards a unity. He worked with different types of bodywork, breathing, movement, non-verbal work and contact that he drew from Gerda Boyesen, Reich, Lowen, & Feldenkrais. Oriental philosophy and particularly Zen & Tibetan Buddhism also influenced him considerably.

*"The work of Unitive Psychology is based in large part on overcoming the formal categories and systems of psychology, philosophy, religion, and the physical sciences in terms of human growth and self-realisation. These categorisations are viewed as useful sources of knowledge in their own right, but as inadequate to the task of linking experiences with understanding. When there is overt or unaware dependency upon these categories as substitutes for experience, the dualities that dehumanise us are strengthened and perversely, knowledge becomes one of the primary sources of intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict."*⁴¹

What we are beginning to see here is the first attempts at a form of synthesis of different methods and approaches; one of the earlier attempts at focussing, not on form, content, or expression, but on process. Boadella followed this, in his own way.

Jerome Liss, is an American living in Europe (now in Rome) and working for many years as a Body-Psychotherapist and trainer. He worked with R.D. Laing and David Cooper (anti-psychiatry movement) in the 1970's and then established his Biosystemic school of Body-Psychotherapy in Rome. Biosystemic therapy combines a number of different aspects of work on the somatic level, examining the relationship

³⁹ Johnsen, Lillemore: *Integrated Respiration Therapy: Birth and rebirth in the fullness of time.* (1981)

⁴⁰ Waal, Nic; Grieg, Anne and Rasmussen, Mogens: *The Psycho-Diagnosis of the Body*, in Boadella, D. (ed) *In the Wake of Reich* (1976) Couverture, London

⁴¹ Stattmann, Jacob, et al.: *Unitive Body-Psychotherapy: Collected Papers: Vols. 1 & 2* (1989, 1991) AFRA Verlag

between the parasympathetic and sympathetic parts of the Autonomic Nervous System, with an emotional deepening that can help the person return to a healthy balance. Inhibitions in action can also create a series of physiological disturbances, and these create the pre-conditions for psychosomatic conditions and emotional distress. A series of methods some verbal, contact and some relationship.

Luciano Rispoli developed another form of synthesis in what he calls Functional Psychology at his school in Naples, Italy, which looks at how people operate functionally. The 'functions' are an entire body-mind system that expresses itself in different ways at different times with unity and circularity in such a way that all the functions contribute equally to the organisation of the Self. It tries to overcome the divisions between the various therapeutic approaches, working towards an integrated therapy, using a therapeutic methodology which claims to be effective on all levels of the Self in order to remobilise and reintegrate the altered functions and heal the early 'fundamental experiences'.

These different forms indicate the scope and range of Body-Psychotherapy in Europe. However there are recent attempts to weld many of the existing schools together into more of an integrated, though still diverse, amalgamation of accredited training schools through the EABP FORUM of Body-Psychotherapy Organisations.⁴²

Qui custodiet ipsos custodes?⁴³

Having described some of the benefits that Body-Psychotherapy derives from all these different systems and the contributions of the innovators, something must now also be said about some of the 'down-side' or disadvantages. There is an element of genius in many of these people: they have indubitably 'broken the mould', thought 'outside of the box', conquered new ground, put together different influences, thought hard and long, worked hard and long, trained many people, and have dedicated a large portion of their lives to their work. In some cases, this has made them some of them quite egocentric, or unable to hear criticism or different opinions, or obsessive, or even somewhat paranoid. Some of them grew up in fairly rigid and controlled cultures; and this has been reflected in their work: the strictness, following the line, purism etc. Some of them have accused others of stealing or betraying their work. Others have used the freedom and licence of the 1960s and 'broken away', almost to a point where "anything goes" and the methodologies used can even be harmful.⁴⁴ These latter examples can be abusive to quite vulnerable people, emotionally dependent on them or their methods during their therapy or training. Some methods can be unsuitable for certain people, and this has not always been fully recognised by the founder, advocates, or practitioners of that method.

There have been quite well recorded instances of people, as clients or as trainees, being pushed beyond their personal limits by aspects of the particular psychotherapeutic 'system' and this has resulted in that person having a physical injury, a 'recreation' of the original trauma, or a psychotic episode. Some of the techniques are frankly invasive or intrusive: as times change this is increasingly realised. There have been instances of therapists abusing the intimacy of touch and emotional contact, or of having affairs with their trainees. There have been instances of 'leaders' abusing their power and rank and being dictatorial over their trainees, or even developing (or encouraging) a 'guru' type of status.⁴⁵ There have been instances

⁴² For further information about The FORUM: see EABP website: www.eabp.org

⁴³ (Latin) Who will guard [us against] the guardians themselves? (Juvenal)

⁴⁴ Boadella, David: 'Violence in therapy' in *Energy & Character*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1980

⁴⁵ Boadella, David: 'Death of the Ego: Part 1: Salvation of Self-Sacrifice' in *Energy & Character*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1980

of methods being used, expanded and espoused and then later it being realised that these methods are unethical or inappropriate and so they are rejected or disregarded without a proper retraction and with some former trainees still having trained in them and still using them. There have been instances of the 'method' predominating – “*All you have to do is this and that*”, rather than an emphasis on the style with which the method or technique is applied – “*Do it this way, if that suits the client best.*” Some methods and techniques display the beneficial experiences of the 'founder' as well as their unresolved issues, in a more negative sense.⁴⁶ Many methods and techniques are accompanied by “wild assertions” and unconvincing evidence.⁴⁷

These caveats apply to all trainers, teachers, lecturers, workshop leaders, etc. and not just to those people named in this article, to whom some of these caveats do not apply. There are books and articles beginning to look intelligently at these sort of aspects, rather than being a lurid attack on that person or that therapy: unfortunately there are plenty of those, some are quite well deserved, but none really benefit the profession as a whole. I hope that I have managed to avoid that particular trap as I have tried to explore some of the current range and scope of Body-Psychotherapy.

Before I conclude, it is important to mention that Body-Psychotherapy is not just confined to America and Western Europe. There are very strong groups practicing excellent Body-Psychotherapy in Canada, Mexico, Brazil and in a few other South American countries; in Australia, where it is called Somatic Psychotherapy⁴⁸; in Israel; in Japan; in Russia; and in Yugoslavia – and these are just the countries that I know about. Links to many of these groups, training schools, conferences, and contact persons can be found on the EABP website: www.eabp.org in the “Further Contacts” section.

Body-Psychotherapy has now been accepted as a legitimate “mainstream” in psychotherapy.⁴⁹ There are, increasingly, excellent books coming out on Body-Psychotherapy, published by mainstream publishers and in professional journals.⁵⁰ One of the most significant of these, *The Handbook of Body-Psychotherapy*, is being published first in German in 2005⁵¹ and then in English (hopefully in 2006) with nearly 100 articles (1,000 pages) on all different aspects of Body-Psychotherapy. There are now two good journals, *Energy & Character* and *The USA Body Psychotherapy Journal*. There are 4 universities in the USA with Masters and/or PhD programs in Somatic Psychology.⁵² There are at least 7,500 people in Europe who have completed a (now recognized) Body-Psychotherapy training within the last 15 years.

⁴⁶ Boadella, David: ‘Death of the Ego: Part 2: Disciples and Character Patterns’ in *Energy & Character*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1980

⁴⁷ May, John: May, John: ‘Body Psychotherapy Under the Rashomon Gate’ In *USA Body Psychotherapy Journal*: Vol. 4, No. 1, 2005

⁴⁸ For further information: www.spia.com.au

⁴⁹ By the EAP, accepting the European Association for Body-Psychotherapy (EABP) as a European Wide Accrediting Organisation (EWAO) in a “scientifically valid” method of psychotherapy. Several of the modalities mentioned here have also been accepted independently as being “scientifically valid”.

⁵⁰ A Reading List was appended to the first article. In EABP Bibliography of Body-Psychotherapy on CD-ROM has currently over 3,000 entries, with many more to be entered.

⁵¹ Weiss, Halko & Marlock, Gustl (eds): *Handbuch Der Körperpsychotherapie* (2005) Hogrefe.

⁵² John F. Kennedy University, Berkeley: Masters in Counseling Psychology: Somatic specialization. California Institute of Integral Studies: San Francisco: Masters in Counseling Psychology. Somatic Psychology Program - Santa Barbara Graduate Institute: Masters & PhD programs in Somatic Psychology. Naropa Institute, Boulder, Co: MA Somatic Psychology Program.

In the first article of this series, I looked at the early roots of Body-Psychotherapy, and how Body-Psychotherapy – and the body – had become marginalized by Western society and psychoanalysis and psychology. I hope that I have shown the spread and diversification of Body-Psychotherapy in this article.

In the third and final article, I shall indicate some of the future directions and possibilities for Body-Psychotherapy.

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