

## THE ITALIAN SOCIETY OF REICHIAN ANALYSIS (S.I.A.R.)

### METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

The Reichian analytical therapeutic paradigm has evolved and developed through its own significant moments in true evolutionary continuity from W. Reich to The Italian Society of Reichian Analysis. Since its conception by Wilhelm Reich this paradigm has been enriched by means of the contributions of Ola Raknes, Federico Navarro and S.I.A.R.. The theory is characterised by its models of **Character Analysis**, **Vegetotherapy** **Character Analysis** and **Analysis of the Character of the Relationship**.

In the latest of these enrichments to the reichian model, the therapeutic setting is interpreted, from a systemic point of view, as a “**Complex Living System**”.

S.I.A.R.’s Reichian Analysis may be interpreted as a stratified and integrated system of theoretical and operational models; models which also correspond to four positions of observation of the complexity of the analytical therapeutic process. All of which can be broken down into individual units for projects which are functionally aimed at an individual level.

Re-examining the evolution over time of the reichian paradigm, which was born while Reich was progressively distancing himself from Freud and it was becoming ever-clearer to him that making the unconscious become conscious by removing the resistance put up to prevent removal is not sufficient to effect healing.

He supposed that “a given analytical situation has only a single optimal solution and, in a specific case, only a single method of employing the technique is the correct way”, (Reich 1933). It was, therefore, necessary to determine which were the criteria involved in establishing this procedure and how to accomplish it.

Among the various forms of resistance which are encountered in analytical treatment, Reich had noticed that a particular group of these were not notable because of their content, but, rather, because of the specific ways in which the subject being analysed acted and reacted – characterological resistance. The character, which begins to form from the first years of life, shows through in the general behaviour of the individual and represents the specific way of living of that individual. At the same time it expresses all of that person’s past. The overall set of character traits reveals itself to be a compact defence mechanism. It is a suit of armour, which protects the subject from the stimuli that come both from the external and the internal worlds. For these reasons Reich came to the conclusion that it functions economically. This all led to the introduction of the first reichian theoretical concepts - **Character Analysis**, (Reich 1933).

The analyst attempts to awaken the patient’s interest in their own character traits so as to make them able, with assistance, to explore the origin and analyse the meaning. As far as possible the analyst shows the patient the links between the overall character and the emerging symptoms.

From a practical, therapeutic point of view, this model does not initially seem to be significantly different from the analysis of a symptom. However, the notable difference in character analysis is the isolation of the character trait and the constant examination of it and comparison with it until it is possible to view it objectively and to consider it as a symptom produced. The character trait becomes objectively perceived as a dysfunctional behavioural process and as an extraneous body, which the person desires to free themselves of.

This step, from the symptom to the trait, is considered an evolutionary passage which bears the engram of the position of the system.

In character analysis, the analyst starts from the resistance that can be perceived from the patient's general behaviour (in the here and now) to reach back to forgotten childhood experiences. Only when these experiences emerge and are recognized by the patient does it become possible, through the understanding of the origin of the neurotic phenomena in the person's character traits, to therapeutically modify those character traits as if they were symptoms.

To be more precise, the character performs an economical sexual function regarding the way in which the libido is organised in the organism in the various phases of its evolution.

The principles of sexual economy and of the character as a system of the organism automatically leads to a global energetic concept of all the fundamental life processes, be they normal or pathological.

A global energetic concept is not so much a principle or a theory and is even less a philosophical viewpoint, but rather represents the identification of a single overall area of investigation. It therefore follows that an energetic concept of existence must express itself in terms that are compatible with a systemic approach to reality.

Since the thirties character analysis has represented a true branching off from the classical psycho-analytical model and the concept of mental health fits coherently with the concept of energetic pulsations in the whole organism.

The integration of character analysis as **character-analysis Vegetotherapy** arises, also from a clinical perspective, from the work on masochism (Reich 1932),.

This is a method which examines the Vegetative Nervous System (from which the name is derived), the muscular system, the neuro-endocrine system and the energetic pulses through which the emotional, affectionate and instinctive aspects of life express themselves. It works using bodily acting to favour a more functional distribution of the libido, as well as working on the psyche through analysis of the character that emerges through body language.

Body language is the most important element to consider in Reichian Analysis, but it is clear that many other aspects are also considered (from dreams to slips of the tongue and from phantasmal lives to liberating fantasies). It is the overall "how" of the patient in the analytical setting, or rather the overall means of expression, which expresses the incised marks of his character and his normal or pathological character traits. Therefore, what is considered is a wider interpretation of functional identity, where "character" should be understood as being psychological, muscular, neuro-endocrine and neuro-vegetative.

The character's armour, though also, paradoxically, an absence of protection, is arranged in levels that are bodily segments which are indicators of various evolutionary phases and which are functionally circular or ring-shaped, with each ring corresponding to a particular level. Reich identified seven bodily levels in man and defined them as "the set of those organs and those muscles which are in functional contact and which are reciprocally capable of inducing an emotionally-expressive movement," (Reich 1933).

These levels are:

I	eyes, ears and nose
II	mouth
III	neck
IV	chest and arms
V	diaphragm
VI	abdomen
VII	pelvis and legs.

Transverse rings and longitudinal energetic movements in relation to the body's axis are constants of every living thing; consequently, the inhibition of emotionally-expressive language acts transversally and the loosening of the rings leads to greater fluidity and energy pulsations.

Character analysis Vegetotherapy punctuates the phases of analysis and of growth into various evolutionary stages, favouring energetic-emotional insights, where the understanding/knowing comes from feeling. It gives the subject the opportunity to go back over the experiences of psycho-affective development and of emotional maturation through a series of specific, progressive actings on the seven energetic bodily levels and on the entire organism. Vegetotherapy, by bringing out feelings and emotions which relay messages that are necessary in order to be able to read the character, tends to assist muscular eutony and to re-balance the neuro-endocrine and the vagal-sympathetic systems.

The following step involves verbalisation of the sensations, emotions and free associations produced by the actings, which are ontogenetic movements of evolutionary phases.

By the method temporally favouring feeling over knowledge, the physiological and evolutionary organisation of the being is respected: the first stage of every man, the pre-verbal, is primarily emotive, manifesting pleasure-expansion and pain-contraction and the verbal stage which follows it with its progressive corticalisation, direct expression of the preceding moment.

An analytical-therapeutic project aims to give the person the capability to functionally manage their own armour.

The passages through which the reichian therapeutic method was developed involved Character Analysis and Vegetotherapy character-analysis, which also included analysis of the body itself. Still to come was the **Analysis of the Character of the Analytical Relationship**, which represents the third theoretical model of S.I.A.R.'s paradigm. This is also referred to as the *container of the relationship* (Ferri, Cimini 1992) or rather is a specific definition of the analytical therapeutic relationship and of the setting in which it interacts.

Analysis of the Character of the Relationship expresses the connections container↔contained and analysis↔therapy which can move in both directions, where the architecture of the relationship is in the privileged position. The *container of the relationship* is therefore defined from the correct *position* and from the correct *how* of the analyst, which is necessary in order to establish counter-transference of the functional character trait to the disturbance to be cured and to the specific temperamental structure which expresses.

We are dealing with a project that is tailored to the needs of that specific person.

An analyst cannot be a neutral mirror, and, in every situation, always expresses a "position" and a "how". The "*correct position*" is his dynamic and functional empathic positioning on the trait of his own personality through which he can reach and touch the person being analysed, so as to be able to help them move away from their fixation.

The "how" is the analogical expression of the position and only if it is in harmony with it will it create an atmosphere that provides space for evolutive or cathartic insights in the other person.

The analyst's awareness of the position and of the how is the awareness of operating through a specific therapeutic method – *trait counter-transference*. An analyst should be aware of his own energetic states, his own specific evolutionary phases, his own bodily levels, his own character traits in order to be able to decode the bodily, empathic and psychological indicators of his own trait counter-transference and to grasp in a

“meta-movement” the structure, the “position” and the “how” so as to favour:

- contact with the person being analysed and evaluation of the possibility of trait transference;
- establishing the therapeutic relationship with the patient’s disturbance and with the architecture of their personality;
- directing the evolution.

It is important to understand which bodily level resonates when we meet a patient; whether his chest reverberates, or his diaphragm, whether there is prolonged or noticeable eye-contact or whether there is tension in the neck. The indicators of counter-transference permit us to understand where the other is, to know where to find him and at what phase and on what evolutionary level the relationship is to be found. However, it is not enough to know exactly where we are. Bodily counter-transference indicators permit the subsequent phase which we call “meta-movement”. It means being able to modify your position through reading the indicators of level and being able to put yourself into a structure, or “meta-structure”, through which the relationship can operate so as to reach the other and to help him to move away from his fixation.

Trait counter-transference even on a bodily level is intended as including the planning aspect and the flexibility of the analytical position, which permits negentropic movement (life climbing towards greater organisation). This brings us to the concept of Co-evolution, of Complexity – the fourth way to define S.I.A.R.’s reichian analytical-therapeutic paradigm.

Historically referred to as the introduction of the **Setting as a complex living system**.

This view hypothesises that the analytical-therapeutic setting represents a living form. It is a living system or an autopoietic system (G. Ferri, G. Cimini, 1999). A system which, at different phases and on different levels of organisation, comes into being from the meeting between the character traits, the analyst’s fractal patterns and those of the person being analysed. Analogically we can compare the concept of pattern or of a fractal to a founding concept of character analysis – character traits.

A fractal is a shape characterised by patterns repeating themselves on different scales. They are patterns which give the shape to the whole, and which are repeated, while maintaining the same characteristics at each different size. The character trait is a process which, in its recursiveness, takes on a pattern, shape or form which suggests itself to be favoured at a particular stage of our evolution in one of the evolutionary phases. This form or pattern is, by analogy, a fractal. It is imprinted, in each specific case, from the incised marks of the personal history of the individual, (character literally derives from “incised mark”) which express the organisation of the personality and can be acted upon or recalled by scenes in the here and now.

The analytical-therapeutic setting is a living form and it expresses the capability of a negentropic gradient. Negentropy is negative variation in entropy compared to the original value – the birth of the individual, the origin of life, the beginning of biological evolution (Schrödinger 1944). Variation in entropy moving towards greater order manifests more and more as evolution advances. Negentropic development and the formation of character are themselves analogically close and they configure the evolution and the stratification of the various organisations, of the various phases and of the various passages of phase which ensue, so building the character over the life of the person until the awareness of self. The association with Prigogine’s statement that “far from the point of equilibrium matter begins to see,” (Prigogine, Stengers 1981) is strong.

The setting therefore represents a living form, which is born of the contact between the analyst and the analysed. This process leads to stratification and to specific forms,

through an ongoing, historical process which belongs to the relationship itself. We are stating that the setting develops its own character and that it is the meeting between the character trait of the analyst and that of the person being analysed, between these two fractals, that will permit the formation of a new complex system. This system expresses its own self-organisation, its own autopoiesis, its own developments and its own stages. Contact which is empathic and functional can have significant consequences on the economy and on the negentropy of the self of the person analysed, on the self of the analyst and on the analyst-to-analysed complex system.

The analyst's ability to make contact bears strong comparison to the concept of flexibility. The analyst should be able to perceive his own positions, the positions of the organisational levels of his own life-story and to settle himself on the fractal which is capable of resonating with that of the person being analysed. The aim is to create a therapeutic alliance, with the underlying possibility of co-evolutive development of the relationship in the analytical-therapeutic setting. This development is possible if the analyst possesses a fractal at a more highly-evolved level of organisation compared to that of the person being analysed.

We underline the concept of co-evolution and we validate it in three ways – the negentropic evolution of the person analysed, of the analyst and of the relationship between the person. The interdependence and the conservation of the differences between the parties is implicit.

Analysis of the setting as a scene as we have described it, requires re-examination of the transference and counter-transference.

We can imagine them as flows which emerge from the structure of the personality, from the traits for the fractals of the analyst and the analysed. They are flows of stage, of trait, of specific fractals which meet in interactions and that respond and they too link themselves to specific stages of the new relationship-form.

The interaction between various trait transferences and counter transferences within the relationship itself, resembles the concept of structural coupling (Maturana, Varela, 1987) defined by recurring interactions triggering structural modifications in the system. If a coupled structural system is an intelligent, learning system, then the analytical setting has the capacity for intelligent negentropic development. It has the potential for intelligent structural couplings, which is reinforced by the privileged nature of the operating space of the setting, which is protected and targeted. We must underline the extraordinary responsibility of the analyst for this relationship, which does not represent an ordinary relationship, but is an analytical-therapeutic relationship. Its fundamental goal is to permit greater vitality to the self of the person analysed. In the background appear the limitations and limits for the sustainability of a project which must be tailored to the person.

The analyst, as a founding father of the new living form, must have clear qualities and ability in meta-communication, knowledge of self enlarged to include other-than-self and to the relationship between self and other-than-self. He needs abundant energy indicating negentropic states which are quite far from equilibrium and a dash of creativity which surrounds and continuously guarantees the form.

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