

THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP AS SEEN IN REICHIAN ANALYSIS

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In Reichian Analysis the therapeutic relationship is considered as a “living form” - a third participant - in addition to the analyst and the person being analysed, who are its constituent parts and who nourish it. This “living form” also answers to the laws of living systems: it has its own character, its own evolutionary stages, lines of preference on what it can evolve into and what it can become, it carries its own scars, given by the specific nature of the meeting of the two persons, patient and therapist and by the compatibility of the baggage carried by their respective characters.

The birth of a significant relationship is marked by a “structural pairing” which occurs in the most “natural” way and responds to extraordinary laws in their economic intelligence.

If structural pairings in day to day life are mostly governed by chance interaction, this cannot be recreated in an analytical-therapeutic setting in which a privileged, significant relationship is developed.

It is necessary to define the “*ubi sum, ubi est and ubi sumus*” – where I am, where he is and where we are – in order to build a therapeutic alliance, to maintain the meaning and quality of our profession and to achieve the most complete “communication” (derived from “cum-munis” meaning to exchange with one another) – relationships are nourished by communication – and to permit the analytical-therapeutic project targeted on the person and or on their disturbance.

The setting which is set up in Reichian Analysis is a “complex” setting in line with the theories on complex systems. It is the realisation of privileged time and space in which the negative entropy, or “negentropy”, of the relationship, considered as a living form, increases progressively from its original value.

This relationship is born from the first contact between the patient and the therapist, develops its own character and, through the meeting of the characterological traits of the analyst and the patient analysed, will ensure its auto-organisation, will maintain its auto-poiesis, will cause its evolution and will guarantee the existence of its stages and its object relationships.

In Reichian Analysis the concept of co-evolution has a fundamental value for which the negentropy must affect all three living forms appearing in the theatre of the setting – the analyst, the patient being analysed and the relationship. We identify the analyst in the role of taking on the intelligent (from “intelligere” meaning “to read between”) responsibility for guiding the process which leads to awareness of self enlarging to other than self and to the relationship self - other than self, as well as inducing greater analytical-therapeutic vitality by moving from own characterological positions.

Awareness brings “dia-gnosis” and its literal meaning “through knowing, cognition, knowledge” and the etymology of “*sapere*” from Latin, meaning “knowledge”, in turn indicates a path that leads from the sense of taste in the mouth to the sense of smell in the nose to grant the brain its own senses and sensations. “Sensing” pervades

the path of knowledge-gnosis; sensing or “feeling” with its indispensable bodily expression – You can’t know without “feeling” and you can’t feel without a body.

This concept of awareness resembles an observation made by W. Reich, a sentence challenging researchers: “A certain analytical situation can have only one optimal solution and, in a specific case, there is only one correct way to employ the technique” (Reich 1933). This assertion has accompanied four generations of analysts in a passionate debate on the most appropriate way to develop a setting for a project aimed at a person’s history and disturbance.

In Reichian Analysis awareness of our movement in the complex setting is based on a guiding-fractal, that is on what the fractal means: a pattern that is repeated in similar form on various scales – Character Analysis.

Today Character Analysis is the Analysis of the Character of verbal language and of the architecture of the thought that they express, it is the Analysis of the Character of body language and of the expressive movements underlying it by means of vegeto-therapy and it is the Analysis of the Character of the analytical-therapeutic relationship and of the transfert and the contro-transfert of the traits which constitute it: it represents our specific position on the theme proposed.

But lets take things in order.

In the history of psychoanalysis William Reich represents a branching off and, like all branching-off points, attracts and generates new lines and shapes in an unfolding of architecture, capable of new codes of interpretation and new points of observation.

He had noted that among the various types of resistance encountered in analytical treatment, some of these were not distinguished by their content, but rather by the specific way the person analysed acted and reacted: he was dealing with personality resistance. He observed that all the symptoms formed were based on the personality and that the character structure, which had developed over the first few years of life, appeared in the patient's general behaviour. Analysis, therefore, had to include character or personality analysis.

Character, etymologically "incised mark", is a way of being of a person, the story of their relationships, it has time-based stratification and its own relational strength. However, it is also the whole structured defences of self, that have taken years to form are not easy to distinguish from the symptoms. The set of character traits reveals itself to be a compact mechanism protecting against the therapeutic efforts of the analyst, a type of armour protecting the subject from stimuli coming from the outside world and from the sub-conscious.

Reich reached the conclusion that it performs an economic function, that it permits linking the individual's libido, functionally, to their defences. That is to say character has a sexual-economic function – it organises the organism's libido in structured blocks according to the topography which reflects the experiences of the patient's early years.

The consequences of this information are significant for techniques of character resistance analysis. The analyst seeks to awaken the patient's interest in their own character traits in order to be able to explore their origin, analyse their meaning and

to show the patient the connection between character and symptoms. In practice, at the beginning this method is no different from the analysis of a symptom. Character analysis, however, provides the isolation of a character trait through repeatedly confronting the patient with it until they are able to see it objectively and transform it into an egodystonic symptom that they wish to be free of. In character analysis the analyst starts from the resistance that he detects in manner and general behaviour, goes back to forgotten childhood experiences and, once these have been brought out into the open, makes understanding of the genesis of personological phenomena and their treatment as if they were symptoms possible.

Character analysis is a turning point which places analysis of the container alongside analysis of the contents, a negentropic-systemic leap which surrounds and “sees” a set of modules and patterns of behaviour belonging to a specific phase of evolution, to the corresponding character trait and to the associated bodily level. Reich, in fact, expresses a propaedeutic position to a natural opening to corporeity and to intelligent presentation of its languages in the setting – a rich source of material to analyse and from which to draw innovative and effective guidelines.

In our methods the symptoms, the syndromes and the crisis states are of great relevance because they are collocated in analytical time and express a sense of the history, as well as representing the expression of a character axis which is incapable of being energetically-relationally sustained in the here and now.

This reading brings to mind another of William Reich’s affirmations (1933) – “the difference between character neuroses and symptomatic neuroses is in fact that in the

latter the neurotic character also produces symptoms". He indeed shows us how symptoms are egodystonic, whereas the character, which is a construction designed to serve the self, is egosyntonic and can manifest itself in various languages – from spoken to oneiric to bodily. These are always indicators of stratified, subconscious history from intrauterine life to the here and now, on each of our internal arrows of time which we define as negentropic, which is to be placed alongside the external entropic arrow of time running in precisely the opposite direction.

By this we wish to underline a difference between classic psychodynamic positions and ours – a differentiation which leads us to express ourselves in terms of re-activating and not regression, of instinct for life and not instinct for death, of irreversibility of time and not of reversibility.

The character is a set of traits and other, a particular combination which is unique in its diversity because of both its contents and its container.

In Reichian analysis the galaxy of prototypical traits extend as far as intrauterine life because a perspective in terms of the negentropic arrow of time cannot be of anything but the entire existence of the person, from conception onwards.

The evolutionary phases identified by Freud following the development of the libido in the human being, have been deepened and extended by also considering pre-natal life. We can thus identify: the autogenous phase bounded by fertilisation and implantation, the tropho-umbilical phase between intrauterine implantation and birth, the oro-labial phase set between birth and weaning, the muscular phase which goes

from weaning to the Oedipal period, the first genito-ocular phase from the Oedipal period until puberty and the second genito-ocular phase from puberty to maturity.

We distinguish six fundamental character traits (intrauterine, oral, compulsive, phallic, hysteric and genital) and numerous “sub-type” derivations according to the incised mark, according to the evolutionary phase in which it took place, according to how the passage from one phase to the next was determined, according to the specific relationship with other than self in that phase time and according to previously fixed imprintings.

Imprintings and incised marks fix themselves in a privileged place– “the body” – and reichian bodily levels are the locations in the body which carry these fixations. They represent the first receiver of the relationship with other than self, the area of resonance of the emotional experiences of there and then, the peripheral interfaces of the evolutionary phases passed through, punctual in their successive dominance in time. In a complex reading our stratified story “incised” in our body appears before us and is projected three-dimensionally in a scan which is not only a psychic scan of the phenomena, but also physical in their expression.

Reich distinguishes seven bodily levels in the person and times them as “the set of those organs and those groups of muscles which are in functional contact between themselves, which are capable of reciprocally inducing themselves to perform and emotional-expressive movement”.

In this way he distinguished elementarily the first level, the ocular section: forehead, eyes and tear-ducts, cheek-bones, nose, ears; the second level, oral section: lips,

mouth, throat and occipital upper nape; the third level, cervical section: lower neck muscles, sternocleidomastoid; the fourth level: thoracic section: intercostal muscles, major pectorals, arms and hands; the fifth level: diaphragm, epigastrium, lower part of the sternum, stomach, solar plexus, pancreas and liver; the sixth level, the abdominal section in which the first great mouth is present – an area of resonance with one of the phases of intrauterine life; the seventh level, the pelvic section: pelvis and legs.

Today, for completeness, we suggest a different Gestalt of these levels, putting them in order of their development on the negentropic arrow of time, making use of a principle in which bodily expression represents the peripheral expression of the evolutionary phases passed through: giving a sequence which starts from the sixth level, goes to the second, the fourth, the third, the fifth, the seventh and the first.

“Bodily level”, therefore, is with functional dominance, corresponding punctually to the prevalent evolutionary phase in the history of the person.

By including the negentropic arrow of time, the history and the concept of bodily level which is a peripheral expression of phase, we can establish a clear correlation between evolutionary phase, bodily level, characterological trait and possible psychopathological disturbances – a correlation which marks a leap forward in the targeted analytical-therapeutic project, and, at the same time, integrates Character Analysis with character-analysis Vegetotherapy.

“Loosening chronic character-behaviour, we can obtain reactions from the vegetative nervous system. At the same time, we free not only the character-behaviour, but also

the corresponding muscle behaviour. In this way part of the work moves away from the mind and character to the immediate break-down of the muscular defences”.

(Reich: the function of orgasm).

Character-analytical Vegetotherapy is a methodology founded by W.Reich and enlarged and re-organised by Ola Raknes and Federico Navarro. Character-analytical Vegetotherapy operates on the vegetative nervous system from which its name is derived, on the muscular system, on the neuroendocrine system and on energy pulses, which are the most direct expression of emotional, affective and instinctive lives. It tends to eutony and to the rebalancing of the above-mentioned systems: it induces neurovegetative and emotional phenomena which constitute messages and expression in body language, which are absolutely necessary to read personological aspects. Verbalisation of feelings, emotions the free associations produced grasping essential, systematic and relational dynamics, that is to say the basic fractals of the person, represents the next step in the methodology. In particular, body language is the most significant message referred to in Reichian analysis, but it is clear that it is accompanied by all the other information given by “how” the patient expresses this in the setting: from dreams to slips, from symbols to metaphors, from imaginary life to liberating fantasies.

“Every time it is surprising to see how the relaxation of muscular rigidity not only releases vegetative energy, but also recalls to mind the situation in which the repression of the impulse came about. We can state that every muscular stiffening contains a story and the meaning of its creation.” (Reich, ib)

“Neurosis is not only a disturbance of mental balance, but, in a well-justified, much deeper sense, it is the expression of a chronic disturbance of the vegetative equilibrium and of natural mobility. Mental structure is, therefore, simultaneously, a resultant bio-physiological structure”. (Reich, ib)

“Muscular behaviour also takes on another meaning in character analysis therapy, making it indeed possible to avoid, if necessary, complicated detours through the mental structure and to penetrate directly from bodily behaviour in terms of impulses.” (Reich, ib)

In practice the function of character-analytical Vegetotherapy is to investigate the body in terms of its mental significance through a series of exercises referred to as “acting”, which work on the seven levels. The exercises are specific and progressive and go back through the experiences of psycho-affective development and of the emotional maturation of the patient, re-proposing ontogenetic movements of the evolutionary phases. By dedicating time in the methodology to feeling and understanding, the physiological and evolutive organisation of the being is respected: the first period of every person, the pre-verbal, is primarily emotional, manifesting pleasure-expansion and fear-pain-contraction; the subsequent verbal period, with progressive mentalisation, is a direct expression of the preceding moment. An analytical therapeutic project aims at leading the person to the capability to functionally manage their own characterological array.

However, Character Analysis and character-analytical Vegetotherapy, though fundamental, are not yet sufficient to realise the aimed analytical therapeutic project unless they are drawn into and integrated with the specific relationship of the setting. But what type of relationship?

Reich was not very attentive towards the reciprocity of the relationship, as Semi reminds us, which is why the use of the character-analysis guiding-fractal applied to the relationship represents a further development in research in our field.

Character traits, evolutionary phases, the negentropic arrow of time, bodily levels, personal history, Character Analysis and character-analytical Vegetotherapy provide us an epistemologically highly-coherent “red line” to move around in within an infinitely complex world of a thousand possible representations: on this red line, analysing the character of the relationship, the controtransfert, for us, in from an aimed structural-therapeutic pairing point of view, can be no other than the controtransfert of characterological trait and corresponding bodily level.

By Analysis of the Character of the Relationship, the Relationship Container is defined – a highly specific arrangement of the analytical-therapeutic relationship. It is to organise the container-contents to be bi-directional, though privileging the architecture of the relationship as the point of reference. Architecture “which contains” any therapeutic action, from listening to the transferral elaboration of a trait, to interpreting a dream, a gesture, a liberating fantasy and to proposing a character-analytical Vegetotherapy acting, but also includes the simple prescription of psychotropic drugs. The Relationship Container we define as the appropriate

“Position” and the appropriate “How” of the analyst-therapist necessary to establish a controtransfert of trait-bodily level, functional for the disturbance and or for the specific layout of trait-bodily level in the person analysed.

Even when an analyst offers himself as a neutral mirror, he always expresses a position and a how. The appropriate position is empathic, dynamic and functional collocation on the trait in his own personality and on the corresponding bodily level. On this level he can meet and make contact with the person analysed, helping him to move himself away from his trait and bodily level “position” or at the very least to read it.

The how is the analogical expression of the position and creates the atmosphere for the person analysed to realise evolutionary insights.

The analyst’s awareness “dia-gnosis” of their own position and their own “how” is the awareness of their own trait controtransfert, underlain by their own controtransferral contents and “primum movens”, or “prime mover”, of the targeted analytical-therapeutic project.

Character Analysis and character-analytical Vegetotherapy are collocated and organised within this greater fractal expressiveness.

If Character Analysis and character-analytical Vegetotherapy operate directly on the peripheral “doors” of self, which is clear in the neurovegetative, muscular, neuroendocrine and psychic subsystems, then the Analysis of the Character of the Relationship acts directly on the central interface of these subsystems, or rather

mainly on the limbic brain, which is responsible for what an individual feels and experiences (fig. 1)

The awareness “dia-gnosis” of the arrangement of their own states, from their own evolutionary phases, their own character traits, their own corresponding bodily levels and the most therapeutic structural pairings in the relationship with the person can permit the analyst-therapist a “metamovement” and to position themselves on the appropriate functional and decisive arrangement of trait-bodily level, so as to make contact with the person analysed, to establish a therapeutic alliance, to achieve a transfert of their trait-bodily level, to establish a relationship with their disturbance, to establish a relationship with the architecture of their personality, to move them from their positions in sustainable evolution, to realise a complex setting and to increase the negentropy of the relationship.

Some examples of elementary and complex semiology which have helped us in our deliberations.

A) Elementary semiology of the seven bodily levels

- How many eyes no longer see, are empty, distant, elsewhere and how many dumbfounded and terrified by panic?
- How many evasive, turned to infinity, incapable of convergence on a point?

- How many looks are imploring and how many others are suspicious, how many furtive, others of ice, others damp, others luminous and enthusiastic?

Which emotional Intelligence do they imply?

Where are they on the internal arrow of time?

What relational stories do they tell?

Which architecture of thought do they translate?

- How many mouths are full of anger, how many sweet and winning?
- How many words are not said and remain behind sealed lips?
- How many others do not make it out, stopping in the chest or further up in the throat?
- How many words are swallowed from fear of being authentic or to not show oneself from a down position in a relationship?
- How many mouths are closed, how many others are ready to snap or bite?
- How many masseters are hypertonic and how many cries removed beneath?
- How much dissociation is there in the words not heard? How much vibration in profound words? How many are poor and shrill, how many are intense or whispered in a tiny voice?
- How many "with" and how many "against" or "outside the contents"?
- How many necks are straight challenging greater height?
- How many imprisoned in narcissistic projection of self?
- How many are blocked on the Atlas axis, incapable of looking sideways?

How many are capable of such rigidity as to separate head and heart, knowing and feeling, rationality and reasonableness, height and depth?

How many super-ego yokes are there around the neck?

How many necks are bent adhering to others projects and how many are tilted back with their "noses in the air"?

How many are trapped between the shoulders from the threats received?

How much crying is there in the oppression of a chest, how much desire for the affection of denied hugs?

How many shoulders are rounded under unbearable weight and how much aggression in the shoulder blades?

How much weariness in unsustainability? And how much feeling is lost in held breath?

How many chests are inspiratory and anxious?

How many others are expiratory and depressed?

How much strength in the chest to take on the reality of things?

How much strength in warm hand, how much fragility in cold hands, to take, to give, to caress, to support, to create, to hug?

Which emotional Intelligence do they imply?

Where are they on the internal arrow of time?

What relational stories do they tell?

Which architecture of thought do they translate?

How many times has no remained in the stomach without being expressed?

- How much light is there in the diaphragmatic radiance of falling in love?
- How much separation anguish is there in the umbilical area?
- How much fury is there in the stomach of much earlier non-acceptance?
- How much castration anguish is there in the pelvis?
- How much power in the genitals in Love?
- How much contact on the skin?
- How much panic in the belly of deep threat?
- How many legs are paralysed by fear?
- How many are firmly rooted to the ground?

B) Complex Semiology – Controtransferral of the Relationship

When we meet a person in the setting what type of bodily level resonates with us and which trait call out to us?

Does it touch our chest, solar plexus, pelvis or eyes?

Does it make us lengthen our neck, seal our mouth or contract our shoulders?

Are we on a phallic-narcissistic trait, on an oral trait, anal, hysterical, intrauterine or genital?

And which is the most “therapeutic” of the structural pairings in the relationship with this person?

Specifically in psychopathology, when we encounter a psychotic state which trait and which bodily level call our attention?

Where is the psychotic vacuum? Is it not also found in the deep visceral quality?

And with which controtransfert of trait and bodily level should we proceed?

Is it the most therapeutic in the relationship?

When we encounter a deeply depressive state, which bodily level and which trait attract our attention?

Isn't the deep depressive withdrawal also in the flattened chest of an unbearable Atlas complex?

Isn't the rage of the borderline also in the provocatively extended chin, constantly challenging others?

Isn't the alarm at persecution of paranoia also in the terrified persecution of the shoulders?

Isn't the fixation of the obsessive also in the fixed staring of his eyes?

With which controtransfert of trait and bodily level do we proceed in these specific pathologies?

Are they the most appropriate in the relationship with these disturbances?

Even simply when we meet a phallic narcissistic trait, with the hardening and erection of the neck, which trait and bodily level are activated and with which controtransfert of trait and bodily level should we proceed?

Which is the most therapeutic dimension in the structural pairing of the relationship?