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"The Reading of Emotional Expression": Wilhelm Reich and the History of Embodied Analysis

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This article reviews historical roots of interest in the embodied dimensions of the analytic interaction. Starting with concepts of embodiment found in Freud's early writings, the article traces the emergence of analysis of direct emotional communication in light of Freud's discovery of the transference. The importance of analyzing the latent negative transference, as stressed by Reich, and his consequent development of resistance and character analysis is reviewed. The paper outlines the Scandinavian character analytic tradition's further development of Reich's thinking about embodied analysis. The work of Harald Schjelderup is reviewed for his early contribution to the relational turn in psychoanalysis and for drawing a principal distinction between the analysis of verbal-symbolic and embodied communications. Tage Philipson's development of a theory of embodied identification and his experimentation with imitation is reviewed and linked to recent work proposing a fundamental role for inner imitation in the unfolding of intersubjectivity.

INTRODUCTION

There is growing interest these days for taking the embodied dimension in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy into account. It is particularly evident in relational psychoanalysis (Aron & Anderson, 1998; Knoblauch, 2000; Anderson, 2008). This historical review attempts to show how efforts to embody psychoanalysis have existed from its very inception. Although he was "not at all inclined to leave the psychology hanging in the air without an organic basis," Freud (1898) wrote, he did not for the time being "know how to go on, neither theoretically nor therapeutically and therefore must behave as if only the psychological were under consideration (Masson, 1985, p. 326)." Since then, embodiment has largely remained a minor tributary of the mainstream of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. With this situation now changing, it might be worthwhile remind ourselves that embodying psychoanalysis was an ambition of Freud and others from the very foundation of psychotherapy in its modern sense.

It is my hope that this historical review of attention to the embodied dimension of the psychoanalytic interaction will provide a conceptual bridge between theorizing past and present.

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EMBODIMENT IN FREUD'S EARLY WORK

Attention to the embodied dimension of psychoanalytic interaction has often been considered as a deviation from the Freudian norm. It is therefore somewhat ironical historically to find that Freud, early in his career, developed an excellent ability to read the emotional expression of the body, believing it to offer a way "to read the mind." This should not be surprising if we recall Freud's (1893) background as a neurologist who had studied hysteria extensively. "Hysterics," he concluded, "suffer mainly from reminiscences" (p. 7). According to Freud, hysterical symptoms should be understood as affect-motor memories of traumatic experience, not the result of hereditary weakness.

In an article on psychical treatment in 1890 (wrongly dated 1905 in Standard Edition, Vol. VII, pp. 283–302), Freud elaborates extensively on the "expression of the emotions" in the body:

> A man's states of mind are manifested, almost without exception, in the tensions and relaxations of his facial muscles, in the adaptations of his eyes, in the amount of blood in the vessels of his skin, in the modifications in his vocal apparatus and in the movements of his limbs and in particular of his hands. (p. 286)

These physical changes, Freud adds, get in the way if what the person wishes is to conceal their mental state from other people. "But they serve these other people as trustworthy indications from which his mental processes can be inferred and in which more confidence can be placed than in any simultaneous verbal expressions that may be made deliberately" (p. 286).

In the following statement, Freud is probably referring to James and Lange:

> In certain mental states described as 'affects', the part played by the body is so obvious and on so large a scale that some psychologists have even adopted the view that the essence of these affects consists only in their physical manifestations. (p. 287)

Freud describes the pervasive bodily changes that result from persistent affective states of a distressing nature, while, "on the other hand, under the influence of feelings of joy, of 'happiness', we find that the whole body blossoms out and shows signs of a renewal of youth" (p. 267). Not only strong affects, but mental processes generally are, according to Freud, manifested in somatic changes.

The affects in the narrower sense are, it is true, characterized by a quite special connection with somatic processes; but, strictly speaking, all mental states, including those that we usually regard as 'processes of thought', are to some degree 'affective', and not one of them is without its physical manifestation or is incapable of modifying somatic processes. (p. 288)

Freud's ambition to develop an embodied psychology and psychotherapy is reflected in many of his early works, among them his Project for a Scientific Psychology (1895). It falls outside the scope of this historical overview to discuss the vicissitudes that led Freud to temporarily abandon this ambition and instead develop a theory and method based mainly on verbal-symbolic representations. On deciding to postpone efforts to establish a bodily, organic basis for psychology and psychotherapy, Freud wrote to Fliess, September 22, 1898.

I am not at all in disagreement with you, not at all inclined to leave the psychology hanging in the air without an organic basis. But apart from this conviction I do not know how to go on, neither theoretically nor therapeutically and therefore must behave as if only the psychological were under consideration. (Masson, 1985, p. 326)
Freud then turned his mind to what should be known as his meta-psychology, starting with The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). His interest turned to dreams, fantasy, and the interpretation of verbal-symbolic representations. Freud’s exclusive focus on a purely mentalist psychology lasted only for a short period. As the importance of the transference for analytic therapy gradually dawned on him, he was once again, slowly but surely, drawn back to the emotional expression of the body. And as I argue, it was a more consistent exploration of the transference that prompted Reich years later to “read the mind” by “reading the emotional expression.”

WILHELM REICH AND THE READING OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

In 1952, Kurt R. Eissler interviewed Wilhelm Reich for the Sigmund Freud Archives on his opinion of Freud (Higgens & Raphael, 1967/1972). Eissler asked Reich to tell him everything he knew, had observed, and thought about Freud. Reich’s reply starts like this:

Well, that is quite a big order. I know a lot about Freud. I would like to start with a basic theoretical difference in the approach of psychoanalysis and my work, not to propagate my work, but to explain how I saw Freud. Psychoanalysis, as you well know, works with words and unconscious ideas. These are its tools. According to Freud, as I understood him, as he published it, the unconscious can only be brought out as far back as the Wortvorstellungen (verbal ideas) when the “word images” were formed. In other words, psychoanalysis cannot penetrate beneath or beyond the second or third year of life. Psychoanalysis is bound down by its method. It has to stick to that method which is the handling of associations and word images. Now, character analysis developed the reading of emotional expression [emphasis added]. Whereas Freud opened up the world of the unconscious mind, thoughts, desires, and so on, I succeeded in reading emotional expressions. Until then, we couldn’t “read the mind”. We could only connect verbal associations. (pp. 3–4)

So again we see the historical irony. When Reich contrasts his approach with Freud’s, he emphasizes “the reading of emotional expression.” Freud’s approach was considered only to allow one to connect verbal association, not “to read the mind” from the body’s emotional expressions.

Interest in nonverbal emotional expression and communication has resurfaced in psychoanalysis in the last decades after Daniel Stern and a number of other investigators of infant–caregiver interaction began to describe, first with film and later using new video technology, a micro-moment world of communication, which opened a new window onto unconscious meaning. However, this interest first emerged within psychoanalysis and adult treatment through the work of Reich and Sándor Ferenczi, only to stagnate following the split between Reich and psychoanalysis (Jacobs, 2005). This text is a contribution toward the healing of this historical split.

THE SPLIT BETWEEN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND REICH, AND THE ROLE OF THE NORWEGIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION

The split between Wilhelm Reich and the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) happened around the time of the 13th IPA Congress in Lucerne, August 1934. Reich presented his paper “Psychic Contact and Vegetative Current. (A Contribution to the Theory of Affects and Character-Analytic Technique)” (Reich, 1933, 1949, 1972). However, he had to attend the Congress as a guest, not as a member. There has been a lot of conjecture how Reich lost his
membership of the German Psychoanalytic Society. Hitler had just seized power, and the political climate in Germany was problematic to say the least. Reich may well have lost his membership for mixing psychoanalysis and left-wing politics, rather than for his psychoanalytical views as such, which, at the time, were not particularly controversial (Sharaf, 1983). He was excluded from the Communist Party at about the same time, a consequence of his views in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933/1946/1988).

At the congress in Lucerne, the Norwegian delegation headed by Harald Schjelderup and comprising Ola Raknes and Nic Hoel (later Waal) supported Reich, and offered him membership in the Norwegian Association. Professor Schjelderup invited Reich to Norway where he could teach character analysis and conduct his planned psycho-physiological experiments at the University of Oslo. Reich stayed in Norway from 1934 to 1939. His seminar on character analysis was attended by most contemporary Norwegian analysts.

Schjelderup, who is discussed later in this paper, had a high opinion of character analysis but was critical of Reich's theoretical and experimental work. Adopting an independent position both in relation to Reich and the IPA, he developed a rather unique relational perspective in the thirties, criticizing both Freud and Reich for overestimating the role of sexual drive and underestimating the effects of real trauma (Schjelderup, 1941/1988).

The analysis of neurotics always reveals infantile sexual tendencies, sexual fantasies, and indications of an oedipal and/or castration complex. However, closer enquiry reveals that these sexual complexes are often not the cause of the neurotic disturbance, but . . . an effect of inhibitions brought about in other ways. Every general inhibition of activity and impulsivity also affects sexual development and harms the ability to fully experience adult sexuality. (p. 101, my translation)

Schjelderup published little in English. Best known is his work on the lasting effects of psychoanalytic treatment (Schjelderup, 1956). Schjelderup continued as chairman of the Norwegian Psychoanalytic Association after the war, but it was no longer recognized by the IPA, which suspected it of a Reichian bias. (Subsequent developments are reviewed next.)

Ola Raknes (1970) remained a loyal supporter of Reich and his work in the United States. Schjelderup, Raknes, and Nic Waal were popular training analysts in Norway in the postwar era. Some of their pupils founded in 1972 the Forum for Character Analytic Vegetotherapy. In 1999 the Forum established the Norwegian Character Analytic Institute as a training institute.

THE DEVELOPED OF RESISTANCE AND CHARACTER ANALYSIS

I review here the basic elements of character analysis as developed by Reich between 1925 and 1935. In the first part of that period Reich headed the seminar on psychoanalytic technique in Vienna. The seminar was particularly focused on the latent negative transference. Here, Reich draws on his personal experience.

It was not until a patient told me, some months after the termination of an unsuccessful analysis, that he had never trusted me that I learned to appreciate the danger of the negative transference that remains latent. That patient had recalled beautifully for a year and a half in a good positive transference . . . . Most of our meetings at the Vienna seminar were also concerned with the negative transference, especially the latent transference. In short, we see that this was not the blind spot
of one analyst. Failure to recognize the negative transference appears to be a general occurrence. Undoubtedly, this can be traced back to our narcissism, which makes us highly receptive to compliments but quite blind to all negative tendencies in the patient unless they are cruelly expressed. (Reich, 1933, 1949, 1972, p. 25)

Reich came to identify latent negative transference as a secret resistance. Not expressed in the content of words, it manifests itself in the form of the communication, in “the way the patient speaks, looks at and greets the analyst, lies on the couch, the inflection of the voice, the degree of conventional politeness which is maintained” (p. 49).

To begin with: what is meant by ‘analytic material’? This is usually taken to mean the patient’s communications, dreams, associations, slips. Theoretically to be sure, it is known that the patient’s behaviour is of analytic importance; but unequivocal experiences in the seminar show that the patient’s behaviour (manner, look, language, countenance, dress, handshake, etc.) not only is vastly underestimated in terms of its analytic importance but is usually completely overlooked. At the Innsbruck Congress, Ferenczi and I, independent of one another, stressed the therapeutic importance of these formal elements. As time went on, they became for me the most important fulcrum and point of departure for the analysis of character. (p. 31)

The entire world of past experience, Reich concluded, is embodied in the present in the form of character attitudes. “A person’s character is the functional sum total of all past experiences” (p. 128).

"THE FORM OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AS DIRECT EXPRESSION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS"

Psychoanalysis followed the rule of interpreting the material in the sequence in which the patient offered it (Reich, 1942/1978, p. 151). Resistances should instead be dealt with systematically, Reich suggested, starting with the resistance closest to the psychic surface and having particular contemporary importance. The neurosis, he urged, should “be undermined from a secure position” (p. 151). Direct interpretations of unconscious instinctual material could only disrupt this work and should therefore be avoided. “The patient first had to establish contact with himself before grasping the connections between his various neurotic mechanisms. As long as the armour remained in place, the patient could at best achieve only an intellectual comprehension of his situation” (p. 151). Reich addressed the problem by paying more attention to embodied communication. He explained:

One thing I was sure about, however, was that the character-analytic technique was a considerable step forward toward the mastery of severe, encrusted neuroses. The stress was no longer on the content of neurotic fantasies but on the energy function. Since the majority of patients were incapable of following the so-called basic rule of psychoanalysis, i.e., ‘to say everything which comes to mind,’ I ceased to insist on it. Instead, I used as my points of attack not only what the patient communicated but everything he offered, in particular the way in which he made his communications or was silent. Even silent patients revealed themselves, expressed something which could be gradually unravelled and mastered. Alongside the ‘what’ of the old Freudian technique, I placed the ‘how’ [emphasis added]. I already knew that the ‘how’, i.e., the form of the behaviour and the communications, was
far more important than what the patient told the analyst. Words can lie. The expression never lies. Although people are unaware of it, it is the immediate manifestation of the character. I learned in the course of time to comprehend the form of the communications themselves as direct expression of the unconscious [emphasis added]. (1942/1978, p. 152)

What Reich points to again and again is how the expressive form of a communication, how it is expressed in the body and the voice, can at critical junctures become more important than the verbalized content. This focus on form or process as opposed to content is something contemporary relational thinking has shown growing interest for, especially as it has been informed by infant research. Beebe and Lachmann (2002) wrote:

Psicoanalysis is currently seeking an expanded theory of interaction. Organizing principles of interaction can be discerned when mother and infant are viewed as a system. . . . We propose that these principles can illuminate how interactions are organized at the nonverbal level in adult treatment. These organizing principles of interaction describe self- and interactive process not dynamic content. (p. 33)

"AN ImitATION IN OUR OWN ORGANISM"

In a letter to his former wife, psychoanalyst Annie Reich, in 1935, Reich (1994) refers to the "ability to sense others’ emotions before they have manifested themselves; that is what made me a character analyst [emphasis added]" (p. 19). Reich’s final important contribution to character analytic technique is, in my view, his explanation of how it is possible “to sense others’ emotions before they have manifested themselves” (p. 19).

We work with the language of facial and body expression. Only when we have sensed the patients’ facial expression are we in a position to comprehend it. We use the word ‘comprehend’ here to mean quite literally to know which emotion is being expressed in it. (1933/1949/1972, p. 362)

Such sensing of the patient’s emotions comes about, Reich suggested, through a process of inner imitation.

The patient’s expressive movements involuntarily bring about an imitation in our own organism. By imitating these movements, we “sense” and understand the expression in ourselves and, consequently, in the patient. Since every movement is expressive of a biological condition, i.e., reveals an emotional condition of the protoplasm, the language of facial and body expression becomes an essential means of communicating with the patient’s emotions. As I have already pointed out, human language interferes with the language of the face and the body. When we use the term “character attitude,” what we have in mind is the total expression of an organism. This is literally the same as the total impression which the organism makes on us. (1933/1949/1972, p. 362)

The full implications of what he was suggesting were not comprehended by many, not even by Reich’s own disciples. The only analyst to formulate a similar view, to my knowledge, is Freud in a footnote to his discussion of identification in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (Freud, 1921). “A path leads from identification by way of imitation to empathy, that is, to the comprehension of the mechanism by means of which we are enabled to take up any attitude at all towards another mental life” (p. 110, fn. 2)
As the German text makes clear, Freud saw the “mechanism” as the only one that allows us to know the mental life of another person. ¹ Discussing Freud’s view much later, Michael Franz Basch (1983) wrote,

A given affective expression by a member of a particular species tends to recruit a similar response in other members of that species. As Freud (1921) suggested, this is done through the promotion of an unconscious, automatic, and in adults not necessarily obvious, imitation of the sender’s bodily state and facial expression by the receiver. This then generates in the receiver the automatic response associated with that bodily state and facial expression, which is to say the receiver experiences an affect identical with that of the sender. (p. 108)

And recently Gianni Nebbioso and Susanna Federici-Nebbioso (2008) have reported on their work on rhythmic and empathic listening with the body.

For many years now, we have been using the tool of miming our patients in order to obtain a better understanding of them. This was done for the purpose of using a knowledge that resides in the analyst’s body and of which he is completely unaware. (p. 224)

This embodied understanding of the basis of empathy and intersubjectivity, proposed by Freud, Reich, Basch, and Nebbioso and Federici-Nebbioso has only been accepted in recent years, facilitated by studies of innate imitative ability in newborns (Meltzoff & Moore, 1995) and the demonstration of a mirror neuron system in humans (Gallese, 2009; Gallese, Eagle & Migone, 2007; Rizzolatti, Fogassi, & Gallese, 2001).

**REICH AND THE RELATIONAL TURN IN PSYCHOANALYSIS**

Despite his understanding of the embodied basis of emotional communication and intersubjectivity, Reich cannot be considered a relational analyst by contemporary standards. His attitude is that of the omniscient analyst, able to tell the patient the objective truth. But he was definitely one of the first analysts to see psychic structure, character, as the result of relational conflict, of conflict constituted at the interface of inner and outer worlds.

In the chapter on psychic contact and vegetative current, where he expands on the talk he gave at the Lucerne Congress, Reich first calls to mind the older psychoanalytic theories. Without a working knowledge of these theories, he says, it is impossible to understand the results of character-analytical research.

The first psychoanalytic views were based on the conflict between instinct and outer world. The complete disregard of this basic concept by present-day theories has no effect on its validity. It is the most pregnant formulation of all analytic psychology and its presence will be unmistakably clear to every clinician in every case. The psychic process reveals itself as the result of the conflict between instinctual demand and the external frustration of this demand. Only secondarily does an inner conflict between desire and self-denial result from this initial opposition. (1933, 1949, 1972, p. 287)

¹“Von der Identifizierung führt ein Weg über die Nachahmung zur Einfühlung, das heisst, zum Verständnis des Mechanismus durch den uns überhaupt eine Stellungnahme zu einem anderen Seelenleben ermöglicht wird” (G. W., 13, 121, fn. 2).
REICH’S LATER WORK

Towards the end of his Norwegian sojourn and especially after relocating to the United States, Reich lost much of his interest in character analysis. His impatient mind went on to explore what he believed was the biophysical core of the neurosis. In Norway he founded what he called character analytic vegetotherapy, renaming it later orgonotherapy following his 1942 discovery of what he believed was cosmic orgone energy (orgone, from orgasm and organism). Reich saw this phase of his work as “a decisive step, for it means that we have left the sphere of psychology” (1933, 1949, 1972, p. 358). Its discussion falls outside the scope of this article however.

Most of Reich’s followers in Norway and the United States more or less enthusiastically tried to keep pace with his thinking. Most IPA analysts, on the other hand, had ceased to take him seriously, and some even thought he was unhinged.

So, in spite of being one of the most influential psychoanalytic writers and teachers of his time, Reich and character analysis are seldom mentioned in the psychoanalytic literature. There are some notable exceptions, among them Kernberg’s (1984) and Schafer’s (1983) chapters on character analysis. Other contributions are reviewed by Jacobs (2005).

Spezanno’s (1993) work on affect in psychoanalysis and Josephs’s (1995) on relational character analysis address the relational implications of character analysis. Both in their way see the value of integrating character analysis and relational psychoanalysis. Spezanno points to the historical similarity of character analysis and interpersonal analysis. There is a clear parallel, Spezanno said, between Reich’s argument and Sullivan’s (1940) later warning that the content of all talking is intended as much to disguise as to communicate, while what is really going on with the patient is revealed in his mannerisms and in the form of his communications. “In many ways, interpersonal psychoanalysis has carried on the tradition of character and resistance analysis with more determination than any other school has” (Spezanno, 1993 p. 202).

CHARACTER ANALYTIC DEVELOPMENTS IN SCANDINAVIA

Yet the idea of embodied character analysis was not totally lost. Indeed in Norway it remained a respected point of view. This was thanks especially to Schjeldrup and the Danish psychiatrist and analyst Tage Phillipson, the only ones to take an autonomous position on character analysis. Both forfeited their friendship with Reich along with membership of the IPA. These analysts stayed with and developed Reich’s original ideas, courageously, in the face of antipathy from IPA and Reich, and formulated views that are surprisingly fresh and current.

Schjeldrup and Reich

Harald Schjeldrup was the key figure in this development. As professor of psychology and chair of the psychoanalytical society, he had a leading and respected position in Norway for several decades. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, Schjeldrup was also an associate editor of Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse, the official organ of IPA of which Freud was editor-in-chief.

After the split with IPA, Reich came to see his own work as something new and altogether different from psychoanalysis. Schjeldrup, on the other hand, saw his application of Reichian
methods as a natural development within psychoanalysis. The privileging of symbolic representations (words, dreams, fantasies) was, he believed, a serious limitation and by extending analysis to character attitudes and muscular behavior important new channels to the unconscious could be opened. However, he continued to value the analysis of verbal-symbolic representations and the Freudian method, and termed his combination of Freudian and Reichian methods “global analysis.”

Schjelderup probably first heard about Reich while studying psychoanalysis in Vienna in the late twenties. However that may be, after Reich fled to Denmark in 1933, Schjelderup asked him to chair a seminar for the Norwegian analysts. This took place during the Easter break in 1934. Schjelderup also rallied behind Reich at the Lucerne Congress, inviting him to Oslo where facilities were available at Oslo University when his Danish work permit expired. Schjelderup’s enthusiasm for character analysis informs an article he published in 1936. Here he says, “The royal road to what is known as the unconscious is not the dream but the behaviour . . . . In my opinion character analysis represents the most important advance in psychotherapy since Freud” (p. 649, my translation).²

In March 1935, Reich writes to his girlfriend Elsa Lindenberg:

My darling, my Elschen,

I am in a great mood again. I just arrived home at 1 a.m. from a seminar evening at which Schjelderup gave an excellent report on a character-analytic case. It was the first time in the twelve years that I have been fighting alone for my technique that another person has reported on a case in a manner in which I recognize my work, my battles and struggles. To be quite honest with you, I was a bit touched. (Reich, 1994, p. 35)

While Schjelderup was enthusiastic about the character analytical technique, he disagreed with what he termed the sexualistic theories of both Freud and Reich. Instead, he proposed a theory of neurosis centered on expressive discipline during childhood and traumatic experiences of every kind. To Schjelderup, neuroses derived essentially from the helplessness and anxiety caused by the traumatic event or circumstance. After comparing “the analytic methods” of Freud and Reich, he concludes that cases of hysteria and anxiety neurosis could start with Freudian free association technique, though in most cases a combination of character analysis and “muscular analysis” offered the most effective approach. Schjelderup did not like Reich’s term vegetotherapy, and referred instead to analysis of muscular behavior. In his case illustrations he describes how he makes patients aware of bodily postures and facial expressions. However, he never describes physical touch, as Reich did in his vegetotherapy. “Practical and reliable application of these methods [character analysis and vegetotherapy],” Schjelderup (1941/1988) concluded, “requires us, however, to relieve them of the special theory of neurosis invested in them by Reich, and give them a new design” (p. 84, my translation).

This position offended Reich, of course, and they ceased corresponding as far as I am aware following Reich’s August 1939 letter to Schjelderup just after arriving in New York.

Now that I have relocated to New York I must approach you with a request that has important consequences for clearly delineating the existing views in psychological research. The most important changes and amendments in the development of psychology took place during the last six years

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²Nicht der Traum sondern das Verhalten ist der Via Regia zum sogenanten Unbewussten. “Meiner Meinung nach bedeutet die Charakteranalyse den wichtigsten Fortschritt in der Psychotherapie seit Freud.”
in Scandinavia. [Reich was not a modest man.—Author’s comment] On the theoretical side they have been grouped together under the concept “sex economy,” and on the practical side they come under the heading of “character-analytic vegetotherapy.” At the core of these changes lies my orgasm theory, which asserts on the basis of clinical experience that disturbances in the autonomic vegetative functioning of orgasmic experience constitute the core mechanism that produces and maintains the source of energy for all types of psychological disorders. Character armouring and muscular armouring have been detected and formulated as the most important result of this disruption in the equilibrium of sexual energy. One can have whatever views one wishes on this subject. You have on several occasions publicly disassociated yourself not only from orgasm theory but also from my sociological explanation of the origin of sexual suppression, which is essential for character analysis. Since I am responsible for the cohesion and also for the further development of my theory, with all its consequences, I must ask you to refrain in the future from calling your technique “character analysis.” (Reich, 1994, pp. 238–239).

Reich reiterates his theoretical convictions and ends by extending his best wishes, “certain that you will not refuse to help clarify scientific views” (p. 240). It is hard to say whether Schjelderup acted on this or not; indeed, he had never referred to character analysis as his technique.

**FOCUS ON THE PATIENT’S SUBJECTIVITY**

During the Nazi occupation the Norwegian Psychoanalytic Association suspended its activities. Schjelderup led the resistance of academics and staff at the University of Oslo and was arrested and interned. Curiously, IPA rejected the Norwegian Association’s membership bid after the war because it had not paid membership fees during the war. Later membership was denied due to alleged Reichian bias, and because Schjelderup gave training analysis with fewer weekly hours than prescribed by IPA. The Association regained its membership only in 1975, a year after Schjelderup’s death.

Schjelderup’s (1955) postwar work includes important research on the lasting effects of psychoanalytic treatment. This was probably the first major longitudinal study of psychoanalytic patients. Schjelderup seems to view the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis as experiential rather than interpretative. “In preference to theoretical explanations,” he writes in 1956 in a piece on the personality-changing processes of psychoanalytic treatment, “some illustrative examples will give a clear idea of the emotional processes in the analysis – not as interpreted by the analyst, but as experienced by the patient” (p. 51). The following quotes from one of his examples, the analysis of a female patient who suffered from severe compulsion neurosis. The patient’s feeling that others were always preferred culminated in a particular episode, “a turning-point in her development. I will let her describe it herself” (p. 58):

“I have had what has surely been the most frantic and worst night of the whole analysis. . . . The full realization that mother rejected me. . . . I suppose I was between three and four years of age—there was nothing dramatic—but I staked everything: “listen to me, mother!” . . . She didn’t slap me; but I felt the complete rejection and her hostility. . . . I went up to my brother’s room . . . cried and cried till I was worn out. . . . When I went out again, the only expedient I could see was not to need anybody—since than I have been in a panic lest I should be found of anyone. . . . I have raged against you for dragging me into this. . . . Not till quite recently in the analysis have
I experienced me like that, as quite little. This has got to the bottom of it all... all that wishing to be a man, and the sexual difficulties, is secondary, a result of the destructive effect of my rejection.” (p. 58).

In this and other illustrations of the analytic process Schjelderup focuses on how the experience of the patient unfolds without interpretations on his part. In stressing the patient’s own experience he presages contemporary intersubjective and relational understanding.

This quote also illustrates his view of sexual problems as often secondary rather than primary causes of neurosis. He lets the patient herself formulate the connection between here main symptoms and the infantile conflict:

I hated mother because she had rejected me—I could have burnt her, set fire to everyone—there wasn’t a thing I wouldn’t have done—later, under the influence of the compulsion, I had to prove that I had done nothing wrong—but I had such a sense of guilt for wanting to do it—I can see the connection now. (p. 58).

VERBAL-SYMBOLIC AND EMBODIED COMMUNICATIONS

Schjelderup saw offshoots of the unconscious infantile conflict in three areas: one in neurotic symptoms and symbolic representations; one in the development of character; and one in the development of definite bodily, muscular, and respiratory patterns.

An unresolved infantile conflict has thus “offshoots,” and in a variety of ways it exerts an influence upon later development. Schematically we can distinguish between three different aspects, or lines, of this development: One line goes in the direction of symbolic representation of the unconscious in dreams, neurotic symptoms, and other “automatic behaviour.” A second line leads to formation of character, and a third to muscular behaviour. These are abstractions, of course. Man is a unity. And character structure, experience, and muscular behaviour cannot be treated as separate components. (1956, p. 49)

“Classic” analysis, Schjelderup goes on to say, takes its essential point of departure in symbolic representation. A more direct beginning is possible by addressing character attitudes or muscular behaviour. In this way Schjelderup highlights the essence of his own perspective which he termed global analysis; an integration of Freudian analysis, character analysis, and “muscular analysis.”

According to Schjelderup, unconscious experience can be made conscious by making the patient aware of his or her appearance and bodily reactions. Emotions and the unconscious are also expressed immediately in bodily action and imagistic symbolization, not only at the verbal/conceptual level.

This principal distinction between the analysis of verbal-symbolic and bodily-emotional representations was forgotten until, as far as I know, Bucci, Beebe, Stern, and others included the distinction in their models.

Bucci (2005) formulated a multiple code theory of emotional processing covering three basic modes—the verbal-symbolic, nonverbal symbolic images, and the subsymbolic, the latter constituting the body-based affective core of emotion schemas. The Dyadic Systems Model of Beebe and Lachmann (2002, p. 35) distinguishes explicit and implicit realms. Some of the possibilities of the model for analyzing the psychoanalytic interaction are demonstrated in Forms
of Intersubjectivity in Infant Research and Adult Treatment (Beebe, Knoblauch, Ristin, & Sorter, 2005).

These new models are all based on a recognition and clarification of the slowness of verbal communication compared to the fast communication at the body-emotional level. This central feature is clinically illustrated and elaborated by Knoblauch (2000). He described verbal discrete-state exchanges as slower and unidirectional and nonverbal continuous-process exchanges as rapid and bidirectional and shows how attention to body-emotional exchanges can facilitate symbolic reflection and verbalization (Knoblauch, 2005). In his book on The Present Moment, Stern (2004) highlighted the distinction between the lived story and the told story, life as it is lived moment by moment in contrast to how it is verbally narrated afterward.

"GLOBAL ANALYSIS" AND THE CORRECTIVE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE TRANSFERENCE SITUATION

Summing up his view on the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis, Schjelderup (1956) states that even though character analysis and “vegetotherapy” have been spoken of as something fundamentally new in psychoanalysis, “what we have are special developments of technical viewpoints which find their natural place within the global analysis . . . into which psychoanalysis has increasingly developed” (p. 50). By global analysis Schjelderup is referring not only to an integration of “the analytic methods” but also to “a complete reorganization of the field of personality.”

An emotional “break through”, accompanied by the revival of the underlying conflicts, is often a great relief, but it does not itself effect a lasting change. . . . Only gradually does a real rectification take place. This rectification is a very complex process: reconditioning of earlier emotional reactions, working through of infantile cravings, admission of new feeling and fancies, and the understanding of connections which have previously been inaccessible to the patient’s adult reason. Actually what takes place is a complete reorganization of the field of personality, as the dynamic conditions are changed.

A decisive part is played by the change in the patient’s spontaneous self-feeling, and together with this the change in the spontaneous relation to other people. (p. 60)

None of these analytic methods is more correct than the others, according to Schjelderup, nor is one form of analysis, generally speaking, any more suitable than the other. His emphasis on the analyst’s elasticity and tolerance pre-echoes perceptions in contemporary relational thinking on the importance of tolerating uncertainty and ambiguity.

In some cases of compulsive neuroses and set “character neuroses,” which are hardly accessible to the more “classical” analysis, a “character-analytic” or “muscular” technique may prove more effective. But what is more important than a specific technique is a high degree of elasticity and tolerance on the part of the analyst. Any dogmatism and one-sidedness in his attitude hinders that liberation and integration of personality which is the goal of analysis.

The main principle governing the analytic treatment seems, therefore to be the same, even if there may be great differences as regards the purely technical form of procedure. The corrective emotional experiences in the transference situation play a centrally important role [emphasis added]. (pp. 50–51)
TAGE PHILIPSON AND THE NOTION OF EMBODIED IDENTIFICATION

Tage Philipson was another key figure in preserving the character analytic tradition in Norway. After failing to meet Reich in Berlin in 1933, Philipson, then a young Danish physician, began studying with him in Copenhagen. They became good friends. Philipson worked closely with Reich in the early days of “vegetotherapy.” Reich now saw muscular armor as functionally identical to character armor, his term for character defenses. Reich therefore started to palpate tense muscles, much like a physiotherapist, focusing especially on respiration with a view to eliciting the so-called orgasm-reflex. The appearance of the orgasm-reflex was considered proof of orgastic potency and successful therapy.

Although character analysis and bodywork proceeded together, Philipson became concerned about the approach’s dualistic nature, the continued separation of mind and body. He therefore started to explore ways to integrate the focus on the body with character analysis. Building on Reich’s notion of inner imitation Philipson came to see embodied identifications as crucial for the development of neuroses.

When the more superfluous neurotic traits are dissolved . . . it turns out that the patients in there expression and appearance is marked by such an accurate rendering of the parent, most often the mother, who played the major part in the developmental arrest, that you as therapist can describe the person concerned. (Philipson, 1951, p. 2, my translation)

Philipson’s (1951) theory of embodied identification is reminiscent in many ways presage of recent thinking among neuroscientists and developmental researchers. “All of these intriguing findings,” wrote Gallese (2009) about research on mirroring mechanisms,

link to our understanding of broader contours of intersubjectivity, clarifying how social identification has a multilayered embodied basis . . . The discovery of mirror neurons provide a new empirically based notion of intersubjectivity, viewed first and foremost as intercorporeally . . . as the main source of knowledge we gather about others. (p. 523)

Philipson also experimented with imitating his patients, in a way akin to Nebbioso and Federico-Nebbiosi (2008) who, as previously mentioned, mime their patients to improve their understanding of them.

One day I spontaneously mimed Giuseppe. Alone in my office, I started to talk and move like him. It was an intense and peculiar feeling. I felt that Giuseppe’s expressions, his Sicilian accent, his manner of moving had slowly “rubbed off” on my body. (p. 228)

In his exploration of embodied identifications Philipson looked for an idiomatic characterization that captured both the patient’s character and physical attitude. This idiom or “common denominator” could be the name of an animal like fox or cat, for example, or a relational term like peacekeeper, suggestive of the type of role expected of and played by the patient at home.

You don’t arrive at this—the common denominator—by using the head. It’s some place inside you, and the more you’re able to function in contact with the patient, the more you’ll be able “to live within” him, really make yourself identical with him. After that – the common denominator—comes by itself. And it is from this position you really succeed with the treatment. (as cited in Strand, 1991, p. 165, my translation)
The verbal phrasing of this common denominator worked best, Philipson found, when the patient came up with the term. Nils Strand (1991), who studied with Philipson in the Fifties, speaks of the importance of identification with the patient.

You can never identify too much with people you want to help. But you can forget you are doing it, and that is no good. . . . Competent psychotherapy depends on the therapist’s sensitivity, and his or her contact with it. No therapist, no human being for that matter, can be too sensitive. What is decisive is the capacity to handle it. (p. 165, my translation)

LOVE AND SEXUALITY

In another crucial step, Philipson came to see love, not sexuality, as the essential factor in the development of character and neurosis. Reich was, as we have seen, even more committed to “the sexual aetiology of the neuroses,” the libido theory, than Freud. Like Freud, he often spoke of love rather than sexuality in his writings. Although Reich (1942/1978) could write about “the deeply buried needs for love . . . in every person” (p. 168), Philipson’s view on the primacy of love was anathema to him, as was Schjelderup’s similar view a decade earlier. This brought their personal and working relationship to an end. Philipson was very upset but continued to work and edited two 1952 volumes entitled Kverlighetslivet [Love Life]. The role he ascribed to love resembles what today is seen as the role of attachment. After Philipson’s death in 1961, at the age of 53, Nils Strand (1991) worked to preserve Philipson’s legacy in Norway.

In another article (Sletvold, in press) I review how the ideas of Phillipson, Schjelderup, and Reich came to be integrated with contemporary relational developments (Mitchell, 1988), and how that work resulted in the establishment of the Norwegian Character Analytic Institute in 1999.

REFERENCES


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