

The way in

In therapy we focus on a person's behavior and how they understand themselves. Particularly we focus on their experience of relationships. The emphasis lies on the relationship between the self and others. Major themes like borders, contact, bonding, containment, etc. surface during the process and need to be understood and worked with. Also the developmental history is understood in terms of relationship (as to the mother, the father and significant others). And very often even the therapeutic process itself is understood in terms of an interpersonal relationship.

Interestingly, all of these interpersonal themes can be understood and worked with by helping the client to first move inward - towards himself - as a way to change their relationship to others. The approach I use mobilizes the inward movement of the life process as a way to deeply and effectively change also his relationships to others. I would like to emphasize the importance of the development of the contact with the self as the foundation of the relationship to others.

Problems as cited above, the lack of bonding, contact and containment become evident in an interpersonal field. Existing originally in the individual itself they come to a head in meeting the other, in contact. On the first look it seems, as if actually there would exist "out there". But really they are "in here", within ourselves. Clients experience difficulties in the sense of insufficiency or lack or as conflicts, different impulses coming together without the possibility for integration or solution. Incongruency, fragmentation, lack of contact with oneself or others,.... All of these are symptoms of an underlying intra-organismic process. They only become more obvious, evident out there. They are *expressed* in an interpersonal field, but they are *experienced* within the person, intra psychic. This is a very important differentiation, which often is not made. Die "Verstrickung": being entangled is part of the problem, if not *the* problem itself!

This is not an exclusive model, negating that a supportive, fostering or unconditionally accepting environment does not help or in vice versa, destroy developmental possibilities. I am not saying that the other, the world does not play an important role, but for the *definition* as well as the *solution* we are pretty much on our own. We have to be able to rely on our self in order to rely on others, we have to be intimate with ourselves - our self - if we want to be intimate with others, we need a sense of self, if we want to have a sense of others and we need to have a sense of *a way in*, if we want to *come out in a contact full way!*

The development of the instroke work

As shown earlier in other articles about the instroke and integration we come from a traditional reichian approach. I trained and was trainer with Charles Kelley and the Radix Institute. The work was classic high charge and outstroke oriented work. Emotional discharge or catharsis was the goal of most of the work. Contact issues - for example between therapist and client or border problems or integration in the sense of cognitive aspects, thinking, conceptualizing and processing what had been expressed was not worked with very much. Even, when it was in the center of our focus we seemed hardly able to "overcome" the body/mind split; and exactly this was the problem: our concept was to overcome, not to bring together, it was to release, not to integrate, to come out not to be within. We were stuck on the way out, the outstroke of the pulsation, not on the way in.

Contact and cognitive processes like understanding and conceptualizing oneself in the world were missing! The first instroke techniques were developed in order to help people we found not able to respond to the strong high charge work; people which turned out to be the so called fear structures, clients which experienced some early disturbance. But over time we realized that the work took an entirely different direction - the way in - and now are able to work with very different clients and problems. A lot of the material is not really new. There have been always good therapists from many different techniques, but some of it might be helpful for you, seen from our perspective. For example, today I believe, that by stimulating the instroke in the physical work, we will also stimulate cognitive processes and do not need to rely solely on verbal work. In fact it seems not necessarily of importance whether we are working verbally or physically, but it seems to be very important to know whether we are on the way in or out.

My thesis for this article is, that what was missing in working with the “energy” - better: pulsation- in the past, was the work with the instroke! The instroke is what allows us to integrate; to “take in” not just physical nourishment, but also emotional and intellectual nourishment. All learning takes place on the way in, it enhances all cognitive functions. It is the predisposition for bonding and containing. It is what allows the self to form and gives it its coherence and continuity. It is what allows us to enhance the relationship to the self as a foundation for the relationship to others.

The founder of the self-psychology, Kohut defined the self as : “an unity, in space coherent and in time continuing, which is the starting point of (Antriebe) motivational forces and receiver of impressions”. Even though the self is defined in a one-person model, it is most often described in relation to his self-objects or the functions of the self objects. Wolf defines it as “a psychic structure, a continuing configuration, which is connected with the experience of self-being. It consists of a cluster of developmental possibilities, which are awakened and constituted by self object relations”. (Bacal, Newman 1994, page 280)

I find these definitions very interesting and like the *dynamic, pulsatory* aspect they contain. In my opinion they could be understood as excellent definitions of the “core” : a unity, which is coherent in space and continuing in time, which pulsates, so that the “outstroke” - the starting point of motivational forces- and the “instroke” - the receiver of impressions- , the inward movement of the pulsation are balanced in an even fashion in order to allow the coherence and continuity through time and space.

Diagram N° 1

If we were to say that the self is the psychic structure of an energetic core we would be able to translate also the dynamic it contains into the language of pulsation. It is evident now that pulsation - instroke and outstroke - are not only the functional base for the self but also for the contact with others.

Diagram N° 2

Pulsation

Pulsation contains of two impulses, the inward moving and the outward directed one. The Instroke is a movement in towards the center/core of the organism, while the outstroke is a movement towards the periphery, the outside world. During an instroke phase the charge is accumulated (convergence) while on the outstroke, the accumulated charge is spent, discharged. Depending on which phase of the pulsation is predominant, the organism will be charged or discharge excess energy. Life oscillates between these two poles of the pulsation. Both of them are equally important for the development and growth of life.

Reich conceptualized the life process as continuing pulsatory cycles, which superimpose in different rhythms (brainwave, metabolism, heartbeat, menstrual cycle, etc). This process is happening not only within an organism, but also as development through time and space. Motivational forces -desire- and receiving impressions - fulfillment- are represented in a spiral forward moving wave. Now the pulsatory process looks like a spinning wave. The outstroke represents the desire to move out and forward, to grow, which is inherent in all living systems, while the instroke is a movement of the energy coming back to itself in a re-unifying, re-organizing condensation. In doing so, coherence and

continuity is created. Constant re-organization, while moving forward, growing and changing at the same time.

Within certain life periods a predominance exists i.e. during infancy the instroke predominates, while in an adult life for certain periods (creating a life situation, building a house, working etc.) the outstroke dominates.

Diagram N°3 Kreiselwelle

In life, which translated into energetic terms, means forward movement in the sense of development and growth, pulsation plays a most important role. The healthy functioning organism stays swinging between the outward moving phase the outstroke and the inward moving phase, the instroke. Reich described the outward phase with an expansion a swelling and increased turgor, the central tension in the organism is low, the movement is directed towards the periphery and the world. There is a streaming from the center towards the periphery. This is where transformation (convergence) takes place. When the charge moves out towards the periphery of an organism it creates a tonus and tension which is necessary in order to act and to produce or to reach out towards the world. The flow of the charge through the plasma may be experienced as power or potency and excitement moving towards meeting the other. Reich called this the expansion phase of the pulsation and it became associated with pleasure, while the inward moving phase was described as "contraction". This was associated with a negative connotation and equated with anxiety. As becomes obvious here we need to differentiate between a flow, a *movement* and a *state*. The inward movement of the pulsation, the instroke is a *movement towards* something, towards a center, rather than necessarily a contraction. It is what brings a center into existence. By merely moving towards our center we do not suffer from anxiety and do not feel contracted. In fact the opposite seems to be true: by coming to or in our self we experience trust, being calm and settled with our self. It is without a center we would suffer or even die. (See, Instroke, Davis 1999)

Within the organism we feel extension and expansion during the outstroke, an "identity grounded in the three dimensional world. The centrifugal and forward movement represents life's desire to move forward and to grow. It may result in a feeling of pleasure and excitement and be experienced as a sense of focus and the accelerating speed forward push, up to the joy of ecstasy..... Finally, in the interactive dimension, we may feel productive,... meeting the world or another person through words, ideas, deeds, ... " (Müller-Schwefe, 98). With the outstroke of the pulsation the life energy flows towards the periphery and out of the organism into the environment : it is the expression of the life force.

The opposite, the inward moving phase is where the streaming moves away from the periphery towards the center, where a gathering, a condensing takes place. The energy comes " back " to itself, accumulating in order to condense and re-organize. Here things "fall into place", shape and form is created. An experience of coming home, of being ("chez moi") myself is made. *Here, I experience my self!*

It is a collecting, centering, a gathering of life force. No system could build or form, no being could come to existence without this inward movement. The instroke allows us to contact the center, the core, the essence of a human being. It is the bio-energetic foundation of integration in the literal sense of the word : to complete and *become whole* !

Also in crisis we find a holding on the instroke. The tension which the self can tolerate is at the verge of being "too much". Classic definitions of crisis are that the organism has to learn to deal with a sudden, drastic change of circumstances. The self needs to learn to adapt to a sudden, undesired situation.

A system in crisis is ready to break down in its functioning. More *in-*formation comes in than can be processed. Earlier rules or forms to deal with difficult situations no longer apply. Turmoil occurs, overchargeTension leads to short-circuit rather than providing a little more supply of "energy" in order to get through the experience. Probably you have noticed: it does not seem to be the expression which is the problem, the short-circuit, the *crisis is the expression*. It is the *experience*, which is the hard part. Whether we talk here about natural or personal catastrophes, like the loss of a close person, ones work or familiar surrounding does not matter here.

The *processing network* has been overloaded and broken down. Whether temporarily or constant there is no more network for attachment and connection. The information leaks through, is not meaningful or can not be contained and used to build up more structure and network. Nourishment is not assimilated. Physical and mental processing or digestion does not work. It is like within a computer system: the "enter" key does not work any more, the screen is blank and life makes no more "sense". Accepting this and allowing the organism to not *do* more, to *be* exhausted and unable to go out is the first necessity. Recognizing the self in crisis allows also to recognize its survival.

Centering the organism again and again, at a dose, which he is able to take in and acknowledge will be the only possible way of allowing the organism to develop now what he could not develop in early childhood: a sense of himself. The movement needs to go in, again and again, like in a weaving itself about itself. Learning to come back to himself is the basis for containment. Learning to come back to a place makes it a home !

Staying coherent like in a spiral movement, without getting stuck. Maybe with long times of instroke dominance, not ready yet to go out and form relationships with others until the relationship with the self has not been re-established. Border-less behavior, fragmentation or splitting are symptoms of a system in shock or constant crisis. We are talking about a continuum here from conflict to crisis to chronic dis-function as in shock or certain character structures. What became evident now is, that in all of them the relationship to the self is endangered, the instroke is blocked.

Early disturbed clients can not "take" anything. Their instroke is held on the way in and if used at all it was only to transport painful and frightening experiences. Chronic dis-function of the instroke results in a characterological structures as i.e. the schizoid or the narcissistic structure.(See Davis, Will, The schizoid 1997 and Munzel,M., Time for fulfillment, a study on the narcissistic character structure, 1999)

I would like to show that the instroke function of the pulsation is in fact the foundation of the self and if properly worked with, enhances not only the creation of the self (and self objects) but also the creation of satisfying relationship to others.

- The Instroke creates growth itself. The condensing of the energetic pulsation leads to the creation of those connections which are necessary in order to build physical, cognitive, psychic structure. It is what makes it possible for a system to come into existence. A flow, a stream of energy condenses to a *core*, a form, a shape and thereby creates a living system. This is, what Wolf calls- in his definition of the self - a configuration, "*the cluster of developmental possibilities, which are awakened and continued by self object relations*".
- The instroke is the means whereby *all intake processes* are taking place. As I said earlier the life force accumulates on the instroke, the instroke is the charging phase of the pulsation. We can imagine the inward movement as a spiral, turning inwards. If you visualize this movement you can easily understand it's attracting force working like in a vortex. The spiral "sucks" everything in from his environment. If you imagine now an infant which is in a period of predominant instroke function, you can easily see how it takes in energy, information and nourishment in order to develop and grow. It is the instroke which makes it possible for us to "receive impressions".

To center, to accept and assimilate, to incorporate, to coordinate, having an in-sight... "receiving impressions".... all of these are functions which are allowed with the inward movement of the pulsation and which constitute *the* (relationship to the) *self*.

In order to work with problems in relationships we would favor working with the relationship of self to self rather than with the relationship between self and others. We would mobilize the instroke and emphasize the "way in": *centering*, - rather than discharging, *experience*, - rather than expression, the *self*, - rather than the other or the world

Conflict, crisis and chronic mal function from an instroke perspective

Most people who come in our practice experience problems in the relationships with others and the world. Often they feel, as if they had exhausted their own resources to solutions. They may feel confused or unable to understand and accept what they experience in their life. Whether in insufficiency or conflict, they experience a loss in contact with themselves. The heavier the disconnection, the stronger the sense of loss of identity and self. The relationship to the self has been disconnected, disintegrated or - in worse cases - never been established as a solid function. In functional terms we would say that the pulsation has been limited, cut off or strongly contracted. The person has constricted – or never had – a well functioning connection to his core and now is lost within a system of - defending or protecting - armored behavior. They are out of themselves, confused or entangled. Neither in contact nor clearly separated. They are not able to stand by themselves and solve the conflicting impulses within themselves. Nor do they feel capable to come forward and communicate. Projection and blaming get in the way of the enforcement and assertion of themselves. Guilt and shame are forms of confusion the person experiences. The fear of being seen or showing become an obstacle. Either experience or expression have become *too much* for the person. The "too much ness" represent the inner tolerance level of the client, which is reached now. He feels pressured, burdened, charged. He is and he can't take more.

According to the constricted core connection the "Auffassungsvermögen", their apprehension and perceptive faculty is constricted. Emotionally as well as cognitively. They are "full" and need *time and space* to process what they have experienced. Demanded too much from the outside, they become projective and blame others for their sense of constriction and tightness, for their feeling of "no way out". Cut off from their core and the way in, they desperately try to gain space on the outside, even if what they really need is more space on the inside.

Here a lot is at stake: charging them more might push them easily into acting out, instead of an acting on (their feelings, beliefs, impressions). Working physically as well as verbally with the instroke helps to recover the inner space and volume. The sense of fullness and the pressure cedes. The pushing out becomes less and the person who was "out of himself" can come back to "his senses". The perceptive faculty restores with the instroke and the experience can be processed. Insight may occur and new cognitive connections might be made, consciousness is widened and pulsation sets in again. Conflict cedes to the possibility for communication.

Acting out instead of acting on is an excellent example of the pushing out of unwanted, unacceptable conflicts of the self. The instroke is blocked. An immature "outstroke"; one which has been forced out, rather than being the simple movement which naturally sets in once the instroke has been completed.

Diagram: attracting force of the instroke

- The Instroke creates relationship ! As Thomas Harms has shown in his article about early infant development the instroke is the decisive movement which allows organotic contact and bonding . The receptive mother (on the instroke herself) is able to create an instroke oriented field contact, which allows the baby to take in and to receive, what is necessary for its development and growth. "The organotic contact and the instroke process of the baby are two aspects of an identical process." (Davis, Harms, et al. Page 43)

Diagram of field contact

Therapeutic implications

- Mobilizing the instroke

Most important is the mobilization of the inward movement of the pulsation. Whether physically or verbally the primary direction of the work focuses on the way in. Centering rather than charging, working with the existing charge, emphasizing an experience, rather than going into expression, being concerned with the self, rather than the other, the world.

Psyche and soma being manifestations of the same underlying energetic process, it may be either physically or verbally the organism can be affected. Both realms present the same underlying pulsatory patterns and thus we may contact the organism and remobilize pulsation in either realm. Generally speaking the concept is to integrate, rather than to overcome, break through or analyze the client and his resistance and defense mechanisms. The goal is to re-enforce the pro-life flow instead of dealing with armor in its divers forms.

The outstroke with its great emotional discharges has become a diagnostic tool in order to establish a hypothesis about the functioning of a client, but is no longer an important medium to work with.

- Physical work

We use a technique, called Points & Positions. It is a gentle touching method looking to "meet" the client in his physical existence. Using the techniques over many years Will Davis was able to reformulate his understanding of armor and its physical location in the body. We do no longer consider the muscular armor as the armor itself. As mentioned above we do not charge the client and do in general not work for discharge. New formulations about early disturbance contain the *plasmatic structures* as such characters which developed earlier than the neuro-muscular functioning has developed . Thus these character structures as well as clients which experienced continuous shock or trauma are not considered as having developed muscular armor at all. They are blocking in a full body response, on the plasmatic level. (see also :The schizoid process, Davis, Will,1997)

The connective tissue allows us to reach also these clients. It is present everywhere in the body and contains a whole network of functions: creating support, communication, spaces, separation, etc in the body . It is the means where by we contact the pulsation and thus central body functions. We can loosen early and long term contraction of the armor in a safe way and " improve the function of a very important and primary system of the body that regulates structure, nourishment, exchange and

defense.” (Points & Positions, Connective tissue and body work, Schmidkonz, 1999)The connective tissue transports energetic information and therefor is the best way to mobilize the instroke.

The *functional* approach is physically as well as psychically more concerned with the way of the functioning than with the reasons for that particular pattern. Even though in the beginning people may feel very tired during or after the work and overtime an altered state of consciousness may occur, becoming aware physically of our functioning is part of the work. Even though such processes may be long, change needs to show in an improved connective tissue functioning and the physical change of form and shape in the body.

- Verbal work

The emphasis lies on “*How* does the organism function ?” rather than “*Why* is it functioning this particular way ?”. It seems more important to *explore* our “points & positions”, than to *explain* them. This keeps us strongly in the present moment and process oriented. Historical events and their understanding will fall “into their place” once the client is dissolving contraction and integrating the in-formation into his perceptive faculty. All in all we are focussing strongly on the development to create a wider perceptive faculty. Creating awareness while focussing on the self is in the foreground. While working with awareness the cognitive functioning/mal functioning of a client becomes evident. The pulsatory patterns or “positions” we encounter in the physical or psychic realm, we also find in the cognitive realm. Cognitive patterns will be as contracted as their physical or psychic counterpart. The instroke block shows for example in an incapacity to take in (new or any other) in-formation. The capacity to differentiate between essential or non essential and to concentrate on that, is a result of a successful centering process. The ability to have, to “own” a point of view - a “stand point”- has to do with the level of core connected-ness.

The lack of perceptive faculty is significant for any kind of blocking and so every character structure shows their particular cognitive patterns. As M.Munzel states in his work about the narcissitic character: “The instroke with its possibility to develop curiosity creates functional access to the cognitive realm.” (see Munzel,M. Time for fulfillment, a functional view of the narcissitic character 1999) He maintains that the “instroke leads to cognitive changes, which represent a new way of perceiving and receiving the outer world. The ability to build and maintain relationships now is the result of the regained ability to build and contain inner connections: to relate.”

- The emphasis on the self to self relationship

As has become obvious throughout the material, we focus on the instroke and so consistently more on creating a “self to self” relationship, than the “self and other” relationship. While forming a deep and reliable self to self relationship clients become able to form stable and fulfilling relationships to others. In focussing on this process we de-emphasize relationships, which were build rather on the lack of self than *desire* for the other.

While learning to center and concentrate on the self, differentiation and separation occur. As was shown in the new sciences individuation does not lead to separation, but in fact to more community. While systems organize, differentiate and thereby become more individual they develop higher community. This is a paradox, which often occurs in the work. While going on the instroke we find that our clients develop better organization and borders. At the same time they are able to make more profound and meaningful contact

The work could be described as more client-centered. By de-emphasizing the self to other relationship we also think to de-emphasize transference, projection, dependency on the therapist etc..

- The dosage

I think it is very important to be clear about how strong an instroke block is and how it affects the client. The ability of a client to “take something in” is highly overestimated by many therapists. It is counterproductive to offer or feed in a higher dose of charge, contact or stimulation in any kind of

form than the client is able to take. Once the client comes in it has been "too much" already. The system is overcharged, in conflict or crisis and definitively not able to handle more charge and stimulation. To assume or demand more will recreate and re-enforce the same conflict and crisis the client experienced before he came. It will not only re-enforce the pattern but even worse, it will prevent the instroke.

- The Therapist on the Instroke

A last point I would like to mention here, is that also the therapist needs to be comfortable on the instroke. Being connected to the inward directed flow of the pulsation will allow him to be receptive in a deep and particular way. It will change his role. He will not be passive, but *receptive*. An *activity* which requires to be centered and available for deep contact : receiving the desperate and unsuccessful *search and miss* of contact as well as the first attempts to establish their self in the world. Doing becomes less important (and in the way) than being. The therapist may use his own potential of awareness to perceive and handle the pulsatory process .

George Downing makes a very interesting remark in his book *The Body and The Word*. He states, that one property of counter transference is that it *weakens* the therapists ability to *sense his physical body*. "Even if the therapist tends to experience strong emotion, now he only feels diffuse and globally." (translation by the author, *Körper und Wort in der Psychotherapie*, 1996) I think this is a very interesting point because it states the physical awareness of the therapist, as a decisive tool to control his level of awareness, of presence, of empathy or for example counter transference. Downing continues: "we give more inner space to the emerging physical reactions, we allow that they unfold and examine them carefully and patient. knowing that the body of the therapist is a source of a lot of new insights, which otherwise would stay in the dark ". Being on the instroke is an important tool to define and evaluate the process.

Being receptive does not only allow our own system to be present but it also enforces, asserts the system of the other. Being separate individuals the instroke allows a deep differentiated contact, focussing on the client. Differentiated with more potential for community and communication. Last not least it is our own potential to be on the instroke and thus *receptive* as a human being as well as a professional which is required here. These qualities often are dealt with as if they were separate ones, which define different, separate solutions. (As a human being you should do this and as a professional you should do something else..... To me they are not separate ones, the opposite is true. They should be organized within me, well integrated. In my opinion a good therapist should be not either ... or, but : s/he should be a human professional, a *living person* !

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