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*Presence in Psychotherapy**

The theme my talk is "being present" and this, I think, is an important theme at least in three fields: psychotherapy, theatre, and life. I think it is a good idea to be present. I think this basically/essentially was said in the teachings of W. Reich. I don't know if he used the word "here and now", but later people who went to him, like e.g. Fritz Pearls, who was one of his patients, and who is one of the founders of Gestalt Therapy, and he made this "here and now" famous. But I still claim that many people even in the gestalt therapy field they are not really using the present. Every time has its own religion(s) and its way of thinking, its own concepts of healing. For ex. now in Europe we are going away from the time of Christianity. Christianity is not any more a strong movement in Europe. I am also aware of the fact that e.g. psychoanalysis and the way we are practicing psychotherapy is not going to last for a long time. Hundred years from now, there is going to be totally different way of doing healing and therapy. And as I have been talking before, not here but elsewhere, if we now go to the fields of culture and art, we are going out of the modernism where the questions were "What really is happening" and this question means...it led to the revelation of unconsciousness, which is one of the most important things Freud and psychoanalysis brought to us. The questions were "what" and "why". Then it was time we moved to the postmodernism that is from modernism to postmodernism.

Everything is connected - psychotherapy, ways of healing, is connected to its time and culture. Reich was very clearly a child of postmodernism. Then in the post modernistic thinking reality is understood not as clean, simple chronological stories. In post modernistic thinking, doubt against a clear message and the story is strong. This you can see very clearly e.g. in theatre plays to day. There are many good Spanish writers. A shift from content to the form, in the arts, music, theatre, and painting, there was a shift from the story, from the content to the form. In the post modernistic thinking, art and theatre, the form became more important than form. Now, we have already passed post modernistic thinking. But Reich is still in the post modernistic state. So the questions are is the post modernistic thinking now "what is happening to the reality, or how", that means that in the field of psychotherapy, now I mean W. Reich, because I think he really was developing psychotherapy very importantly. And so the therapist now, which means W. Reich, pays attention to

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how the patient is speaking, how is he moving, how is the voice, how is my voice now, and not to the content of the story not to words I am talking now. And this is very interesting, because now to day lots of neuroscience research, especially affective neuroscience, which means the part of the neuroscience research, which is doing research in the field of emotions and affects, is showing that the most important message, information, is, the exchange of information, the most important part of it is what nowadays is called “implicit”, which means this “how”. So now that I am talking, most information comes to you through how my voice is, how am I moving my body, and this you receive without being aware of it, every movement of my body is happening also in your body and you are receiving information, and this is proven in different ways in the neuroscientific research, and to day we know already that there are ways of collecting, ways of sending information which are totally unconscious, implicit and not verbal and this is why I think one of the things e.g. I think where Reich was a genius: he came to this doing his clinical psychotherapeutic work. Now the neuroscience research has come to same conclusions using extremely expensive machines, when e.g. you know, they put your head full of things and take pictures of your head, what is happening in you, in your brain, e.g. the mirror neuron research, but that is only one way. There are also neurotransmitter research, it is showing the same, the neurotransmitters are neuroaffectives, there are many many of them, the most famous to day we talk about serotonin, dopamine, and twenty other and in five years there will be five hundreds other, so Character Analytic theory is looking for a deeper understanding of critical inter subjective forces that operate at implicit, means, nonverbal level of therapeutic alliance, beneath language and explicit cognition. This is something that is happening all the time between people, you receive the most information... My hands are moving like this, and something happens in you brain, in your body, when I am doing this, and my voice, something is happening in you, the voice is doing it, not the content. So this means that the core of the mechanism of the therapeutic exchange lie at nonconscious level. And this is also that to days academic research has shown us Even more than that there has always been the question “where is the Self . Now they claim that the Self lies in the right brain, and according to days science the right side of the brain is also the home of the unconsciousnes. The optimal development of a child and also the optimal psychotherapy which are very close to each other, they promote and enhance the biology that means the side of the brain, that means that in the optimal childcare and optimal psychotherapy we are dealing with the right side of the brain, mostly, which is the unconsciousness, which is the images, and where the Self lies. Reich’s notion that a theoretical model of human mind and behaviour can not be exclusively psychological, that has also be proven by to days



neuroscience. To days psychological and neuroscientific research are combining the mind and the brain, the psychology the mind, the neuroscience the brain, the body. And this is essentially what Reich was trying to do and to teach us almost seventy eighty years ago. He did not know much about the brain research, but the paradigm, which is “oneness”, was there. The editor of the international journal of psychotherapy, Mr Wilkinson writes: “Sound therapy requires an understanding mind, brain and body.” Now such knowledge is available. Nothing less will do.

There are many things that differentiate a good therapist from a bad or a mediocre therapist, and this is also common for all the fields of all the schools of psychotherapy.

One thing is the therapist’s ability to regulate emotions of the patient. This is also shown in the outcome studies of psychotherapy. So a therapist who can regulate the emotions of the patient will do good therapy. And a mother, or farther, who can regulate the feelings, emotions of a child will be a good mother, or farther. E.g. my mother, when I hit my head on a stone, I was bleeding and I went back home, and my mother was very angry with me. So she was not a good regulator of the emotions of the child. And, I guess, that’s why I had to take thirty years of therapy. So you understand that it is very important that the mother can regulate the emotions of a child, and the same thing happens for the therapist. Of course my mother was very afraid, very worried, but that was the way of dealing with it. This is also happening in the psychotherapy session, if the therapist gets worried, feels fear or so, he or she is totally unable to regulate the emotions of the patient. It is also very important for the therapist to understand the developmental phase of the patient, in the process of regulating the emotions. Another thing that differentiates a good therapist from a bad one, again according to the research to day, and that thing is the therapist’s ability to create alliance, therapeutic alliance. This is also universal among all schools of psychotherapy. All this leads to the fact that a therapist’s character, personality, is the most important fact, and not the method. That is why in a psychotherapy training, it is very important to concentrate on the personality and the character of the therapist. It is important that the therapist knows his method, too, but personality is the most important thing. Many psychotherapy trainings of to day teach too much technique, and again, because the point is to be with the patient and not so much what to do with the patient, that is, to be present. When the therapist is present, this creates the change, and most of this is happening at the bodily level. We all the time receive information of emotions of other people. The patient knows without knowing, if the therapist is worried, afraid, angry, whatever. So what did I mean by being present? Often the patient starts to tell about the present moment, as soon as he comes upon a sensation, feeling, image or word that leads to an associative pathway, she is likely to do that. So,



when the patient talks about the present moment and then there comes a feeling, a sensation, something that is happening, very often the patient takes the way to go to the associative thinking, and very often the psychotherapist is encouraging the patient to do that. Why is doing this, why is she encouraging the patient to go this associative thinking, associate here and here, etc? Many times, because of the personality of the therapist, because she or he gets anxious. The associative pathway is safe. Staying with feelings, sensations is unsafe. Why? Because you never know what is going to happen next, with you, as the therapist. This means that the exploration of the experiencing as lived, gets interrupted by associative work, which leads away from the original present moment. The patient may, or may not, pick it up where he left off, present moment, usually he does not, but he jumps ahead to another element of the experience, or to another experience which seems promising, or to the related associative sidetrip that may enlarge the meaning. This is actually technically what psychoanalysis and most psychotherapy is, searching for meanings, which is not phenomenological. Phenomenological is presence, the other is searching for the meaning, which most of the psychotherapies do. Searching for meaning moves us away from the experience. The other direction is to give space for experiencing and being less hurried with interpretations. I think this is basically Reich's idea, which is again and again and again: the form comes before the content. So, that means that to day many psychotherapies rush towards meanings leaving the present moment behind. Psychotherapy seems to be more interested in the reconstruction than in what is happening now. Most of the psychotherapy is focusing on the verbally reconstructed aspects of experience, and so the phenomenal gets lost. This is, what Merley Ponty said, it is as if intellectual and linguistic functions always operate on what might happen or what did happen, but never on what is happening. So I am essentially interested in implicit happening beyond the search for meaning.

The recent psychotherapy research has shown that to create effective change in the patient, the patient has not to understand. For some reason, in my therapy practice, I have had more success with men, from, like engineers, which means that it is often much more faster to work with these men than with women who are searching for these meanings. They do accept more easily that they do not have to understand, just get me healed. The women, they always want to ask why, why why are we doing this. So change really can happen to shifts in implicit knowing and not sure understanding meanings, also reconstructions of the narrative story or history. So why do we not teach therapists to be more present? There is so much research for this what I have said now, that all this has been proven so clearly: the affect regulation, the alliance, the ????. So one way is to become



more aware of the proprioceptive sense, which is actually the sense which Sir Sherrington talked about eightyfive years ago, and wrote a book on it, proprioceptive sense. He received the Noble Prize. But for some reasons we are not consciously using this proprioceptive sense. Our bodies have of millions and millions of receptors that then in the brain become one proprioceptive sense. This means that one way of teaching a therapist to be present is to teach him to use his proprioceptive sense, which means to teach about sensations in the body. Most people know only about a sensation called pain. So first, a therapist has to learn to be aware of his/her sensations before she can do this with the patient. Again, it really is, most of what is happening between the therapist and the patient, between every human being, is happening at the implicit level, non-conscious level, through change of information we are not aware of. And this is the body. There are a number of things that describe the context in psychotherapy. I will say four more requirements for a good therapist that come from the reality of the psychotherapeutic context. Basically, psychotherapy is a very fuzzy business. It means that e.g. when a psychotherapist is doing what we call an intervention, when he is doing it, 95 of the time of it he does not know why he is doing it. If you ask him why did he do this, he says that because of this and this. That is a lie. Because we want to present us as somebody who knows. This is of coarse a trap, an arch typical trap. So, one requirement is intentional fuzziness. I am claiming that psychotherapy is a fuzzy business. That means that the context is such as the therapist, he has to use that, to be intentional with this fuzziness. Another requirement is also coming from the context of the psychotherapeutic setting: it is unpredictable, like every human contact, I never know what you are going to say next. I can have a good guess but I can never know. When I am doing an intervention in a psychotherapeutic setting I never know how the patient will react. And that's the whole thong, this is, what it is. She does not know, I do not know. So this is another requirement, unpredictability, the therapist has to be ready for unpredictability. He has to have this space in himself to be ready for this unpredictability. (Whispering to the interpreter: Do you know "what is redundancy"?) Most often, evolving variations, this is the third thing. The fourth thing is "moving along the stream". Now we go further, there are many other things you do not understand. In other words, a good psychotherapist is good in improvising. All these skills can be taught. That is why, e.g. in our training we have borrowed many things from theatre, e.g. many good ways of teaching improvisation, and imitation. These are two very important qualities of a psychotherapist: the ability to improvise and to imitate. If you have read how Reich was doing therapy, he was very often imitating the patient, with his body, his face, with everything, voice... This is how you receive implicitly information about the other. What is the most important method of learning? It is



imitation. That is the thing we have been doing our first years, imitation. That is how we learned most of the most important things. So you have to be ready for the unexpected.

I will say something more about the development of a child, especially the development of the brain. One important thing I did not say was about the context of psychotherapy and the context of the change of information between people which is that we all the time make mistakes in communication. Do you have an experience of that? Like we, how many times she did not understand what I said. This is what is happening between two people all the time, and in the psychotherapy setting all the time. The patient and the therapist, they do not understand each other, they make mistakes in the communication all the time. This is a fact you have to accept, which means that the therapist has to ask all the time and to say “I did not understand what you said” and not to enter the symbiotic “yes, yes, yes, I do understand”. We do mistakes and what is important is that I have a good will, e.g. I have had a good will with her to help her understand what she did not understand, to correct the mistakes. Of course now this is very easy with her, between me and her, we have a very easy relationship, we have no dependency, nothing. But the more there is dependency, the more difficult it is to have good will. I think most of us, I at least I, anyway, have lots of experiences of losing my good will with a woman, to correct the mistakes in the communication. In psychotherapy this is fatal, in relationships too. It is important that the therapist has the attitude that I am willing to correct the mistakes all the time and to get away from the arrogance, and to be humble. – A few words about the development of the brain of the infant. It is right side of the brain, which is developing first. And this right side of the brain is this implicit, unconscious, it is where the Self lies. The right side is dominant for the child’s processing of visual and emotional information and the infant’s recognition of the mother’s face. As you know this is happening very early and it is happening in the right side of the brain, which is the non-verbal. Also, the perception of arousal, including arousal in the mother’s face, and this in turn, is psychophenomenologically attuned to the output of the mother’s right side of the brain which involves taking and processing emotional information and nonverbal communication. This is especially important as for arousal, in this context, because this is also important in psychotherapy, that is, how do you receive information about arousal, which is the same as charge. This is connected to the fact that how a good therapist regulates the affects and emotions of the patient. So this means that the development of the right side of the brain for the therapist is very important. E.g. I as a child had a very training in that. To day most stresses come from other humans. This is very interesting, no more hunger, no more lions. Other people are the stressors, and especially intimacy



between two people is a tremendous stressor. I think we are there now. We are finished. A couple of things still. Many psychotherapies, many body-psychotherapies, Gestalt, movement, dance, psychodrama, whatever, many body-psychotherapies, many body-oriented therapies where body is used, the technique is only used to produce material, but then when this bodily technique is used and it produces material, the *id* material, *libido*, *content*, *trauma*, or whatever you want to call it. But the most important thing is that many body-psychotherapies are really like doing old-fashion psychoanalysis, the technique to produce material is only different, but then what you do with the material is the same. So many body- and Gestalt-psychotherapies they only use the technique to evoke the material and then how they deal with it is searching for meaning and the associative path. So the change which differentiates these therapies is not how you produce material but the difference comes from how do you deal with that, and what is your attitude towards the objectives, of the meta of the therapy, which means is it looking for meanings, reconstructions we talked earlier, or that we are looking for a deeper and deeper experience, which is this phenomenological. I am very interested in looking new ways of staying there, in the presence, phenomenological, not going into meanings. When we work as psychotherapists in this way, it often produces a lot of anger in the patient, because they think that I am not giving them what they thought they came for. Ok, there this practice, which is proving the same. To day the psychodynamic interpretation model is delusive. Patients come to therapy and they think that this is what I need to work with because they have read it some book, that "I need to work with my childhood", and then I ask, what do you mean, what is your problem ... "because I had problems in my childhood... with my mother" ... So why do come here? You know... So, you need to get them back... what is the expression of your so-called childhood problems. One more ? thing. Every circulation of breath- exhale inhale, every circle of breathing which takes about between three to five seconds, is a possible moment of being present, and also this is the longest time you can be present. This is also... very interesting research to day with infants that other research do, giving some kind of information that may be this is the foundation of the experiencing the moment. A child stays connected e.g. with the mother, the face of the mother, between 3-5 seconds, and then turns away its head. So in average we have 15 possibilities to be present in a minute.