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von

Margit Koemeda-Lutz, Mae Nascimento, Vincentia Schroeter

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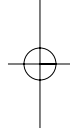
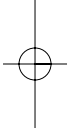
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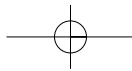
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Editorial Note

The increase in psychological knowledge is as irrevocable as the development and proliferation of psychotherapeutic methods. But is the world getting more sane? Are people suffering less? Insurances at least keep moaning the constantly rising costs for health care. What is going wrong?

The art of healing and the scientific basis of it take different forms, have rises and falls in popularity. Psychotherapy, and body-psychotherapy in particular, are not so popular these days – at least in Europe they aren't.

The prescribed »ideal« we are to live up to, is: See a patient 6–10 times, find the right medication, pick some very precise verbal interventions, make him or her brain switch to a different working mode (a little less amygdaloid activity, some increase in striatal and frontal lobe perfusion). And this should be it.

Human suffering and the art of healing are older than most of these fashion swings. To preserve and unfold the essence of our personal healing power and wisdom and its evolution in our bioenergetic community is one of our predominant tasks. Committing oneself to writing is one way of doing this, I believe. In this sense we would like to thank all colleagues who have committed themselves to the effort of working out and submitting their articles.

This year's conference¹ theme »Human Nature and Conflict Resolution – Affirming Life and Lives in a Time of Violence« naturally inspired several articles (V. Wink Hilton, M. Maley, R. Robbins). In addition to this, sexuality as one of the most vital forces in human life gets more elucidation by E. Tucillo's and D. Guest's articles. A. Lethin undertakes further investigations into the wide and still expanding realm of the neurobiological foundations of our sense of self. Koemeda reviews evidence from neurobiological research for the necessity to involve the body in therapeutic processes. Shapiro finally presents a didactically excellent lesson in Bioenergetic Boundary building.

Bioenergetic Analysis is presently published once a year. We hope that it continues to serve its purpose of being a medium of communication for the International Bioenergetic community and of presenting our theoretical concepts and positions, our clinical expertise and psychotherapeutic skills to the wider scientific community.

¹ Biennial conference of the International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis (IIBA), May 10th–14th 2005, at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA.

Editorial Note

The opinions and theoretical positions of the articles published in Bioenergetic Analysis are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the opinion of the editors or an official position of the IIBA. Thanks to our review system we hope that they are skillfully written, scientifically well informed and sufficiently sophisticated so they will instigate serious discussion among our colleagues in the IIBA and from other schools of thought.

Again, Mae, Vincentia and I have been a surprisingly well-functioning team during this past year, considering the fact that we live on three different continents, speak three different languages, had no meetings and no conference calls. E-mailing was our only means of communication. Once again we thank Helen Resneck-Sannes for her valuable work, who resigned from the Editorial Board by the end of last year for personal reasons and welcome Vincentia Schroeter as our new partner.

We would like to invite everyone in the membership of the IIBA to contribute to a continuously prosperous development of this journal, whatever you have to offer.

I hope you all enjoy reading this issue!

Zürich, 01.12.2005
Margit Koemeda

Reich, Lowen and the IIBA: Facing the Challenge of a Conflict-Ridden World¹

Virginia Wink Hilton

Summary

This paper addresses the double emphases of the 2005 International Conference: the theme of »Human Nature and Conflict Resolution« and the 50th anniversary of the IIBA. The author summarizes the lives and the contributions of Wilhelm Reich and Alexander Lowen in light of the theme, and as prelude to the development of the International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis. Particular attention is given to the major conflicts, both personal and socio-cultural, that arose in the lives of these men, and their differing responses to them. The question is addressed: *What can we glean from our history that may give us inspiration, and a realistic sense of direction for contributing to healing and to change in these conflict-ridden times?*

Key words: Wilhelm Reich, Alexander Lowen, History of IIBA, Socio-cultural conflict, Sexuality, Sexual Politics

Regardless of differing political perspectives, we can all agree that the times we live in are dangerous, baffling, and deeply discouraging. Daily we are overwhelmed by vivid accounts of violence and conflict in almost every part of the world. Although they are less bloody, we experience appalling and wrenching conflict here in the United States between political perspectives and lifestyles. And I am certain that there are those of us here who are discouraged and disillusioned by the conflicts that exist within our own Institute. And of course on a daily basis in our therapy practices, our clients bring their myriad of internal conflicts and traumas to us, hoping for resolution and change. It's a struggle not to be exhausted with it all, not to want to keep it simple and turn off the news. Forget external conflicts; the internal is quite enough, thank you very much!

Reich was keenly aware of man's internal conflicts but also had a life-long

¹ Address given at IIBA International Conference at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, May, 2005
Conference Theme: HUMAN NATURE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Virginia Wink Hilton

concern with the socio-cultural conflicts that both cause and reflect the internal ones. Lowen, while aware of the cultural conflicts of our day, chose to focus on the internal: healing the mind-body split in the individual. The Institute was formed to further this goal. But those who chose the theme for this conference hold the belief that we must address our internal conflicts, our organizational ones and those of the world we live in.

So we ask the question, what *can* we glean from the history of our founders' lives and the life of the Institute – the ideas, the successes, and the failures – that may give us inspiration, and a realistic sense of direction for contributing to healing and to change on all these levels in these conflict-ridden times?

Wilhelm Reich

[For Reich's story I have relied heavily on the brilliant biography by Myron Sharaf, published in 1983.]

Wilhelm Reich was born on March 24, 1897, and grew up on a large and prosperous farm in a northern province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father was stern and demanding in relation to his son, and fiercely jealous and abusive toward his wife. Reich's mother doted on Willy, and he in turn adored her.

Reich had a rather idyllic childhood on the farm that allowed him to observe and be stimulated by the natural phenomena of animals and plants, as well as human beings. Then, when he was around twelve years old, his mother began having an affair with his highly revered tutor who lived on the premises. Willy secretly spied on them, and eventually, apparently, revealed to his father what was taking place. As a result, the tutor was banished. Shortly after, his mother committed suicide. This tragic series of events no doubt had profound effects on Wilhelm, fueling some of his achievements on the one hand, and contributing to the complex and dark aspects of his personality on the other. Apparently, this crisis in his life at such a formative stage, was never dealt with fully in analysis.

Reich's father died of tuberculosis in 1914. After that, Reich managed the farm alone for a period until he was forced to flee when the Russian army invaded the countryside. He then went into the army in 1915 at age 18. In 1918, Reich went to Vienna for his professional education. There he quickly became immersed in the tremendous intellectual ferment of the time. He entered law school briefly, then switched to medicine. Soon he encountered Freud's young science, psychoanalysis.

Reich, Lowen and the IIBA: facing the challenge of a conflict-ridden world

Reich was profoundly impacted by the person of Freud, and Freud was apparently also impressed with Reich, because he referred patients to him by early 1920 when Reich was only twenty-three. At the same time, Freud did not accept him as a patient, to the deep disappointment of Reich. He was engaged in only two brief periods of psychoanalysis, both with analysts who ended up later bitterly disliking him and his ideas.

When Reich joined the analytic circle there was no training curriculum and few guidelines for doing psychoanalysis. Reich organized and presided over a technical seminar for his peers where he urged them to present particularly their failures. Over the next few years he expanded and combined existing ideas into a systematic character-analytic approach. He uniquely emphasized the necessity of accessing the negative transference and eliciting strong emotional expressions beneath the character resistance. So at a very young age Reich was making acknowledged contributions within the analytic circle. At the same time he was arguing that the goal of psychoanalysis was to achieve orgasmic potency. This was certainly a different emphasis from that of Freud and his other colleagues.

Following World War I, which left much devastation and poverty among the Austrian people, the country was highly polarized between the secular-minded Social Democrats who wanted reform, and the Christian Socialist party, which was heavily Catholic in religion, conservative in economics, and rural in constituency. [*The political situation in Austria at that time certainly bore some resemblance to the »red« and »blue« landscape of America today.*] Reich was drawn to the Youth movement of the Social Democrats.

In 1927 a group of WWI veterans who were members of an extreme right wing group within the Christian Socialist party, fired shots into a group of Social Democrats, killing a man and a small child. The accused perpetrators were brought to trial but acquitted. This angered the workers in Vienna who organized a large protest strike and marched to the courthouse in front of which they started a fire. Reich and his first wife, Annie, joined the protest, and when the police started shooting into the crowd, they ducked behind a tree. After three hours, 89 people were killed and over a thousand wounded. This was the event that radicalized Reich.

Thereafter, Reich became actively engaged in the political issues and social struggle of the left, which at that time included the Communist party, but he was also asking deeper questions about »mass psychology«, why people are drawn to one political perspective or another. »He gradually came to realize that the main problem lay in the character structure of the masses themselves, especially their fear of freedom and responsibility« (Sharaf p.127).

Virginia Wink Hilton

Meanwhile Reich began what he termed the »sex-pol« movement, which included the establishing of sex hygiene clinics. This effort was a kind of »community psychiatry«. His prolific speech-making metamorphosed from psychoanalytic theory to discussing the practical matters around sexuality. He went about the suburbs and rural areas, speaking to ordinary people about orgasm, contraception, a woman's right to choose abortion based on emotional and/or economic factors, and he inveighed against a sexual double standard for women. He emphasized affirming childhood sexuality rather than just tolerating it. He wanted to take a prophylactic approach to the neuroses: if children were allowed to express their sexuality rather than repressing it, they would grow up to be unarmored. He believed that it was the armoring that prevented a person from responding to social needs in a compassionate and humane way. And he believed that repressed sexuality was the source of many ills, including passivity in the face of authoritarianism, conflict of all sorts, and perverse and violent acts.

The political right responded by proclaiming the need for morality, law and order, and protection against those who would erode the values of the family. [*Does this sound familiar?*]

By 1930, Reich's analytic colleagues in Vienna, while positive toward his ideas regarding character defenses, were quite negative toward his emphasis on sexuality. And the Social Democratic party expelled him for being too critical of its leadership. So Reich moved to Berlin to join other young analysts (Otto Fenichel, Karen Horney, Eric Fromm), and where he expected his colleagues and the Communist party to be more open to his ideas as well as his social involvement.

In Berlin, which a few years later became the capital of fascism, Reich established the German Association for Proletarian Sex-Politics, which quickly grew to have 40,000 members. This group set about to establish sex clinics in several German cities. Get this: their goal was massive propaganda for birth control and free distribution of contraceptives; abolition of anti-abortion laws; freedom of divorce, elimination of prostitution, elimination of venereal diseases; avoidance of neuroses and sexual problems by a life-affirming education; training for doctors, teachers, social workers in matters relevant to sexual hygiene; treatment rather than punishment for sexual offenses; and protection of children and adolescents against adult seduction. He also encouraged adolescent sexuality as a natural, healthy expression, and the acceptance of childhood sexuality on the part of parents. [*Now, seventy-five years later, the U.S. government is doing its best to abolish sex education and replace it with abstinence training!*]