

CALATONIA and PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL INTEGRATION (2008)

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This therapeutic approach, devised and developed by Dr. Pethő Sándor (1916-1992), a Hungarian physician and psychologist who immigrated to Brazil in 1949, views man as a body-mind integrated unit, thus resembling what is presently called the holographic view of the universe. So far, we are still trying to overcome the false dichotomy originating from the mechanistic model of the scientism which has embodied occidental science and culture since the Renaissance. In philosophical terms, our outlook is based on principles from Classic and oriental philosophy (1). Recently, occidental physics took a giant qualitative leap in the theory of knowledge. They proved that the duality matter/energy, or body/mind, or time/space, or subject/universe, is nothing more than an approach derived from the observer's perception, being therefore conditioned and limited by his senses and consciousness.(2).

These philosophical and epistemological principles are present in the theoretical and practical work of C. G. Jung. The concept of collective unconscious frees man from the limitations of ego consciousness parameters, opening up new space and time dimensions. Jung's approach, which is also based on Phenomenology, aims at evading pre-established mental conditioning so as to facilitate a more wholesome relationship with the patient and with knowledge. "I do my best to avoid pre-judgement and ready-made methods that might stop me devising my own method; I am determined to act in accordance with what I am" (C. G. Jung - C. W.).

Pethő Sándor's point of view of man and health were similar to Jung's. Besides applying the already developed verbal approach to psychological contents, Sándor started utilizing stimulation to the patients' skin, a technique not utilized by Jung. It is worth mentioning that Jung made vast use of other "heterodox" (at the time) activities such as painting and music, and challenged fixed patterns of setting and schedule.

However, one can easily spot several citations in Jung's work that show his awareness of the bodily dynamics in relation to the psychological dynamics. "All we know is that body and psyche are the two constituents of living beings. Therefore, I would rather say that both act simultaneously, in a miraculous manner, and it is best to leave things like that, as we cannot imagine them as one. I have coined to myself a term to be able to refer to this simultaneous existence. In my opinion, there is a particular principle of active synchronicity in the world that makes certain events take place together as if they were one - but we're unable to grasp such integration."(3)

Wilhelm Reich also set parameters for our approach. He situated the psyche in the realm of the body, showing the fundamental role of touch in breaking down muscle and character armors and in liberating repressed energy.

From J. H. Schultz and his Autogenous Training, Sándor took up the notions of "organismic psychotherapy" and "psychophysiological reconditioning". Like Sándor, while treating war patients Schultz developed practical ways of influencing the

psychophysiological organism, facilitating it's rebalancing and reorganization within a healthier and unique rhythm. The stimuli each used to promote the alteration of the psychophysiological state varied, though; whereas Schultz made use of sounds (commands), Sándor introduced skin stimuli - Calatonia. (4)

Our method aims at reintegrating the patient with himself in many ways. First, body therapy reconnects the person to his immediate nature, the physical body, which is the origin of the bodily ego, by arousing feelings and providing information, which, if adequately perceived, may guide him safely to health. In this sense, body therapy acts as a prophylactic instrument for health, by promoting self-care.

The techniques applied, Calatonia, Adjustment of Points of Support, and Subtle Touches, create a peculiar psychophysiological alteration. This alteration leads to an altered state of consciousness, a change in level from the usual ego functioning, with its own sensations and notions, diverse from those of the ego functioning in daily vigil. Such alteration facilitates experiencing different psychological contents. This helps to dissolve the ego's conditioning and to go beyond those thoughts, feelings and sensations typical of the mass culture in which we live.

Here is a path to a deeper and more authentic contact with aspects of our unconscious ego, the core of the personality named Self by Jung. Such reconnection is essential in the person's process toward individuation and full realization of the Self's potential., veiled and distorted in our culture by the ego's unbalanced wishes and goals. The ego pushes for actualization and so does the Self. The Self wants to fulfill itself, i. e. , fulfill the destiny of that individual to participate harmoniously integrated in that greater Being to which it belongs.

Man's conscious psyche is characteristically distorted in our culture : the inflated ego tries to control and determine the process of Being . Ego inflation is but an illusion, though. Man cannot fully understand Nature (both in its physical and psychological facets), let alone control it. He is part of it and functions according to its laws. Such illusion bears serious consequences: Nature resents man's unilateral, predatory action, and creates the resulting imbalance. As Jung said, it is the unconscious that determines whether I will be able to pronounce (or write) the next word.

The patient's re-union with his Nature through Calatonia comes about by means of several factors. Lying down, undressing and closing one's eyes are in themselves a symbolic and physiological change of the rhythm of the bodily and psychic functioning. Accepting the proposed touch and allowing oneself to experience perceptions permits the emergence of contents from inner layers of the psyche. Moreover, by provoking muscle relaxation and the balance of functions such as breathing and circulation, the touching stimulus complements the creation of the psychophysiological field that propitiates this experience.

The phenomenological field in which this work is carried out is created by the interaction between therapist and patient. This field activates the healing archetype and forms an "hermetic vessel" in which the psychophysiological energy mobilized will operate alterations and changes in both, the therapist and the patient. An unconditioned, non-usual, more archaic characteristic of our unconscious is mobilized through the type of touch used, on the soles of the feet, or along the spine. The archaic characteristic is also mobilized

through the use of primitive group configurations, the circle, clasped hands, dance and the emission of primordial sounds like "A."

Organismic therapy requires that the therapist too be willing to let go of pre-conceived ideas and intentions and open up to the process. What happens here is a process that confronts, promotes exchange, integrates and transcends both therapist and patient in targeting a third point, the energy of synthesis coming from the unconscious Self.

The therapist moves mostly along the axis sensation/intuition, in Jungian terminology. The therapist observes the patient and "listens" to him through the tips of his fingers. The therapist allows the impressions from his unconscious to come through the intuitive function and socially conditioned thoughts and feelings take second place. Later, the therapist allows the ego to participate in the process of working out and integrating what first emerged.

The body reveals and unveils the inner universe through touch. The autonomic nervous system is operating. In other words, consciousness has no role here. "There is evidence that different segments of the autonomous nervous system participate in the formation of images and that the cerebellum is important in the coordination of their fragments. It appears that each visceratom, neurotom, myatom, or dermatom shapes a certain quality or intensity of psychic dynamism which tends to manifest itself as an image in given stages of the afferent or efferent work." [Sándor,1974].

"By experiencing the emergence of calatonic images, their changes, overlappings or fusions, one grows aware of their integrative dynamics and inherent purpose. They bring about the one content which is most fit for the solution of the patient's current problems, comprising the necessary areas and - as Jung would say - constellating from the respective potential spheres." [Sándor,1974].

Observing attentively the process that takes place through body work is very important for psychological development. Actually, that is the psyche's religious function (religion = religere, re-reading) in Otto's conception, one adopted by Jung to describe religion as a psychological instinct. In that sense, disregarding religion would originate the physical and psychic imbalance of the second half of life. Religion is observing oneself; bodywork furnishes the means to do it.

Notes

[i](1) To cite but a few: Socrates, "Know thyself"; Plato, "The idea originates the Being"; Heraclitus, "All flows ... All comes from Logos". Among Egyptians, Hermes Trimegistus, "Beneath the representations of Universe, Time, Space, and Mobility lies Primordial Reality, the Essential Truth" and "As above, As below". As for Orientals, "The unity of life and awareness is Tao", as shown by Jung in "The secret of the golden flower".

(2) See bibliography.

(3) Jung, "*Tavistock Lectures*" in *Collected Works XVIII-1* - Routledge and Kegan Paul

(4) Sándor, "*Técnicas de Relaxamento*" - Vetor

(This text is part of the reading material required in the first year of the course Psychological Kinesiology at Instituto Sedes Sapientiae - São Paulo - Brazil).

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