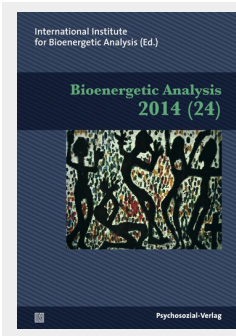


*Léia M. Cardenuto*

# Creativity and Grounding in a Liquid World



## **Bioenergetic Analysis**

24. Volume, No. 1, 2014, Page 85–103

Psychosozial-Verlag

DOI: [10.30820/0743-4804-2014-24-85](https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2014-24-85)



Submissions for consideration for the next volume of *Bioenergetic Analysis* must be sent to the editor (vincentiaschroeter@gmail.com) between June 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

Bibliographic information of Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (The German Library)  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;  
detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

2014 Psychosozial-Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Gießen, Germany  
[info@psychosozial-verlag.de](mailto:info@psychosozial-verlag.de)  
[www.psychosozial-verlag.de](http://www.psychosozial-verlag.de)



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). This license allows private use and unmodified distribution, but prohibits editing and commercial use (further information can be found at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). The terms of the Creative Commons licence only apply to the original material. The reuse of material from other sources (marked with a reference) such as charts, illustrations, photos and text extracts may require further permission for use from the respective copyrights holder.

Cover design & layout based on drafts by Hanspeter Ludwig, Wetzlar

<https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2014-24>

ISBN (PDF-E-Book) 978-3-8379-6799-9

ISBN (Print) 978-3-8379-2372-8

ISSN (Online) 2747-8882 · ISSN (Print) 0743-4804

# Creativity and Grounding in a Liquid World

## Building and Maintaining a Social Clinic in São Paulo, Brazil

Léia M. Cardenuto

### Abstracts

#### English

After more than 14 years dwelling with the challenges of a Social Clinic in Focused Bioenergetics we intend to share our experience with the bioenergetic therapists community. In all those years we have learned much about the difficulties of establishing a line of work suitable to use the bioenergetic approach with troubled people in troubled social environments, in particular those outside of our consumer society. We had to rely more on a progressive approach than on a regressive one in order to bring the analytical process to a successful outcome, consistent with the focused bioenergetics method we adopted. In this process we did not abandon our psychoanalytic-based approach, but humbly adapted our understanding to terms that could be agreed between therapists and clients, establishing what we call the symbolic universe sharing. We were very moved by the theme chosen for the present<sup>1</sup> conference, “The grounded body as a safe place in difficult times”, and felt we should attend. This is the first time a conference addressed exactly our difficulty. The new concepts that were developed during this process will be presented.

*Key words:* social clinic, liquid modernity, focused bioenergetics, visibility, consistency

---

<sup>1</sup> The IIBA conference held in Palermo, Sicily in May, 2014, where this paper was presented.

## **Kreativität und Grounding (German)**

Nachdem wir uns über 14 Jahre lang mit den Herausforderungen der fokussierten bioenergetischen Behandlung in einer Sozialen Ambulanz gestellt haben, möchten wir unsere Erfahrungen mit unseren bioenergetischen KollegInnen teilen. In all den Jahren haben wir viel über die Schwierigkeiten gelernt, geeignete Arbeitskonzepte für die Anwendung des bioenergetischen Ansatzes bei psychisch belasteten Menschen in gestörten sozialen Umfeldern zu implementieren, vor allem für Menschen, die außerhalb unserer Konsumwelt leben. Wir mussten uns mehr auf eine progressive als auf eine regressive Herangehensweise stützen, um den analytischen Prozess zu einem erfolgreichen Ergebnis zu bringen, in Übereinstimmung mit der fokussierten bioenergetischen Methode, die wir uns zu eigen gemacht hatten. Bei diesem Prozess haben wir die psychoanalytisch fundierte Herangehensweise nicht aufgegeben, aber wir haben unser Verständnis bescheiden an Begriffe angepasst, auf die sich TherapeutInnen und PatientInnen einigen konnten, wodurch wir ein so genanntes gemeinsames symbolisches Universum etablierten. Das Thema, das für die Konferenz in Palermo gewählt wurde, berührte uns sehr: „Der geerdete Körper als sicherer Ort in schwierigen Zeiten“. Und wir hatten das Gefühl, wir sollten teilnehmen. Zum ersten Mal spricht eine Konferenz genau unsere Schwierigkeiten an. Es werden die neuen Konzepte, die wir in diesem Prozess entwickelt haben, vorgestellt.

## **Créativité et enracinement dans un monde fluctuant (French)**

Après plus de 14 ans à faire face aux défis posés par une Clinique sociale dont l'axe principal d'intervention est l'analyse bioénergétique, nous souhaitons partager notre expérience avec la communauté des thérapeutes en analyse bioénergétique. Durant toutes ces années, nous avons beaucoup appris relativement aux difficultés que peut représenter l'instauration d'une modalité d'intervention appropriée en analyse bioénergétique auprès d'une clientèle perturbée vivant dans un environnement également perturbé, en marge de notre société de consommation. Il nous a fallu faire appel à une approche davantage progressive que régressive de manière à pouvoir mener à bien le processus analytique, en accord avec la méthode axée sur l'analyse bioénergétique que nous avons adoptée. Dans ce processus, nous n'avons pas abandonné notre approche fondée sur la psychanalyse, mais nous avons humblement adapté notre compréhension à des termes pouvant faire l'objet d'une entente commune entre les thérapeutes et les clients, instaurant par là même ce que nous appelons l'univers symbolique de partage. Nous avons été très touchés par le choix

du thème de ce congrès (*N. d. T. il s'agit du 22<sup>e</sup> congrès de l'IIBA à Palerme, en juin 2013*), «Le corps enraciné, un lieu de sécurité dans des temps difficiles», et nous avons senti qu'il nous fallait y assister. C'était la première fois qu'un congrès prenait en compte le type de difficulté que nous rencontrons. Les nouveaux concepts qui ont été développés durant ce processus seront présentés ici.

### **Creatividad y Arraigo en un Mundo Líquido (Spanish)**

Después de más de 14 años dándole vueltas a los desafíos en una Clínica Social en Bioenergética Enfocada, pretendemos compartir nuestra experiencia con la comunidad de terapeutas bioenergéticos. En todos estos años hemos aprendido mucho acerca de las dificultades para establecer una línea de trabajo conveniente que utilice el enfoque bioenergético con personas afligidas en ambientes sociales dificultosos, en particular aquellos fuera de nuestra sociedad de consumo. Hemos tenido que recurrir a una aproximación más progresiva que a una regresiva para lograr un resultado exitoso en el proceso analítico, consistente con el método de enfoque bioenergético que hemos adaptado. Durante este proceso no hemos abandonado nuestro enfoque psicoanalítico, sino que hemos adaptado humildemente nuestro entendimiento a las condiciones que se pueden acordar entre los terapeutas y clientes, estableciendo lo que llamamos el universo simbólico compartido. Nos conmovió el tema que se escogió para la Conferencia actual “El cuerpo arraigado como un sitio seguro en tiempos difíciles” y sentí que debíamos asistir. Esta es la primera vez que una conferencia abordaba exactamente nuestra dificultad. En este ensayo se presentan los nuevos conceptos que se desarrollaron durante este proceso.

### **Creatività e grounding in un mondo liquido (Italian)**

Dopo più di 14 anni in cui ci siamo cimentati con le sfide di una Clinica Sociale ad orientamento bioenergetico desideriamo condividere la nostra esperienza con la comunità dei terapeuti bioenergetici. In tutti questi anni abbiamo imparato molto sulla difficoltà di stabilire una linea di lavoro adatto ad utilizzare il metodo bioenergetico con persone in difficoltà, appartenenti ad ambienti sociali difficili, in particolare quelli al di fuori della nostra società dei consumi. Abbiamo dovuto fare affidamento più su un approccio progressivo che su uno regressivo al fine di ottenere risultati positivi, coerenti con il metodo bioenergetico che abbiamo adottato. In questo processo noi non abbandoniamo il nostro approccio basato analiticamente,

ma con umiltà abbiamo adattato la nostra comprensione a termini che potessero essere di concordati tra terapeuti e pazienti, stabilendo ciò che chiamiamo condizione di un universo simbolico. Siamo rimasti molto commossi per il tema scelto per il presente convegno, “Il corpo radicato come luogo sicuro in tempi difficili”<sup>2</sup> e sentivamo di voler partecipare. Questa è la prima volta che una conferenza affronta esattamente le nostre difficoltà. Verranno presentati i nuovi concetti che sono stati sviluppati nel corso di questo processo.

## **Criatividade e Grounding em um Mundo liquido (Português)**

Depois de mais de 14 anos lidando com os desafios de uma Clínica Social em Bioenergética gostaríamos de partilhar nossa experiência com a comunidade terapêutica bioenergética. Durante estes anos aprendemos bastante para criar uma maneira de trabalhar que pudesse trazer a bioenergética para a população mais afetada socialmente e mais necessitada, aqueles que se encontram à margem da sociedade de consumo. Tivemos que nos basear em uma abordagem mais progressiva do que regressiva, para conseguir um bom resultado, consistente com o método da bioenergética focada que adotamos. Neste processo, não abandonamos a base psicanalítica da nossa abordagem, mas adaptamos nossa compreensão a termos e conceitos que pudessem ser compreendidos tanto pelos clientes quanto pelos terapeutas, estabelecendo o que chamamos de universo simbólico compartilhado. Ficamos muito mobilizados pelo tema deste congresso<sup>3</sup>, “The grounded body as a safe place in difficult times”, e achamos que deveríamos comparecer com nosso trabalho. É a primeira vez que um congresso trata exatamente das nossas dificuldades. Os novos conceitos que desenvolvemos durante esses anos serão apresentados.

### **1. Introduction**

During more than 14 years we developed a Social Clinic in Focused Bioenergetics, within the IABSP (Bioenergetic Analysis Institute of São Paulo). In all those years we have learned a lot about the difficulties of establishing a line of work able to adapt the bioenergetic approach to troubled people in troubled social environments, in particular those who live apart from our consumer society.

---

**2** La conferenza dell'Ilba che si è tenuta a Palermo, in Sicilia, dove questo lavoro è stato presentato

**3** Congresso do IIBA em Palermo, Sicilia, Maio, 2013, onde este trabalho foi apresentado.

We had to rely more on a progressive approach than on a regressive one in order to bring the analytical process to a successful outcome, consistent with the focused bioenergetics method we adopted. In this process we did not abandon our psychoanalytic-based approach, but humbly adapted our understanding to terms that could be agreed between therapist and client, establishing what we call the symbolic universe sharing.

In this paper we describe the concepts and exercises that were developed during this process. As bioenergetic therapists, we developed a way of understanding the human being as an individual who has certain basic needs that have to be met, for her/him to be able to completely express her/him self.

We will be talking about psychological and physical needs, always. Of course, some of those basic needs will be provided with more or less ease depending on the environment. We cannot say that those needs depend entirely on environmental or cultural matters, as for example the need to feel safe.

Sigmund Freud, in his late work called “Civilization and its discontents”, locates the basic human conflict as being between his impulsive animal nature and the repressive rules of civilization. This can be described as the difficult choice between the protected life in community and the life in the wilderness, with no comfort or assurance, but without the conventions and boundaries of society.

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes this process as a challenge that I summarize as “how to be grounded in a Liquid World”. He states that we trade our feeling of liberty for the feeling of safety, but in that trade we lose our ability to deal with the new and the unexpected.

Bauman’s Liquid World can be described as the place where jobs have no security; velocity dominates communications; relationships appear to be safer when virtual; and bonds get insubstantial. In this Liquid World old icons and ideals are replaced by consumer needs. Paradoxical dilemmas bring discontent: people fear solitude, but also fear relationships. Consumerism is accompanied by feelings of emptiness. Seek for rapidity leads to the consumption of anxiety taming drugs.

From the point of view of individual psychology, safety as a basic need has been much more studied after the works of Melanie Klein, Winnicott, and many psychoanalysts that continued Freud’s work. On the other hand, over the last 100 years Social Psychology has been studying the way individuals react to the effects of political instabilities and wars.

Some countries live in a permanent state of insecurity, and war is not the only threat because there is misery and violence everywhere. This situation hits everybody; no matter if poor or rich, but the poor have fewer resources do deal with their problems. When we began our work at the Social Clinic, the main purpose was to look at these

people through the Bioenergetic Approach to help us do our job in helping them. The task was not easy and we came by many difficulties, but learned a lot too.

We were very moved by the theme chosen for the present conference “The grounded body as a safe place in difficult times” and felt that we should attend. This is the first time a conference addresses exactly our difficulty.

Zygmunt Bauman, who was mentioned above, may not be new to some of you. He is the sociologist who describes well the actual state of bonds. That is why he is so important for psychotherapists, because we deal all the time with bonds and their vicissitudes.

In order to achieve a perception of increased safety, urban communities started physically building high fences, or walls, around them enclosed in high-security condominiums, which apparently offered the sought after safety. Those walls, instead of protecting against fear, increased the lack of safety. The need to create a security perception comes from the feeling that “others”, different from “us” can harm us.

This is one of the basic strategies of global capitalism. Beyond social class discrimination, discrimination against immigrants, exiled from their own cultures in search for better opportunities, is now the major threat in large metropolitan areas. They are part of the “industry of the fear” that nurtures these differences, while offering security equipment and higher walls.

Bioenergetic therapists face those problems in several guises: frequent panic crises, professional insecurities, fear of relationships, and at the same time, fear of solitude. In our practices we deal with those situations as individual problems, but we know they have very clear social sources.

## **2. Threats to our Creativity**

According to Wilhelm Reich, true satisfaction comes from the orgasmic surrender and from the balance between love, work, and knowledge, given that this work is a meaningful and freely chosen activity. From that alternating process between pleasure and work, our energy will flow, without blocks, in an ideal world.

Today, some nostalgic souls can see their old icons losing their strength. That creative energy, responsible for many social changes, is being traded for consuming desires, and at the same time, bonding and commitments traded for virtual relationships, apparently easier to achieve and sustain, in insubstantial nets of belonging, where nothing is asked and you can connect or disconnect with just a click.

Speed begins to be considered an important asset, but at the same time, a tiring effort, as Bauman points out. Promising to conduct us to constant movement and



free flow of energy, *Speed* pushes us to “run” after our desire, our relationships, with no permanence, showing that breaking up is easy, and thus bringing more anxiety to our life in the modern liquid world. Speed, changing, flow, can be virtues or vices.

Desires change and can become all consuming, resulting in: “to have” in order “to be”, to live to be able to consume, and people seen as products. This can generate more anxiety and anguish that have to be calmed down by consuming even more. The risk of being excluded from the world of consumption is perceived as a risk of ceasing to exist, which builds anxiety, and if you fear that, you will get more and more anxious and ill, increasing the toughness of the characterological armor.

Another way to look at this is to understand the problem of consumerism as a neurotic process, as being a form of exclusion that keeps people apart from the creativity process. Hector Fiorini, a psychoanalyst, author of several books about psychotherapy techniques, is a Professor at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, (his country), and gives supervision also in Spain and Brazil. His texts about creativity help the understanding of these matters. He attributes the excessively psychopathological approach of psychoanalysis to the lack of emphasis in the “healthy” psychic processes, which he calls “forces that manifest themselves as tendencies, like tendencies to health, to grow, to development, to change, to acquire new abilities or new identity elements, tendencies that may be individual or of a group” (Fiorini, “Estruturas e Abordagens em Psicoterapias” p. 9). For him, creativity may be viewed as the effect of a system of drives and psychic dynamics that push in the direction of the unconscious mind. He says that we could imagine a different psychic mechanism that would drive the creativity process, something distinct from the Freudian principles of Pleasure and Reality, that would be something intermediate, closer to what Winnicott describes as transitional space (Winnicott, “Playing and Reality”, 1972).

Social Sciences analyze insecurity from the perspective of being excluded from consumption, i. e., loss of material prowess, of job, generated by the “liquid modernity” where the worker is discardable and there is no security. The feeling of insecurity is enhanced by the fact that the modern citizen has “unlearned” to be creative, and the search for new solutions in troubled times depend on the ability to be creative. Fiorini cites Lowen, who, in his book “Pleasure”, emphasizes the hypothesis of the existence of basic dynamic processes, or unconscious, as always present in healthy persons.

Lowen believed that the pleasure of creating something was more important for the human being than passively consuming something created by others. He states that creativity is a natural human process; but that it can be blocked when vital flows are also blocked.

The “globalitarian world”<sup>4</sup>, is a threat to our creativity. The pleasure to create, or produce something, seems wan compared to the offer of renewed pleasures associated to the goods to be consumed. How do you compare writing a small text, a verse, accomplish a good therapy session with your client (or your therapist), cook a new dish, with buying a new smart phone, or a new multi-pixel camera, or computer. The pleasure of the acquisition may not be so complete but feels much safer than doing things by oneself. The paradigm of security is to be home, safe and protected, and making virtual contacts to anybody, anywhere, anytime. That is something computers and phones can promise and deliver, anywhere, guaranteed. Real contacts at body level are considered as potential threats to some people. They fear getting contaminated, losing their individuality, and, in the end, their precious freedom.

We should listen to the modern slogans very carefully. We can join them, but with restrictions. We must develop ourselves without losing our character, and some of the so-called “modern appeals” are fakes that hide old schemes of subjugation and imprisonment.

Another author that deals with the theme of Modernity is Italo Calvino, who wrote the “The Nonexistent Knight”, an excellent portrait of a rigid character, and also “The Cloven Viscount”, about ambiguity and character splits in schizoid and psychopathic personalities. In his last work, “Six Memos For The Millennium” he establishes some paradigms for contemporary literature that seem to fit well into psychotherapy. He sets premises built to resist the impoverishment of the language. He states, “only literature can build the antibodies against the expansion of the language plague” (Calvino, 1994). Those premises may serve us well and will be presented next.

### **3. Six Proposals for this Millennium**

Calvino listed six virtues to guide not only literature, but also every human creative manifestation, which would act as antidotes against authoritarian globalization.

They are:

- Lightness
- Quickness
- Exactitude
- Visibility
- Multiplicity
- Consistency

---

<sup>4</sup> “Globalitarian world” – term created by Milton Santos, Brazilian geographer, in his work “Território e Sociedade” (Territory and Society), 2000.

These premises were to be presented for the first time in a talk at Harvard University, but this talk was prevented by his untimely death. They constitute a set of ethical, more than aesthetical, propositions and so should be of interest to be employed in psychotherapy. Calvino's language, although literary, constitutes an interesting way to illustrate the ideology that founded our Social Clinic.

### 3.1 Lightness

Calvino's paradigm is the myth of Perseus and Medusa, whom Perseus killed by cutting off her head. In this version of the myth, Medusa had a woman's head on a dragon's body, with snakes for hair, and was feared since her gaze turned whoever looked at her into stone. Only a hero could defeat her, and Perseus, already famous for other feats, was aided by the Gaias. They lent him winged sandals, which could take him up to Medusa's height. From up there, his plan was to cut her throat with his sword, without looking at her, using the reflections on his polished shield to guide his blow. And he did so. As the legend goes, later he carried her head in a bag and used it as a weapon by showing it to his enemies. Perseus' lightness: without this feature, his winged sandals lifting his weight, Perseus would not be able to accomplish his feat. The myth of the petrifying gaze, that immobilizes and kills, is still alive in our unconscious.

Reich created the concept of body armor, our counterpart to the idea of turning into stone. Following this parallel with the myth, we can say that Freud, Reich, and Lowen, to fight against the stiffening of the society, proposed a lightness-based solution. Psychotherapy creates the possibility of changing the point of view, as if we had winged sandals to hover and look at what is dampening our spirit from another angle.

What follows is a case from one of our therapists.

The client was a doctor from a children's Intensive Care Unit, who developed a multiple sclerosis that prevented her from doing most activities, including her work. She lived with her parents, who both had mental problems and all were supported by her social security income. They were all compulsive collectors and the lack of space at the house was so intense that she could not even stretch on her bed to sleep. When she arrived for therapy she could not be touched, so intense were the pains in her body. The therapist was at a loss, but during a supervision session with Liane Zink she related how sad she was by the unkempt look of the patient, who was not even able to comb her long, straight black hair of Japanese progeny. The supervisor suggested to the therapist that she comb the patient's hair during the session. This elicited a deep intimacy between them, allowing for several confessions and catharses that led to

changes in both the patient and the therapist. This may be an example where a light approach succeeded in dealing with a heavy situation.

Lightness may not be enough to deal with all the complexities we find, and Calvino's second proposal may be useful for other purposes.

## 3.2 Quickness

Calvino tells us about short stories and jokes, and how they combine themes so diverse and intense, with such rhythm and flow that they seem to be enhanced by the spare use of words.

Concerning psychotherapy we can ask: how to deal with themes that are frequently very disturbing during the period of one session.

Reich believed in the logic of the function of the orgasm, where all living bodies should obey an energetic flow regulated by this function: excitation-charge-discharge-relaxation. The flow of a sexual intercourse, of a song, of a conference, or even of a therapy session is, to Reich, something that can be scientifically observed, like a mathematical function that evolves with time. Going back to the Greek myths, what type of time would that be, Kronos or Kairos? Would it be Time of the clock, with passing minutes and hours, which are inexorable and represented by Kronos, devourer of his own offspring; or Time for transformation represented by Kairos, who rules the change of seasons and the organic flows?

Liquid modernity takes away from us the time of Kairos while throwing us in the arms of Kronos, the ravenous god. It is hard to be precise and choose the correct timing for a decision. We always seem to be not perfectly ready. Questions we ponder are: When to consider a task finished, how to interrupt a defensive verbose speech, how to conclude a therapeutic process.

### 3.2.1 Addressing The Time-Limited Problem of Social Clinics at SAPS

We are a department of the IABSP. As in other bioenergetic institutes, we deal with training of bioenergetic therapists in Brazil. The majority of these students already has, or intends to have a private practice. In Brazil the social security does not provide psychotherapy at low cost for all people who need it. At the same time, several professionals finish their training and don't have clients to initiate their practice. To try to fill the gap between professionals and clients we started a Social Clinic at the IABSP, in a model that exists in various Institutes that offer graduate courses. They are called School Clinics, and their motivation, sometimes, is only to provide clients for the students to practice with.

To create the SAPS, Serviço de Atendimento Psicoterapêutico Social, (Social Psychotherapeutic Service) we based our work on the experience we had at other institutions. In all of them there were some difficult problems to solve. First, in some of these clinics, the client was not the priority; the training process of the students was the priority. This prioritization led to overlooking some aspects of the therapeutic process. For instance, serious problems can happen when the client is not ready to finish the therapy but the therapist finishes his/her training, and the patient is transferred to another therapist. An example of this situation happened in one of these institutions, where the patient was passed from one student to another as the groups graduated. There was a particular patient who had been in treatment for eight years, and was already an expert on the several possible diagnostics he had during this period. What shocked us was not his cleverness about his process, but the fact that, in all those years, he had not been able to improve his condition at all.

As a corollary of this problem, we had to deal with the time frame with limits. So we had to create a method with a time limit, that could help prevent the client staying in therapy for good, not only for his well being, but because he is not supposed to please the therapist in need of a client.

As we started to study the field, we noticed that there is a great amount of literature about brief therapeutic intervention, but our interest was captured by the idea of focused therapy, as proposed by Hector Fiorini, cited above. From his supervisions we understood that to work in a focus-based way requires being attentive to the social environment of our clients, their family, group and society.

In a Social Clinic we believe that we are bound to consider the therapeutic process from the point of view of the client. Also, we believe we should always be careful not to be confounded by the task of teaching psychotherapy to the students, and maintain very clear boundaries, settings and therapeutic agreements. These themes take us to the exactitude.

### **3.3 Exactitude**

Calvino illustrates this theme with Maat, goddess of measure and justice, represented by a feather, which, even though lightweight, unbalances the scale toward the pan where it rests.

The concept of focus, basis of the focused bioenergetic therapy, aims to join both virtues of quickness and exactitude, which must work together so that the intensity of the intervention is not lost. Accuracy in tuning the focus, in the diagnosis, and,

finally, in the development of the treatment, are the keys to optimize the time of a psychotherapy (H. Fiorini).

### 3.3.1 Addressing Brief Therapy in the Social Clinic at SAPS

Of course some cases are not suitable for brief therapy. We try to sort those out in our assessment during the initial interview. For instance, when we spot a borderline personality or some other problem that will need much more attention than we can offer, we refer the case to other clinics. It is not always that one can evaluate a patient in one interview, and we have had some cases that needed a different approach, like seeing them more frequently and for more than one year, and we learned a lot with them.

We offer individual sessions to our clients, 50 to 60 minutes in duration, in weekly sessions, during one year. The choice of this period was arbitrary, but we wanted to span a whole period in the patient's life (a complete cycle of seasons, holidays, anniversaries, etc.), while keeping a time limit. We divide this period in 4 "moments": 1) focus and bonding; 2) building new grounding and experiencing; 3) accomplishing and maintaining new achievements; and 4) preparing client and therapist for the ending of the relationship and departing. Those moments will be described in more detail below.

There is also a fifth moment that we call "follow up", because we ask our clients to come back for interviews 3, 6 and 9 months after the therapy is finished to report about how they are doing.

As did Reich, who searched for the best intervention for each specific case, Lowen also looked for technical accuracy in each specific exercise. Developing characterological maps helps in understanding the dynamics of each particular situation, and in identifying the different character types. The search for accurate diagnosis makes use of theoretical and practical instruments, like body reading, energetic reading, and character analysis.

## 3.4 Visibility

Calvino makes use of many metaphors, and one of his favorites is that of the movies as places we can visit and at the same time be transformed. Movies are made in a way that makes us feel like both actors and spectators of our lives, and of others lives as well.

Before starting to work at a social clinic, we asked ourselves about our role in our client's lives. Our psychoanalytic background led us to believe that psychotherapeutic

processes are endless, and our need for this kind of self-knowledge, unlimited. We are not able to suppose that other people can do without it, and although they have small budgets, their other resources may not be poor.

We learned that to build a focus we must not only listen to the client's complaint, but also try to see him/her in his/her own context, and try to build a common understanding. We developed the concept of symbolic horizon sharing, based on the philosophical concept of "fusion of horizons" of Hans-Georg Gadamer, a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher.

### 3.4.1 Moment 1: Focus and Bonding Using Symbolic Horizon: Case Example from SAPS Clinic

Building a focus using symbolic horizon sharing can be illustrated by the following case: a therapist brought to supervision the problem she was having with a client, a young woman working as cashier at a parking lot. The client came to see her, referred by a male friend that had lent her Lowen's book, a translation of "The Physical Dynamics of Character Structure". She came to her first session with that book in hand, said she had read it and showed her annotations. Her complaint was to be able to have orgasms, the way Dr. Lowen said they should be.

The therapist heard her story and noticed that the patient was in a vulnerable situation. She worked at a parking garage where her boss abused her. They had intercourse in very inadequate places, as cars, staircases, etc. She lived in a small house with her son, a six-year old boy, and some neighbors that used to ask for her sexual favors. She told the therapist some stories that made the therapist wonder if the boy was also being abused, because the client had to leave him with those same neighbors to go to work.

The therapist was in a difficult situation because she could not accept the client's demand, to her it seemed totally disconnected. She presented the case in supervision, and we suggested that she ask her patient about the meaning of "orgasm" to her. When she explained, the therapist noticed that what she really missed was to be well treated, brought to a nice and clean place, where she could feel like a human being. That understanding brought the therapist much closer to the client, their symbolic horizons became much more attuned, and the process developed.

The process of Focused Bioenergetics is divided into four moments, with the duration of, more or less, three months each. The first moment is when therapist and client meet and try to build a focus for the therapeutic process. To do that we use our ability to build a common symbolic horizon, which is necessary to establish a focus.

The focus is built over the client's complaint and the mutual understanding of the client's problem, together with character and body reading, enhanced by the use of

the somagram technique<sup>5</sup>. This is the task of this first moment. As an example, in the case described above the client and therapist agreed that the focus should be on the possibility to build better ground for the client, so she could live in a less threatening situation. The therapy ended before one year, when the client moved to a smaller town where she had relatives to help her with her son.

### 3.4.2 Second, Third, and Fourth Moments

In the second moment we deal with the strengthening of a bond to allow for surpassing difficulties that can emerge: transferences, counter-transferences, collusions, etc. This process will take some sessions, even months, and this will be done with the help of psychoanalytic understanding, body consciousness and bioenergetic exercises.

During the third moment we try to help the patient consolidate new defenses, postures, and states of well being.

Then we move to the fourth moment when we deal with the farewell. Since the beginning the patient knows that the work will end in one year, but, although we hope it is not abrupt, we know that separations are always difficult and need time to be dealt with. Sometimes, many things happen in that phase that make it difficult to end the therapy in one year sharp, and we extend it some more. What we expect is that the patient perceives that he/she is already walking by him/herself, using all he/she has learned, and that usually reinforces the positive aspect of the separation. In cases of patients with borderline characteristics he/she might need more time with the same therapist or we might refer the patient to group therapy.

During the whole process a multi-professional team that involves supervisors, psychiatrists, group and family therapists, etc. supports the therapist. This directs us to Calvino's next proposal.

## 3.5 Multiplicity

Calvino proposes that the modern novel can be used as an encyclopedia, a method for achieving knowledge and mostly as a net of connections among facts, people, and experiences. He does not accept that to make the world orderly, to get rid of the apparent mess, we must lose the world's intrinsic complexity.

Ilya Prigogine, the 1977 Chemistry Nobel, says: "A Science that proceeds

---

**5** Somagram: This technique that joins body consciousness and drawing is based in the work of Stanley Keleman, and integrated to our bioenergetic techniques. Zoca Freire, Lucia Magano, Karin de Marwal and Marina Pedroso have already presented it at international conferences.



analyzing everything in fragments, small portions, isolating objects cannot deal with complexity orders”.

### 3.5.1 A SAPS Case Example of a Complex Process

The patient was brought in by his father, who was also a Clinic patient. The son had just turned 18 years old and was under disciplinary measures, accused of being a pedophile because he had pictures of adolescents on his computer, and was linked to a pedophile net on the web.

It was not a case for a focused therapy in one year, but it was an example of the involvement of a lot of professionals, from SAPS and other institutions, that were able to deal with the case. His family situation was chaotic and he had several compulsive behaviors, such as Internet, food, drink, and a specific kind of social phobia. His insecurity increased when he was arrested and kept under custody for a week, and this was noticed in the media. After that he seldom left home. Each monthly contact with the judge made him worse. He started to cut himself in the arms and legs, and twice attempted suicide by taking rat poison. Once he tried to jump from a 10<sup>th</sup> floor balcony.

His parents divorced when he was 10 years old and were not able to agree about the way to educate him. Both parents, after divorcing, lived with their respective mothers, and admitted, during a family therapy session, that the mothers decided everything they did, including the marriage. They both agreed that their son had been neglected but they accused each other. Limits proposed by one of them were ignored by the other and the son manipulated the situation in order to avoid responsibilities. He lived with his mother and his grandmother, to whom he had been “given” when she had lost her son, the patient’s uncle, a victim of AIDS. After one year of individual and family therapies, the situation changed completely. His mother’s mother left the city and he went to live with his father’s mother. Both his parents live alone. He has more autonomy and responsibility at his new home with his father’s mother.

In several moments along the process we had to assemble the professionals that were involved, like the patient’s psychiatrist, his father’s therapist, and the family’s therapist, all of them from SAPS. Besides those, we also contacted the psychologist responsible for his disciplinary measures, in order to articulate our actions. He started to feel more secure, and brought his parents to his therapy when he felt the need. His weight had reached 132 kg, but managed to lose 15 kg and is preparing for a bariatric surgery. He still does not want to work with his body, but in the last two years he did not attempt suicide or cut himself, resumed his studies and finished high school. A complex case like this needed a network of professionals that, as a team, could provide the patient with the “tonic envelope” described by Guy Tonella (2011).

To the multiplicity of themes, we responded with a multiplicity of resources. But it is not always possible to find such an ample integration. Sometimes we have to rely only on the consistency of our work.

### 3.6 Consistency

This is the part in his work (consistency) that Calvino did not write. He died before he could finish the job. But such an admirable intent should not be left incomplete and we can humbly try to imagine what he intended with this proposal. Probably the origin of the vocabulary will help.

Consulting the dictionary we found that consistency responds to two possible understandings. *“As synonym of conformity in the application of something, which is necessary for the sake of logic, accuracy or fairness.* The other meaning has more to do to our Liquid World, because the dictionary defines consistency as *the way in which a substance, typically a liquid, holds together; thickness or viscosity.*” The origin of the term is the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, denoting permanence of form.

As a liquid trying to get some form we began, in 1998, as a small group at the IABSP discussing new bioenergetic approaches, and we were interested in social and political questions, concerned with our country’s problems. Guided by Wilhelm Reich’s principles of intervening on the social scene through our knowledge and drive to help, we started to organize the seeds of a Social Clinic.

To our knowledge, the first psychoanalytic social clinic was Vienna’s Psychoanalytic Policlinic (Roudinesco and Plon, 1997, p. 802). It was founded by Sigmund Freud in 1922, and was the place where W. Reich began his work as first assistant, and started to build his “Analysis of Character”, which is considered his main work. Here are the difficulties Reich had to face, in his own words (my translation), “The consultations schedule was always full of people. There were industry workers, office clerks, students and farm workers. As we became known around the community, the need for psychotherapy was so intense that we almost could not attend to them all. Each psychoanalyst had agreed to give one daily session for free. But that was not enough...Later on I convinced the analysts to give a monthly contribution in money. I wanted to employ one or two physicians, to justify our title of Clinic. At that time, we believed that the treatment required one session a day, for at least six months. One thing became suddenly clear: psychoanalysis is not fit to be applied to the masses. The idea of preventing neurosis was not yet a purpose, and nobody could say anything about it.” (Reich, *A Função do Orgasmo*, 1978, p. 72/73)

### 3.6.1 Consistency and the Current Status of SAPS

To be able to attend more people than our private practices would allow, we started, at IABSP, to build a network of therapists that were interested in giving therapy in a non-profit setting. As the work began, we understood that the client needed to pay for his therapeutic process. Not to pay the usual prices we charge at our private practice, but after some time with the help of some social workers, we were able to define a social fee table, based on the client's financial situation.

At the beginning we thought we would attend very poor people. In fact those poor never showed up. Probably because their needs of basic things were more urgent and even to come to our place could be a difficulty. In fact we attend people that thought about psychotherapy as something they would never be able to get.

The patients pay something between 5 to 20% of a regular session. Eighty percent of this goes to the therapist as his fee. The SAPS retains the rest (20%) to build a fund. With this percentage we were able to bring H. Fiorini to Brazil, but as he knew about the social nature of the project he charged much less than he is used to charging. Some Bioenergetic trainers coming to Brasil were asked to give us each one supervision session. They always gladly agree, and when they knew about the project, never asked for a fee.

We are now 40 therapists, 10 CBTs, 6 trainers and supervisors, and 24 students of the third and fourth years of the course (bioenergetic training in IABSP is a 4-year process). Each therapist belongs to a small group of supervision, with 3 to 7 colleagues. Those groups are conducted by some of our supervisors, and each therapist can see up to 4 patients, beginning with one, for one year. After this first period he/she can apply for more patients. The supervisors do not charge any fees, and are rewarded just by being part of the program. We meet every month for case discussion and seminars, and those reunions are the opportunity to have all the members together and to discuss institutional themes that cannot be worked out at the small groups.

To be part of the social clinic is voluntary, but it became a beautiful way of teaching bioenergetics to our students. More than that, it gives them the sense of being part of something bigger, of being able to use their abilities to help others, which is very rewarding. As all the supervisors are trained in supervision and are also trainers at our Bioenergetic institute, the hours the students are supervised at the SAPS count for their CBT (certification as Bioenergetic Therapists) process.

These days the majority of our students are members of SAPS. Our methods and protocols are not new, but the way our work was organized was able to attract the students and give them a sense of belonging. That is why we consider creativity as the propeller of our jobs. The Social Clinic is a place where our students are trained in the

psychotherapeutic process. But we have other activities also, related to outreach, like, for instance, assisting students in low-income public schools in the area. For our institution, consistency is what is needed to ensure that these processes will not be abandoned as soon as our students feel secure about their professional skills. Therapists come and go, some stay, but the Institute remains, and so remains SAPS. As examples of continuity, we can cite the project's work with groups of adolescents at a nearby public school, which have been going on for almost five years and the four-year experience with exercise classes being given to the clients of a public mental health day-hospital. Some of these patients were also followed with somagrams to estimate their changes and development.

Consistency also takes us to sustainability, related directly to grounding, which is one of our main concepts in bioenergetics. Our grounding at SAPS is felt as our desire to be part of processes where we can be socially useful.

In all these cases, a geographer that was cited above, Milton Santos explains what moved us to continue this social work. He says: "To oppose the belief that we are small and can do so little, compared to the enormous task the globalitarian world proposes, there is the certainty that we CAN produce the ideas that allow the world to be changed."

## Bibliography

- Bauman, Z.: "O Mal Estar na Pós Modernidade" (1997). Ed Zahar, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.
- Bauman, Z.: "Modernidade Líquida" (2000). Ed. Zahar, Rio de Janeiro. Brasil
- Bauman, Z.: "Comunidade" (2001). Ed. Zahar, Rio de Janeiro. Brasil.
- Bauman, Z.: "Amor Líquido" (2003). Ed. Zahar, Rio de Janeiro. Brasil.
- Bauman, Z.: "Medo Líquido" (2006). Ed. Zahar, Rio de Janeiro. Brasil.
- Bauman, Z.: "Vida Para Consumo" (2007). Ed Zahar, Rio de Janeiro. Brasil.
- Bauman, Z.: "The Art Of Life" (2008). Ed Zahar, Rio de Janeiro. Brasil.
- Calvino, I.: "Seis Propostas Para o Próximo Milênio" (1994) Ed. Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, Brasil.
- Calvino, I.: "Os Nossos Antepassados" (1990). Ed. Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, Brasil.
- Fiorini, H.: "Teoria e Técnicas de Psicoterapia" (1979). Ed. Francisco Alves, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.
- Fiorini, H.: "Estruturas e Abordagens em Psicoterapias" (2004). Ed M.Fontes, São Paulo, Brasil.
- Fiorini, H.: "Nuevas Lineas en Psicoterapias Psicoanalíticas.Seminarios em ACCIPIA" (1999) Ed. Prisma, Madrid, Espanha.
- Freud, S.: "El Malestar en la Cultura" (1930). CLVIII, Tomo III, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, Espanha.
- Lowen, A.: "O Corpo em Terapia" (1972). Summus Editorial, São Paulo, Brasil.
- Lowen, A.: "Bioenergética" (1975). Summus Editorial, São Paulo. Brasil.
- Lowen, A.: "Prazer: Uma Abordagem Criativa da Vida" (1976). Summus Editorial, São Paulo. Brasil.
- Lowen, A.: "Narcisismo" (1983). Summus Editorial, São Paulo. Brasil.
- Santos, M.: "Território e Sociedade, Entrevista com Milton Santos" (2000). Ed. Fundação Perseu Abramo, São Paulo, Brasil.

Tonella, G.: "The interactive self", The Clinical Journal of the IIBA, vol 11, number 2 (2000).

Winnicott, D.: "O Brincar e a Realidade" (1972). Ed. Zahar. São Paulo, Brasil.

Winnicott, D.: "A Criança e o seu Mundo" (1972). Ed. Zahar. São Paulo, Brasil.

## About the Author

Léia Cardenuto is a psychotherapist. She graduated in psychology at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1974. In 1980, at the Sedes Sapientiae Institute, also in Sao Paulo, Brazil, she had graduate studies in Reichian psychotherapy. She continued her academic career at this Institute, working initially as teacher and supervisor, then as coordinator of the Reichian Psychotherapy Course, and finally as Director of the Institute between 1995 and 1996. She co-edited the *Revista Reichiana*, an annual publication of the same Institute, between 1992 and 1999. She became a Certified Bioenergetic Analyst, in 1992, by Sociedade Brasileira de Análise Bioenergética; 1995–present: Supervisor and Local Trainer of the Instituto de Análise Bioenergética de São Paulo (IABSP) (Brazil); 1997–2001, Local Trainer of the Sociedade de Análise Bioenergética da Bahia (Brazil); 1998–present, Coordinator of the Social Clinic of the IABSP (Serviço de Atendimento Psicoterapeutico Social, SAPS).