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PSYCHOENERGETICS: Toward an integration of subtle energy work with the psychosynthesis perspective *

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Abstract

This paper addresses the emergence of subtle energy awareness in the therapeutic culture of our time. It considers how new ways of working based on subtle energy can contribute to the evolution of Psychosynthesis theory and practice.

Introduction

Psychosynthesis is an approach to human development originated by the Italian psychiatrist, Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974). He was a colleague of Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung and shared their interest in the depth dimensions of the human psyche. He expanded the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious to include what he called the “superconscious”, repository of the higher drives such as compassion, creativity, spirituality, and altruism. Assagioli postulated a spiritual center of consciousness and will, the Self, viewed as guiding the process of inner growth and healing. The Self was seen as mediating within the individual a more universal process of evolution with which we can learn to cooperate.

As I was preparing to write this paper, I was aware how much the outer form of my work has changed since the early days of Psychosynthesis. In fact, the part of me that’s afraid of being branded as a heretic actually got a little uneasy. But then I remembered Assagioli’s words that Psychosynthesis is a living and evolving thought form—not a static entity—and felt reassured. It’s actually quite remarkable how unattached Assagioli was to specific techniques, compared to the founders of most other psychological traditions. I think it’s a sign of his wisdom. He believed it was important for Psychosynthesis to adapt to the various cultures and historical moments in which it was embodied. And he seemed to have no ego investment in maintaining an orthodoxy of practice. He actually once said to me that we could throw away every technique we use and we’d still have Psychosynthesis. We would simply invent new techniques and retain the essence of the work.

Though we’re still far from a real science of subtle energy, things are developing rapidly in this field. It was in fact in the 1990s, as Assagioli had foreseen, that new disciplines and institutions concerned with subtle energy began to proliferate. That’s when the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP, website) and the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energy

and Energy Medicine (ISSSEEM, website) were born, when Barbara Brennan's books (Brennan, 1987,1983) came out, and various schools of energy healing were founded. It's also when Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR, website) and traumatology (Academy of Traumatology, website) came onto the scene, pointing to more body-oriented ways of working. It was during this time that I became involved in the field. In the mid-1990's, I met a therapist who spoke passionately about the miracles she was seeing since discovering the so-called 'power therapies.' She introduced me to two modalities, which she regarded as complementary: colored light therapy, developed by Dr. Steven Vasquez, which he now calls Emotional Transformation Therapy (ETT, website), and Thought Field Therapy (TFT web site) one of the 'meridian based' approaches. ETT is an 'uncovering' modality working with unconscious and depth-psychological material, while TFT is more of a 'containing' modality, used to reduce the energetic charge of disturbing emotions. I took both of these trainings, along with many others, went to conferences in the field, and attended two schools of energy healing, the Stillpoint School of Advanced Energy Healing and Dr. Robert Jaffe's School of Energy Mastery, focused primarily on work with the chakras. It took some time to find my way among these many different modalities, but over the years I've found a way of working that's harmonious with my own energy. Many of these strands are woven together in the work I'll present in this paper.

Another strand in the culture that is closely related to the expansion of energy awareness is the recognition of consciousness as distinct from the reasoning mind. This is seen in the popularity of teachers such as Eckhart Tolle with his 'power of now' message (Tolle,1999) and in the widespread interest in mindfulness meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2005). I find it particularly important in subtle energy work to help clients disidentify from the mind so they can attend to their experience in the body from a state of presence or pure awareness.

There are various ways one might categorize the different approaches to working with subtle energy. Many of these approaches manipulate energy in a rather external way, working with the therapist's will and insight rather than the client's. A healer friend of mine calls this the 'push and pull' approach. Such an approach can be effective for certain purposes, particularly in physical healing, but I've not been drawn to this way of working. As a psychosynthesist, I like to work in a more integral way with the client's inner healing process. I believe it is important for people to digest their own experience so they can learn their life lessons and evolve their consciousness, not just remove symptoms.

In working with subtle energy methods, as with any therapeutic technique, practitioners need to bear in mind the context of the work. Attention must be given to establishing rapport with the client, to taking the history, assessing the person's needs and objectives, and aligning the client's will with the work to be done. If I believe a particular energy-based technique would be helpful, I describe the method and its rationale. I offer the technique as an option but never impose it. If the client elects to work with an energy-based approach, I allow time at the end of the session for grounding, in which I generally refer back to the targeted issue so we can discern any shifts in how the client experiences the issue. Grounding may also include suggested action steps or practices to integrate a new awareness or attitude in the client's ongoing life.

In this paper, I will focus primarily on what I call the Depth Energetic approach. In this way of working, the client is in a relaxed, somewhat meditative state that facilitates letting go of the rational mind to connect with the deeper healing processes of the psyche. It tends to access the more unconscious and dissociated parts of the self as well as powerful transpersonal energies. I also use energy methods in the Cognitive-Behavioral (NACBT, website) and Energy Psychology (ACEP, website) traditions, approaching these from a Psychosynthesis perspective. These methods focus on thoughts, feelings, and energy patterns that the person is more consciously

aware of. I find it helpful to teach people to pay attention to the power of our thoughts and emotions to create experience, including energetic experience. As Carolyn Myss says in her Energy Anatomy tapes, “Every thought creates and is a prayer. Every emotion creates and is a prayer” (Myss, 1997).

Energy Psychology techniques are a useful complement to the depth approaches, as they can be used to ‘contain’ emotions arising in cathartic work. The technique I like best in this category is EFT, the Emotional Freedom Technique developed by Gary Craig. EFT is simpler than TFT (Thought Field Therapy, its parent discipline) and is more user-friendly. It’s a wonderful self-help tool that people can use on their own to reduce the charge of distressing emotions. Clients find it reassuring and empowering to have a means of doing this. The procedure involves paying attention to the ‘target’ issue, usually a disturbing event or emotion, while tapping on a series of meridian points. According to the theory, this balances the energy system in relation to that issue. I believe intention is also an important factor in the process. Information about EFT is readily available on the www.emofree.com web site, which also has many reports of problems that have been helped by EFT, other resources, and a free manual.

I’ve observed that when people learn to pay attention to subtle energy in and around their body, their transformational process is accelerated. This is true in both therapeutic and life-coaching contexts. It echoes Eugene Gendlin’s research with Focusing, an early precursor to energy work. I find that energy awareness enables clients to process more effectively, to release old patterns more easily, to be more present in the moment, and to access spiritual realms in more deeply experienced ways. Restructuring seems to happen on cellular and energetic levels, as well as mentally and emotionally. For whatever reasons, it seems that inner work takes place more rapidly and with less effort these days. Sometimes things happen in a single session that might have taken months or years without the energetic complement to the work. I suspect that there are other factors in this acceleration beyond the fact that we have more powerful tools. I believe it is part of a shift of consciousness or rise in our collective vibratory levels. It is interesting that the psychiatrist, David Hawkins, found that in the mid-1990’s, just as subtle energy work was coming into its own, humanity crossed a critical point on his scale of energy levels or consciousness states. And perhaps it is significant that these years leading up to the end of the Mayan calendar in 2012 are viewed in many indigenous and spiritual traditions as ushering in a higher consciousness for humankind.

Depth work with subtle energies

I’d like to describe more concretely now my approach to depth work with subtle energy, including reports on client responses. Traditional depth psychology has concerned itself with unconscious material, particularly as represented in dreams, visual imagery, art media, and transference phenomena. More recent therapies such as Gestalt therapy and Arnold Mindell’s Process Oriented Psychology include unconscious body expression as a representational channel of psychic process. I believe that energetic experience is a valuable addition to the depth tradition.

The approach I use to depth energetic work has much in common with the guided imagery method used in the early days of Psychosynthesis (Crampton, 1974, 2005). Both methods have the advantage of integrating the client’s conscious viewpoint with the powerful healing resources of the unconscious. The client can interact with the material as it emerges or afterwards, as appropriate. And both depth approaches draw upon the key variables of inner work: attention and intention.

As the client attends to his or her internal experience, with intention to allow the experience to unfold, the healing process is activated. Jung describes this in referring to his method of ‘active

imagination' as follows: "Looking, psychologically, brings about the activation of the object; it is as if something were emanating from one's spiritual eye that evokes or activates the object of one's vision" (Jung, 1967).

In the case of depth energetic work, the client is paying attention primarily to a kinesthetic sense, though there is often a visual component. The ability to allow one's internal experience to unfold, whether it be visual or kinesthetic/energetic, is crucial to depth work. A prominent Jungian, in speaking of active imagination, said:

"We must be able to let things happen in the psyche. For us this becomes a real art of which few people know anything. Consciousness is forever interfering, helping, correcting, and negating, never leaving the simple growth of the psychic process in peace" (Weaver, 1964).

The most important key to this way of working is a particular state of the will. In this state there is a balance of the yang (active) and yin (receptive) aspects. On the one hand, the client holds focus and intention toward what needs healing. On the other hand, the process is turned over to a higher power or field of intelligence beyond the rational mind. George Leonard uses the term 'focused surrender' in his research on the flow state, reported in his book with Michael Murphy, *The Life We Are Given* (Tarcher, 2005). He describes focused surrender as a paradoxical state that involves trying and not trying, zeroing in and letting go. I find this to be a very apt description of the client's state of will in deep energetic work. In a similar vein, the poet Rumi has spoken of the healing process:

Don't turn your head,
keep looking at the bandaged place.
That is where the light enters you.
And don't believe for a moment
that you are healing yourself.

One of my healer colleagues described his state in the healing process as that of a bridge between realms: the material realm of the condition being healed and the higher dimensional realms from which healing takes place. This is very similar to the process of quantum healing described by Deepak Chopra. In the work I will describe, the client is asked to become such a bridge in his or her own healing process. It should be said that this approach is ordinarily not for a beginning client and requires a certain capacity to tolerate intense affect.

How does the process work? In addition to this dual state of the will, there are two factors of prime importance: the ability to sense subtle energy and the ability to be present to one's experience from a state of pure awareness, often called the 'Witness' state, rather than from the rational mind. In Assagioli's time we tended to work in a more mental way. Trauma had not yet come onto the radar screen in the therapy world and there was little awareness of the need to release energies frozen by trauma. Though we were aware of the need to disidentify from the mind, it seemed more difficult to achieve this in the past than it is today.

In the concrete practice of depth energetic work, the client is seated in a comfortable chair, settling into a state of relaxation, with attention on his or her state of bodily awareness. The person is invited to pay attention to any feelings or sensations, particularly along the central core of the body from the base of the spine to the head. Examples may be given of emotionally tinged sensations such as a physical/energetic constriction in some area, 'butterflies in the stomach,' shortness of

breath, etc. These sensations are similar to the ‘felt sense’ Gendlin describes in his Focusing therapy.

The emotional component of the energetic experience is not always apparent, though it can usually be elicited by questions from the therapist. Therapists with knowledge of the chakra system will observe that issues are held in the body near the chakra centers associated with these particular issues. (Chakras are bioenergy centers in the energy body recognized by energy practitioners in both Western and yogic traditions. There are seven primary chakras along the central axis of the body from the base of the spine to the top of the head. They are thought to mediate various aspects of our life experiences).

There are two basic approaches to starting a session. A particular issue may be targeted for healing or the client may choose to focus on whatever ‘next step’ emerges. The notion of ‘targeting’ an issue is central to the approach of Energy Psychology and EMDR. This helps to focus the client’s intentionality and, I believe, plays an important role in the process—even with an undefined target such as one’s next step in healing.

I have found that certain technologies can play a valuable role in assisting clients to let go of the mind so they can access deeper levels of the healing process. The ones I have found most useful entrain brainwave states to alpha and theta levels through the use of sound. More recently I have used a CD with embedded delta frequencies (the very slow frequencies of the sleep state) with very profound results. In delta a client was able to deeply experience the pain of merged identity with her mother, which opened up a major breakthrough. While some clients are able to shift into the healing state without the use of such technology, most people find the sound helpful in getting started. It is particularly useful for people who identify with their thought process and tend to get lost in their ‘stories’. Some clients use the sound technologies as training wheels and eventually learn to work without them. Others prefer to continue with this support.

I began using sound with EMDR tapes and CD’s designed to deliver bilateral stimulation to the brain. In this process, the person listens through headphones to sound that moves back and forth between the left and right ears. They might be listening in a background way to ocean waves or simple tones or melodies. Their attention is on their internal experience, especially on what they are feeling in their body. They report out what they’re experiencing. The headphones are open so normal conversation can take place. According to EMDR theory, the key element is bilateral processing, whether it be activated through alternating left and right sound, eye movements, or tactile stimulation. I have found similar results, however, without bilateral technology, using sound that induces slower brainwave states. I suspect that the active ingredient may be the relaxation effect and meditative state induced by the sound.

Another technology I find helpful in facilitating Depth Energetic work is a device that emits colored light used in Emotional Transformation Therapy. In this approach, the client is looking at a source of flickering colored light while interacting with the therapist. The flicker rate can be adjusted to entrain a range of brainwave states. The alpha range is used for most processing. Theta is used to access repressed experiences. The colors are chosen by various criteria: presenting issues, areas of bodily tension, or the results of an assessment process. In this system, different colors correspond to particular psychological issues and areas of the body. The premise is that certain frequencies of light stimulate correlated issues and help to resolve them. This system was worked out empirically by Dr. Vazquez (ETT, website) and I find it very powerful.

Illustrative client experiences

The following case descriptions will help to convey a better sense of this work. Many of these sessions used some form of sound technology. Two used the light device. Several used no technology at all. Pseudonyms are used for the clients to protect their privacy. In most sessions, only the client's words are recorded verbatim. This is because, in taking my clinical notes, there was not time to record my own words. In any case, my verbal interventions tend to be minimal in such sessions. They are oriented toward providing safety and encouragement, helping the client stay present to bodily experience, drawing out the expression of that experience, and integration at the end of the session. For example, I might say things like "Stay with what you're experiencing and let me know what happens," "Go with that" (an EMDR intervention), "You're doing great," "Keep breathing through it and let the process unfold," "What's happening now?" "Just be with the energy now and let yourself really take it in," "Can you describe what that feels like?" etc. The kinds of interventions described in my earlier work on Dialogic Imagery are relevant for unfolding the depth energy work as well (Crampton, 1974, 2005) Though verbal interventions play a useful role, the most important role of the guide is energetic: holding space, providing energetic support, reinforcing intention and the dual state of the will, and helping to maintain the bridge between realms.

Session 1: Energetic scar dissolves in river of light

In this session, the client was listening to an EMDR tape with headphones. The session illustrates how intelligent subtle energy moves through the body to bring about healing. The client, 'Emma', was a woman in her early forties. She had been in therapy most of her adult life, recovering from sexual abuse by her father throughout her childhood. She worked with me for more than a year before she gained enough trust and ego strength to be able to do this type of work. Her stated 'target' for this session was to heal the trauma in her body from her father's abuse.

"It's cold; dead, layers of it in my body. It's like scar tissue all over my body... on my Third Eye—so I can't see... in my gut, over my hands, feet, legs. It's an energy of hopelessness. The scar is hiding something, guarding something. It's hiding love, cutting me off from love. From active loving, from vibrancy. It's like a deformity, like not having legs. It's the psychic waste from all the abuse."

"A subtle river of light is coming. Oh my gosh!" Emma was sobbing deeply. "The scar is being replaced by the light. It's flowing into my jaw and my throat. This is enormous! This is the scar that kept me from playing music, from writing."

"The light is going to my nose now. Black oozing stuff there is being replaced. There is something putrid in my chest, a swelling... grief. It's connected to the lumps I keep growing in my breast. It's betrayal. The smell is of the sexual abuse. Shame. Self-pity."

"Now the River of Light is going into the volcano place. I feel a huge release—my whole left side. Now the river is more whole, more flowing. It's still blocked at my throat. There's some resistance. I don't want this to be true... I just let go. I will let it be true. Big opening!" Emma breathed into the blocked area. "My throat is fully open now."

"There is still scar tissue at my knees. Being cut off at the knees. Crippled. Mother's demand that I not reveal the truth, that I not exist."

"I don't know how to release what connects me to her in a negative way." I suggested that she target this by holding the question and noticing what came to mind. "It's my belief that I have to get love from her. Now that I know about the River of Light, I can release this. The light is going down to my feet, to my calves, to my knees. It's like breaking a dam. The light is

gushing through. It's like I'm going home. This is so amazing! The scar tissue is all gone now.

Emma felt light and peaceful at the end. This session released a long-standing blockage in her body that had interfered with her ability to play music—a skill that she needed to earn her living. It is interesting that she had an intuitive sense of what the blockage meant in the various parts of her body. For example she sensed that the throat chakra blockage was related to not allowing herself to know and speak the truth. Meredith Young-Sowers, Director of the Stillpoint School of Advanced Energy Healing, believes the throat center is concerned with sensing one's truth as well as with speaking it (Stillpoint, website). This is consistent with Emma's experience. At first it was too painful for Emma to allow herself to fully know and accept the enormity of what had happened. When she came to terms with this and was able to say, "I will let it be true," the blockage was released. The body metaphor of "being cut off at the knees" also reflects an energy archetype. When one's efforts to speak the truth are denied, it is as though there is no ground to stand on.

The phenomenon of intelligent energy moving through the body to bring about healing is a fascinating feature of this type of work. I had not experienced it until I began to work in this way. The first reference I saw to this phenomenon was by an energy healer named Irving Feurst who used the term 'shakti' in referring to this form of subtle energy (Essene and Feurst, 1998). Feurst says, "A shakti is a subtle energy which has been programmed directly by God or indirectly by an intermediary... who is so spiritually evolved that they can act as a pure pipeline for the divine mind." He goes on to say that "many prayers are answered on God's behalf by spiritual beings (such as angels) using shakti." Feurst describes many different types of shaktis, each having specialized functions. Some work with the chakra system or with particular chakras. He says "a shakti can act more quickly and can access more information about the structure of chakras than any individual working alone." He further states that shaktis can help us with our blind spots, sensing areas where healing is needed that we may not be aware of.

In this paper I have adopted the term 'shakti,' as used by Feurst to refer to this type of seemingly intelligent subtle energy. While Feurst's description of the phenomena is consistent with my own experience, I have no way to verify his speculations as to its sources. Other explanations are certainly possible. Many theorists in humanistic and transpersonal psychology have spoken about the organism's innate tendency toward healing and evolutionary change. Psychosynthesists would likely view such experiences as originating from the client's Self, the postulated source of inner healing. Whatever their source may be, apparently intelligent energies intent upon healing are of great interest and offer a promising topic for research.

Session 2: The war is over

A different type of shakti is evidenced in this session. This session took place over the telephone and without the use of consciousness technology. The client, 'Hans,' was a man in his sixties living in Germany. He was a therapist himself, seeking help to recover from the 'physiological/neurological residue,' as he put it, of the Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) he incurred as a small child during the bombings of the World War II. He was sent to the countryside, away from familiar surroundings, to live alone with his mother, who was constantly threatening suicide. He believed that this trauma continued to keep him immobilized as an adult, unable to move toward positive goals in his life. Though I felt cautious about undertaking this kind of work at a distance, he was confident he could handle it. He assured me he had local resources available if needed.

We began the healing phase by helping Hans to enter the Witness state and become present to his bodily experience. He described discomfort in his chest and his knees, and chose to begin by focusing on his knees. He felt a chain around his knees that cut off the flow of energy between his lower legs and his body above the knees. It felt like there was a ball and chain on his lower legs like prisoners have.

“I can’t move my legs. The lower legs are heavy, fixed to the ground. Now there is more pain. I want to move but I’m unable to. The pain of wanting to change and not being able to. I’m now exploring trauma. I know that my immobility is a symptom of this.” The chain is still there. I invited him to go to the energetic root of the chain. The chain became thicker and stronger. “Like someone is holding my knees so I can’t move. There’s an impulse to liberate myself from this captivity. I can do that.” (Hans started to shake and breathe heavily). “It’s still there somewhat. The other side said, ‘I’m stronger than you.’ It wants me to believe I’m a victim, powerless. When I see this belief I can put it aside.”

Hans returned to his legs and felt the part holding his legs. “It’s impersonal... the body’s reaction... a mechanism. Some part of me is frozen in my legs. I can feel the condensed, frozen energy. A beginning of unfreezing comes. The war is over. Some danger is over. I’m not talking about the World War. It’s my internal war. A huge wave of warmth and salvation is coming toward me now that the war is over. A voiceover says, ‘You haven’t realized yet that the war is over.’ I sense the knowledge of this, but it hasn’t penetrated my body.” I suggested that he invite that knowledge to penetrate every cell of his body. “It’s like melting. Slowly melting. I feel a Divine Presence. Energy is flowing into my legs now. It’s like a stream. My hard muscles are becoming softer.”

The “voiceover” said, “Believe it, allow it. I present my open knees to be healed. Just like when you open your hands. The knees believe it now. They are like an open vessel. My consciousness is in my knees. They are more penetrable... like space is opening up between the cells. I’m still presenting my knees to the Truth.” Hans allowed this process to continue for some time on his own after our session ended. He reported to me in our next session that his sense of powerlessness was gone and he felt more able to take action on his needs for friendship and love in his life.

In this session the shakti took the form of a sense of warmth and Divine Presence. These are other variations of shakti also described by Feurst. In both this and the previous session, clients who had been severely traumatized experienced major relief from energetic blockage caused by their trauma. In Emma’s case the traumatized condition was represented by scar tissue. In Hans’ case, it was frozenness and immobility. The speed at which healing occurs when ‘shakti’ intervenes is striking compared to traditional trauma treatment modalities. This was particularly significant as Hans had been working with therapists in Germany for some time, attempting to gain relief, without much success. It is interesting that he described space opening up between the cells. This phenomenon is commonly reported by energy healers when physical healing is occurring. A certain period of time is usually required for energetic healing to complete itself or for spiritual ‘treatment’ (the term used by New Thought practitioners) to take effect at the physical level (Barker, 1966, 1988).

Though the healing of Hans’ knees began during our session, he sensed that more time was needed to complete the process. I therefore suggested that he continue to hold his focus and attention there after our session until he sensed the healing was complete. When clients are finely

attuned to energy, as Hans was, they are able to participate more effectively in the healing process.

This session beautifully illustrates the mode of the will, which George Leonard described as 'focused surrender.' In presenting his knees to be healed, Hans was highly focused and intentional. He held his awareness on his knees until he sensed that this was no longer needed. Yet he was simultaneously in a surrendered state, allowing the healing to take place in its own time and in its own way. He was aware that a Divine Presence was guiding the process. This brings to mind another of Rumi's poems, reflecting profound insight into the spiritual healing process (excerpted from 'Zero Circle'):

Be helpless, dumbfounded
 Unable to say yes or no.
 Then a stretcher will come
 from grace to gather us up....
 So let us not be sure of anything
 beside ourselves and only that, so
 miraculous beings come running to help.
 Crazed, lying in a zero circle, mute,
 we shall be saying finally,
 with tremendous eloquence, lead us.

I would like to address now some other aspects of psychoenergetic healing and share some sessions to illustrate these points. Though the previous two sessions moved very quickly into the phase where healing energies were activated, in many sessions a cathartic phase precedes this. In such cases the client, when possible, stays present to the pain, allowing emotional release and insight to take place until a 'turnaround' occurs. It is as though the person 'hits bottom' in Alcoholics Anonymous terminology, and begins to bounce up. EMDR speaks of 'positive cognitions' arising after reprocessing traumatic experience and clearing associated channels. In working with EFT, a similar phenomenon occurs, though generally with less catharsis. A client may suddenly shift from experiencing painful or negative thoughts and feelings to an opposite state. For example, a person targeting feelings of powerlessness may shift to feeling empowered. In Depth Energetic work, the person sometimes needs to reach a core place of pain or despair, shining the light of consciousness on this place, before the turnaround happens. The following sessions illustrate this process.

Session 3: Grace

The client, 'Karen,' is a woman in her mid thirties. She is suffering the after-effects of having been sexually molested and beaten by her grandfather as a child. She believed she had to put up with this behavior because her father had abandoned the family and the grandfather was supporting them. EMDR tapes with alternating right and left auditory stimulation were used to facilitate this session. Karen's target for the session was her feelings of shame.

"A lot of pain and shame. I had to feel all this stuff, all the violence and pain." I suggested that she shine the light of consciousness on the pain so it could heal.

“The pain wants to be acknowledged.” Karen’s body was shaking. She contorted her body and covered her face with her hands. “It’s over. I survived. But I feel there’s still no room for me in this world.” I suggested that Karen target this feeling. “Despair. No matter where I turn, there’s no room for me. Even in my relationship.” Karen cried a lot with deep wracking sobs, bending over and covering her face. She was coughing and choking. “This is the abuse. I can’t be who I am. So much shame. There must be something wrong with me.”

“I don’t have to live like that any more. (The turnaround began here.) I won’t live like that anymore. I’m in charge. I’m stronger now. I can make my own decisions. Speaking up and standing up doesn’t mean I’ll be alone. You don’t have to kowtow or submit in order to be loved.” “I’m afraid that if I stand up in this relationship (i.e., with her current partner), he’ll leave me. The image of my Dad comes. If I stood up for myself I’d be obliterated. He was so angry. I believed I had to submit to men in order to live. My grandfather supported us. I felt I had to sacrifice myself and let him abuse me to preserve the family.”

“My field is clearing now. Reverberating. A boost in my field, moving outward.” Karen’s hands were open and out now, vibrating. “I feel like I’m receiving Grace. It’s washing over me. I don’t feel I deserve it. I have fear in my heart to let it in. Is it real? Can I trust it? It wants to move into my pelvis. Part of me wants to push it away. I know what I am if I’m this way. I don’t know what I am if I’m not this.” ‘Grace’ spoke to Karen and said, “You can be all of yourself if you let me in.” Karen replied, “I’m afraid that I’ll be too big, too much. And I fear that I won’t be enough.” She sobbed deeply with open hands and her head back. “I invited Grace in.”

Kare had a blissful expression. The energy of Grace had moved to all the places in her body where she formerly held pain and fear. Having resolved her resistance to receiving Grace, the turnaround completed itself. “I see myself as a totally different kind of person now. I can be happy, joyful, fully alive. I can let go of all the pain, the grief, the shame, the guilt. I’m a new person. I don’t have to be ashamed. I can let people see me. I can smile without feeling embarrassed. I can really look at people and stand up for myself, say how I feel, and speak my truth. I’m smart. I’m very smart. I’m funny, wise, gentle, and loving. I have a childlike quality of innocence. I’m strong and sensitive, knowledgeable because of my experiences. I’ve learned a lot. I’ve been through it. Now I know the journey. I’m smart. I used to play dumb. I don’t want to do that now. It feels scary. I’m free. I have no fear of abandonment.”

Karen silently received the energy in her body. “It’s coming in more and more strongly. I can let go of the old image of myself—that I had to be a certain way to be accepted.” Karen started to vibrate strongly. “The energy’s coming in. It’s like my whole brain and body have been rewired.” Her body was shaking and she made releasing movements of her head and hands. “I hear that I’m changed—never to be the same.” Her head and torso shook for a while. Her eyes were closed. She placed her hands over her heart, reverentially. There was a long silence. “There is still some slight resistance in my pelvic chakra about letting go of my old self.” At first she felt that to change was to dishonor her former self. When she saw the illusion in this, her resistance released. Then she raised her hands, palms forward, as though in a gesture of blessing. “This felt like a gift from God. The pain is gone.” She looked radiant.

Karen’s session had many interesting features. First of all, the sheer depth and intensity of the transformation she experienced was very moving. She paved the way for this by allowing herself to experience so fully the depth of her pain so she could release it from her energy field. She did this through the shaking, bending over in shame, and sobbing. It was also important that she saw the origin of her belief that she had to suffer and endure in silence. Then the shift happened, and ‘divine intervention’ through the shakti of Grace took over.

The resistance Karen experienced to transpersonal energy is quite typical of what many clients feel. She felt unworthy, feared being too big or not enough, and feared losing her identity. It is interesting that it was in her second chakra that she felt the fear of letting go of her old self. One of my teachers of energy healing, Meredith Young-Sowers, refers to the pelvic chakra as the 'renaming chakra' because of its function in transforming false identities—the self-images acquired through early conditioning and labeling by others.

Finally, it is worth noting the phenomenon of 'rewiring' which Karen describes: "It's like my whole brain and body have been rewired." This metaphor is used by many people when they go through a deeply transformative process. Perhaps some day we'll have a way of knowing if there are actual physiological correlates. In any case, overall, Karen's session speaks to the profundity of identity shift that can occur in a relatively short time with this kind of work.

Session 4: Body electric

This next session is another example of the 'turnaround' process that occurs when the depths of pain and despair are touched. In both this and Karen's session, there is an influx of transpersonal energy at the turnaround point. In the following case, the client experiences deep forgiveness with the turnaround as well. 'Cara,' the client, is a woman in her early fifties. She has been participating in a sadomasochistic relationship with a man, in which she subjected herself to severe pain. In this relationship she was reenacting her role in the family of origin where she took abuse from her father to protect her siblings. Her target or goal for the session was to resolve the intense anger she felt toward her lover after ending their relationship. An EMDR music tape was used to facilitate the session.

"How dare you treat anyone this way? My father comes in now. I want to kill him, hurt him, kick him, make him pay. Not get away with it. I want to see his head crack open." (Her rage was directed toward her father as well as her former boyfriend.) "What's the use of living?" (Cara was sobbing deeply.) "I'm so tired of being abused. I'm tired of being heroic, tough, all tied up in knots. I took the abuse from my father for my siblings and for my mother. Nobody appreciated it. There's no way out. You can only dull the pain. Despair. I just want release from this life."

"This pain is so intense. Searing pain. It wracks my whole body. It's everywhere. I don't feel like a person. I'm just pain. It's a humanity pain. Not just me. Primordial pain. All the pain of everybody." "Images of Jesus and Buddha are coming in. Something about grace and forgiveness. Maybe I'm understanding for the first time about Jesus on the cross. I always thought martyrdom was theatrical. It's like we have a choice to forgive and rise above it. I have a sense that their story was to feel everything and transmute it into something else."

"The blockage in my body just left. I'm sitting tall and straight with my central core wide open. The light is pouring through it. I'm in the universe amongst the planets and on earth at the same time. I am light. It's in my heart and my shoulders and my mouth. My whole body. I'm electric. And there is truth in forgiveness. There is life for me in forgiveness instead of blame. I feel acceptance." Cara was looking very peaceful and radiant at this point.. She said that she felt kindly toward her father and her former boyfriend.

Cara did resume seeing the boyfriend on occasion after this, but put an end to the rough treatment. This session helped her let go of her victim identification. An interesting feature of this session is that Cara experienced a pain beyond her personal pain – 'a humanity pain.' This is a common

occurrence in psychoenergetic work. Clients may feel they are processing not only their personal issues, but also the pain of collectives such as all women, or all members of their family or cultural group.

Session 5. Heart healing

This session also follows the pattern of a turnaround occurring after being present to pain. It is less dramatic than the previous sessions, though still profound in its effects. I have included it because of the various types of shakti experienced in such ways as pulsing light, a ball of light around the client's heart, and a sense of spiritual comfort and presence. 'Kurt' is a man of 50 who had been hospitalized for major depression in the past. Kurt was feeling depressed and hopeless after being rejected by an internet date. He felt pain in his heart and a sense of emptiness in his chest. He was concerned about this because he had recently been diagnosed with medical heart problems. His target for the session was to heal his heart and feelings of emptiness. An EMDR tape was used.

Kurt directed his attention to the area in pain. "I feel pain in my heart, like a wound." He began to get childhood memories of feeling alone but felt there was something more involved here. "Something's missing." I suggested that he "Google" what was missing. This took him to a flashing light that said "Self-hate." I suggested that he target the energy of self-hate. "I feel contracted all over. It's especially painful in my heart. It feels like the self-hatred is in all my cells." Kurt had an agonized look on his face. I encouraged him to stay focused on the energy of self-hatred, intending release and turning the process over to higher intelligence.

"There's a pulsing light moving through my body now. I feel a breeze. It blows through me and airs out the self-hatred. "I redirected Kurt's attention to his heart. He said it's tender, still wounded. Then he saw hands coming, holding a glowing white-gold ball. The ball was placed around his heart. He said, "It's healing my heart." Then he heard a chorus of voices. They said, "You're not alone. We're here." Kurt was sobbing deeply. "I'm so touched by this. Such a strong presence of support and help. I don't have to do it all myself. Steadfastness of the presence. It's OK if you forgot we're here. My heart feels open now. A pleasurable feeling. I feel like I need to give thanks."

Kurt's 'need to give thanks' is a measure of what he received—release from a profoundly depressive state. Gratitude is an important indicator of whether clients have been able to receive healing at a deep level. Kurt's session illustrates the device of asking a client to 'Google' something he needs to get in touch with. This very useful technique usually takes a person right to the heart of things. This is especially true when the guide has confidence in the process and is able to convey this confidence to the client.

Working with the chakras

The preceding sessions (especially 1 to 4) were focused on releasing the after-effects of major trauma held in the body. This was accomplished by targeting the trauma residue itself or specific emotional or energetic correlates. In the first two cases, intelligent healing energies were activated when the client brought awareness to the energetic residue of the trauma. In the third and fourth cases, the clients underwent major emotional catharsis of pain before the energy shifted. The notion of 'turnaround' was introduced, describing the shift that takes place to a more positive state after processing emotional trauma. The important role of intelligent healing energies or shakti was

discussed. The fifth session further illustrated the turnaround principle and other forms of shakti.

The next series of sessions will illustrate working with the chakras. These sessions are less dramatic than major trauma release sessions, but equally profound in their own way. Before sharing them I'd like to discuss some general principles of chakra work. Assagioli (in personal communication) maintained that it's safer to focus on the qualities and issues associated with the chakras instead of attempting to manipulate the chakras directly. He believed that the chakras are interconnected in very complex ways that we don't sufficiently understand. Therefore, harm could result from misguided efforts to intervene in their functioning. Irving Feurst seems to concur with Assagioli on this point. He states, "The process of opening a chakra to change our consciousness is an organic one that can't be hurried... You can't make a flower grow more rapidly by prying its petals open... If you're going to use energy work to help your chakras open, the best way is to use a shakti because it knows exactly how much to work on each chakra and in what way. Using a shakti will help you to avoid the harm which misapplication of many commonly used practices can lead to" (Essene and Feurst, 1998).

In the session just quoted on healing the heart, this approach was used. We were not deliberately attempting to pry open the heart chakra. Instead, the heart was healed organically—first through processing the pain which was held there, then through the agency of a shakti.

I find that with most clients, the solar plexus is the chakra calling out for attention. The third chakra has to do with the right use of power, our sacred sovereignty, our ability to assert ourselves, maintain healthy boundaries, and take responsibility for our lives. The heart chakra cannot open fully until the solar plexus is able to support it. The next three sessions illustrate work with the solar plexus chakra.

Session 6. Energy knot in the belly

'Susan' is a professional woman in her late fifties. She was interested in exploring colored light therapy. She chose to use an open-ended approach, asking to see the next step in her healing rather than targeting a predefined issue. She began to sense tightness in her solar plexus. I therefore selected yellow which, according to ETT protocols, is the color that activates issues held in this area of the body. I suggested that Susan look at the yellow light while focusing on her sense of tightness. As she did this, she set her intention to explore and release the tightness in her belly.

"A sense of waiting, of not going toward. No permission to move toward. Aloneness. Resignation. The belief is I can't have anything except what gives itself to me. I can't go after things. Mother had poverty consciousness. She was competitive with me. I learned early not to ask for things and became her caretaker. We were told we might be farmed out to foster homes if we didn't behave."

Susan integrated this awareness in a range of brainwave states. "I came to believe there is not enough. If I reach out to take something, it hurts somebody. I feel the pushing down, the cringing in my belly to make sure I don't do that. I learned this from my mother. She didn't know there was infinite supply, that I could have something and not take away from her." Susan felt a deep sorrow that it was that way for herself and for her mother. She sobbed gently as she connected with these feelings that had previously been unconscious.

The insight and experience of remorse released the energy blockage in her belly. "The cringing is releasing now, untangling. My whole belly was caught in the cringe. The energy knot is releasing. Wow, that feels better!"

We ended the session by discussing Susan's difficulty in self-assertion and the sense of lack in her life. She set some assertiveness goals for the following week, which she carried out. There was no shakti involved in this session. The shift took place instead through awareness of the patterns and beliefs connected with her thirdchakra constriction. The experience of remorse, such as she experienced here, can be an important factor in healing. It is part of acknowledging how we have participated in creating our pain and seems to enable 'digestion' of our experience, with release of the associated negative feelings. One of the functions of the solar plexus is to establish self-responsibility. It facilitates this by helping us to see our part in unconscious reality creation. This is an important element in metabolizing our experience. There is a parallel at the physical level in that the solar plexus is generally seen as governing the digestive system.

Session 7: Yellow ball of light in belly

This session is an interesting one in conjunction with the previous solar plexus session. In this session the target was an issue in the client's life rather than a physical sensation. 'Bob' is a young man who recently graduated from college. He was troubled by the fact that he felt enmeshed with his father. He was very angry about this enmeshment which he felt trapped by. Bob complained about his father's ego investment in his son's writing and described how his father would write papers for him in school. EMDR tapes were used in this session. He targeted the sense of entanglement with his father.

"There is a tightness in my stomach. I was complicit in my Dad's investment in me. My ego was invested in him as well. I need to separate my identity from his identity. Our energies were competing. It keeps me from focusing on my own energy. I want to trust in my own higher Self to guide me, not my parents." Bob saw a ball of energy covered with mud. Rain came down and washed the mud off. It revealed a bright yellow ball of energy like the sun. The ball of energy came inside him. "It feels so nourishing. My stomach feels loose now. I feel joyful. Energy can flow freely through me and out of me. It feels wonderful. Brings me to the edge of tears." Bob was breathing heavily with intense feeling.

Bob talked about the anger he had been feeling for his father. It was so intense they were barely speaking. "I can let go of the anger now. I can bring my Dad into that bright landscape with me. Maybe he can receive some of that nourishment too. When I focus on the ball of energy I can see his pain but it doesn't hurt me. I tell him he doesn't have to find salvation through me. You too can open to this joyfulness inside of you. We can be separate but together in this world—honor ourselves for who we are. I see myself putting my arm around his shoulder. "

In this session, as in the previous one, there was recognition of a competitive pattern with a parent, diminishing the client's sense of personal autonomy and agency. It was important for Bob to recognize his own complicity in this enmeshment so he could take responsibility for his part in it. This is a necessary element in resolving this type of solar plexus issue. It is interesting that a shakti in the form of yellow light entered his solar plexus, as yellow is the color associated with this chakra. This provided Bob with the sense of nourishment and support he needed to separate from his father. He was able to do this lovingly, releasing the anger he had previously felt toward his father and owning his part in having maintained the enmeshment. Shortly after this session, he resumed communication with his father on a healthier basis. They developed a relationship which was both warm and differentiated.

Session 8: Rings of light

This is another session with Kurt, whose ‘heart healing’ session was cited above. I included this for several reasons. It illustrates another aspect of third chakra healing, and its interconnectedness with other chakras—notably the root and heart chakras. It also illustrates other types of ‘shakti’ described by Feurst—a circular ring and energy expressed as music. This session took place without the use of technology. As Kurt was an experienced meditator, he was able to enter the healing state and be present to his bodily feelings without additional assistance. Kurt’s target for the session was the paralysis he was experiencing in his life. This kind of paralysis of action has a third chakra component, in my experience, as does the related issue of being overly focused on the opinions of others rather than on one’s own needs and aims.

Kurt stated, “I’m feeling paralyzed. I don’t take action. I want to be able to move, not just stand there. I feel it in my third chakra. Really tight. I’m so tired of caring what people will think, of trying to be some idealized image. I’m so cautious, so frightened.” I suggested that he target this sense of tightness in his third chakra. A silver mirror was presented to him. He looked at himself in the mirror. Suddenly he was surrounded by angels. “I see beings of light and I’m hearing heavenly music. Everything I need is here. I’m safe. I feel like I’m being healed.” I suggested that he stay with this experience and allow time to really take it in.

At this point, a different type of shakti appeared. Kurt said, “A Ring of Light is moving up and down my body, surrounding me. Going up and down from head to toe and back. It keeps doing this. I feel so alive—very expanded—cared for. There’s still some sadness.” (Kurt was sobbing deeply.) “I love myself. It’s hard to say that. I feel shame in saying it.” Since a new issue had emerged, I suggested that he target the shame. The mirror was presented again. This time he looked deeply into his own eyes. He saw himself with love, wonder, and appreciation. “I feel totally filled and connected with Light. My feet are so connected to the ground. There’s an intense vibration between my feet and the ground. It’s very expanded around and above my head. I feel cleansed and washed by the Light—feel it most strongly in my solar plexus and my heart. I choose to be true to myself.”

In the week following this session Kurt reported experiencing a joyful state of pure being for hours at a time, a state in which he felt there was nothing he had to do or to prove. This was in sharp contrast to the pressured, driven state in which he lived most of his life—always feeling that he didn’t measure up to some idealized self-image, trying to prove that he was a worthy person. Since then Kurt has broken through the paralysis of action that plagued him. He sold his old apartment, purchased a better one, committed to the relationship with his girlfriend, and launched an exciting new business.

The interconnection of the chakras was very interesting in this session. What started out as a third chakra issue expanded to include the root, heart, and even the crown chakras. The ring of light moving up and down his body, moving from head to toe, seemed to have helped integrate the energies of these various centers. The solar plexus cannot function in a healthy way without support from the root chakra and its earth connection. Having one’s feet connected to the earth is an energetic metaphor for having a legitimate place in life. The vibration Kurt described between his feet and the ground established his sacred space in this world. This grounding to the earth and his connection to self-love through the heart, supported the solar plexus in healing his paralysis of action.

Session 9: Plugging in to the earth current

The next two sessions illustrate other forms of root chakra activation. In this session, ‘Denise,’ a woman in her mid-forties, was distressed about her inability to say “no” to people. She recounted an incident with her sister in which Denise was talked into something she didn’t want to do and then resented it. She complied with her sister’s agenda, feeling like a victim, and then paid her sister back by refusing to speak with her on their way home. Denise could not even imagine there might have been a healthier way to establish her boundary. Her target for this session was what she called her ‘disease to please.’ We worked with an EMDR tape. The sound played an important role in allowing Denise to enter the healing state. Without it, she functioned like a totally different person, caught in mental meandering and ego defenses.

In targeting this issue, Denise felt the energy in her solar plexus. This chakra is an important one in healing victim consciousness and addiction to approval. Denise sensed an obstruction like a white ball in her third chakra that blocked the flow of energy. She began seeing her own part in the pattern of giving away her power and blaming the other person. She said, “I see how I’ve allowed others to set the parameters. I see how I change the image I present to fit in with others’ expectations. It’s about having the right to exist.”

When Denise had owned her part in creating the ‘victim’ experience, I asked if she felt ready to clear the energetic blockage. She said she was—and aligned her intention with this goal. As she focused her intention, the block seemed to dissolve. A kind of rawness remained where the ball had been. I suggested that she allow the healing energy to come into this area. Suddenly she felt the chakras in her feet opening and the energy poured up from the ground through her feet. It moved right through her solar plexus, with no obstruction, soothing the rawness there, and continued up the spine. This was the first time she had experienced the Earth Current in a strong, tangible way, even though she had been a Tai Chi practitioner. She was a little overwhelmed at first and asked if this meant there was something wrong with her. When I normalized the experience, she was able to relax into it, basking in the energy for several minutes with a big smile on her face. We allowed ample time for Denise to silently experience this connection to her own life energy before continuing.

When her connection was firmly established, I brought Denise back to the issue with her sister. My goal was to ‘ground’ her new sense of self in this interaction. This time she had no difficulty in imagining speaking authentically with her sister. She pictured them both feeling comfortable with what she communicated. There was no energy of victimization or opposition. Her “no” was about her own needs and didn’t dismiss or attack her sister. We ended the session talking about the meaning of the root chakra, and its importance for her. I pointed out that the first chakra has to do with the choice to live, the right to exist and be herself, and that it provides the support for her expression in the world. We also discussed the importance of having been able to see her own part in the issue with her sister.

In this session, a solar plexus block was the client’s first energetic awareness. As in other sessions, reclaiming power through self-responsibility was a key to healing this center. The other factor that clearly played a role here was Denise’s connection to the flow of energy from the Earth. Once again, root chakra activation supports healthy expression of self-assertion through the solar plexus.

Session 10: Red light of a root chakra shakti

This session reveals another aspect of the root chakra: its function in connecting us to nurturing, Mother Earth energy. It illustrates very clearly the ‘intelligence’ of a shakti— how it seems to know exactly where healing is needed as it moves through the body. The sense of the shakti performing some kind of ‘surgery’ is frequently reported in this type of work. ‘Janice’ was a woman in her mid thirties. Her target for the session was her fear of abandonment by her boyfriend. Abandonment was always an issue for Janice as her father had died when she was an infant. She was raised by a depressed and narcissistic mother who was unable to provide much nurturing. We were using an EMDR tape.

As she targeted her fear of abandonment, Janice was using an Energy Psychology technique, placing her hands on each chakra in turn. As she reached the root chakra, a shakti was activated. She described it as a dark red light, originating at the base of the spine. This is the color generally associated with the root chakra as perceived by clairvoyants. Janice experienced the red light as a ‘loving energy.’ It told her it would never abandon her. The red energy began to move through her body. She felt shame about what the energy would see in her body because she felt so damaged. “I feel like a concentration camp victim who can’t be re-nourished.” I had her tell this to the energy, and it asked, “Do you want help?” She said she did, and aligned her intention with this goal.

“I feel the energy moving through my pelvis, like a snake or tube. It’s performing some kind of surgery or healing as it moves. She said she needed healing in this area as she had problems with her sexuality. The red energy spent a long time working in her pelvic area and then went on to move throughout her body. She described it “like a red tree with many small branches... singing songs to me, telling me that everything about me is OK.” She said, “My Mummy couldn’t tell me these things. The red energy is like a real mother.”

Janice had an interesting mother transference onto the red energy. She was able to accept the healing to some degree, but encountered resistance. Receiving was very difficult for her at first. She said she felt like a beggar. This was how she had felt when she attempted to get her needs met as a child. The energy reassured her that it was OK for her to receive, that it was her time now to experience love and healing. She found it hard to believe that the energy could be so unconditional in its acceptance. She kept expecting it to yell at her the way her family had done. The energy had to reassure her it wouldn’t do that. This kind of resistance to the transpersonal is often encountered in clients who feel unworthy because they were neglected, abused, or unseen. The resistance must be resolved in order to fully receive the healing of transpersonal connection.

Session 11. Releasing the energy of shame

This session illustrates a way of working energetically with an emotional complex—in this instance, shame. I have found it helpful to have clients think of shame as an energy that they can target for release. This helps them to disidentify from the shame and to find a place within themselves that is larger than the shame—a place that can observe the shame and work to heal it. It is particularly difficult for people to disidentify from shame, because it is so deeply entangled with the sense of self. In contrast to guilt, which is more related to specific behaviors, shame attacks one’s personhood, one’s basic self-worth and right to exist.

The client in this session was Bob, the young man described in session 7. He came to the session

feeling agitated because he had learned that his brother had been gossiping about him behind his back. He felt deeply shamed by this, echoing experiences in his shame-based childhood. I suggested that we work with colored light therapy, employing a particular frequency of red-orange used in ETT to stimulate issues of shame. Bob set the intention of healing his shame. He was looking into the orange light as we talked.

“I feel shame. A little voice on my shoulder says this is stupid, that I’m stupid. It feels like this color is attacking me and I’m deficient. It’s the way I felt as a kid when I was yelled at. This light is putting a coating of shame all over my body.” A shift in affect took place and Bob said, “I feel like I can take control. I choose not to be colored by this liquid shame. This shame is not mine.” He spoke to his mother and said, “You are trying to give it to me and I don’t accept it. I’m in charge. I feel more empowered now. But not rock solid. I could still crumble. I feel there is no way I could withstand shame for a long time if someone persists.” He recalled a childhood memory of being shamed by his aunt and his shame intensified.

At this point a compensatory part of his shame complex came in to be cleared—a prideful defense against feeling shame. He felt this as tension in his lower back. “I spent so many years with my back held rigidly erect, pretending to feel pride. This was just defiance to cover my shame. There is no strength in this. Strength comes from taking responsibility and throwing off the shame. It’s OK to make mistakes. I can own them and not feel shame. You don’t have to be perfect. I can love myself with my mistakes rather than punishing myself. Rigid strength is not real strength. I need to comfort my child and find true strength inside. I don’t have to put my head down or rigidly hold it up. Just be authentic and accept myself as I am. I can stop pretending that I’m perfect.” As the session drew to a close, Bob said the tension in his back had released. He felt very strong and centered, no longer reactive to his brother’s behavior.

This session demonstrates the value of colored light therapy to activate and resolve issues relating to shame. As in many of the other sessions, there was a turnaround point where Bob shifted from an intensified experience of shame to an opposite cognition. “I feel like I can take control,” etc. It is particularly interesting that a polarity emerged in the session. In Psychosynthesis terms, two shame-based subpersonalities were there. One was the head-hanging kind of shame, the other a prideful defense against it. Both were activated and resolved in his insight: “I don’t need to put my head down or rigidly hold it up. Just be authentic and accept myself as I am.”

Conclusions

Assagioli, with his background in esoteric psychology, was deeply interested in subtle energy and foresaw the emergence, after his lifetime, of new ways of working that would incorporate this dimension. . Today the fields of subtle energy and energy medicine are rapidly gaining momentum. As I was writing this, a publication arrived from the Institute of Noetic Sciences entitled “Subtle Energy, the Medicine of Tomorrow”—no doubt a harbinger of things to come.

Powerful methods of processing psychic material have become available through body and energy-based therapies such as EMDR, Energy Psychology, and Emotional Transformation Therapy. It is like having a faster computer chip that enables more rapid as well as deeper resolution of issues. The enhanced processing, I believe, is a function of various factors. Perhaps, the most important of these is working from consciousness or the witness state rather than from

the rational mind. This can be facilitated by such means as brainwave entrainment and the use of sound, which tend to induce meditative states. Another important element is the simple fact of paying attention to one's experience in the body. This tends to go directly to the heart of things, as Gendlin found with his Focusing method, bypassing the ego's defenses and the rationalizations of the mind.

Energy psychology practitioners work directly with the body's healing process in other ways as well, such as tapping on meridian points. Another factor that, in my view, enhances processing is the more focused use of intention in these therapies, as in the practice of 'targeting' an issue. Selecting a target for healing seems to function much like typing a topic into a search engine. The wisdom of the psyche then seeks out and brings to the client's attention whatever is needed for this healing to take place.

A further way in which the will supports healing is described in the depth energetic approach. Active and receptive modes of the will are integrated to produce a state of 'focused surrender' in which healing is directed by higher intelligence.

Finally, I believe that the trauma paradigm is an important element in these new therapies. Many energy therapists believe that all pathology is a function of trauma in some form and that release of trauma residue held within the body/mind is essential for healing. They believe that 'small t' trauma, such as not being seen or understood can be treated effectively in much the same ways as 'big T' Trauma, like serious loss or abuse. I have found in my own work that when trauma or Trauma is not addressed and cleared from the system, dysfunctional behavior persists. It is difficult for a person to disidentify from victim consciousness or a wounded child subpersonality when the underlying trauma is untreated. As the importance of trauma was not fully recognized in Assagioli's time, the topic has usually not been included in Psychosynthesis training. This is one area where we can borrow from the energy therapies.

This paper shares some highlights of what I have learned about subtle energy over the past decade. I believe that Psychosynthesis, with its understanding of the depths and heights of the psyche, the role of disidentification, and the subtleties of the will, has much to contribute to and learn from the field.

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