



FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

ENCYCLOPEDIA MATERIAL

Will Davis





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Definitions

Pulsation

Wilhelm Reich discovered the pulsation of the life force and declared it his most important discovery. In his book publications it is first mentioned in *Function of the Orgasm* although it may have appeared earlier in *The International Journal of Sex-economy and Orgone Research*. The term is now used widely throughout the body-psychotherapy field and can be found in many journals and books. (I do not know of any significant modifications of the term and concept of pulsation. Later I will talk about instroke and outstroke but this is not a modification of the concept of pulsation only a refinement.)

Pulsation represents the movement of Orgone energy throughout all of nature. It is a rhythmic movement out and back, from center to periphery that Reich describes as an expansion and contraction. This movement is represented in the world by the natural rhythms of the seasons, heart beats, intestine activities, the creation and dissipation of weather systems and storms, the EEG, the pumping action of full orgasm etc. This rhythmic flow out and back - in both the living and non-living - represents the primordial movement of the Orgone in the material world. The Orgone pulsates continually manifested or unmanifested.

In the living, we can see this process at work most easily in the rhythmic thrustings of the plasma of single celled organisms such as the amoeba. We can see how the plasma flows outward toward the periphery in movement and in search of food. And we can see how the organism gathers itself together again in order to make the next rhythmic thrusting outward - from center to periphery and back again. It also contracts towards the center in stressful situations.

All organisms - be they a one celled organism, or a human - expand outward in health and pleasure and contract back to the center in danger, pain, fear and disease.

When this pulsatory movement is interfered with, imbalance, disorder and disease - both psychic and somatic - eventual sets in. When this pulsation in the living stops altogether, there is death

Counter Pulsation

Reich used the term armor to describe the holding back of the energy flow in both the psyche and in the soma - character armor and muscular armor. Armor is a long term, systematic interference pattern that prevents the Orgone from pulsating resulting in decreased sensation, awareness, experience, emotions and mental activity. It represses and resists and is the source of all psychic and physical problems.

Counterpulsation is a term coined by Charles Kelley that is basically the same as armor but is a better description of the process because it better represents its dynamic quality. All resis-



tances (armorings) are energetic based and so they are all active processes - something that is happening right now. It is even more than that. As Reich pointed out, it is something that the person is doing to themselves right now.

Historically, the original motive for blocking and holding was to protect against some external threat: an angry parent, a drunken father, a physical attack, a sexual abuse. But over time, the original reason for the blocking has ceased to exist, yet the blocking continues. Psychologically this is sometimes introjection, identification etc - taking on the others system as ones own. It is living in the past. Now the person is doing to himself what originally someone else was doing to him. He has created an active counter-pulsation to the flow of the energy. He is holding himself back by using some of his energy to block the pulsatory flow of the original energy source.

It is an active process that is done unconsciously to oneself. It is historically rooted, but it is a present day activity.

Instroke and Outstroke

In the Function of the Orgasm Reich used the two terms expansion and contraction to describe the energy flow from center to periphery. Charles Kelley uses these terms too, but he also refers to the instroke and the outstroke of the pulsation to describe the direction of the flow of the energy. These terms are found throughout his writings and specifically in the "Red Book", his training booklet. We have taken these terms and developed them further.

Instroke and outstroke are a better description of energy flow because they are neutral; they describe only the direction of the movement. Expansion and contraction describes not only the direction, but also the quality of the movement and implies a judgment - expansion is good, contraction is bad.

Expansion is not only the movement of the energy from the center to the periphery; it is also the source of all pleasure in Reichian terms. Equally, contraction is not only the movement inward, it produces anxiety.

But sleeping, which is an inflow of the energy and technically a contraction, is clearly not contractive. In addition, not all movements of the energy outward are either pleasurable or non-contractive. A movement outward - an outstroke - can be for example: explosive, dissipative, contactless, contractive or frustrating.

An instroke - an open flow to the center can be other than contractive. It can be centering, restful, recharging, meditative, intense contact with oneself. In Humanistic Psychology terms, it is a being state.

It is the quality of the movement that determines the experience, not the direction and therefore this distinction is of importance. As a result we can now work with either flow of the pulsation concerning ourselves not with the direction but the quality of the experience.



Patterns of Charge

The spontaneous open flow of the Orgone produces patterns of charge within the organism; how the organism organizes itself energetically. These charge patterns translate into personality, character, ego structure etc. Historically, Reichian work has been interested in the blocked energy patterns of charge. The concept of segmentalization - the body dividing itself up into different, disconnected parts - is an example of this in the somatic realm. Character armor represents the blocked energetic patterns in the psyche. They are functionally identical. The somatic and the psychic blocking systems are mirrors of each other.

Any blocking process increases the charge in both the psyche and the soma resulting in an overcharge. From this we can develop a systematic approach as to how the person blocks their energy, where the charge is and then understand their armoring system which developed historically.

The various Reichian schools have focused on freeing these blocking patterns with some more oriented to the somatic and others more towards the psychic. But no matter what approach, most of the work has been focused on freeing the organism from these charge patterns by working on the location of the overcharge, the armor.

The understanding in Functional Analysis looks to bring Reich's concept of functioning more into the work. We do not work on or with the patterns of charge within the armor. We look to contact the person below the defenses and mobilize the core energy system without activating the charge in these patterns.

Working on the functional level, patterns of charge take a secondary position. While we recognize their historical origins and their importance to the client we no longer have to work to free the person from them. Patterns of charge, armoring, character armor are all seen as symptomatic behaviors in response to a deeper pattern. This deeper pattern is the primary pulsation around the core. When this is out of balance, the symptoms appear, the behaviors occur. When this deeper balance is re-stored, the symptoms disappear, the behaviors change. The patterns of charge are altered.

Additionally, working on this deeper level frees us from having to work with the charge - tension - discharge formula. When mobilizing the organism deeper, there is only flow and pulsation a wave like movement of the energy. Charge and discharge become secondary or irrelevant.

While recognizing both health and unhealthy patterns of charge, we rarely work on or with them. Yet, in the long term our work is ineffective unless they do change.



Theoretical Contributions

There are three major areas that I have contributed to. The first is the understanding of the importance of the instroke of the pulsation. Traditionally Reichian work was based on the expressive, discharge of the energy. The development of the instroke understanding and the resultant methods of working with the instroke movement of the pulsation allowed Reichian work to expand into using both phases of the pulsation instead of only one. Now we can say that we work with pulsation itself – both the flow in and the flow outward. This development has allowed us to broaden and deepen the work in that it offers more possibilities to continue to work energetically with certain character structures: for example the schizoid, the borderline, the oral and “low” energy structures. The classical discharge work was either too dangerous or inappropriate for these structures.

The development of the understanding of the instroke has also created a model of working with people that more closely follows the pulsatory quality of the energy flow. The energy moves not linear in one continuous flow outward, but in “pulsatory thrusts” forward and back. When working with this rhythm, the client stays more in contact with himself and his process as the work unfolds. A beneficial result is that the client is more active in his own healing process and that there is less engaging of defenses and resistances: less projection and transference. The work is more “client centered” to use Carl Rodger’s term.

The second theoretical contribution I have made centers around the concepts underlying the physical touch technique of Points and Positions. The most important of these is the development of Reich’s functional understanding. By the end of his life he was writing that working with emotions, memories, personal history – the basic materials of most forms of psychotherapies – was now secondary to a functional understanding which precedes the psychosomatic understanding.

With the further development of the functional approach a clearer choice is possible. It is now possible to decide to work on the behavioral level – the symptoms represented in the psyche and soma – or deeper and more primary, on the organismic system itself; to work with personal histories and the individual or to focus on the life process and existence itself before the split into psyche and soma.

The Points and Positions technique has helped to further develop a conceptual understanding and a method for mobilizing the organism on the organismic level.

The third contribution is furthering Reich’s understanding of the importance of the plasma in healthy functioning. His early conceptualization was that the energy was blocked on the somatic level by the muscular contraction. But it is not possible to hold a muscle tight for 20 years, it fatigues. And, no viable explanation was offered for how the psyche blocked the energy flow since there were no muscles in the brain/psyche.

Plasma functioning, through the form of connective tissue, offers a clear explanation of how the muscles can contract and hold over time as well as explaining the blocking process in the brain. Connective tissue functioning is the physical manifestation of Reich’s functional identity uniting the psyche and soma into one principle.

Muscle contraction in stress is acute, temporary. The additional build-up of connective tissue fibers in the muscle tissue to support the stress induced contraction is what allows the muscle



to hold its contraction for 20 years. The same is true in the brain or psyche. There may be no muscles in the brain, but connective tissue build up and plasmatic dehydration are both possible. The combination of these two will cause blocking.

The life energy flows through the bodily fluids. Once connective tissue build up begins due to stress, there is a dehydration process in the plasma. With this dehydration, there is a hampering of the energy flow: decreased sensation, awareness, emotions, mental activity etc. and later the development of specific physical diseases.

Also, with a plasmatic understanding, it is possible to develop a model of character development based not on behavioral description, but on energetic functioning. Early disturbance is now seen biologically and psychologically as a contractive plasmatic response. This helps us to understand not only the physical malfunctioning we see in the body, but also the emotional and cognitive disturbances that result due to stress and trauma. For healthy development, all are dependent on good plasmatic functioning.

Working with plasmatic contraction, it is possible to understand early disturbance on the pre-verbal level.

In addition, we can expand this model further along a continuum of character development. The earliest defensive response of the child to stress or a threat is limited to a plasmatic contraction; the Moro reflex. As the child matures, the cognitive and neuro-muscular systems develop and can be called upon to defend the organism. As it gets older still, the plasmatic response lessens as the cognitive/neuro-muscular functioning matures and pre-dominates. Character structures can now be understood in terms of plasmatic or neuro-muscular response.

Published in:

Wörterbuch der Psychotherapie

Gerhard Strumm, Alfred Pritz (Hrsg.)
Springer-Verlag Wein, New York, 2000
ISBN 3-211-83248-3

Pages: 18, 122, 168, 484, 579, 582.



will davis Mas de La Capelle Route de Saint Côme 30420 Calvisson France
+33 (0) 466 81 43 25 willdaviswilldavis@gmail.com