

Appendices: Responses to Critiques of the energy concept in body psychotherapy

Introduction.

The energy model originated with Freud in his „economic principle“, related to the energy of drives, and was developed by Reich in the orgasm theory, and in his concept of psychosomatic identity and antithesis, as well as later. The energy of drives is an integral part of affect expression, which however cannot be reduced to the energy of drives. Affective life, the emotional expression of the living, expresses both biological energy, and the „psychic energy“ of wishes, needs, intentions, relations, beliefs and expectations, and values. Affective life relates to the „conatus“ which Spinoza described, which was one of the forerunners of the Freudian libido theory. Affective life is governed by processes of attraction, fusion and liberation (Paul Ritter, 1954), which seem very basic processes not limited to human beings, or even to living organisms. The criticisms of George Downing and Peter Geissler, and others, of the energy model can be seen as challenges to us in the way that we apply this, or even misuse it, and as challenges to rethink our model with more clarity, in relation to new knowledge of human beings, and of the universe. The energy model needs differentiating into the limited secondary energies of physics and biology, and the more primary sources or grounds from which these energies emerge, and from which the „psychic energy“ of consciousness also seems to emerge, if we are to avoid the reductive and mechanistic trap of reducing consciousness to biology and physics.

Appendix I . The energy model critique by George Downing.

George Downing, in an appendix to his book on Body and Word, praises Reich for his early contributions, and then offers specific criticisms of the Energy Model. His criticisms are:

i That there is insufficient evidence that a special life energy exists.

My answer: The energy model does not require a special life energy. The concepts of bioelectricity, and vegetative energy, are part of normal science. The work of Szent-Györgi on bioenergetics at cell level and tissue level, is part of normal science. Oriental models of prana, chi, etc are not needed in order to do body psychotherapy. Nevertheless for some practitioners for whom body psychotherapy is part of complementary medicine, these models are important and useful.

ii Even if it did the flow or blockage of this energy would not necessarily explain health or neurosis.

My answer: Downing gives six aspects of this argument, which I answer below.

iii. The wider scientific hypothesis of Reich, related to orgone energy, is embarrassing.

My answer: The aspects of Reich's wider scientific views, related to weather, and atmospheric energy, are beyond George Downing's area of competence. The practice of body psychotherapy does not depend on these, except in so far as aspects of point 2 above are involved.

iv The ontological status of cosmic energy is confusing and philosophically unsound.

My answer: The ontological status of the cosmic energy as a philosophical concept, would take us deeply into quantum physics, complex relativity, and the post modern aspects of German natural philosophy, which are increasingly relevant to understanding our place in the cosmos. Again these areas seem beyond the competence of George Downing to discuss, and are only indirectly relevant to the practice of body psychotherapy

In particular, in relation to the second point above, Downing gives six counterarguments:

a) The energy flow model is mechanical, and deprives the client of his agency. Therapy is reduced to plumbing.

My answer: If a client has a heart attack because of a blocked artery, he may need some kind of replumbing. Before the attack, or after, if he can be helped by body psychotherapy to avoid this kind of mechanical replumbing, by becoming aware of how to avoid stressing himself, and to handle anger arousing situations differently, than he becomes more relaxed, and his agency is expressed in his capacity to change himself with therapeutic help. The therapist is not a plumber, but he needs to know something about stress, relaxation, the

dynamics of the heart, and the expressive channels, which may be open or closed, for anger, especially the channels of the arms.

The energy flow model is not mechanical, but it can be applied mechanically. When so I would agree with George Downing.

b) The energy flow model is reductive, mind is reduced not only to body, but to one aspect of body, its energy flow.

My answer: in relation to the late Reich, and the American orgonomists, I agree with the critique. In relation to the Reich in the period of characteranalytic vegetotherapy, I do not agree. Downing himself finds Reich here not reductive, but believes the model at that time already had reductiveness built into it. I disagree, since I read the model differently than George Downing does. Our agreement is that in the middle period of Reich there was an integrated mixture, dealing in depth with both levels, somatic and verbal.,

c) The energy flow model leads to an overemphasis on catharsis, on releasing the flow, and on pleasurable gratification which can block the work with negative feelings..

My answer: the energy flow model can lead to an overemphasis on catharsis. Nevertheless many body psychotherapists working with the energy model, such as Will Davis, and myself, retain the energy model without an overemphasis on catharsis. Catharsis as a main aim is thus not intrinsic to the energy model, but to how one interprets it. Containment is another pole of the energy model. In the biosynthesis metaphor, rivers need banks. Of course the therapist can collude with the client to induce a sense of pleasure and well being at the expense of not working with negative feelings. This would be superficial body-therapy, not depth body psychotherapy. Genuine well being is incompatible with large amounts of unworked through negativity, and in the Reichian three-layer model is accessible only after having worked through the negative layers sufficiently.

d) The energy flow model narrows rather than widens the description of body experience.

I agree with George Downing that undifferentiated client talk about energy is unproductive and that specific statements about feelings, sensations, attitudes, is needed. Once again we are dealing with how the model is used, or rather misused. Jung used a model of psychic energy, and still managed to make differentiated statements about our experience.

e) The energy flow model encourages the patient to overvalue some aspects of himself and undervalue others.

The criticisms seem to apply only when the energy model is used to the exclusion of other models. The danger of creating value hierarchies, the more energy the better, are specifically counteracted in biosynthesis, for example, with the counterbalancing of many other values, including the qualities of contact in the relationship.,

f) The energy flow model creates a major therapeutic goal out of what should be a minor one.

My answer: once again, the energy model can be misused in this way, that the more vital, emotional, and vigorous a person is, the better, but this is not inevitable in the model.

In summary: George Downing ably criticises many ways in which the energy model is open to misuse by some therapists or therapeutic schools, where it can have the disadvantages that he describes. These misuses are not inevitable within the energy model, and there are more sophisticated and differentiated uses of the energy model within body psychotherapy, which avoid the misuses which he catalogues. Paradoxically one of the best descriptions is found in the article quoted above by Peter Geissler.

Appendix II

Body Psychotherapy and Transference: a response to Peter Geissler

by David Boadella

Introduction:

Peter Bolen (1) invites contributions to his critical article on Peter Geissler. In the spirit of ongoing debate, I offer the following comments to the theme of body psychotherapy and transference.

1. Character analysis, and Transference

Vegetotherapy, the principle root of modern body psychotherapies, grew out of character analysis. Wilhelm Reich (2) was one of the foremost analysts to study the processes of transference and countertransference. The application of character-analytic understanding was carried further, in relation to the body, by Alexander Lowen in his first book, „The Physical Dynamics of Character Structure“ (3) but Lowen never wrote in any detail about the transference aspects of character, or of therapy. Andres Leites, educated in the bioenergetic tradition, in his book „Countertransference“ (4), on the other hand has mapped out many aspects of patterns of transference and countertransference between client and therapist.

Authors within the body psychotherapeutic traditions who have written on transference aspects of therapy are Stanley Keleman (5), who wrote an excellent book on somatic resonance and bonding; myself, writing on levels of depth in transference and countertransference (6); George Downing (7), writing in great length on differences between verbal and non verbal transference as parallel processes; Maarten Aalberse, exploring somatic aspects of projective identification (8); and Andreas Wehowsky (9) differentiating aspects of transference from what he calls transmission.

All these authors work extensively with the body, they are embodied therapists, and they do not use transference as a way of depreciating direct somatic work with the body.

2. Back to basics: stress, splits and bridges.

The politics of Alexander Lowen and the crisis within the bioenergetic community

In 1989 a crisis occurred within the bioenergetic community. The crisis occurred because Alexander Lowen became dissatisfied with the tendency of many of his therapists and trainers to move away from working directly with the body, and to begin to draw more practically and theoretically on ideas taken from ego-psychology, and modern object relations theory. He organised an obligatory refresher course for Trainers, entitled „Back to Basics“, one of the requirements of which was that the Trainers should work with him on individual issues related to sexuality, in front of the whole group. Two senior trainers, Sandor Kirsch, and Jacques Berliner, refused to meet the requirements of the obligatory training group, and were subsequently denied the title of Trainer. Subsequently these two trainers broke away from the Bioenergetic Institute and formed a new body-psychotherapy direction, which they called „Analytical body-psychotherapy“ which is discussed below. As the bioenergetic movement broke into two on the issue of how the body and mind are related, the question to be considered is whether this was a genuine split, or would it lead to the development of new bridges. This reminds me of a discussion I had with Alexander Lowen quarter of a century ago in Aspen, Colorado, when he affirmed the importance of the word „split“ as used in bioenergetic theory to describe the blockages in the body, whereas I preferred to develop the concept, crucial in biosynthesis, of bridges that are not used. The difference is the difference between a primarily medical model (the bioenergetic model) and a primarily educational model (the biosynthesis model).

3 . Real body and symbolic body: energy or analysis?

The analytical body psychotherapy of Jacques Berliner, and Sandor Kirsch

Jacques Berliner and Sandor Kirsch were therapists and later trainers within the bioenergetic tradition for at least fifteen years. They had invested much energy and experience in the practices and theories of the bioenergetic movement. Their expulsion at the height of their maturity as trainers must have been both a personal and a professional shock. It was also a paradigm break, and a challenge to the identity they had built up.

Their response to the challenge of back to basics was to build within a very short space of time a new movement called „Analytical body psychotherapy“. This movement is recognisable by the following characteristics:

- a) It is deeply critical of many of the key tenets ,assumptions, and practices of bioenergetic analysis. This critique is well expressed in the title of Sander Kirsch’s article:“There is no analysis in bioenergetic analysis“- (10)
- b) Expelled from the bioenergetic family, the two senior trainers sought a new family and who found it in those psychoanalysts who were aware of the lack of body in their classical training, and found in Berliner and Kirsch a richness of awareness of the body that they needed, and at the same time a critique of Alexander Lowen, and Wilhelm Reich, which they could support.
- c) Jacques Berliner (11), emphasises the importance of transference and counter transference in body psychotherapy, as Reich had done initially, and as in Berliner’s opinion had been increasingly neglected or forgotten in bioenergetics. This emphasis on the transference between patient and therapist, and the countertransference between therapist and client, is not however paralleled in my personal opinion by awareness of the transference from student to teacher, in both its positive and negative forms. It is clear from Berliner’s description of his years within bioenergetics, that he idealised his teacher in a way that analytically can be seen as a very strong positive transference. How else can one explain his attachment to practices and principles for 15 years, which he gave up only after his expulsion? Similarly, in the intensity and form of his later critique of Lowen, and similar critiques by those under his influence, it does not require one to be a psychoanalyst to detect a quality of bitterness, even of revengefulness , which speaks clearly to a very strong and unworked through negative transference on his former teacher. We are speaking of intitial idealisation, followed by subsequent devaluation.
- d) The need was clearly experienced to develop a new set of concepts and practices to replace the now discredited ones discarded from bioenergetics. These concepts and practices can be understood as primarily a restatement of classical and modern psychoanalytical and object-relational concepts,with the inclusion of body reference, rather than by strikingly new theories about the nature of the body mind connection, or of new methodologies to work with neurotic states.
- e) A tendency is found to counterpoint the „new“ analytical body-psychotherapy against the „old“ bioenergetic analysis, derived from Lowen, and further back from Reich. In this competitive advancing of the new against the old, certain concepts such as „relationship“ are seen as typically analytical, as against other concepts such as „energy,“ which are seen as typically outmoded, and discardable. Thus a splitting between energetic work and relationship work is created. Nowhere is this tendency to take a one hundred and eighty degree turn more obvious than in the reversal of Reich’s principal of functional identity and antithesis, which was a basis of his psychosomatic thinking, in a long philosophical tradition, and returning quite explicitly and deliberately to dualistic thinking in which body and mind are consciously dichotomised.
- f) In the fight to discredit the father (Lowen) and the grandfather (Reich), in what may seem to a psychoanalyst something resembling an oedipal revenge drama, not only are Lowen and Reich the target for discreditation, but also the brothers and sisters (ie the founders of other forms of body psychotherapy derived from Reich or earlier) are drawn implicitly into the attack, since it is tacitly assumed that most of the critique of bioenergetic analysis can be applied indiscriminately to almost all other forms of body psychotherapy. With so many competitors struck down, directly, or indirectly, there can be only one survivor: analytical body psychotherapy.
- g) In its rejection and critique of what it sees, in bioenergetics, as the use of unnecessary pressure, on techniques of breaking through the armour, of pushing the client in an unbalanced ways into primitive emotionality, in the overuse of regression, and the neglect of progression, in the overactivity of the therapist’s interventions, and the underawareness of the client’s emerging process, in all these ways the analytical body psychotherapists began to throw out the baby with the bathwater. The bathwater is the forms of bioenergetic methodology which are being criticised: **the baby is the body**. While much remains of value related to the body, and certainly much more than one finds in classical psychoanalysis, one cannot resist answering Sander Kirsch’s paradoxical title („There is no analysis in bioenergetic analysis“) with the thought that „there is not much real body left in analytical body-psychotherapy.“

- h) Jacques Berliner (11) distinguishes well between the real body, of flesh and blood, the imaginal body of the body image, the symbolic body of verbal expression, and the transitional body signalling its needs and feelings within the relationship. However, he tends to polarise, rejecting the energetic reality of the real body, for the imaginal, verbal, and transference aspects of the body, all of which are important. The value of interpreting what the body is doing and meaning is elevated to a cardinal principle, neglecting the insight that interpretation can also constitute a form of misuse at least as serious as the manipulations which Berliner sees in bioenergetics. More serious still is the belief, shared with the analysts, that symbolic life is possible only through words, thus denying the non-verbal symbolism in a dance performance, or in the non-verbal communications systems which are the basis of our human existence, in the crucial attunement systems in the infant-parent bonding, in love making, in the somatic resonances between therapist and client. The mistake is to split the „real body“, the body of movements, the body that can vibrate, and pulsate, the body activated by the now discredited energy of emotionality, the body that breathes, – from the speaking, imaging and relating body, a mistake as serious as the mistake these critics see in bioenergetics, in overemphasising the external body at the expense of the internal body.
- i) One can say that bioenergetics can be enriched by listening to the critique of some of its theoretical and practical weaknesses, and that psychoanalysis has been enriched by the addition of the experience gained within bioenergetics and applied differently by the renegades from the bioenergetic community. To imply as the writers in this school do that the new analytical body psychotherapy is the only serious form of body psychotherapy, and that all other forms are to be discredited on the basis of their critique of bioenergetics, is not only insulting to other forms of body-psychotherapy, but reveals the ignorance of these authors of other body psychotherapy methods and principles, once they step outside the framework of the limited bioenergetic analysis that they left behind them, and the new analytical landscape that they are now colonising.

4. Relationship is more than transference.

A fundamental point of critique of the analytical body psychotherapy approach, is that many other aspects of therapeutic relationship are ignored, or underemphasised, in the over emphasis on the importance of classical transference interpretation. Petrushka Clarkson in her book on the Therapeutic Relationship (12), describes five important forms of therapeutic relationship, each of which is important, and only one of which is the transference relationship. Thus we must be aware of the risk not only of shutting out many important aspects of bodily interventions, out of fear that they will lead to transference complications, as Peter Bolen (1) has argued, but of excluding or minimising non transference aspects of relationship. The other four described by Clarkson are the working frame relationship, the real relationship, the developmental-educative relationship, and the spiritual-transpersonal relationship. Of these the first is well described by Peter Geissler (13).

Of course any therapist can choose to reduce the extent of his direct bodily interventions, and to increase the extent of his interpretations of relational and also of bodily events. What he is not free to do, without being publicly challenged, is to justify such a putting of the clock back, in terms of an ill informed critique of the energy model, and of other body psychotherapy approaches which do not share the splitting of energy and contact, bodily and transference interventions, which is apparent in description by Peter Bolen of the analytical body psychotherapy perspective, which seems to me to be confirmed in the writings of this school. I have written elsewhere in response to critiques of the energy model.

The whole debate is very important, as the dualising tendency described above, risks splitting the body psychotherapy movement, into „body therapy without transference“, and „transference therapy with little body“.

5. The contributions of Peter Geissler

I have great respect for the writings of Peter Geissler (13), many of whose articles have been published in „Energy and Character“. He has inherited the best of diagnostic aspects from bioenergetics, and has combined it with a well grounded understanding of analytical principles in relation to the transference. In my opinion he is less motivated by negative transference against Lowen, than his therapist and teacher, Jacques Berliner. How far he may be influenced by positive transference to that teacher, I leave as a question for others to reflect on.

Peter Geissler shows great differentiation in his writing, and he seems a first rate clinician. However, he has understandably discarded many of the direct classical bioenergetic interventions, which were criticised as invasive or over pressurised by Berliner, and Kirsch, as well as by others. There is however a hole left, which would need filling, if he wished, by the incorporation of other modes of non invasive somatic interventions, of which there is a whole catalogue in George Downing's book, or which he might find if he enquired more deeply in some other body psychotherapeutic schools who work in very different ways from classical bioenergetics. Peter Geissler has been one of the foremost supporters of the energetic understanding of organismic processes, and one of its foremost attackers.

In relation to the description of biophysical processes in cells, tissues, and muscles, one of the best descriptions we have is that of Peter Geissler (1996a), in which strong support for some form of the energy model is provided: Geissler describes the transformations from static to kinetic energy in the evolution of life forms, the energy flow in the body related to fluidity streams, he draws extensively on the embryological model of biosynthesis, and the biodynamic understanding of streaming, he explains processes of vegetative charge and discharge, he quotes positively Reich's comparison of the pulsation in the individual organismic cell with the pulsation in the amoeba, he mentions the longitudinal energy flow in the acupuncture meridians, and describes energy blockages, and energy circulation. All the more surprising is it that only one year later, in his book on Analytical Body Psychotherapy (1997), he devotes a whole chapter to critical remarks on the Reichian and Lowenian energy model. Some of his specific critiques of the use of the energy model by some therapists, I can agree with, and have discussed these above in relation to my answers to similar critiques by George Downing. But Geissler makes sweeping generalisations about the energy model in general, and the best answer to Geissler is Geissler in his own earlier paper, from 1996, where he stoutly defends the energy model in a very differentiated way.

6. Conclusions

There have been so many splits in the history of psychotherapy. The movement in the past ten years since the EABP was founded has been a movement of convergence, of shared perspectives, with respect for differences. A similar convergence is found in the European Association of Psychotherapy conference: „Common ground and different approaches“ (Rome, June 1997). It would be ironic if a new tendency to splitting now arose within the EABP. On this see the excellent article by Andreas Wehowsky on „Energy in Somatic Psychotherapy“, to be published in *Energy and Character*, Vol 29, no 2., at the end of this year. I welcome the work of Peter Geissler, and his teachers, and of George Downing, in building bridges between the work of modern analysts and object relations theorists, and the understanding of the body. We hope the analytical community can be similarly receptive, to the rich contributions to be found within the various body psychotherapy schools over differentiated, subtle, and specific forms of bodily interventions: some of which will enrich the transference in the ways that George Downing has described by opening up its non verbal dimensions, but others of which are not reducible to transference, not explainable by transference, and where it would be a gross therapeutic error to seek to interpret.

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Appendix IV

Der Energiebegriff in der Körperpsychotherapie, Self-published, May 1999

Authors: The Energie Arbeitsgruppe des EABS-CH (Ernst Juchli, Jeannette Andermat, Marga Moser, Monica Rumbelli, Bernhard Villiger, Jules Zwimpfer.)

Reviewed by David Boadella.

This 137 page report, produced by a working group of the Swiss Body Psychotherapy Association, had the opportunity to do a serious scientific work on the energy concept in body psychotherapy, which could have been of inestimable value for body psychotherapy in general. Unfortunately the six authors of the report have produced a document claiming to be seeking to be scientific, and yet full of **paradoxes, prejudices, and problems.**

1. The context of the report.

The report appears at a crucial time in the history of body psychotherapy, when every psychotherapy method is being challenged all over Europe to show that it is scientific. Critiques of body psychotherapy often seek to attack the energetic concept from without as unscientific as a way of invalidating it. Those within the body psychotherapy movement seeking a rapprochement with the analytic community, on the other hand may attack it from within, as a form of acceptability may be found in the psychopolitical recognition processes, if body psychotherapy maximises its analytical roots, and minimises its energetic roots.

2. The authors of the report

Four of the six authors are from one body psychotherapy school accepted within the Swiss Psychotherapy Charta: Klientzentrierte Körperpsychotherapie (GFK). (The other two are from biodynamic psychology and organismic psychotherapy). The four authors from GFK have a particular philosophical perspective, radical constructivism, which is used in various parts of the Report as a basis for negative critical commentary on the energy concepts of body psychotherapy. However, nowhere in the report is radical constructivism defined, or described.

The authors of the report describe various stages of their unhappiness in doing the investigations (to be described later) on which the report is based, chiefly due to their difficulty in finding a consensus of viewpoints within body psychotherapy, and partly because of the frustration of their apparent wish to find a scientific perspective for the energetic concept. **It can be questioned how seriously the four authors from Client Centered Psychotherapy may be in this wish, in view of the fact that a leading author in Client Centred Psychotherapy (Peter Schmid), who is quoted in the report, sees the energetic concepts of body-psychotherapy to be incompatible with client centred psychotherapy. Thus a massive built in bias seems to have been**

incorporated into the report from the beginning, due to the overweighting of one school in the constitution of the investigating team, and to the particular philosophical pre-assumptions of this school.

3. The investigating methods of the report.

The procedures described consist of:

- a) an agreed questionnaire on energetic concepts in therapy, the selection of 17 persons to be interviewed, and the processing of the questionnaires.
- b) a review of relevant literature on the theme of energetic concepts in body psychotherapy.

4. The questionnaire and the protocoll of responses to it.

*The designers of the questionnaire created many questions which are more practical than theoretical, yet in the comments to the responses to the questions, the authors of the report state that the answers are not theoretical enough. **The questions are frequently what is known as „leading questions“**, that is they are questions that predispose the interviewed person to respond in a particular way. Again the responses so provoked are criticised for being vague, not scientific, or not theoretical enough.*

The authors of the report had the wish to make use of the protocolls of the taped interviews to justify their conclusions. They make a distinction between the spontaneity of a spoken interview, where a person, in their view, says what he really thinks, and the reflected response of a written text, where the authors seem to believe that a person says what he wants others to believe that he thinks.

For this reason, among others, a policy decision was made not to send to the seventeen persons transcripts of their interviews, which is the normal process in interviews.

The following situation therefore arose, in relation to the raw data of the report:

i All those interviewed (with one exception, see below) are unnamed, but letter coded. *We are told that they ranged between trainers in a body psychotherapy direction, and those trained in it. No information is given if any of those in the second category were „Lehrtherapeuten“ or not, with any capacity to teach others the concepts of body psychotherapy. We are told that their professional background included: Doctor, psychologist, natural scientist, and „other“, but no figures are given of how many of those interviewed were in each category, or of what „other“ might mean.*

ii No interviews are reproduced in full. *Rather twelve out of seventeen are selectively extracted by the authors of the report, to highlight their critique of the energy concept in body psychotherapy.*

iii No interviews presented have been seen by those interviewed: so the accuracy of transcripts has not been checked.

iv There are various non-sequiturs, where sentences break off into inaudibility in tape transcription, and the meaning is therefore incomplete, or distorted.

v One interview, done in English, was translated into German, but the giver of the interview was not allowed to correct the translation, as this conflicted with the policy decision to publish (extracts from) unedited raw transcripts.

vi The policy of anonymity of those interviewed was broken in relation to myself, as one of the seventeen persons interviewed, for the following reason: when I received the protocol of my interview I realised that I could not consent to its publication in an unedited and uncorrected state. Therefore I withdrew my consent to use it. Nevertheless I was the only person named in the report as one of those interviewed, and comments on my interview (without text) were nevertheless made.

vii The anonymity of the others means that the energy concepts of body psychotherapy are being criticised based on **statements without identifiable authors**. Not only are the authors not identified **the schools they represent are also not identified**. (They were all invited as private persons, and represented in total nine schools of body psychotherapy, including four of the five accepted within the Swiss Psychotherapy Charta, and five additional schools. *One of these five schools (the school of George Downing) does not use energy concepts, so it is difficult to know why this school was chosen for interview.* We have no information as to the distribution of the seventeen persons between these nine schools, and no idea of how representative the views of those interviewed may be in relation to their schools.)

5. **The processing of the interviews by the authors of the report.** The authors tried to classify the statements about energy in the interviews by using eight colours to differentiate different levels of statements. They distinguish the following meanings: metaphorical, natural scientific, substantial, vitalistic, constructivistic, phenomenological, esoteric, and other. **These categories are arbitrarily created, and no coherent attempt is given to justify them. Rather predetermined assumptions are used to bias the discussion in advance.** Short comments I can make on these eight categories:

- Natural scientific, metaphorical, and phenomenological: see section 8 below.
- Substantial: the only example given of substantial is „subtle energy“ which could equally well be placed by the authors of the report under „esoteric“.
- They criticise the view that energy is a substance that can flow, or which can charge the body more or less. One could similarly throw out the concept of electricity, because it flows, and has capacitance, and argue that it is not an energetic process to be included within natural science, for this reason.

- Vitalistic: here they criticise Bergson, without naming him (anonymous once again), and Wilhelm Reich for his orgone theory. Vitalists, and the philosophers of the organism had many perceptions which were foundational for the later development of holistic biology, even if their concepts have had to be revised and reformulated with time. Holistic biology, including holistic psychosomatic medicine, grew out of the rich field of debate between mechanists and vitalists, and transcended the shortcomings of both.
- The scientific evidence for the atmospheric and biological mutual interactions which Wilhelm Reich studied under the „orgone“ theory, is ignored as too complex to discuss, even though the authors of the report pay lip service to the understanding of „complexity“.
- Esoteric: Distant healing and parapsychological interactions are given as examples.
- The authors of the report ignore the fact that parapsychology has been an accepted part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, for the past thirty years. On energy in relation to healing, see below, section 7f.
- Other: no examples are given

In addition to this confused and unscientifically „justified“ list of eight forms of energy concept, the authors of the report constantly interject feelings and attitudes of their own, as commentaries on the highly selected and unedited abstracts, to illustrate their viewpoints, rather than in any genuine attempt to clearly and impartially represent the view of those they interviewed. Nowhere is their colour coding process for the eight forms of energy concept they categorised illustrated, nor is there any summary of to what degree, in the opinion of the authors of the report, each of these categories was represented in the interviews of the **anonymous therapists from the unspecified schools.**

6. **There is no literature survey appended to the report.** Of the immense literature on the energy concept in body psychotherapy, they choose to ignore, with one exception, the work of Wilhelm Reich, as it is too comprehensive for the authors to comment on. They limit themselves to publishing in their report reviews of a mere nine books, and three articles.

Ten of these twelve reviews are listed in the contents to the report. **Inexplicably the reviews of Baker and Boadella are omitted from the contents list.**

Of these twelve reviews, eight are by body psychotherapists (Baker, Boadella, Boyesen, Brown, Downing, Lowen, Pierrakos, Rosenberg). Seven of these authors support the energy concept, and give different degrees of emphasis to it, or use different universes of discourse in describing it. There is a spectrum of usages of the energy concept, comparable with the spectrum of uses found in psychotherapy on the use of the concept „libido“ (contrast, Freud, Reich and Jung), or of different ways of defining and understanding transference (contrast Kohut, Kernberg, Klein etc). One of these eight authors, George Downing, explicitly criticises the energetic concepts of Reich. I have pointed out in my article on Energy and Therapy, that his critique is actually a critique of

reductive ways of using the energy concepts, not the concepts themselves. **Although my article is reviewed in this report, there is no mention of this extensive reply to George Downing in the review.**

The remaining four are reviews of:

- a) An ecological report by Arnim Beckmann on the desert research of Wilhelm Reich which has no direct relevance to the energy concepts of body psychotherapy.
- b) A book by Loil Neidhofer called „Intuitive körperarbeit“. Neidhofer does not call himself a psychotherapist, and is in fact contemptuous of both psychotherapy, and body psychotherapy. A review of his book has no relevance to the energy concepts of body **psychotherapy**.
- c) A book by Bernd Senf on alternative energies in agriculture, complementary medicine and in the later work of Reich. Senf, as far as I know, is not a body psychotherapist.
- d) An article by Peter Schmid, a well known client centred psychotherapist. Peter Schmid edited a series of books on dialogues between client centred psychotherapy and other psychotherapy forms. **Schmid is not a body psychotherapist, and he does not understand the energetic concepts of body psychotherapy.** I did an interview for him in Vienna, and the transcript of this interview (**properly edited and corrected**) was published and was a true record of the views I gave in the interview. However in his comments on this interview, Schmid makes deductions and assumptions which are not grounded in the interview, and which include his own prejudices against the energetic concept in body psychotherapy. **In this sense he is an untrustworthy person to quote in a report that seeks to represent the view of body psychotherapists on energy.**

The content of the reviews is mixed: like all reviews, they express personal views of the reviewers. Naturally, some valuable points of constructive critique may be found. **The tone of the reviews unfortunately is consistently biased by the preconceptions of the reviewing team who wrote the report, and seek to use the book reviews to support their general arguments.**

7. Ignorance shown by the report

It is not known how much command of one of the main languages for scientific research, English, is possessed by the six authors of the report, though the principal author has admitted his knowledge of English would not permit him to read research findings in English.

To seriously discuss the energy concepts of body psychotherapy in a scientific and philosophical context, the authors of the report and the designers of the investigation would need to show some familiarity with the following ten research domains:

- a) The concept of energy in physics, including the quantum understanding of what lies beyond energy (Bohm, Heisenberg, Heim, Laszlo). This is important since two authors are criticised as soon as they use concepts beyond energy, such as information, for the understanding of their work. The authors of the report seem to think that if energy is not everything, it is nothing.
- b) The concept of energy in holistic biology, and its influence and importance in living systems (Waddington, Goodwin, Sheldrake, Maewan Ho, Popp). This is relevant because body psychotherapy works with non verbal communication as well as verbal communication, and this non verbal communication is carried by energetic processes. It may be noted that this creative line of biologists were influenced by Hans Driesch, a major German embryologist and parapsychological researcher, who would fall under the critique given by the authors of the report to „vitalism“.
- c) The concept of psychic energy in psychology, and its development (Fechner, William James, Freud, Jung, Reich, Lichtenberg). This is relevant because the founders of psychotherapy were intensively and extensively involved with the concepts of energy. It would seem unfair to limit a „radical deconstruction“ of the energy concept to **anonymous representatives of unspecified body psychotherapy directions**, without having something to say about some of the key founders of psychology and of psychotherapy. This could have placed the design of the interviews, the conduct of the interviews, the policy decision of selective quotation from the interviews, and the **biased critical commentary on the partially presented anonymous viewpoints**, in a genuine historical and philosophical context, rather than **singling out unknown representatives of unspecified schools**, for what many may feel to be a **belittling commentary based on unedited partial transcripts**.
- d) The understanding of energetic processes in relation to the biosystemics and psychodynamics of emotionality (Cannon, Gellhorn, Laborit, Liss, Allan Shore). This is relevant because of the tendency to create a false dichotomy between the „energetic“ and the „relational“ understanding of body psychotherapeutic experiences and events. I have myself published responses both to uncritical use of the energy model in a reductive way (see Organism and Organisation), and to uncritical use of the transference model in a reductive way (see „Körperpsychotherapie und Übertragung“).
- e) The understanding of the current debate on energy in the Journal of Consciousness Studies, which is at a very high level and at the leading edge of scientific understanding of the relationship between energy and consciousness. This is totally relevant since body-psychotherapists are working conceptually with the „mind-body“ problem where soma and psyche meet.
- f) The understanding of the scientific evidence for energetic transmission in healing (supported by 137 controlled experiments). This is relevant since the authors of the report frequently criticise the use of the term „energy“ in contexts which they label

and then dismiss as esoteric. Relevant here are the seven volumes of the Journal of the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine (ISSSEEM). The authors of the report (p 83) are interested, in the service of being „natural-scientific“ in „setting boundaries against the esoteric“. The chairman of the scientific commission of the Swiss Charta, a Jungian therapist, had a similar wish during the Swiss Charta discussions on the scientificity of body psychotherapy. He told me it was necessary to build a boundary against esoterica. I replied that I was happy to make such a boundary somewhere, but it would be important not to shut out the twenty two volumes of C. G. Jung. After this exchange a vote was taken that body psychotherapy, like Jungian therapy, was „scientific enough“ to admit into the Swiss Charta.

- g) The understanding of spirituality in relation to body psychotherapy in particular and psychotherapy in general. The authors of the report seem to show an anxiety in relation to the theme of spirituality, which they constantly confuse with religion, and to add to these confusion they throw in the word „guru“ from time to time, *anonymously*, so it is unclear who they are referring to: Freud, Reich, Buddha, one or more of their seventeen interviewed persons? The reader of the report is left to guess. The seriousness of interest in spirituality in relation to psychotherapy is shown by the fact that a working party on this very theme, by the European Association for Psychotherapy, was upgraded to be also a working party of the World Council for Psychotherapy. In their anxiety to defend against a possible threat from sects and cults (as well as „*gurus*“), the authors of the report seem to have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. I refer them to the comprehensive overview on the theme of spirituality and psychotherapy in the article „Essence and Ground“ in International Journal of Psychotherapy, Vol 3, 1, 1998.
- h) The understanding of the psychopolitical approach to health within the World Health Association, which is supportive of alternative paradigms for healing: an Office for Alternative Medicine has been created within the National Institute of Health in the USA, and is actively connected to the ISSSEEM. This is relevant since we are dealing with the theme of acceptability of body psychotherapy, with its energy paradigm, within psychotherapy as a whole. **The scientific debate has political decisiveness.**
- i) The understanding of the relationship between Western and Eastern energy concepts. This is relevant because the authors of the report frequently criticise individual anonymous interviewees, because of their usage of Eastern energy concepts. **This critique is somewhat astounding, since four of the six authors are from the GfK, and when the GfK sought to enter the Swiss Psychotherapy Charta, it was at first rejected as unscientific: in particular it was asked to explain its use of the concept of „chakras“ in the description of its approach. It seems that this**

concept has now been dropped from the explicit self-description of the GFK.

What is not understood by the authors of the report is that Eastern energy concepts, particularly those related to acupuncture, and to „chi“ energy, are not only paralleled by Western energy concepts which are independently derived, but that literature on the empirical evidence for the kind of energy described in the eastern concepts, is extensive. Reports on „chi energy“ have been published in the scientific journal, Nature, which is certainly not open to esoteric reports.

The scientific report of the EABP, prepared by Michael Heller, Courtney Young, and others, after extensive work, as part of their scientific submission for the EAP, is similarly criticised destructively, and not constructively „because of some reference to eastern energy concepts. **Nothing is offered in its place except vague references to constructivism, and a recommendation to read a book by Foerster on the social construction of „occult“ (sic!) reality.**

- j. The understanding of the broader context of energy concept discussions within body psychotherapy as a whole: Energy and Character, the best known journal of body psychotherapy, in its thirty years of existence, has published contributions from 35 body psychotherapy schools. Of these 35, a mere eight are sampled in the report. The views of biosystemic psychology, which has a strong scientific basis, are ignored. The views of Peter Geissler, even though supportive of the critique by the authors of this report, are ignored (possibly because they support an analytical paradigm which the client centred bias in the report is not sympathetic to?)

8. Misconceptions of the report.

In spite of their wish to use concepts of radical constructivism to illuminate their commentary on the interview-extracts, the **authors of the report fall into many terminological and conceptual confusions.**

- a) Firstly, they judge many of the extracts by a natural-scientific understanding of the world „energy“. **Their wish is to find a „trivial, technical“ small-energy concept, which can be pragmatically applied to body psychotherapy,** and offer a common language. But the term energy is not only used in natural science, it is used in psychosomatic medicine, and in developmental psycho-biology, which are mixed fields where different universes of discourse need to be translated between each other: psychotherapy is a human science, using concepts from the human sciences. Body psychotherapy is also a human science, but one which includes concepts and evidence from the natural sciences, because it pays more attention to biocommunication than non-body psychotherapies. Thus in their wish to be natural-scientific, the authors of the report overplay their hand. This becomes even clearer when they talk about energy as a physical quantity which is measurable. Of course biological parameters are measurable, but they are also perceivable. A thermometer enables me to measure the

temperature of the hot day, which is related to heat processes, which are energetic processes. But without a thermometer my sense organs tell me the day is hot: the human body can perceive and respond to energetic processes, and „measure them“ in its own way. Similarly with body temperature in a feverish child: the mother puts her hand on the child head and perceives there is a change in his thermal metabolism (an energy change). She checks it with a thermometer. Similarly with heart rate, blood pressure, breathing changes, sweating, muscle tone shifts, all are energetic; all are perceptible by a sensitive observer; all are measurable in quantities, all are also carrying „information“ , even if the authors of the report do not like the way this term is used by others than themselves.

- b) Due to this reductionistic bias towards the natural-scientific,(as if the word energy has no right to be used in the human sciences), there is a tendency to regard phenomenological reports by therapists on energetic conditions in their clients, as „**wishy washy**“. There is also the tendency to explain away anything not seen by the authors of the report as „natural scientific“ as „metaphorical“. The problem here is that all concepts of natural science are basically metaphors: for example „waves“ in physics. On this matter **there is an extensive literature which the radical constructivists could be aware of, on the use of metaphors in natural science**. This was cited in my response to the same critique of the energy concept within the debates of the Scientific Colloquium of the Swiss Charta. **The authors of the report were well aware of my standpoint in relation to metaphors in this respect, but chose to ignore it in their 137 page report.**
- c) Those interviewed were represented, in the extracts from their interviews, in the speech form, which tends to be more phenomenological, than natural-scientific. A written form could lead to a different blend of these two aspects of perception. **Thus the choice of the interview form, in particular the refusal to let those interviewed look over their texts, creates a bias towards more phenomenological or metaphorical use of language, which is then retrospectively criticised as unscientific.**
- d) The authors of the report consistently belittle those interviewed in their commentaries, by asking ironical questions (which they almost invariably never answer) in an attempt to invalidate as „unscientific“ the spontaneous responses of the persons they interviewed. I can imagine an interview with Einstein, (who once said that he developed general relativity after a dream of riding through the cosmos on a light wave), as being similarly used to discredit him as a serious thinker, especially if the interview was selectively extracted, and he had no chance to edit and revise the spoken text for publication. The principal author of the report describes himself as a „*half-trained amateur philosopher*“. The authors of the report attempted themselves to write about the energy concept in body psychotherapy, but *admit that their attempts failed to be helpful to them*. The following

„definition“ of energy was offered by one of the six interviewers and authors of the report: “Energy is something that happens. It can only partially be measured. There are things which happen which cannot be measured. They have effects nevertheless in psychotherapy“. It seems to be a question of the blind leading the blind, or the blind criticising those who see and say for what they see and say, *because it is not precise enough!!*

9. Conclusions of the report.

Since the authors of the report are disappointed that they cannot make sense of the replies to their questions, (**a disappointment which is even stronger for the reader of the report since he has access only to partial unedited and sometimes inaudible replies**); and since the authors of the report were unable to come up with any things better themselves; and since they find a need to „fight against“ definitions offered by the EABP scientific report, the result is that the end status of their report is the decision that a second report is needed: „*Energy group II*“ to develop the „trivial-technical“ definition of energy which they hope could serve to unite the body psychotherapy community. **Maybe a „trivial-technical“ definition of libido, of transference and of resistance, and of the Self, can follow.**

10. Comment on the report.

My overwhelming feeling is that inspite of their declared intent, the report has done a great disservice to body psychotherapy. The questionnaire, and written replies to it, could have been circulated internally, before publishing in this form. An attempt over two or three years to gradually generate some agreed terminology, or to inspire body psychotherapy schools to improve their own terminology, should in my opinion have taken place by internal dialogue, rather than in the public availability of such an unsatisfied and unsatisfactory „report“. Placed in the hands of other psychotherapy schools, or psychopolitical gremiums, which are negative to body psychotherapy, it represents what seems to be **a devastating critique of important concepts of body psychotherapy**, at least as shown by the nine schools which were interviewed. One might ask how can this not also be potentially self-destructive for the principal school which authored the report: the GFK. Here it may be noted that although the GFK is formally part of the CH-EABP, they define themselves also as part of the humanistic mainstream: we have seen that Peter Schmid, a leading writer from Client Centred Psychotherapy, views energetic concepts of body psychotherapy as being „incompatible“ with Client Centred Psychotherapy. Could it be that the Client Centred members of the Swiss EABP (the majority of the report writers), are seeking to reduce the energy concept to a „trivial-technical“ level, thus **sweeping their discomfort over the spectrum of understanding of energy within body psychotherapy under the psychopolitical carpet?**

I fear a future where body psychotherapy is „scientifically“ managed by the descendants of Carl Rogers, where energy becomes a „trivial-technical“ adjunct to therapy, where a pact is made with the humanists, (or in the case of Peter Geissler, who is ignored by the report, with the analysts), where we push energy, unless we can measure it, back into the last century, and where we move forward into the next millenium having got rid of the uncomfortable baggage of the orgasm theory of Wilhelm Reich, of the Freudian economic principle, of the Jungian libido, and of all those metaphorical concepts by which the human sciences are enriched. In the uncomfortable climate of increasing regulation of psychotherapy schools, where the competition is constantly increasing in every country in Europe, for who can be recognised and therefore paid by the social insurance for their work, I fear a future where school may turn against school, or mainstream against mainstream, in the struggle for survival, adopting the arguments for a politicised science, and a trivialised therapeutic technology, as their pseudo- justifications.

11. Recommendations.

This review of the report is being sent to all the schools who participated, to the President of the Swiss Body Psychotherapy Association, and to the EABP President and General Secretary. It represents the personal views of the author. **It is recommended that schools make their own response, in writing, to the same persons. A different leadership than the GFK is recommended for the Energy Group II, so as to overcome the many shortcomings and difficulties described in this review.**