The Therapist's Role in the Developmentally Sensitive Reparative Process

Providing a Corrective Emotional Experience

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ABSTRACT

From a theoretical and clinical perspective, developmentally needed, reparative therapeutic relationships have deep roots in psychoanalysis and other psychotherapeutic modalities, including biodynamic body psychotherapy (BP). This paper explores BP's approach to regression as it supports the client's continued salutogenic development – the processes of moving toward health – and the realization of their inherent potential. By integrating unique clinical tools and techniques, BP fosters psychological and physiological corrective emotional experiences that reestablish authentic affective states as allostatic phenomena – the synchronized capacity of all systems to achieve dynamic stability amid change. This paper illustrates practical ways in which biodynamic psychotherapists become a "good enough" presence in the Winnicottian sense, while also considering the impact of regression in reestablishing biopsychosocial functions. These include aspects of neuroscience and psychoanalysis, such as conscious and unconscious integrative processes, organic changes in perception, and the emergence and reconsolidation of memories.

Keywords: regression, emotion, implicit memory, neuroscience, psychotherapy, reconsolidation of memory, vegetotherapy, biodynamic, salutogenesis, allostasis

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Biodynamic psychotherapy (BP), developed by Gerda Boyesen in the 1960s, is a holistic approach that supports salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987; Mittelmark et al., 2017) through body awareness, emotional expression, and attuned touch (Steinberg, 2024). Rooted in the human potential movement (Douglas, 2010), BP aims to unlock the "primary personality" (Boyesen, G., 1972, 1982), a construct similar to Feldenkrais's *potent self* (1985), Horney's *real self* (1951), Winnicott's *true self* (1960), and Schwartz's *self* (1995, 1997). BP utilizes a comprehensive assessment framework that integrates medicine, neuroscience, neuropsychoanalysis, trauma work, and developmental psychology to facilitate natural health processes (Steinberg, 2010) and foster personal growth.

Basic Principles of Biodynamic Psychotherapy

Biodynamic psychotherapy (BP) promotes salutogenic change by harnessing the organism's ability for emotional and physiological regulation. It addresses unconscious conflicts, defensive processes, and maladaptive patterns. By identifying and processing dysfunctional relationships within the therapeutic context, BP seeks to enhance natural growth and reawaken health potential.

BP methods are guided by organic *transference* (Stattman, 1968), and facilitated by *biodynamic typology*, which is defined by energetic permeability (Boyesen, G., 1986 [2022a]; Speyer, 1977; Tanguay, 2022a; van Heel & van Eeghen, 2022) between therapist and client.

- *Organic transference* is a somatic identity formation process involving unconscious mirroring of parental bodily rhythms and emotional complexes from pre-birth through early childhood (Stattman, 1968).
- *Biodynamic typology* (Tanguay, 2022a) describes an individual's permeability to their primary personality. It illustrates stages of self-actualization, ranging from neurotic to less neurotic types. Permeability denotes the flow of primary personality energy through bodily and psychic layers.

The concept integrates affective permeability, defined as the "shared experience of intense affect across permeable boundaries" (Mitchell, 2000, p. 58), interoceptive awareness, or the conscious perception of internal bodily sensations, and alexithymia, which refers to the difficulty in identifying and describing emotions and is often linked to childhood adversity (Lloyd et al., 2021).

This comprehensive approach enables BP to address the whole person, promoting growth and healing through a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of body, mind, and emotions.

Three Core Methods

Biodynamic psychotherapy (BP) employs three core methods: BP touch/biodynamic massage (Southwell, 1982; Eiden, 1995; McCallion & McCallion, 2000; Steinberg, 2016, 2024; Westland, 2022), biodynamic vegetotherapy (Southwell, 2022a), and rooted talking (Southwell, 2010).

These methods correspond with Panksepp's concept of nested brain-mind hierarchies (Panksepp et al., 2014; Panksepp, 2015), activating intrinsic brain emotional systems (primary processes) as bottom-up events. This leads to new learning (secondary processes) and ultimately affects thinking (tertiary processes).

BP work balances biological and psychic processes, emphasizing attuned interventions and monitoring integrative processes without a pre-planned agenda. The principle that "the client cannot fail the method, but the method may fail the client" (Boyesen, G., 1985 [2022]; Leudesdorff & Santner, 1995) underscores the importance of flexibility in the therapeutic approach.

1 Biodynamic Psychotherapeutic Touch

Biodynamic psychotherapeutic touch, or biodynamic massage (Steinberg, 2016, 2024), is an attuned haptic form of nonverbal communication initiated by the biodynamic psychotherapist. It relates to and is guided by unconscious conflicts and the natural growth potential that emerges in the client's verbal and nonverbal communication during the psychotherapeutic encounter. The psychotherapist is regarded as the midwife of the client's process, not its cause.

Biodynamic psychotherapeutic touch integrates 18 different techniques guided by biofeedback from the digestive system, known as psycho-peristalsis (Boyesen, M.-L., 1974a, 1974b, 1975a, 1975b, 1976a, 1976b, 1976c), non-invasive vagal stimulation (Steinberg, 2016), and the autonomic nervous system (ANS). However, the "magic" – the effectiveness of the touch – doesn't depend on the specific touch technique but rather on the therapist's level of attunement during the touch – i.e., attuned touch. The touch must be attuned biologically and psychologically (Steinberg, 2024).

2 Biodynamic Vegetotherapy

Biodynamic vegetotherapy is defined as an embodied free association process that allows the embodied infinite possibilities of human subjective experience, unconscious needs, unfinished business, repetitions, and desires to spontaneously emerge from within the client as

an organism due to "internal organismic pressure" (Southwell, 1979), which unconsciously "knows" which processes will lead to a healthier state as an individual-subjective whole.

3 Rooted Talking

Rooted talking is a verbal process where the client, as an active participant, connects deeper into themselves, their sensations, and the feelings in their body. The psychotherapist metaphorically positions themselves alongside the client, supporting the process of rooting verbal expression in bodily sensations of the self through "stepping stones." They support communication with "it" (Southwell, 2022b), the unconscious and the unaware, through non-provocative communication that encourages the continuation of the sentence without using "wh" questions (i.e., who, what, where, when, why).

Understandably, Gerda Boyesen highlighted two qualities required of the therapist:

a. The therapeutic presence (Boyesen, G., 1985 [2022]). The therapist is connected to their well-being and their own streaming. The therapist can emotionally and physiologically self-regulate. The therapist's state of being gives the client with the space and time to reach the deep, essential levels from which the "stimuli from within" can impinge.

b. The essential executive function of flexibility that the attuned psychotherapist must exhibit in response to the client's changing needs.

The psychotherapist must be fully attuned to the client's rhythm, including the crescendos and decrescendos of their emotions and sensations. Attunement, resonance (Boadella, 1981), and organic transference (Stattman, 1968) are significant tools that facilitate this process. Being attuned does not mean that the psychotherapist forcefully intervenes; rather, they need to embrace a state of *being* instead of *doing* or *having*... "a feeling of well-being that accompanies the relaxation" (Fromm, 1989, p. 15). In this state of being, the psychotherapist remains open, with freely flowing attention to whatever is occurring.

The Client Creates the Psychotherapist

Biodynamic vegetotherapy, a client-centered approach, allows clients to form their image of the psychotherapist as a subjective-object, similar to Winnicott's "good-enough therapist" (Jacobs, 1995, p. 62). The therapist provides a "facilitating environment" (Winnicott, 1958) within a "potential space" (Winnicott, 1971a), resembling Winnicott's play space, where both the client and psychotherapist can "play," facilitating the expression of their entire personalities (Winnicott, 1964).

Winnicott's perspective that "there is no mother without a baby" applies here. The client constructs the therapist, much like infants fabricate the breast through their capacity for love or need (Winnicott, 1953). Consequently, the client influences the therapeutic relationship.

The therapist, like a good-enough mother, facilitates the regressed client's illusion of creation. As a technique to support this illusion during vegetotherapy in a regressive state, the therapist might, for instance, offer a cushion at the base of the thumb (anterior view) as a substitute for the breast to suck on.

The illusion of the therapist as a surrogate mother gradually dissipates, and the client evolves from complete dependency to independence (Winnicott, 1965b). Over time, the therapist becomes less involved (Winnicott, 1975, p. 238), allowing the client to tolerate the absence of the object (Winnicott, 1988b, p. 106) and develop "towards independence" (Winnicott, 1965b [1963], p. 83; 1965b [1960], p. 46). This process mirrors early development, from the infant's omnipotence through disillusionment, ultimately fostering independence within the therapeutic relationship.

A Parable of Two Psychotherapists in the Desert

We can use the metaphor of a parable involving two psychotherapists to better illustrate how the biodynamic psychotherapist operates within the reparative framework.

Two psychotherapists await a client at a desert oasis. After three days without food or water, the exhausted client arrives seeking help.

The psychodynamic therapist, who is focused on verbal communication, invites the client to discuss their hardships. In contrast, the biodynamic therapist, who views the client holistically, recognizes their immediate physical needs.

The biodynamic therapist provides food, water, and rest, saying, "See what feels right. Eat, drink, and rest if you wish. Then, we can talk if you want." This approach embodies the biodynamic principle that all needs are equally important, focusing on the client's overall well-being before engaging in verbal therapy.

What is the meaning of this parable?

This parable illustrates the contrast between traditional talk therapy and biodynamic psychotherapy (BP). BP prioritizes addressing all needs – including physiological needs – rather than just psychological work, recognizing the interconnectedness of body and mind.

BP holds that lasting change requires more than establishing top-down processes focused on reflection and re-evaluation of behavioral issues and conflicting self-representations (Mitchell & Black, 1995). It also considers the Freudian idea of bringing unconscious content into consciousness to be inadequate (Freud, 1933).

Instead, BP proposes an integrative approach and views the person as an undivided organism. This bottom-up process, rooted in the concept of primary personality (Boyesen, 1972, 1982), aligns with Winnicott's "desultory formless functioning" (1971a) and supports emotional and physiological regulation.

This approach echoes the thinking of Ferenczi, Balint, and humanistic clinicians like Rogers and Perls (Kramer, 1995).

In contrast to cognitive behavioral therapy, which asserts that emotional distress is the consequence of maladaptive thoughts (Ellis, 1962), and behavioral therapy, which claims that suffering results from irrational beliefs, BP assumes that emotional distress stems from a maladaptive embodied capacity for emotional and physiological regulation. This maladaptation disrupts internal connection with the primary personality (Boyesen, 1972, 1982), which is constructed from several qualitative components, such as the individual's positive developmental potential.

This assertion aligns with contemporary research by Bruce Perry in his neurosequential model of therapeutics (Perry, 2001, 2002, 2006; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006; Perry & Winfrey, 2021). According to Perry's model, human growth and development are predicated on the brain's hierarchical structure, and the developmental sequence of processes under optimal conditions is to fulfill an individual's genetic potential. This process begins with the lower and simpler structures of the brainstem, which are responsible for temperature regulation, respiration, heart activity, other ANS functions, and the seven prototype emotional systems (Panksepp & Biven, 2012). It then progresses to the diencephalon, which governs wakefulness, sleep, appetite, and movement, followed by the limbic system, responsible for reward, memories, connections, and complex emotions. Finally, development reaches the neocortex, the uppermost structure responsible for creativity, thinking, language, beliefs, values, time perception, and hope. It is only within the neocortex that psychoanalytical verbal reflection can emerge.

BP aims to influence the brain, beginning with the brainstem, through the use of touch, breath, movement, and other body-based psychotherapeutic techniques. According to affective neuroscience (Panksepp, 1998; Panksepp & Biven, 2012; Panksepp et al., 2014), we can assume that body-based biodynamic psychotherapeutic techniques engage with the "primary-process affective substrates for primal emotional feelings and behaviours" (Panksepp et al., 2014, p. 472). This suggests that these techniques target the foundational emotional processes that underlie basic feelings and behaviors.

Biodynamic psychotherapy emphasizes the development of abilities necessary for self-regulation and relationship regulation, trusting that neocortical abilities, such as recognizing, understanding, reflecting, and mentalizing one's inner processes and those of others, will develop as a continuation of the natural ontogenic process (the origination and development of an organism) within the psychotherapeutic encounter. From the perspective of affective neuroscience, the psychotherapist influences core subcortical brain mechanisms responsible for generating emotions and their associated actions (Panksepp & Biven, 2012). While the neocortex can interpret these emotional states, they do not require neocortical participation, as they origi-

nate from subcortical brain circuits. There is a natural evolutionary order and maturation sequence, beginning with improved emotional and physiological regulation processes at the primary process level in the brainstem, which ultimately supports the development and ordering of the mental apparatus (Davis & Montag, 2019), ultimately changing how life situations are predicted.

First-Order and Second-Order Affective States

Lambie and Marcel (2002) proposed a bi-level view of consciousness, distinguishing between first-order affective states (the phenomenology of emotion) and second-order affective states (the mode of awareness and attention). In clinical contexts, emotional processing (Foa & Kozak, 1986) can occur at the first-order level without conscious awareness.

The implicit emotional level involves body-based states and autonomic responses from the brainstem and diencephalon. First-order experiences are expressible without symbolization or understanding. Second-order experiences involve awareness, symbolization, and reflective processing in the neocortex. This distinction allows for body-based methods in psychotherapy.

Psychotherapists must navigate between first-order and second-order processes to meet clients' emotional needs. Conscious awareness emerges spontaneously, making interpretations unnecessary and potentially harmful.

In biodynamic psychotherapy, first-order affective states are communicated at the "it" level (Southwell, 2022b), enabling deeper self-experience. Moving to the "I" level (second-order) depends on the client's ability to recognize and acknowledge feelings and urges. The psychotherapist should trust the natural evolution of the client's self-awareness.

Introduction to the Reparative Model of Psychotherapeutic Relationship in Biodynamic Psychotherapy

Biodynamic psychology holds that reflection is vital in psychotherapy, yet often insufficient by itself.

True healing demands a comprehensive body-mind process involving all bodily systems. Biodynamic psychotherapeutic techniques are guided by multiple intentions, dimensions, and assessment domains, as depicted on intersecting axes. These axes span polarities to capture the complexity of human dynamics, eschewing simplistic dichotomies. The therapist often follows their intuition during sessions, guided by the client's process.

Reflection on the therapeutic process is essential, and uses dynamic assessment tools. These overlapping tools offer unique perspectives on the therapist's ability to provide a "good-enough" therapeutic presence, a cornerstone of biodynamic psychotherapy.

The Chick, the Egg and the Eggshell from the Lens of the First Two of Southwell's Seven Axes of Intention

The first group of seven axes of intention answers the question: What is the psychotherapist's intention in the session?

A second group of axes answers the question: What is the client's dynamic state ontologically (developmentally—at the depth level) and on the here-and-now level (the surface level)?

Biodynamic psychotherapy employs a reparative model, likening the primary personality to a chick and defense mechanisms to its eggshell. The therapist aims to nurture the chick directly, fostering growth from within by offering corrective emotional experiences (Alexander & French,

1946). This approach involves the intention of the psychotherapist (from the first group of axes) to offer "relational moves" leading to "transformative co-constructed 'now moments'" (Stern et al., 1998) that meet the client's developmental needs. As the "chick" grows stronger, it cracks the eggshell (the defense mechanisms) from within, rather than the psychotherapist confronting the client and breaking the "eggshell" from outside.

This method contrasts with potentially misattuned techniques in bioenergetics or classical psychoanalysis, which metaphorically crack the eggshell from outside. It aligns with Spagnolo and Northoff's (2021) concept of shared time and space, and aims to recover Winnicott's "personal continuity of existence" (1953, 1967). This is similar to Perry's approach, and embraces Clarkson's (2003) reparative relationship model while addressing developmental needs and deficits (second group of axes).

Emotional arousal remains crucial for therapeutic change (Lane et al., 2015), particularly within a developmentally sensitive reparative relationship. This entails reliving experiences through the bodily felt sense, akin to Bowlby's (1969-1982) goal-corrected partnership concept (Wells et al., 2023).

The approach supports Winnicott's notion of mature integration into "a unit" with a sense of "I AM" (1965b, 1975), facilitating what Boyesen terms "independent well-being" (1981, 1982, 2022b).

Meeting Clients' Basic Psychological and Physiological Needs Underlies All Biodynamic Methods

In all therapeutic encounters, biodynamic psychology is guided by meeting the individual's basic needs according to their developmental sequence (second group of axes). This principle informs interventions such as dialogue, physical proximity, and touch, and encompasses various levels of contact – emotional, mental, and physical – through biodynamic massage, vegetotherapy, and rooted talking. Responses to needs may occur at both adult and child levels, ensuring a holistic approach to the person as a living organism.

Responses to Needs on the Adult Level

At the adult level, we engage as equals, fostering originality and contribution–a "real personal relationship" versus "true transference reactions" (Greenson & Wexler, 1969, p. 27). Humanistic and integrative psychotherapy approaches extensively developed this "non-transference relationship" concept (Rogers, 1951). Anna Freud also advocated for this "real personal relationship" between analyst and patient of "equal adult status" (Freud, 1954, pp. 372-373).

This relates to the desert parable, exemplifying what Gerda Boyesen called the practical, trivial level (Boyesen, 1986 [2022a]). The psychotherapist respects the client's timing, aligning with BP's principle that clients are always right about their feelings and timing. Responses to developmental needs at the child level, particularly within regression work, reflect the ideas of Ferenczi (1933) and Balint (1935b): "Such a development by means of regression is the necessary precursor of every new beginning" (Haynal, 2002, p. 58).

Winnicott's three developmental stages – absolute dependence, relative dependence, and "towards independence" (1965b, p. 84) – form a delicate progression. He posited, "No stage can be missed or marred without ill-effect" (1964, p. 85). Regression allows us to revisit these missed milestones on the timeline of emotional growth.

In our desert parable, the biodynamic psychotherapist, like a nurturing oasis, first quenches the thirst and satiates the hunger of basic organic needs, all within the emotional context of the missed developmental stage.

What If the Psychotherapist Ignores the Client's Developmental Needs?

Ignoring developmental needs breeds negative transference and projections. Gerda Boyesen posited that psychotherapists' failure to satisfy natural needs engenders challenging emotions like hate (Heller, 1987; Tanguay, 2022b). Conversely, addressing these needs diminishes hate, elevates contentment and love, and functions as an emotionally corrective experience (Alexander & French, 1946, pp. 66-70). It also supports the reconsolidation of memories and incorporates new emotional experiences.

In touch-based therapy, attuned positive transference is crucial (Steinberg, 2024). Gerda Boyesen astutely queried, "How can you be massaged by somebody you hate?" (Heller, 1987, p. 3).

Like nurturing parenting, biodynamic psychotherapy satisfies primary needs through direct contact. This aligns with Ferenczi's and Balint's concept of seeking reparation for missing primary love (Haynal, 2002, p. 57; Balint, 1935a, p. 50). In Balint's view, primary love – the desire to "be loved always, everywhere, in every way, my whole body, my whole being – without any criticism, without the slightest effort on my part" (Balint, 1935a, p. 50) – is the primary tendency in transference love.

The biodynamic psychotherapist, guided by "organic transference" (Stattman, 1968), becomes like a surrogate parent, attuned to basic needs and startle reflex remnants accumulated due to empathic failures (Boyesen, 1970 [2022]; Boyesen M.-L., 1974b, 1977). Through vegetotherapy and biodynamic massage, BP therapists offer a "sustaining echo of empathic resonance" (Kohut, 1984) and satisfy the need for primary love as a body-mind-soul energy process via "direct vegetative contact" (Reich, 1945, p. 324) at the primitive edges of experience, finally resolving some of the developmental arrest.

This could become a transpersonal process that resonates between two "core layers" of the primary personality (Boadella, 1981, p. 80), mirroring Winnicott's "good enough mother" "who makes active adaptation to the infant's needs, an active adaptation that gradually lessens, according to the infant's growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration" (1988a, pp. 3-14; 1953, pp. 13-14). It establishes a substitute contact, reaching beyond to cosmic energy and universal love – a genuine, present-centered relationship.

The Desperate Hunger for Absent Primary Love Leads to Aggressive Feelings and Behavior and Can Be Soothed by Good-Enough Vegetative Contact with the Psychotherapist

The yearning for absent primary love breeds aggression, which can be soothed by the psychotherapist's nurturing touch. Balint mused, "Aggression is no more than a reaction to this missing primary love" (Haynal, 2002, p. 57). In biodynamics, this void fuels inner "thirst & hunger," the "neurotic transference" (Stattman, 1968; Heller, 1987).

Reich (1945) distinguished "substitute contact" from "direct vegetative contact," both sustained by vegetative instinctual energy. He illustrated this with a case of repressed aggression manifesting as neurotic compliance: "Once the immediate vegetative contact with the world has been more or less destroyed, when the remaining traces of vegetative contact are no longer sufficient to preserve the relationship to the outer world, either substitute function develops or there are attempts to establish a substitute contact" (p. 324). He claimed that there is a need for natural contact with the full affective state of aggression, and conscious awareness (the second-order affective state) of the felt sense of the body's autonomic function (first order emotional state).

Within a clear ethical framework (Southwell, 1991), developmental needs are met during vegetative regression. A "good enough" psychotherapist rehabilitates "basic trust" (Boyesen M.-L., 1973), shifting the client from Erikson's (1950) basic mistrust to hope and agency.

This aligns with current psychology and neuroscience: "Accessing the unmet need associated with maladaptive emotions and promoting a sense of rightfully deserving to have the unmet childhood need met creates a sense of agency" (Lane et al., 2015, p. 7).

Accepting the Need Does Not Necessarily Mean Concrete, Non-Symbolic Fulfillment of the Need

Accepting a need doesn't always necessitate its concrete fulfillment. The path is nonlinear; sometimes, withholding touch is the right intervention (Casement, 1985), while at other times, physical touch is essential for relational affirmation (King, 2011), lest the client experience neglect (Zur, 2007). The intervention will be guided by a framework that facilitates secure attachment.

Unattainable early needs, such as returning to the womb, can be met symbolically through imaginative work or empathetic resonance. In regressive work, interventions aim to foster secure attachment by maximizing attunement and offering concrete support. For instance, the client might be invited to lie in a fetal position on a mattress on the

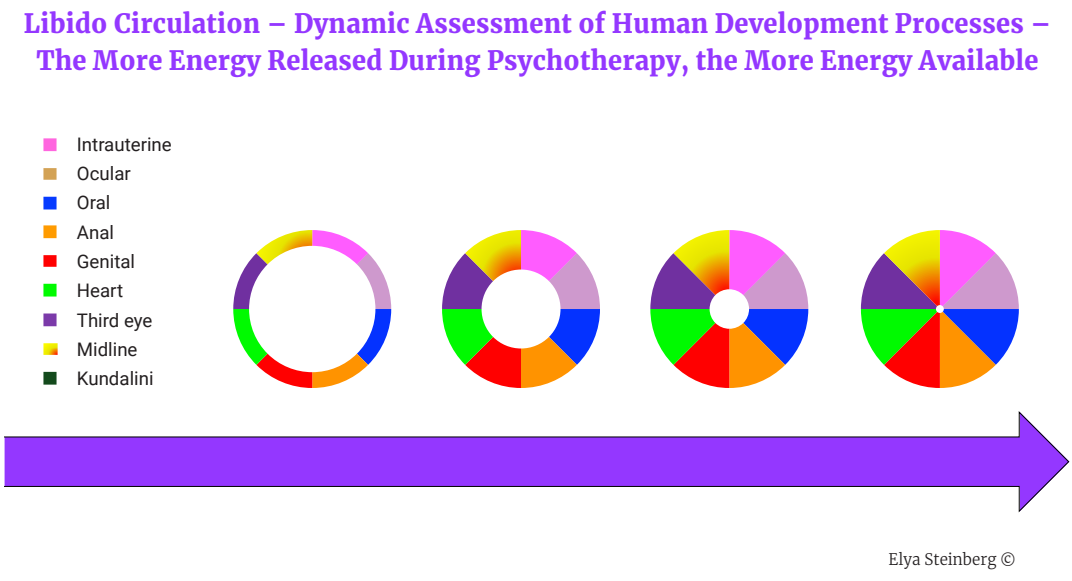


Figure 1. *The evolution of libido circulation: As earned secure attachment develops, libido circulation evolves, as illustrated by the process of thickening circles. This represents increased energy available for self-fulfillment and independent well-being.*

floor, covered with a heavy blanket, and take time to rest in a regressive state similar to that inside the womb.

In any case, it is important that need satisfaction is followed by discourse in vegetotherapy's final stages (Southwell, 2022a), thus bridging the gap between unfulfilled needs and reality.

These final stages of vegetotherapy offer conscious understanding of the unconscious predictions of unmet needs, as discussed in neuropsychoanalysis (Balchin et al., 2019). They create space for analytical freedom, allowing both therapist and patient to examine prior experiences while updating predictions to current realistic possibilities.

Differentiation Between the Client's Present and Past

Gerda Boyesen advocated separating present from past (Heller, 1987; Tanguay, 2022b). When erring, psychotherapists must apologize, and not accuse clients of transference. This authenticity, crucial in biodynamic processes involving touch, echoes the approaches of Ferenczi (1933) and Clarkson (2003).

Clarkson (2003) posited five therapeutic relationship strands: working alliance, transferential/counter-transferential, reparative/developmentally needed, person-to-person, and transpersonal. These interweave subtly, guided by client needs, yet shouldn't be mixed – especially the transferential/counter-transferential relationship and the reparative/developmentally needed relationship.

Biodynamic psychology distinguishes tools for oedipal/post-oedipal processes from those for early trauma (pre-oedipal processes). The pre-oedipal, pre-autobiographic self (Stern, 1985) is worked with through organic transference within a reparative, non-confrontational approach.

Revisiting our desert parable: as organic needs are met, health naturally blossoms. The client develops "earned secure" attachment (Wallin, 2007, p. 85), enhancing libido circulation and self-fulfillment. (Figure 1)

Regression A Passage Through Time: Entering a Wormhole

In biodynamic vegetotherapy, clients undergo benign regression, a process Balint (1968, p. 141) de-

fined as serving the self. This journey facilitates a new beginning through memory reconsolidation, similar to that described by Lane et al. (2015).

The process involves three key aspects:

1. Reactivation of memories and contact with felt needs (first-order emotional state). For example: a yearning (emotional arousal) to be hugged.
2. A regressive state to a child level, where the client experiences "vegetative contact" with themselves and the therapist, fulfilling long-held needs in the present. For example: the psychotherapist provides physical contact (a hug) that expresses care and sympathy within clear ethical boundaries.
3. Return to an adult level with verbal processing, making sense of the experience and applying it to life. For example: "reinforcing the integrated memory structure by practising a new way of behaving and experiencing the world in a variety of contexts" (Lane et al., 2015, p. 1).

This process can be likened to an Einstein-Rosen wormhole (Christian, 2013) that creates a shortcut between the traumatic past (B) and the present here-and-now (A), which are connected by a spacetime conduit (C). While the client's physical body doesn't travel, their conscious awareness can safely navigate this passage during benign regression.

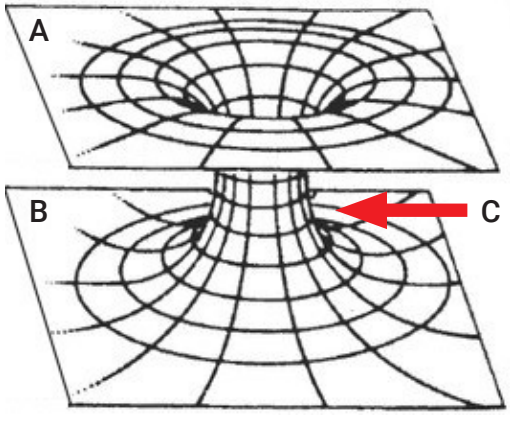


Figure 2. *Wormhole. The figure illustrates two space-like or time-like separated regions of space-time. (A) represents the here-and-now; (B) represents the past; and (C) is the throat of the wormhole.*
(Photo by Unknown Author, licensed under CC BY-SA)

The journey allows for a "corrective emotional experience" (Alexander & French, 1946), satisfying instinctual drives for primary love (Balint, 1935a, 1968). This liberates suppressed energy (Reich's "vegetative instinctual energy," 1945), enabling the completion of integrated sequences in the emotional- vaso-motor cycle (EVMC) (Southwell, 2022c).

The EVMC aligns with the medical concept of allostasis, defined by McEwen (1998) as "the ability to achieve stability through change" (p. 171). This process supports dynamic regulation and the adaptive responses of body and mind to ever-changing life situations.

Through this time-transcending journey, biodynamic vegetotherapy offers a chance to reestablish the subjective embodied sense of self, impacting past ruptures in present time within a reparative psychotherapeutic relationship framework.

The Dynamic Moment

In the "dynamic moment," past embodied content emerges into the present, as it might in time travel. The client's neuroception alters, reactivating original affective states. Senses and visceral affects are re-experienced, and resonate between client and therapist (Boadella,1981; Stattman, 1968). This moment allows the self to reclaim lost experience, thus nurturing the growth of the primary personality. As Gerda Boyesen posited, aspects of self, halted by trauma or developmental deficits, can now evolve. The liberation of trapped energy (akin to releasing allostatic load) enables the primary personality to expand, returning to the present more acknowledged and developed.

Bottom-up Healing: Emotional Time Travel in Regression

Perry and Hambrick (2008) note that brain development progresses "from bottom to top" (p. 40) – from brainstem to neocortex. Biodynamic psychotherapy uses this principle by offering developmentally sensitive interventions that simulate early childhood experiences – for example, providing attuned touch to a person deprived of attuned touch in early childhood.

Through benign regression, clients enter an emotional wormhole, reliving past experiences and

reviving dormant developmental potential. This bottom-up approach, including attuned touch, stimulates lower brain regions, including the periaqueductal gray (PAG) and brainstem, autonomic nerve nuclei in the brainstem, and insula and promotes the production of oxytocin. This stimulation may support the development of secondary and tertiary processes in the cortical areas.

This process aligns with Panksepp's (2012) concept of the mind traveling "backward and forward" (p. 5) to create new aspirations and plans. Biodynamic therapy allows for revisiting past traumas to experience corrective emotional experiences, and is guided by the client's process rather than the therapist's agenda. Together, client and therapist emotionally relive the past, and revive the positive developmental potential that had been halted.

The approach is sensitive to Southwell's axes and the varying needs across human developmental phases. It trusts in the client's innate healing process, while avoiding retraumatization that might occur in provoked cathartic experiences.

By facilitating this emotional time travel, biodynamic psychotherapy aims to support the continuation of developmental sequences as if they were occurring in early childhood, thus potentially healing and completing interrupted growth processes.

Separation and Individuation in Regressive Processes

Clinical data from biodynamic regression sessions suggest that fetuses and infants recognize "not-me" entities (Winnicott, 1953), thus reflecting interpersonal intelligence in self-other interactions (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2009) as well as separateness. Clinical experience suggests intrasubjective and intersubjective states coexist from conception, challenging Mahler's symbiosis phase (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975).

Physical separation exists even in utero via the placenta. During regression interventions, this raises questions about self-other differentiation throughout development.

Further systematic research into regression states in biodynamic psychotherapy is needed to fully understand these early self-other dynamics and their implications for therapeutic practice.

"Being" in a state of self differs from the process of reflecting on that state. However, the initial "being state," which originates as a primary process) must precede the later reflection on that state, a tertiary process. This progression is essential for constructing a sophisticated self-other representation, a requirement in both psychoanalysis and biodynamic psychotherapy.

Dynamic Updrift: Unleashing the Inner Core

The concept of dynamic updrift was introduced in 1980 to describe the liberation of a person's inner stimuli, representing their living core pressing for acknowledgment (IFBP, 1980 [2022]; Boyesen, G., 2022, p. 1173). This phenomenon manifests as an energy wave moving from the lower to the upper body, and originates from interoceptors (bodily sensors that detect signals from the body's internal environment, primarily the viscera and internal milieu) (Damasio, 2003) and implicit memory (Budson & Price, 2005).

Dynamic updrift often emerges from past experiences where the EVMC was interrupted, disturbing libido energy circulation. Accumulated disturbances, or allostatic load, can disrupt emotional and physiological regulation throughout life, potentially leading to developmental trauma or complex post-traumatic stress (c-PTSD). In Wilhelm Reich's terminology, this creates the "muscular armor" and shapes the person's character, inhibiting genuine feeling and expression (Reich, 1945).

In biodynamic psychotherapy, the therapist's presence is crucial in encouraging this updrift of the true self (Southwell, 2022d). During vegetotherapy sessions, clients may relive past experiences and tap into their "embodied-embedded level" (Linson & Friston, 2019), thus allowing unacknowledged emotions to be processed within a safe environment. This enables clients to update their prior learning (Friston, 2010) and, consequently, their predictions – a function often underdeveloped in individuals with c-PTSD (Linson & Friston, 2019).

The biodynamic approach views emotions as psychobiological processes with natural courses of rising and falling (via the EVMC). When this process is obstructed in childhood, emotions and memories can be suppressed, interrupting the natural cycle.

Therapy aims to remove these obstacles, effectively "unloading" McEwen's allostatic load (1998).

From Darwin (1872) to contemporary affective neuroscience (Panksepp, 1998, 2012), emotions have been recognized as vital for human and animal evolutionary development. In biodynamic psychology, emotions are not judged as good or bad, but are seen as motivational forces for self-preservation within social contexts.

This perspective aligns with Rousseau's (1762) organismic approach, which posits that children are born with largely positive tendencies, and that the role of adults is to clear obstacles for natural development. Rousseau argued, "The mind should be left undisturbed till its faculties have developed" (1762, p. 24). This thinking influences various educational and psychological modalities, including Winnicott's concept of the "good-enough" parent or therapist (Winnicott, 1953).

In biodynamic sessions, as the emotional cycle completes, clients often rediscover buried feelings and reclaim their sense of self (Southwell, 2022a). This process resonates with Janet's "stage of triumph" (Janet, 1925, p. 669), which allows the free flow of libidinal energy. Southwell describes how, during sessions, "the client discovers the feelings he had buried away, reclaims his sense of self and rejoices in the energy libido flowing freely through his body" (2022a, p. 1271).

Unique to biodynamic psychotherapy is the use of psycho-peristalsis to clear residual stress through vegetative discharge. This involves activating the enteric nervous system, or "second brain" (Gershon, 1998; Rao & Gershon, 2016), as well as the parasympathetic nervous system via non-invasive vagal stimulation (Steinberg, 2016). The therapist may use different types of biodynamic massage to facilitate this process, supporting the client's natural self-regulation.

By supporting the client's sense of safety related to vagal function, the therapist aids the client in recovering their hidden potential and strength. This process of dynamic updrift, rooted in the body's wisdom and supported by attuned therapeutic presence, forms the cornerstone of biodynamic psychotherapy's approach to healing and self-discovery.

The dynamic updrift process often involves a benign regression, in which clients revisit past events, reconnecting with and reviving the perceptual embodied elements of these experiences. During these regressive states, clients may not have verbal memories of early childhood events, but instead relive them as embodied, reactivated emotional experiences. This allows for a deeper processing of emotions that may have been previously unacknowledged or unexpressed.

Through the therapist's attuned presence and facilitation of "organic transference" (Stattman, 1968), clients can experience emotionally corrective experiences. This enables more complete emotional processing via the EVMC, supporting the client's dynamic adaptation and regulation in their current life, and improving their "reality testing."

In essence, the dynamic updrift in biodynamic psychotherapy represents a holistic approach to healing by recognizing the intricate connections between body, mind, and emotion. By facilitating the natural flow of energy and emotion, and addressing physical and psychological blockages, this method aims to restore the client's innate capacity for self-regulation and growth. It embodies the belief that within each individual lies the potential for healing and self-actualization, which are waiting to be unleashed through the dynamic updrift process.

The Psychotherapist as a Good-Enough-Surrogate-Parent: Bridging Fantasy and Reality

In biodynamic vegetotherapy, the transition from psychotherapist as subjective object to realistic figure occurs gradually in the final stages of vegetotherapy (especially if regressed to a preverbal stage). This natural developmental process cannot be rushed, and requires space for separation. Crossing the bridge "toward independence" is never absolute (Winnicott, 1965b, pp.84-85), and follows the internalization of Winnicottian qualities of a good-enough surrogate parent (Winnicott, 1953, 1971a). The process of separation and mourning has at least two stages: separation from the omnipotent figure of the psychotherapist, who serves as a good-enough surrogate parent instead of the original parent (the second stage of mourning), who did not provide good-enough experiences in childhood.

This aligns with Mahler's view of separation as natural personal growth (Jacobus, 2022 [1995]). In

biodynamic psychotherapy, separation occurs organically when the therapist supports the client's connection with their primary personality, thus facilitating movement from dependency to independent wellbeing (Boyesen, M.-L., 1981; Boyesen, E., 1981; Boyesen, G., 1982).

Along the same lines as BP, Winnicott's concept of maturity develops naturally after the therapist provides opportunities (Winnicott, 1965b, p. 103) and allows for immaturity without premature interpretation (Winnicott, 1971a, p. 117). "Mature adults... must believe in their own maturity as never before or after" (1971a, p. 145).

Biodynamic techniques can be seen as quantum-like, as in the fabric of Winnicottian thought, stemming from "the basic principle of the initial merging with a human mirror" (Kulka, 1995). This enables a healing, salutogenic experience of creative self-realization, unlocking the potential within the primary personality.

Regression: A Working-Off Mechanism in Biodynamic Psychology

In biodynamic psychology, regression is viewed as a benign process supporting the primary personality's evolving potential rather than as a defense mechanism (Balint, 1968, p. 153). This approach contrasts with "classical" psychoanalytic perspectives (Freud, S., 1900, 1909a, 1909b, 1910; Freud A., 1936), as regression is instead understood as an opportunity for corrective emotional experience.

Ernst Kris distinguished between two forms of regression: unregulated post-traumatic flashbacks (Brewin, 2015) and "regression in the service of the ego" (Balint, 1968, p. 153). Balint termed these "malignant" and "benign" regression, respectively. Biodynamic psychology emphasizes building ego structure and restoring "vegetative equilibrium" (Southwell, 1977, 1982) before employing regressive techniques.

In this context, regression functions as a working-off mechanism (Bibring, 1943) that strives to realize the subject's possibilities rather than urgently reduce internal tensions. This perspective differs from Sigmund Freud's view of repetition compulsion (Freud, S., 1909c, 1914, 1926) and suggests that supervised repetition of difficult experiences allows gradual tension reduction by changing internal conditions.

It is important to note that while psychoanalysis and neuroscience use similar terminology, their definitions of primary process differ significantly (Panksepp, 1998, 2011a, 2011b).

Final note: Regression in Biodynamic Vegetotherapy: Varied Experiences

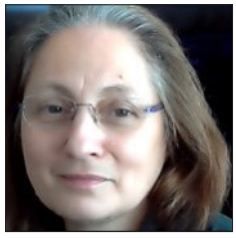
Not all vegetotherapy sessions involve regression. Southwell (2022a) notes that sessions "vary enormously: in shape, intensity, and the nature of the client's experience" (p. 1271). The energy liberated may manifest in lighter forms, leading to diverse experiences, including "archetypal, orgonomic or transcendental" (p. 1271).

Southwell emphasizes that the healing process is fundamentally energetic – liberating repressed energy and integrating it into the client's circulation at the muscular, vegetative, and psychological levels. This highlights the importance of the therapist's flexibility and mindful presence, without attachment to preconceived agendas or judgments.

Biodynamic vegetotherapy, therefore, is "essentially an energetic process" (Southwell, 2022a, p. 1271), encompassing a wide range of potential therapeutic experiences beyond regression.

In Summary

Biodynamic psychotherapy (BP) is a holistic approach supporting salutogenesis through reparative relationships and corrective emotional experience. It employs biodynamic touch, vegetotherapy, and rooted talking to activate affective systems and regulatory processes. The "dynamic updrift" concept refers to releasing suppressed energy from past disruptions. Through benign regression, clients process these experiences, fostering growth. The therapist acts as a surrogate parent, providing a safe environment for self-integration. BP aims to meet developmental needs, enabling clients to access their innate potential and develop secure attachments.



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