

Biodynamic Massage: is the Client Touched or Moved?

Transcription of a talk given by Clover Southwell at last year's AGM

There are two ways in which we can think of biodynamic massage as being psychotherapeutic. One is the 'relational effect', that is, the fact that as a client I am being massaged by another person with all that this means to me. The other is the 'instrumental effect', which consists of the client's energy flow being altered by the massage. Both strands are always active, and the psychotherapeutic effect of biodynamic massage is a combination of the two.

Thank you very much for inviting me to your Association again. I'd love to hear everybody's name.

Round of names: *Suzanne, Gaye, Lisa, Fred, Lorna, Kathrin, Bernd, Kate, Charlotte, Chris, Brett, Sara, Anne Marie, Dianne, Kayode, Mary (Chadwick), Sarah, Andrea, Ora, Gerrie, Tony, Sue (Armstrong), Sue (Frazer), Mary (Law).*

Good. I'm not going to give a great discourse. I'm going to raise questions which we can talk about.

Kathrin and I had a discussion which resulted in the title and the description of this talk. Since then my mind has moved on. I now find myself thinking of the question: What is it that makes biodynamic work so special ?

I first met biodynamic work as a client of Mona Lisa Boyesen in 1973. She worked with me on the massage table always. That was the shape of every session. But it was so unlike any other sort of massage session, I was flabbergasted at the effects of it in me. I felt transported. It was almost like being transported into another perspective.

As I lay there and relaxed, thoughts would come into my mind and kind of pass through my mind, like wisps of cloud passing across the sky. They weren't thoughts that I could actually catch and recount to somebody. They were much more fleeting than that. And yet what was so striking was how enriching it felt to have had those

thoughts and those images. Many sessions would pass without us talking very much at all. And yet I felt things changing in my mind.

The question: what is this particular quality that is so fascinating about the work? When that question came to my mind was about a year later when Gerda started her training programme. And some people would be very obviously taken with this special quality, and other people wouldn't be at all. They simply wouldn't recognise it. And I'd try to 'put them right' as it were. So I had to try and explain what I felt this special quality was.

And the first answer that came to me was that biodynamics works with the body and mind together, at the very same time, more seamlessly than any other work that I'd come across. And then as I got more deeply into it, I felt, maybe this quality has to do with the fact that we're working with energy.

In the training, we talked about the three levels of the emotional cycle and the processes of the cycle in the level of consciousness (the ectoderm level), in the level of the muscular structure, the muscle tensions (mesoderm level), and the endoderm level, the vegetative charge and so on and so on. What came to me was that this cycle moving on all three levels is ONE process. It's a process of me being emotionally aroused, and me clearing or not clearing the effects of this emotional arousal inside me.



Considering this as one process made me feel that the energy that we feel in our bodies or in our clients' bodies, or their auras, is the same energy as the energy of our thoughts and our conscious emotions. This one energy manifests at three different levels of our organisation.

In the training we were given papers talking about the 'biodynamic process' (i.e. the biological process), and the 'psychodynamic process'. I began inwardly to quarrel with that. I feel that it's one and the same process. The point about biodynamic work is that we're actually working with the biology of the psychodynamic.

That's where I was for a long time. The energy was the connecting factor between the body and the mind, and the biodynamic quality seemed to rest in that.

For me it was a tremendous adventure to enter into a world that recognised energy and talked about energy. I resisted it for a long time. I had a much more concrete view of life than that, I didn't want to think about energy. But eventually it absolutely became real to me.

At the Gerda Boyesen Centre, we really plunged into the energy view – my energy is this, my energy

is that, my energy is making me do X, Y and Z, and how's your energy today. I began thinking, well what about ME? Where do I come into this? We provoke the energy, we release the energy, we bring the energy down, we clear the energy, and so on. This all sounds very mechanical. Where is the experience of choice? Where am I?

A few years ago it occurred to me that I'm actually thinking about the soul. That the energy that we're working with is actually the energy of the soul.

What do I mean by my soul? My soul is what makes me alive, and what makes me me. It's the organising principle of me. I'm not thinking of my soul as something that I have. It's who I am. It's not something I can lose. The soul is the individual life force, which is in constant interchange, interflow, with the universal life force, it's not separate from the universal life force. My soul organises my molecules, ME, in patterns that I share in common not just with all of you but with all the other animals in the world and with all the living beings in the world. That for me is a very exciting thought, and it's part, for me, of the thought of my individual life force in relation to the universal life force. So there is this enormous commonality and at the same time the utter individuality of each one of us.

Very early in my own biodynamic experience I was touched by the way that the biodynamic work embraced the animal nature, the vegetative processes, the spiritual nature (which is utterly part of our nature). Embraces all of them and can move among these levels in an instant – because they're all part of who we are. And there's no hierarchy about it as far as I'm concerned. One isn't better than another, it's all part of creation.

I want to move on to thinking: if I presented myself to you for some biodynamic massage, what would you be looking at? What would you

be looking for? What is actually going to happen in the process?

But before I do: Would anybody like to say anything?

Ora: Could you just say a bit more about the three processes?

Clover: Gerda Boyesen related them to the embryonic layers: the endoderm being the vegetative level in the body, and the mesoderm being the muscular and bone level, and the ectoderm being all the sense organs and the brain, the nervous system, which, if you want to express it non-physiologically, you can call the mind.

Supposing I did come to you for massage – I say 'me' because if we talk about 'the client', there's already a kind of distance. I find it's better if I think about biodynamic therapy from the point of view of the client than from the point of view of the therapist.

I'm drawn to the hollow chest, or whether I'm more drawn to the fact that their eyes are sparkling.

Clover: Yes indeed.

So you have your impression: my shoulders are like this, my breathing is like this, my legs are like this and so on. We talk about what could be, it could become fuller, it could become warmer and so on. But also, how much sense do you have backwards in time, of the past? How did I develop myself into this particular state in which I now come?

Really the whole life history of me is now lying on the table

Sometimes we talk about the circumstances of somebody's life - you know, they had a mother like such and such, and they went through such and such difficulties. As if the shaping of the person is made by these outside circumstances.

*My soul is what makes me alive, and what makes me me.
It's the organising principle of me.*

Anyway, supposing I come to you for a session, what are you looking at? What are you looking for? You have to make some decision about how you are going to start working with me. Do you look for the problems? Do you look for where my breathing isn't coming through, where my shoulders are tense, there isn't much energy in my feet or whatever. Do you look for the problems, or do you look for the potential? Do you see a sunken chest or do you see a chest that could be fuller? Which way does your search go?

Dianne: I do look for the aliveness, at what level their energy is, but then I do look for the hollow chest, and I do look for the lack. So there's two things going on.

Clover: I absolutely agree, there are two things going on.

Kathrin: Possibly it says something about the client whether

But in fact I develop in the way that I do develop, limited or full, contracted or expanded, because of the way that I have responded to my circumstances. So what we are talking about is the history of my response to certain circumstances. Another soul would have responded differently. My responses are actually how my molecules move and reorganise themselves in response to this situation.

For me that is a move out of the mechanical thinking that such and such circumstances in life produce such and such developments. The problems that you find in my energy flow are the result of I myself interrupting my emotional cycle. We know that there is a particular physiological change when an emotion starts, the upwards side of the cycle. If we interrupt our cycle and do not pass right through the downward side, there's a residue left. The residue is in the way my

organism is organised.

So I think it's enormously interesting to study the physiology of particular emotional repression, of the particular characteristic way that a person has over and over interrupted an emotional cycle. Not just which sort of emotions, but how far have they come in the cycle, at which point in the physiological change has the process been interrupted, has the person interrupted the process. It's one thing if I'm furious and hold back that fury just before it would have burst out. It's something else if I hold back from engaging with somebody who is likely to make me furious, or stop the fury from beginning to boil and cut it off further and further back in the cycle. If I do that, what happens next? Where do my molecules go next? How do they organise themselves in the next 2 minutes? What's happened by the end of the day? What has happened inside me if I've had 10 years of an unhappy relationship? All these things are different. But in each case these are the experiences of my soul. When we are working with someone on the massage table, we are actually touching the physiological residue of the soul's uncompleted cycles.

I'll make a pause at this point and see how this is hitting you.

Sarah: When you talk about the uncompleted cycle, the question that comes to my mind is what happens next. It feels like an incredible moment of choice.

Clover: You describe the intensity of the moment beautifully, and that's what I would call the dynamic moment. And what I feel is that the more deeply we have taken on board what it means to be working with the totality of a person, and not to be working with a muscle system, a body, or even just an energy system, but actually with the person's soul, at that moment – we don't have to put anything in words, but our sense of the hugeness of this moment gives

space for the person we're working with to move into that space.

I feel that most of us are minimising ourselves, we're minimising our soul, we're minimising these moments. A couple of weeks ago I was walking in Regents Park, fairly early in the day, and it was a very white sky, it wasn't a blue sky at all, and somehow because of that background, the leaves of the trees were almost transparent, and the trunk and branch structure was enormously powerful through the trees. And it was so beautiful that I just stood, and the tears just streamed down my face, really just energy movement, there was nothing sad about it in the slightest bit, it was super. But if I had been a child having to move at somebody else's pace, and somebody who didn't want to stop and just be with the tree at that moment, again the moment wouldn't have been given the space.

Any other thoughts?

Tony: You talk about residues. Are there not residues from every moment of my experience, so that I am the accumulated residue of my whole life experience? So what is special about residues of uncompleted cycles?

Clover: That's a very good point. I guess I was using the word pejoratively. But we're also of course accumulating experience in the sense of wisdom, and richness, and happy memories and all sorts. But I guess what I meant was the sort of residue that gets stuck. If I've had an experience which has nourished me, I have taken it into my moving system, into my circulation, so that it's actually a moving part of me, a living part of me, whereas the residue I was thinking of was more like something which wasn't moving on, a limiting residue.

Kathrin: Perhaps what defines a limiting residue is something that doesn't feel that it's quite 'me'.

Clover: Exactly. And one of the

reasons that we don't come through the cycle is that we can't bear the experience that we've just had, we can't bear to be somebody who's been as angry as that, or as resentful, and we refuse to accept it, to own it. Then there's less and less 'me'. I become a diminished soul, a limited soul.

And that brings me on to what I wanted to think about next, and that is symptoms. If I have conflict about something emotional, then the residue gets stuck and doesn't move on. And a lot of symptoms arise from the pressure of this conflict inside us. And it's a conflict between two different pressures colliding, a collision between two conflicting impulses inside us. I might have an impulse to wave at somebody, but then think "then I'd be drawing attention to myself," so I restrict the impulse. There's a conflict. So I subdue my soul. And if that's repeated over and over again, then the residue piles up.

Let's think of the emotional cycle, the movement of energy up in the emotion and then subsiding and physiologically clearing. If we interrupt this, our original impulse doesn't die, the dynamic of that impulse lives on. That is the biodynamic that we're working with. So symptoms are the pressure of the soul, symptoms are the person's soul pressing to move on, and at the same time being held back by another aspect of their soul. This pressure of the soul I would call psychodynamic. And it is biological, in the flesh; it is biodynamic.

This is enormously important if we think developmentally, and if we think relationally. Think of a small child needing to assert his independence and still be loved and welcomed. The parents feel threatened. They do not support the child to exercise the independence muscles of the soul. The child stifles his protest. He won't be able to complete that developmental cycle, his energy won't be able to move through so as to nourish the next

stage of development. So the symptom can be seen as a positive sign, because it is actually the vitality of the soul pressing to complete a cycle, sometimes pressing to complete a phase of growth. So we may not only take away the pain by the help of the massage, but also create the possibility for the soul to move on in development. Then we can be curious as to what's going to happen next.

Curiosity is an important factor in therapeutic work. I find it really tragic when people go for biodynamic massage over a period of time and don't experience it as in some way transforming. If I as the therapist have a sense that something significant is shifting or opening in my client, I am curious to hear if their experience in the following week has a slightly different quality from what they're used to. So I always like to hear how their week has been. Do I listen to what they say in a way that holds the space for something more? It could be something absolutely tiny but of a huge significance, like a tiny apple seed but with an enormous weight of significance and potential.

I'm now thinking of myself again as the client, actually as the client of Mona Lisa Boyesen of the beginning, who often didn't talk much in sessions. But she certainly had an enormous sense of the significance of the shifts. That gradually taught me to find them significant, to take myself seriously. If we say lightly "Oh I'm glad you're backache's a little better, right, get on the table" – there's no weight in that, no space for the soul, there's no celebration of what's significant in that.

Dianne: Sometimes that brings up horrendous conflicts, because the soul being given space makes the ego want to stop it, to squash it. It can be quite a rocky passage rather than something pleasant.

Clover: And it can bring up a tremendous sense of what has not

been, a tremendous sense of loss. What are your thoughts about that?

Dianne: That I'm not doing things wrong. That's one of my thoughts, Gosh this is all turning out wrong, because there's things moving and it's very difficult and we're having to do battle, we're having to struggle and hold, we're having to work with the conflict there and then. I wanted it to be a good experience and actually it's a very difficult and painful experience, and accepting that that's OK. I think it's the judgement on myself.

Clover: It certainly seems to raise the question of the motivation of that client, what that particular client is ready for. If you feel that the process is moving in an enriching direction, then just in your manner and with the choice of a couple of words, you can help somebody to feel that for themselves. The stronger your sense of this soul beneath the pain, the less hopelessly swamping the difficulties become, because it's a part of the journey. How does the person feel themselves in the situation, in the journey? They may be able to feel that they are undergoing, in a literal sense undergoing, this torment, that they're actually passing under it towards something else.

Dianne: A hero's story. Because they know that it's something that's needed, that they need it, and they're willing to undertake the journey.

Clover: But the more that you sense that it is a journey, rather than a pit that you've stumbled into by mistake, the more you hold the space and keep the thread.

I'm very glad that you brought this up in those terms, because if somebody comes for massage over a considerable period of time, and they're not opening themselves to these enriching processes, I think that they are resisting it and armouring themselves more. It is in the nature of the soul to move onwards. I don't think it's possible

to maintain oneself in a constant state. I just don't think that's the way life goes. There are people that come and their vision is simply that they would like to be put right. So they'd like you to put them back where they were before, to work correctively on the problem, rather than on the potential. I think we can do that a few times, but after a while the soul's going to press for more space. We need to recognise that and create the space.

Ora: I had a client who came for five sessions with backache and neckache. After five sessions she reported that she didn't have any more pain and didn't need to come anymore. During the five sessions there was a lot of mistrust.

Clover: Well, that's her choice. And sometimes it's a conscious choice, and sometimes the molecules know very well that they're not going to organise themselves that way. Was it frustrating for you?

Ora: Disappointing.

Sarah: Don't resist resistance, because that continues to create resistance. If you have the intention of it being held, then you are not in the way and can simply be there.

Clover: My attitude towards somebody's resistance varies enormously according to what I think their conscious intention is. Some people really have made a choice that they want to journey, and they want to find a way out of the prison of their resistance. But it's likely to be a sandwich with many, many different levels, levels of wanting to journey and of wanting to stay in the prison. So we have a very delicate negotiation, which varies from person to person and from session to session, I would say.

Kate: What's caught my attention is your connection between impulsiveness and symptoms. I feel that impulsiveness is to be encouraged. And yet I've had to learn to subdue my impulses. And when I listen to your experience of

lying on the table, I wonder: when I am meditating or doing Yoga, am I actually subduing my impulsiveness, is that stopping myself?

Clover: I think that we would be far more exuberant than we are, that we do subdue our exuberance enormously, we subdue countless manifestations of our life force, it isn't welcome in our culture really.

Kate: I wonder if there are any big cultural differences too? In other words: in a culture where people are more impulsive, and more communicative and more exuberant, does that mean they have fewer symptoms?

Clover: They might have different symptoms, I do think so, yes. I don't know the facts, but it makes absolute sense. There's a story that some of you may have heard me tell. It's a story against myself, but it illustrates this point fantastically well. I was working in a group where a man enormously came into his strength, and he started running around the group room with this wonderful sense of strength, and he snatched up another hefty fellow and put him across his shoulders and ran around the room with this other fellow around his shoulders. Fortunately the other fellow was OK, I guess he made a good choice who to pick up. And I said: Goodness, you remind me of the Strong Man at the circus. And thank God I heard what I'd said: I had minimised the power of this soul by turning it into a circus act. Thank God the Holy Spirit brought me up short. And I said, I'm sorry. You're Hercules, you're not the Strong Man at the circus. I couldn't take this heroic fullness at that moment.

And even disco dancing is just sort of jiggling to and fro, I mean it's not tremendously impulsive, is it. I'm sure people have studied the characteristic ailments of different societies and why a society has a particular sort of ailment.

Mary Law: There's a piece of research about the incidence of heart disease, and about how in

Italy people are less likely to suffer from heart disease, which is put down to the fact that they take a lot of olive oil in their diet. And as a voice worker I thought that really funny, because in fact they use their voices quite differently. I'm generalising dreadfully, but there's clearly far more at work. I thought about it when you were talking about exuberance, that there's a far more energetic way of using the voice, and that seems to be just one little portion of exuberance that one can look at.

... we subdue countless manifestations of our life force, it isn't welcome in our culture really.

Clover: I haven't yet been talking in terms of the biodynamic concepts of the primary personality and the secondary personality. And I find that I actually prefer the idea of the primary potential, the feeling that it's the potential to go somewhere. If we hold the vision that the potential is there somewhere, the person is a living soul, that soul potential is there. And the stronger our sense of that, and the stronger our connection to that level inside ourselves, the more powerfully we are reaching across to somebody at that level, calling that forth in the other person. In biodynamic massage, the most potent force is this calling to the primary potential.

(Teabreak)

Clover: What's been coming up in the break? What are your thoughts about these things?

Suzanne: My words are inspirational, and provoking, and confirming. It's always good to hear something which is very connected with what I do and what I feel. Confirming and perhaps taking me on somewhere, where maybe I've been but have forgotten and need some reminding and

clarifying.

Clover: Do you feel like saying how it was provoking?

Suzanne: I can't really because I'm following you, so I'd have to say it at the time. Most of it is confirming and enlightening, and there's a sense of companionship with it. I feel very deeply about the work and about the connection I have with the client. It's good to share that.

Clover: Well it is lonely work. The actual session isn't lonely, but cumulatively. And that's why it's such a wonderful thing that this Association exists. It's really remarkable, your Association is so robust, and it's been going, and it's tremendous.

Mary Chadwick: As you're talking it seems to me to embody the work that you're talking about, and my experience of being a client and a therapist. My mind is wanting something – I wonder about the place for articulation of what is going on, and how that can enable the residue to enter the space.

Clover: I think it's an interesting question: When is it helpful to put something into words? If I think of the two sides of the argument: I am so glad that as a client, certainly at the beginning, I wasn't pushed to put my experience into words, and that my therapist didn't put it into words for me. So I have a lot of feeling for the value of keeping things undefined, and I'd like to say more about that. But on the other side people say: "but then your clients don't know what's happening to them, so they're in your power, and they can't develop their autonomy because they don't know what they're doing or what you're doing."

I think that a conceptual structure is one of the things that we use for security. For each individual person, the question is: What sort of security do you need at this moment in your life? When I embarked on biodynamic work, I was a very articulate person, and very clear thinking and linear thinking, and it was enormously

important for me to kind of lose my bearings, and swim and float. Going into the Oceanic space was enormously important for me. And for some clients I think that the pathless Ocean is an enormously important area to be in, and for other people a really close structure is absolutely necessary for security. And it's a little bit the same in the vegetotherapy side of biodynamic work: some people need a very close connection with the therapist, and other people can just kind of set off on a sail without a rudder and just see where they land up. So it's very individual. But I do feel that my experiences would have been limited if I had tried to put words to them too quickly. Because every word – if I say blue I'm excluding everything that isn't blue, it's either blue or it's not blue. Words tend to be like that.

And I think that one of the most exciting things about the work from my point of view is that we're often right in the borderland. I don't want to say borderline, because I don't think it's a line. We are working in the borderland between what is conscious and what is unconscious. That's where we're journeying, between what is voluntary and what is involuntary. As we get more body awareness, as we come more in touch with what used to be involuntary, our voluntary land gets bigger. But this will vary from day to day, and I don't want to cut it off with a word. Words are very controlling, and again there's a polarity. I want to have control of my life in the sense that I want to have self-direction, but on the other hand it's enormously important not to try to control things that I can't control. There are things that are better uncontrolled, and things that are better directed. I'm just ruminating on your remark.

Bernd: But there might be a danger to maintain that split between the verbal and the non-verbal. Because I think one can catch the soul in words.

Clover: Of course you can, the human soul is very articulate in words, absolutely.

Kathrin: It can be equally controlling not to use words: What you are doing right now is also daring to put something into words and step out, and say, "So here it is: what is the world going to do with it?" You are taking the risk of inviting response, which we don't risk if we say it can't be put into words.

Clover: For my part I can only say: my soul has, as it were, been on some adventures into the unknown. That was already a risk. In certain cases it would have been pushing the risk too far to put words on it. I guess it's all a matter of timing, of when to put experience into words. It's also like talking about a painful experience: you cannot talk about it at first, and then there comes a moment when it feels very good to. Part of what we're talking about is mystery. And from time to time one really wants to disentangle the mystery.

Kate: Something to do with I experiencing part of myself that might not have before, going into uncharted territory, and if I'm a very articulate and intellectual person, then falling into silence (literally) is a very uncharted world, and the other way round also. It feels to me that there isn't any rule, it's just where the client is.

Clover: Absolutely.

Ora: So, Clover, if I understand you right, you like to work with no words.

Clover: No, no. I'm glad you asked that. I was talking about the value sometimes of there being no demand to find words for something. But no, it makes me laugh, the idea of me working without words. Words are an important form of human energy, and I think of words in that way. It can be enormously important that a client speaks something, actually says "I am angry with my father" for instance. It's a totally different

process for me to say to somebody "I think maybe you're angry with your father", or for them to say "I am angry with my father." We have this concept of Rooted Talking. If the words are actually rooted in the person's being at this moment, so that they are actually speaking their anger, then it's not just information, it's something moving inside them that is being spoken out. Does that help?

Ora: Yes.

Clover: The client's words are energy moving, not just in thought but actually in speech. And once it's said it's out there, it's no longer a secret thought. Enormous importance. But I don't think that the validity of an experience comes only through the words in which it's declared.

Suzanne: I think it's important to establish that a client can speak but doesn't have to speak.

Clover: Yes, I think that's important. And it reminds me of a time when I was being supervised by Gerda Boyesen, and I was telling her about this particular client, and she said, "well, do you let him speak?" And I said, "of course I let him speak! I'm not going to tell him not to speak!" Gradually I realised that what she meant was something more than that. It was more the sense of invitation. For me as a client, when my soul is moving into new territory, my soul is extremely shy, and extremely hesitant. And I don't know whether it's worth saying something so piddling as this thought that just came into my mind. So it helps if my therapist, in some way or other, explicitly or by some grunt or by some smile or something, repeats the invitation over and over again.

This can be particularly important in a massage context. Because most of us have been in the context of 'now you're in bed, now you lie down quietly and go to sleep'. A massage table is the next thing to a bed. Plus here's this kind lady doing

her very best for me, I shouldn't say that I've got a crick in my neck. I shouldn't say if my elbow hurts me either because maybe there's something wrong with the position she's put me in. Maybe the pain is actually some old impulse to elbow somebody coming up but I'm holding it back! The soul may speak through a tiny bodily impulse in a movement or a loss of colour in the face. When we see that, we may want to invite the person to say what was going on in their mind.

Suzanne: It's very important to have a relationship with the client so that they know that things can come out and will be heard.

Clover: I think a lot of us have had the experience of not being welcomed. I don't mean being an unwanted child, but not being welcome at this moment with what we have to say. What is moving in me at this precise moment may not be welcome. What you describe is lovely, because if you respond to these tiny signs, then this is when I, as your client, really feel seen. It's such an important experience to feel seen, to feel really seen, and you have really seen me because you have seen this tiny flicker. It would be totally ridiculous for you to then 'work with that' and say "now do you feel seen? How many times have you not felt seen?" etc. But for the client, the active experience of being seen is a hugely significant energetic shift. It nourishes the soul, waters the plant.

Suzanne: In that coming out I have a picture of a encouraging a seed to germinate, and then that plant has its own life. So therefore with the encouragement of being seen it then starts to grow. So we just stand there and behold it, having the respect for the dynamic and the energy of that formation. And we don't know what form it's going to take.

Clover: Yes, that's lovely. We don't know. I feel that our curiosity, our active expectancy, is hugely powerful, it's a hugely powerful

element in the therapy. We don't know who is going to come forth.

Bernd and I were talking about vegetative reactions in the break, and about how passionate I am about vegetative reactions. When the colour drains from my face, that is a huge movement of my soul. You see that, you respond to it, and maybe you invite my soul to say in words what's going on.

Tony: The way you monitor process through the stethoscope is, it seems to me, a fairly crude process. Are there more subtle ways of monitoring process?

Clover: I sometimes speculate what might have happened if Gerda Boyesen had met the Craniosacral approach much earlier in her life. Because I think the Craniosacral process is much more subtle than the psychoperistalsis.

Tony: I have this fantasy of monitoring someone's vegetative response like listening to music, and I guess that music you hear with the stethoscope is just too crude.

Clover: Well, the stethoscope gives us one field of response. There are others.

Kayode: There's something about the difference between listening and looking. I remember the first few times of using the stethoscope. It invited me to start to relate to the client from a position that feels more inward. I'm taking it in more, I'm more in touch with myself, in order to resonate with what's happening with the client, rather than objectifying them by placing them out there, and looking at them and observing all the details, and I'm here and they're there, and there's that separation. I was thinking that the Craniosacral people are listening to the movement. I still look, but I'm engaging different senses from a more participatory, a more attuning-myself-mode than the more separating element of observing and looking.

Clover: I love the stethoscope. The more familiar with it you become, the

more it becomes like a language. But I still don't claim that it's the most subtle way of monitoring.

Bernd: But the vegetative process includes so much more than the peristalsis.

Clover: It's possible to measure skin resistance, and I'm sure there are a lot of different monitorings that are done medically, but that wouldn't be practicable in a therapy room.

Kathrin: Surely different therapists have different channels by which they collect information, different ways of resonating. I'm sure I do massage because my hands pick up more information than my eyes. So I would say it depends on the therapist how crude or how refined the monitoring is. For me, peristalsis is a very subtle music.

Chris: What I've found is if I use a stethoscope, clients are curious, and it really increases their body awareness. It really draws them into the process. Clients get very passionate about peristalsis, and then you've got them, and you're both working together.

Clover: Yes, absolutely.

Ora: But sometimes clients become judgmental about whether there are sounds or not.

Clover: I know, exactly. It's very individual for different clients.

Andrea: And they start asking "what does that noise mean?"

Suzanne: That's my concern as well – making it too objectifying.

Andrea: And when it's silent, the client says: "Oh, I'm not doing what you want. Haven't I got any energy?"

Clover: It's quite useful to have thought up some answers to that. If there are no sounds, you could say 'maybe you're collecting your energy at the moment, rather than discharging it'.

Kate: Lots of animals will become completely quiet and passive and floppy when they're being carried from danger to somewhere safe. And I've sometimes wondered about that. In my own experience I go to my therapist and put myself in

her hands and become completely passive and quiet. And I sometimes feel that become I completely inarticulate. And it's to do with that becoming completely passive.

Clover: I think that's a very interesting point. I think a lot of the biodynamic ideas are ways of counteracting the typical imbalances in our culture. One imbalance is that we all tend to do too much and rest too little. Also our technology has developed so far that we have an enormous control over so many things, and it can be really hard for us to give up control, and this is a missing polarity. So I think for a lot of people what they need most of all is to be passive. Also we have the idea that it's more blessed to give than to receive. People are unwilling to receive. They can't bear feeling indebted, and they've got to bring two bottles of wine so that they're one bottle of wine up to your bottle of wine, and all this stuff. So maybe for somebody like that, even getting a whole yearful of biodynamic massage won't redress the balance. Those are the thoughts that come to my mind.

And there comes a moment when it's worth talking about this. It's not worth talking about it in the first couple of weeks but after a while there may be a pressure in the client to talk about it.

Suzanne: We often will need permission to give up, that it's OK to give up.

Clover: You could perhaps say, this is a moment in the week when you can give up completely. That's a way of relativising it into the rest of their life.

Suzanne: My holding can convey that: You can give up, and I can be here to hold you.

Clover: Maybe it's a good idea every so often to ask somebody: "how are you feeling about our work together these days?" That might bring up that kind of thought.

But we didn't talk about what you were saying earlier about massage

and meditation and Yoga, and impulsivity. People practise Yoga in different ways and different spirits, but sometimes the goal seems to be about avoiding being moved inwardly, avoiding being upset. I'd like to think that Yoga develops the freedom to be impulsive when it's the right moment.

... for a lot of people what they need most of all is to be passive.

One of our students went back to Norway and worked in a children's therapy unit, where they worked with a very strictly structured Family Therapy approach. She wrote a paper about her view of this from a biodynamic point of view. There was a little boy, an eight year old, who was a terrific biter. It was so extreme that if he passed a breast at the right height, he might bite it. And the way the unit would deal with this was to take him off to another room, physically preventing him from biting. But the way our student did it was to have a cushion and encourage the boy to bite the cushion whenever the impulse to bite came up. And then he got himself a cushion that he could carry around with him, to bite whenever he felt the urge. I think that's absolutely beautiful. Because what it's saying is that the impulse is perfectly fine, but you have to choose when and where you do it. That's what life is all about.

Sarah: And he agreed. It was another set of behaviour being given to him. And he chose to walk around with that cushion, so he was looking for another way.

Clover: So I think that with impulsivity, we do have to choose where and when. But where and when it's fine, then it's lovely.

Suzanne: And it changes the whole energetic connection in that. Because instead of doing it against himself, he was doing it with himself, and with permission. And

therefore it changes the relationship with an action.

Andrea: I think the thing about Yoga that is putting me more in touch with my body is, I get the impulse of which way to move rather than to have a set routine. I don't have a set routine. The impulse is to decide where my body actually wants to move to next.

Clover: Should we wind up? Any things that people are burning to say?

Dianne: We've got a dog next door who barks about half past eleven at night, every night. Goes completely bonkers down the garden barking away. And I met this dog a couple of days ago, in the week. And he was nuzzling all around. And I started stroking him, massaging his back, and he sort curled over and he was just enjoying it so much. And when he barked last night, I found myself visualising massaging this dog, and he just went very, very quiet. We said wow, this is amazing, let's do it every night. So it even works intuitively.

Clover: Well, what a good place to stop! (*Applause*)

More thoughts on the therapeutic relationship in biodynamic massage (January 2003)

When I talked at an earlier Association meeting, I made a major distinction between two different categories of effect that biodynamic massage can have, calling them the 'instrumental effects' and the 'relational effects'.

Let's again imagine I come to you for massage. Your work loosens some of my contractions, it cleanses my tissue, so my energy flow changes. Memories and feelings may surface during the session. Things may also move in me at levels far below my conscious awareness. These may result eventually in subtle shifts in my attitude to life.

I see all these movements as direct psychological repercussions

of your massage. Your hands were the instrument, causing my soul to move within me, irrespective of our on-going relationship. All this I called the "instrumental effect" of the massage.

On the other hand I, your client, am also affected because you, the person I have just been talking with, are now touching me – handling me – as I have perhaps never been touched before. This particular way of relating through the massage can trigger any of a vast range of both happy and troublesome feelings:

- a. will this wonderful touching come to an end too soon?
- b. do I deserve this?
- c. can I safely let all this happen? I am not in control
- d. long-seated feelings of shame or disgust about my body
- e. anxiety that sexual feelings will come up in me
- f. fear that you will get sexual

All these responses I called the 'relational effects' of the massage.

I'd now like to re-name them the 'interpersonal effects'. These effects arise directly from this particular relational experience with you, rather than from the physiological shifts you were making in me instrumentally.

For some clients, such an interpersonal experience can overwhelm anything else. If this massage session is part of a psychotherapy process, it will obviously be necessary to explore these feelings in depth, perhaps right now on the table. If this client is coming "only for massage", it will be important at least to acknowledge those feelings. If not, the client may – deep in their tissue – stay on the alert, holding the feelings at bay. Then they will not be able to integrate the shifts the massage is making. The interpersonal effect can prevent the potential instrumental effect.

The reason why I have been so concerned to distinguish the instrumental from the interpersonal effects was that I want to confirm

and emphasise how the energetic/physiological movements set off by the massage can lead directly to significant psychological shifts. These shifts are an intra-psychic process: a process in the individual soul.

When we emphasise the importance of relationship in the biodynamic process, there can be a risk that these intra-psychic processes get overlooked or even denied. Over-emphasising the relational aspect can lead to under-emphasis on the soul, with its intrinsic potential to develop in its own unique way and to respond to others in its own way.

In this present talk I was emphasizing another level of relational effect: the soul-to-soul connection. The deep transformative potential of biodynamic massage lies in the fact that we are working at the level of the person's individual life-energy – their soul. The more deeply we know, understand and believe this, the more deeply our work can affect the person.

We work with profound respect for the – as yet largely unknown – potential of this person. We are literally touching the soul in the flesh, and the soul will respond. This soul-to-soul connection is hardly relational in the usual sense. The therapist is working from the level of his/her own soul, reaching across to the client at this level, witnessing with reverence the tiny signs through which the moving soul may speak.

Many people have never before experienced being attended to with this level of respect and acceptance. Ideally, they will respond at an equally deep, essential level. The experience can awaken in them a profound acceptance and respect of themselves. But this may not happen right away. Our client may look instead to us as the source of their well-being, rather than appreciating the potential within themselves. We hope that this positive transference will eventually melt and transform into

self-validation. Such transference is another level of relational effect.

Transference can arise also from the instrumental, rather than the relational effects of the massage. As I showed in my earlier talk, reduction of armouring and shifts of posture caused instrumentally by our hands may re-open in the client a developmental – and temporarily regressive – process. For example, as a client opens to his inner world, we may find him revisiting the 'terrible two's' and challenging us much as the two-year-old challenged his parents. This I see as basically an instrumental effect, but with relational consequences. The process was triggered not by the client's on-going relation with therapist, but by the physiological shift caused by the massage itself. Such a 'regression' may be short-lived, particularly if the therapist succeeds in meeting the client with the loving clarity and firmness which the two-year-old needed but did not get. Then the client can traverse that developmental phase rapidly and successfully.

Such jumps in developmental level and in the level of interaction between client and therapist are natural and healthy. They allow us to work effectively with old interrupted emotional cycles, in which the therapist may temporarily become a specific and significant object for the client. The therapist must be ready to move out of that specific role as soon as the client is ready to move on, so that the client is not trapped in that early phase of life. Gerda Boyesen loves to speak of the 'flexible therapist' who can jump in a split second from one level to another, from one role to another, as the client's process moves.

All of us live at many different levels at once, and the more clearly we recognise this, the more clearly we can live in harmony with ourselves and with our friends.

With thanks to Kathrin Stauffer for this transcription.