

role models. I experienced my mature sexual role and identity as having occurred through a sociological process of progressively increasing commitments to the set of norms and institutions that comprise the homosexual sub-culture. This sociological process constitutes a secondary agent of socialization or a re-socialization of my sexual identity.

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“COMPARISON OF GESTALT AND REICHIAN SCHOOLS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY”

Reichian therapy is based, as the name implies, on the work of **Wilhelm Reich**, and Gestalt therapy was 'founded' by **Fritz Perls**: both men - Reich and Perls - were influenced very greatly by **Freud**, being trained psychoanalysts. Reich was born in 1897 and died in 1957; his most influential work relevant to psychotherapy was published in the (1) 1920s and '30s. Fritz Perls was born in 1893 and died in 1970. His significant innovative contributions - the theories and techniques of Gestalt therapy were published during the late (2) '40s and following decades. Most writers, for example Dreyfuss (3) and Feinstein, (4) Magda Denes-Radomisli, (5) Back and the Polsters (6) describe Reich as being one of the four major influences on Perls, the others being Goldstein, Moreno and Freud. This is non-reciprocal and no commentator describes Perls as an influencer of Reich.

Perls' appreciation of Reich is expressed clearly in his first book "Ego Hunger and Aggression" - for instance in the preface he praises (2) "Reich's bringing down to earth the psychology of resistances" as a monumental discovery made since Freud. In all of his later writings Perls presents many of Reich's theories unacknowledged, in paraphrase, and at time talks (2) scathingly of Reich's work. In his posthumously published book "The Gestalt Approach" Perls strongly misrepresents Reichian theory when he describes it as one of the (2) "conventional therapies based on the theory that what the patient lacks is understanding of the whys of his behaviour, that these can be understood only if we dig deep enough into the past."

The theoretical bases of Reich's and Perls' therapeutic techniques are very similar partly because of Perls' theoretical debt to Reich and because of their common theoretical debt to Freud.

Both Reichian and Gestalt therapies are branches of the school of Humanistic Psychology - sometimes called the Third Force - in contrast to the two other dominant schools of psychotherapy - behaviourism and psychoanalysis. Rowan contrasts the (7) "pessimistic bad animal view of human nature, and therefore an exaggerated respect for the needs and powers of society to socialize and tame the child, and to keep the adult socialized and tamed" beliefs of the two latter schools with one of the main tenets of humanistic psychology expressed by Rogers: (7) "One of the most revolutionary concepts to grow out of our clinical experience is the growing recognition that the innermost core of man's nature, the deepest layers of his personality, the bases of his 'animal nature' is positive in nature . . . there is no beast in man. There is only man in man." Both Reich's and Perls' theories of the structure of personality conform to this belief, and both therapies because they are based on affirmation of human nature can be seen as therapies of growth rather than adjustment.

Perls postulates five layers in a person. His description (8) in "Gestalt Therapy Now" (2) and "Gestalt Therapy Verbatim" differ from each other, but generally the pattern is:

1. The cliché layer.
2. Phony layer game playing, role playing layer; "as if" we are what our superegos have demanded of us.
3. Impasse: a feeling of being stuck or lost. A phobic attitude of avoidance.
4. Death layer or implosive layer: feels like death because of the paralysing by opposing forces. We contract and compress ourselves.
5. Explosion: By getting in touch with the deadness of the implosive layer - there is a link-up with the authentic person who is capable of experiencing and expressing his emotions. Four main kinds of explosion: grief, sexual orgasm, anger, and joy.

Here is Boadella's summary of Reich's three layers:

"There was the uppermost superficial layer, the face which the person chose to present to the world. It was this layer associated with restraint, compulsive politeness and compliance, that the process of analysis foundered on if it mistook it for a reliable base from which to interpret symptoms and dreams. Beneath this there is a secondary layer of .

dangerous grotesque and irrational impulses and fantasies, the nightmare world of the Freudian repressed unconscious . . . the third layer (primary) layer where impulses were no longer distorted and pathological, but spontaneously decent. This primary layer was as emotionally healthy as the secondary layers and above were emotionally sick". (9)

Perls' first two layers correspond with Reich's first layer, and Perls' third, fourth and fifth layers describe that experience of the client during Reich's second, with final movement described in Perls' fifth layer and Reich's third layer to the experiencing of "the authentic person".

Rieff believes Reich confirmed D.H. Lawrence's claim (10) "That Freud did not go deeply enough". Rieff states Reich's case thus (10) "Instinct is pure, good and beautiful until it is adulterated by the repressions through which it must pass on the way to action . . . therefore abolish repressions". Perls too 'abolished' the super-ego replacing it with a 'top-dog' label - always in conflict with a 'bottom-dog' expressing themselves phenomenologically in the phony layer. The rejection by Perls and Reich that there are any beneficial results of obedience to the super-ego has effects on their attitude to society. Reich expresses this in "The Mass Psychology of Fascism". Reich wrote: "This is a sick - and would do so in psychological depth as well as in political latitude". In turn Perls writes: ((2) "We are living in an insane society and that you only have the choice either to participate in this collective psychosis or take risks and become healthy and perhaps crucified".

Perls expresses his rejection of the super ego by rejecting what he calls "shouldism". He also rejects "aboutism (2) - "you never get anywhere with explanations" and Reich also rejects "shoulds" and "abouts" (11) "Unarmoured life does not look for meaning and purpose for its existence, for the simple reason that it functions spontaneously, meaningfully and purposefully without the command "Thou shalt". Perls and Reich both reject intellectual understanding as a tool to create trust at the beginning of therapy. Reich (11) criticizes explanations to the patient and emphasizes that right from the beginning of contact all interactions are the expressions of the person's character. The content of therapy is irrelevant compared with the process.

An extension of Perls' and Reich's rejection of the super-ego and their confidence of the "goodness" of the authentic person is both therapists' confidence in the self-regulation of the organism. Perls writes: (2) "You can let the organism take over without interfering,

without interrupting, we can rely on the wisdom of the organism". For both therapists the organism was a whole entity, a whole being that was innately wise. Reich's discovery that bodily expression of a person corresponded to his/her mental attitude first introduced at the Lucerne Conference in 1934 was a mighty blow to the still dominating belief in body/mind duality. Character armour has its expression in muscular armour or vice versa. Reich writes: (11) "Muscular attitudes and character attitudes have the same function in the psychic mechanism. They can replace one another and can be influenced by one another. Basically they cannot be separated. They are identical in their function". Perls, confirming these ideas (2) "The how shows us that one of the basic laws, the identity of structure and function, is valid. If we change the structure, the function changes, if we change the function, the structure changes". (Perls' acceptance of the wholeness of a person has been attributed to both Wertheimer and Goldstein).

Another area of agreement in their theoretical bases of therapy is their belief in 'energy'. Whereas Reich spent more than thirty years scientifically studying energy - Perls expresses his ideas very vaguely with no more than nineteenth century sophistication. He calls it (2) "the élan vital, the life force". Later, he equates the emotions with basic energy. (2) "Now these emotions, or this basic energy, this life force . . . is apparently differentiated . . . this basic excitement is differentiated . . ."

Reich called this energy "orgone energy". At first Reich's discoveries (2) supported Freud's hypothesis that energy was quantity of excitation and had a sexual source (libido). (9) When Reich formulated his idea of character structure he saw it as frozen energy. (9) In 1935 Reich confirmed scientifically the existence of a bio-electrical field of excitation. By 1947 Reich was involved with orgone physics and hoped to prove that he (11) "was dealing with a primordial cosmic energy, which was omnipresent in the organism, in the atmosphere, in minerals and in space". These speculations . . . amounted to a comprehensive speculative physical theory of a universal substratum of existence, which paralleled in many ways the earlier scientific concept of ether. Reich believed that (11) "the basic characteristic of orgone energy is pulsation" (synthesis of contraction and expansion) and Reich showed scientifically the vegetative processes of the body.

For both Reich and Perls therapy consists of the person's experiencing of relief as the energy that is being used in creating character structure (rigid personality traits) moves into the expression of authentic emotions.

There is thus a tremendous amount of common ground in the theories of the two therapists. In fact I cannot see one important area of conflict. The main difference is that Perls expresses all the theory much more vaguely than Reich. Perls was eclectically integrating other people's theories (I think an enormous amount of Reich); and has published very few books. Reich on the other hand, had a scientific background, was actually discovering and proving many of the facts on which his theory was based and he wrote many books and papers.

In the translation from theory to therapy Reich and Perls developed differences - equally exquisite in technique. The differences arise from their choice of different areas of the person for therapeutic intervention.

Dreyfuss and Feinstein have clarified the differences between many schools of therapy by diagrammatically showing the dimensions of a person in which triggers and supports for self-healing can occur.

REICH	REICH	reich	reich
physical structure	automatic operations	deliberate operations	consciousness "known to the person" able to be described with language
perls	perls	PERLS	PERLS

Dreyfuss and Feinstein confirm Reich's and Perls' belief that (3) "effective interventions entering any point will ultimately affect the person at every point on the continuum.

Perls and Reich emphasized different places of intervention. Their names in the lower case and upper case lettering in the diagram above express the strength of their interventions in the different dimensions.

Boadella (9) believes that Perls and Reich followed two of the possible three paths based on the acceptance of character analysis. Reich followed the path the "closer study of physical aspects of character structure in the form of bodily posture and muscular tension states" (the therapy based on this study - vegetotherapy) while "in 1951 Fritz Perls, together with Paul Goodman and Ralph Hefferline, published a book entitled "Gestalt Therapy" in which concepts derived from Reich were linked with other techniques aimed at increasing awareness of ingrained character attitudes and releasing repressed emotions".

Another way of describing diagrammatically the therapies' places of intervention is:

REICH	REICH	reich
body	emotions	mind
sensations	feelings	conscious thoughts
		speech
perls	PERLS	PERLS

While Reich created many techniques for freeing energy using the body Perls developed many techniques for making speech a useful tool for growth rather than a manipulative tool for keeping the status quo. Both therapies express distrust of "the mind". John Enright expresses the Gestalt disenchantment with the (12) "threat of Western civilization to put intellectual and cognitive understanding in a primary place in life . . . one of the costs it seems to me, being a decrease of the vivid full participation in life". Perls said (2) "The aim of therapy is to lose more and more of your mind and to come more and more to your senses". How then is speech, associated so strongly with the intellect, used in therapy?"

In traditional Reichian therapy speech hardly occurs until the person is experiencing increase in excitation so that the speech is experienced as coming from the second and third layers of the person. Until then the emotional feelings of the person and the existence and physical position of blocks are monitored by the sound "ah".

In Gestalt therapy language is still the main medium of therapy because Perls invented magnificent techniques to prevent intellectual free association (as in psychoanalysis) and prevent it from being manipulative, thereby breaking through the cliché/phony layers; techniques which increase the client's level of excitation almost as much as Reich's physical methods. Perls' rules to keep therapy in the "here and now", the identification of language with the (2) "awareness continuum", so that the client is asked to speak in the present tense; to use the word "I" rather than make generalizations; to make statements rather than ask questions; language is put in a straight jacket so that it expresses with the same immediacy as the behavior of the body. Perls, like Reich, is not interested in the content of the languages but in the process expressed by the sound. (2) "Don't listen to the words, just listen to what the voice tells you, what the image tells you" (a statement that shows his stretching across the whole continuum in diagram above).

In his use of the body as the main medium of therapy Reich created or discovered his techniques related to deep breathing, muscular manipulation and use of body positions to facilitate the flow of energy.

Both therapies are directive to the extent that they create a structure in which the client has to work if s/he hopes to "grow". Acceptance to work has to involve acceptance of the structures. (Hence in "Gestalt Therapy Verbatim" Fritz Perls sometimes tells the person to leave the stage); but they are non-directive in that they are non-interpretive, non-advice giving and are based on a "paradoxical theory of change". (2) "Change occurs when we allow ourselves to experience what is there" and a patient at Moreland Hall expressed it. "It's not trying, it's surrendering". The Reichian theory of "organismic self regulation" has been supplemented by two others by Perls in support of the non-directive approach. These are the theories of homeostasis: "change is always in the direction of greater organismic ease and balance and is always accompanied by a release of energy and a feeling of lightness", and from Gestalt psychology - the concept of "unfinished business" - that the person's most pressing need becomes the figure, until the need is satisfied and recedes into the background to give way to another organizing need.

Although Reichian therapy does take the cue from the organism - "watch the needs of the organism" writes (13) Elsworth Baker, there is also encouragement in the different Reichian schools to follow a particular order of therapy or unlayering of the muscular armour. Because the Reichian therapist is working with the body it is possible for s/he to see, like a geologist, the patterns of muscular tensions in the body; and because one of the Reichian therapeutic tools is muscular manipulation the therapist can choose where to free the blocks, to some extent. This is a crucial difference between Reichian therapy and Gestalt therapy and is contrary to the existentialist and Gestalt Psychology influences on Gestalt therapy. (The order in the schools of Reichian therapy differs: Organomics: head to pelvis; Radix; head to pelvis; Bioenergetics; feet to head).

In relation to the whole question of amount of direction of therapy there is the paradox that both therapies proclaim "organismic self-regulation", yet both therapies have strict structures in which to work; and while Gestalt believes that what is 'figure' is best to work on, Reichian therapists have integrated in their structure techniques that to some extent determine what is figure. (I think this would be an excellent subject for research: the order in which physical blocks become unblocked during Gestalt therapy).

Movement of the whole body is important in both therapies as means of increasing person's self-awareness. Perls adapted psycho-dramatic techniques - which caused dramatic body action and expression. While in Gestalt therapy the muscular movement is usually voluntary in Reichian therapy involuntary muscular movement or abreaction is more common.

Because Reichian therapy can result in intense abreactions Rowan believes that a Reichian group (7) "is not a good first stop in fostering personal growth - go to an encounter group or do some re-evaluation co-counselling first", John B. Bellis (14) also points out another reason for less use of Reichian therapy: "the patient who sees his problem only in psychological terms is not likely to welcome a physical method of treatment". I see an integrated use of Gestalt and Reichian techniques as being a tremendous form of therapy. A combination of neo-Reichian less intense group exercises, plus classic Gestalt techniques can form the foundation of work for the client to become aware of the processes involved and the warnings of Rowan and Bellis are heeded and solved.

Both Reichian and Gestalt therapies are used in one-to-one sessions and group work. Reich himself didn't use the group context but two neo-Reichian schools - Bio-energetics and Radix - do. Perls stated that (2) "individual therapy is obsolete . . ." and that "in a workshop you learn so much by understanding what's going on in this other person, and realize that so much of his conflicts are your own, and by identification you learn".

To summarize - I believe that much of the theory of Reichian and Gestalt therapy is very similar and in that which is different there is little conflict. In terms of practice, whereas Reich developed techniques of somatic intervention to help the person experience his/her sensations and feelings more fully, Perls developed techniques for controlling language and dramatic techniques involving the whole person (body, mind and emotions). The process is the same in both therapies: increase of excitation or arousal; the experiencing of the block or impasse fully so that the person explodes, or breaks through or moves gently through to relief, joy, peace and strength - the vegetative flowing of energy on the other side.

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