

## **Centre Profile**

# **The Chiron Centre for Holistic Psychotherapy**

*Bernd Eiden, Jochen Lude,  
Rainer Pervoltz and Gill Westland*

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**T**he growth and development of the Chiron Centre for Holistic Psychotherapy has been an organic interweaving between individual lives, events and opportunities.

The present directors, Bernd Eiden, Jochen Lude and Rainer Pervoltz, were students at Berlin, where they were involved with the political left of the early 1970s. It was a time of turmoil and excitement when people were experimenting with self-help, the abandonment of old structures, and the creation of new ways of living and working. Around the universities groups of people came together to read the ideas of Wilhelm Reich, but Bernd, Jochen and Rainer ('the three') felt that discussion alone was insufficient. They wanted more direct action, and out of this impetus 'Sponti' groups began to spring up, concerned with women's issues, gay rights and so on.

Jochen was working as a community worker, Rainer and Bernd as teachers. Bernd engaged himself in work with



smaller children and led a 'Kinderladen', or 'children's shop', based on A.S. Neill's Summerhill. The Kinderladen involved parents and children in defining and creating the children's education, rather than following the rules of a state institution. In his community work Jochen was active in building neighbourhood networks and groups. Many people became

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politicised in this process, and it is possible to see seeds being sown there for the German Green Party. Many of the activists from those days now hold positions within the German political structure.

At that time the ideas of R.D. Laing and David Cooper on psychiatry and insanity were becoming popular, as were Lowen's books and Jack Rosenberg's *Total Orgasm*. People came together to try out the exercises: Rainer was passing on Feldenkrais methods and Bernd massage techniques.

Out of this interest grew an organisation called 'Seterap', which still survives in Berlin. It was a self-help growth group with a core membership of twelve, where members rotated leadership. What they were doing attracted much interest, and they began to offer public events and ongoing growth groups. They learned from doing, and from their optimism, courage and luck. Rainer recalls working in a group with a woman who was lying on a mattress, becoming increasingly tense with anger. From somewhere he had the inspiration to say to her, 'Make a fist!'. She followed his suggestion and spontaneously began pounding the mattress and shouting. Rainer thought that he had developed a hitherto unknown method of working with anger! These were the days of knowing just enough to get by, and not knowing enough to get scared to the point of not daring. When and where they could, they travelled to events in Germany to gain training from others. The more they learned, the more they appreciated their lack of training, and so decided to devise their own training programme. They invited guest trainers into Seterap. Gestalt and bio-

energetic therapies were available and becoming popular, and when biodynamic psychotherapists came to lead events the three felt a sense of relief and refreshment from what was a markedly different way of doing therapy. The classic biodynamic statement, 'You don't have to do anything . . . feel your body . . . let it happen . . .' was such a contrast to the outer-directed hitting, shouting and sobbing methods. It was a breath of something new, and they wanted more of it.

It became clear that they were all at a turning point. They could continue in their jobs or they could do the necessary training to become psychotherapists and make that their life's work. Bernd was encouraged by Robin Lee, when she came to teach biodynamic massage. After an event she told him, 'Look at your hands! You are naturally meant for this work. You must come to London to continue your training with Gerda Boyesen.'

Rainer was at the point in his teaching career when he had to decide whether or not to commit himself to work for the German state for life. He balked at the idea and instead wrote to Jack Rosenberg in Los Angeles. He received a welcoming reply: he could come to LA, stay until he found somewhere to live, and begin gestalt training. So in April 1977 Rainer left for the USA to begin his training with Jack Rosenberg.

Jochen, too, was restless. He had been in community work for ten years and felt the need to do something for himself. He was frustrated because much of his work involved facilitating groups of people to achieve task-oriented goals, and then, the task completed, the groups split up and

he started all over again with a new group. He wanted a deeper on-going level of relationship with people. He enrolled for a sociology degree, but was increasingly aware that it was not right for him and did not complete his studies.

Bernd was being drawn to train in London. As well as Robin Lee, he had met Clover Southwell and Ken Speyer, who were trainers for Gerda Boyesen, and was sufficiently impressed to want to do the Boyesen training. Bernd visited the Boyesen Centre during 1977 and was accepted for training. Jochen, too, decided that this was the psychotherapy training for him, and in January 1978 Bernd and Jochen joined Angelika Golz and Mike Noack in London. The four of them decided to live and train together.

Living in their new adopted countries resulted in some bewilderment and confusion, but what kept all three going was a strong sense of being in the right place and doing the right work. In London, Gerda Boyesen personally taught a small group of advanced level students for one afternoon a week. Jochen and Bernd were part of this group. Others in it included Jeff Barlow, who later founded a training centre in Australia, Mike Noack and Angelika Golz, who now both work in Devon, and Gottfried Heuer, who went on to complete his Jungian analytic training. Bernd and Jochen kept in touch with Rainer in the USA and exchanged ideas, and Rainer decided to join them in London. He had finished his training and began teaching Gestalt-Body therapy at the Boyesen Centre.

A dialogue continued between the feminine, 'midwife' approach of biodynamic work and the more masculine,

focused ways of gestalt. Jim Healy, an analytical psychotherapist from Canada, came to train with Gerda Boyesen and to run groups. He brought another dimension to psychotherapy. For Bernd it was the beginning of trying to integrate analytic and body psychotherapy. Bernd and Jochen travelled to New York and did training with John Pierrakos, and David Boadella acted as supervisor and trainer for the three. Bernd wanted a deeper integration of all his experiences and, choosing to undergo Jungian analysis, felt this should be with a man. He began his analysis with Dr J.W.T. Redfearn from the Society of Analytical Psychology. Jochen and Bernd also became interested in transpersonal work and trained with Ian Gordon-Brown and Barbara Somers at the Centre for Transpersonal Psychotherapy. Jochen and Bernd have also been taught for the past ten years by Bob Moore, the Irish spiritual teacher and healer.

At the same time, all three were training others at the Boyesen Centre in London and in Germany and Switzerland at weekends — taking their psychotherapy skills to those they had left behind. They continued to tussle with balancing the masculine and feminine principles; taking responsibility in relationship; using therapeutic knowledge for more skilful living. They struggled with being connected, through their bodies, to themselves and in relationship with others. This became the foreground of their work. As they experienced it, biodynamic psychotherapy was inwardly focused, working to give expression to internal pressure and finding flow and movement for life forces. Gestalt therapy seemed to

be more ego-centred, concerned with being aware, making choices, being more outwardly focused and emphasising relationship. Somehow they wanted to embrace the best of both psychotherapeutic approaches.

As body psychotherapists they also needed to put their skills and knowledge into a deeper and broader context. They knew about bodies and emotions — how to stimulate emotions and to encourage internal rhythms and vegetative currents in the body — but felt their lack of understanding about how to integrate the psychotherapeutic experience into daily life. They also wanted to know how to bring the mind and the spirit into psychotherapy, and to look at the psychotherapy session in terms of overall context and life meaning.

Gradually it became apparent that the three were wanting to practise and teach a psychotherapy different from biodynamic psychotherapy, but including a lot of its aspects. A group of six emerged at the Boyesen Centre who had the vision to found their own centre: Jochen Lude, Bernd Eiden, Rainer Pervoltz, Kristiane Preisinger, Jochen Encke and Rita Maag.

Jochen Encke found the name for the new centre. It was to be the Chiron Centre for Holistic Psychotherapy. For Jochen Encke the name coincided with his astrological interest and the discovery of a new asteroid in 1977 called Chiron. It appealed to the others for mythological reasons. They were captivated by Chiron, who was half man and half centaur — wounded himself, he could be a sage and healer to others, healing the



*Staff meeting at the Chiron Centre*

split between the instinctual and the spiritual. The idea behind the name 'holistic' psychotherapy was that although the focus of the psychotherapy would be the body, there would be on-going exploration of a form of psychotherapy integrating mind, body and spirit.

The setting up of the centre in 1983 happened very quickly. At first the six used rooms in various houses, hoping to find a way of living and working together and using their home as the psychotherapy centre — this was how they had begun their therapeutic journeys in Germany. In the event, Jochen Encke came to realise that his interest lay more in combining astrology with psychotherapy, Rita wanted to return to Germany, and Kristiane wanted to work in a new centre but felt that as the new mother of a baby boy it was unrealistic to take on its management and administration. The building that was eventually acquired became home and work for the remaining three.

Since 1983 the centre has grown organically, and now offers a clearly defined three-year (certificate level) and five-year (diploma and accreditation level) training in psychotherapy. Since its founding there have been seven crops of students completing the training in Holistic Psychotherapy: 55 have gained the Certificate in Holistic Psychotherapy and 12 the Diploma and full accreditation. The majority of these now have private practices of their own. Now there are 120 students and 15 trainers participating in the Holistic Psychotherapy training. Additionally, there are more than 20 qualified Chiron-trained psychotherapists working in the clinics in Ealing

and Kilburn which are a central feature of the centre. In 1992 Gill Westland set up her own training organisation in Cambridge, Cambridge Personal Development (CPD) which offers training leading to the Certificate in Holistic Psychotherapy.

In recent years Chiron has been more outward looking. A professional association of Chiron Psychotherapists (AChP) has been developed, which hopes to register as a charity in 1993. The centre is a full member of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). The directors are active in the HIPS (Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy Section) of the UKCP; the European Association of Body Psychotherapy (EABP), and AHPP (the Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners). Recently the centre has joined the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP Vienna). It regularly offers training to students of other psychotherapy training institutes both in this country and abroad.

For a couple of years Rainer was toying with the idea of going back to Germany but at the same time he was very concerned not to jeopardise the daily running of the centre by such a move. In the summer of 1992 the three felt that the time was ripe for Rainer to follow his longing to return to the country where everyone speaks his mother tongue. At present Rainer comes over each term for 10 days in order to do some training and so keep in touch with the centre's affairs. He now also has time to fulfil another long-held ambition, to write a book about his work. At Chiron, too, articles are being collected as the basis of a manual on the work of the centre.

At present Bernd and Jochen are look-

ing at the possibility of restructuring Chiron, as it is entering a new phase as a training organisation. Other trainers will move into more responsible positions as training directors. This means establishing anew the ground from which

Chiron's philosophy and beliefs spring and integrating varying approaches into the curriculum, particularly the humanistic and psychodynamic standpoints anchored in the body — essential to the holistic view of Chiron psychotherapy.

## *Chiron Holistic Psychotherapy*

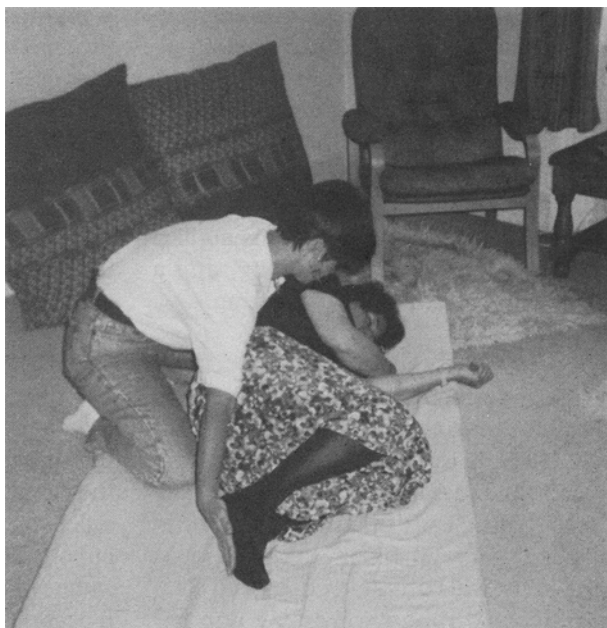
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**H**olistic psychotherapy as practised by the Chiron Centre for Holistic Psychotherapy combines methods and theory drawn from biodynamic psychology, gestalt-body therapy, biosynthesis, transpersonal psychology, core energetics, Reichian psychotherapy, and analytic psychotherapies. It is fundamentally a form of body psychotherapy within the terms of reference defined by the European Association of Body Psychotherapy.

Chiron Holistic Psychotherapy is holistic in that it works with both psyche and body, but also includes recognition of the totality of the person: mind, body, emotion and spirit.

Chiron Holistic Psychotherapy is process and person-centred, not goal-oriented. Clients are not given practical assignments to practise in between sessions, nor does the psychotherapist go into the 'in vivo' situation to help the client achieve an objective. Nor is the client expected to come to the psychotherapy session with a

clearly defined sense of what the session is to be about. However, in the long term there is the hope that the client may be able to express his or her inner 'charge'. There will usually be more integration and harmonious functioning of the whole person in relationship with him/herself and the environment. This means the client may feel more at peace with him/herself, be more in touch with



*Part of a body psychotherapy session*

the world as it is, and experience an improved quality of life through directing his/her life more fully.

In Chiron Holistic Psychotherapy, the relationship between client and therapist has been explored and examined in some detail, and we have established the following guidelines.

### *Relationship is Paramount*

The relationship between the client and the psychotherapist in the present, rather than regressive aspects of relationship, is the important part of the healing process. The way that the client and the psychotherapist make their relationship transcends any method or technique.

### *Creating Security*

The basic task for the psychotherapist is to create with the client a safe environment in which the client can learn to express him or herself from the core or primary personality. Inner safety can only grow in an atmosphere of clarity and honesty, with a clearly defined structure and boundary. This includes issues of time, frequency, interruptions notified well in advance, confidentiality, and a contract about the way of working.

### *Methods*

The psychotherapist is flexible and uses whatever means of making contact with the client is right for the client, within ethical and therapeutic boundaries. Practically, this means that the way of working will vary. At times psychotherapist and client will both sit in chairs and communicate through words. At another time the client may lie on a mattress and silently become aware of breathing and

tiny body movements; at another the client may be massaged, or feel the need to be on his or her feet, to move around and make sounds. The client would never be forced to engage in a method they did not want. For example, if the client was invited by to talk to a cushion/father, but felt this was too embarrassing to contemplate, it would be the psychotherapist's job to find another way to explore the client's current issue.

### *Presence and Contact*

The psychotherapist has the task of going with the client into whatever state the client is in, whether it is joy, fear, anger, confusion or despair. At the same time the therapist is responsible for maintaining a slight distance from the client's experience in order to observe, in as neutral a manner as possible, his or her own experience. This position of the psychotherapist's is often called the observing ego or witness. In this meeting between two people the psychotherapist is challenged to 'meet' the client, which means being neither collusive with the client, nor under-involved. It is in this detached but involved space that something different can arise.

### *Attitude to the Client*

The client is not perceived as someone who is more neurotic than the psychotherapist. The main difference between the client and the psychotherapist is the skill of the psychotherapist in being aware of both him/herself and the client at the same time and not being self-absorbed. It does not imply that the psychotherapist is healthier, more 'advanced', or 'better' in the capacity to live life.

## *Transference and Counter-Transference*

In the relationship it is the psychotherapist's job to be as aware as possible of transference and counter-transference — the experience and feelings that arise in the interaction between psychotherapist and client. It involves looking at the way in which the client 'hooks' on to the psychotherapist in fixed patterns of thinking, being, behaving and feeling. These patterns will be ways in which the client unknowingly gives away power and flexibility in relationship. The psychotherapist will observe these patterns, bring them to consciousness in the relationship, and gradually help the client to unravel their meaning and origin. Chiron Holistic Psychotherapy encourages the involvement of the psychotherapist and client in the 'here and now' of the relationship, and so the psychotherapist is perhaps more involved in the interaction than in some other psychotherapies. One outcome of this is that there is less transference material coming from the client. However, it is an approach that demands a high degree of self-awareness from the psychotherapist in the countertransference.

### *Negative Transference*

The work with negative transference is an important Reichian principle. The idea is that often, hidden in the negative transference, is the strength and creative force of a person. It is our belief that we don't reach the deeper, creative force and qualities within ourselves without going through and integrating the so-called negative aspects of ourselves. The negative aspect is simply the character defence

blocking and distorting the life force. By freeing the energy in the negative transference, it can become positive and constructive.

### *Sexual Transference*

Sexual transference is of concern in body psychotherapy because of the direct use of physical touch. For some clients physical touch has the capacity to evoke sexual transference which is too strong to be integrated within a fused and intimate space in the therapeutic relationship. For these clients physical touch would not be included. Sometimes physical touch is experienced as sexual by the client because of the charge held in maintaining taboos about touching. Chiron psychotherapists are skilled in differentiating various sorts of touch and are able to help the client to liberate the energy held in the charge. Often deeper feelings behind the sexual charge are contacted, such as the need to be held, contained and nourished. Because physical touch is part of the range of possibilities, and because issues around touch are explored, it can be argued that sexual transference is a less dangerous issue in body psychotherapy than in some other psychotherapies.

### *Transference as Body Phenomena*

Transference and countertransference are located in the body and can be felt as body phenomena. This gives a palpable way of checking and knowing oneself through and in the body which is both exciting and ordinary. This physical awareness is part of the work with the therapeutic relationship and its manifestation.



There is also a body 'felt-sense'. Much emphasis in the Chiron training is put on developing a highly tuned and sensitive kinaesthetic self-awareness, particularly through the experience and practice of massage. In being touched, s/he can develop a sense of inside and outside the body, of knowledge of self in space and of being grounded or 'in touch' with reality through skin contact.

### *Physical Touch*

There is also a sensitivity about how to touch and how not to touch. Both psychotherapist and client will become aware of subtle body changes and movements as their interaction progresses. At one moment there may be a very slight breath holding and tightening of musculature, at another there may be a long out-breath and a relaxation of tissues throughout the body. Sometimes these bodily changes can become almost like a dance between psychotherapist and client, a moving, spontaneous, wordless interaction — for sometimes words hinder and slow down the unfolding.

### *The Therapeutic Process*

The therapeutic process never unfolds sequentially. The client is nearly always the starting point for the process and the psychotherapist meets what is there. At first the psychotherapist 'touches' the client and allows him/herself to be 'touched' by the client. This is not just about physical touch, but also touch on the emotional, energetic and spiritual levels. In the course of time the client begins to know him/herself as an energetic being with bodily sensations. Neglected areas of the client are experienced and tolerated be-

cause of the therapeutic relationship: 'I can be with this and know it because you can be with me and accept this in me'. The psychotherapist 'holds' what is there until the client is ready to be aware of it. As a result the client can be supported, and develop the ego strength to face profound and strong emotions. As the client opens up bodily it becomes possible for him/her to take in more of the relationship with the psychotherapist. In the beginning the client may feel that it is only possible to feel the energetic bodily sensations with the psychotherapist, but gradually the therapist guides the client to know these body sensations and their meaning for him/herself. At the next stage the client is outside the therapeutic situation, aware of him/herself bodily and energetically in relationship with other people.

### *Catharsis*

At various stages in the therapeutic process catharsis may unblock the emotional expression in the client, but catharsis is not seen as an end in itself — it can become a way of avoiding being in relationship with oneself and the psychotherapist. Cathartic work is balanced with verbalisation and integration of the cathartic experience. What is critical is the energetic re-owning of the emotional expression in a way which is constructive in daily life. Emphasis is put on being in touch with emotion, but not being a victim to emotion.

### *Being*

At a stage when the client has developed his/her own observing ego, it can be fruitful to realise that just 'being' with

another person, without having to talk or start any activity, can be enough. Sessions working at this level of relationship can be experienced as very 'natural' and deeply peaceful. 'I don't have to do anything or to perform in any way to be with you.'

### *Working with the Autonomic Nervous System*

Since the focus of Chiron Holistic Psychotherapy is on body experience, much of the therapeutic relationship is discussed in terms of the autonomic nervous system and its responses in both client and psychotherapist. The main methods used are vegeto-therapy, biodynamic massage and gestalt-body therapy. Generally the autonomic nervous system is not under voluntary control, except after specialised training. By working directly with it the therapist has a way of making a deep contact with a client which is not controlled by the rational mind.

### *The Spiritual Aspect*

Every coming into the world is an act of separation from an all-embracing feeling of being at one and at home. And no matter how much psychotherapy and spiritual practice we engage in there is for most of us a sense of never completely feeling at home and belonging. There is a sadness and an unfulfilled longing to come home, to be at home with the wider universe, and to be simple again. At the core of each person's being there is an essential rightness, which goes beyond the ego, and is about a loving generosity to oneself and others. From time to time we all have experiences where there is a sense of being more than 'me', of being

connected to a greater whole, and with everything being 'right' and simple. These times may be felt as the heart opening and can arise sometimes in psychotherapy sessions or at other times. They are often around in childhood or states of innocence where there is no armouring.

### *Completion of Psychotherapy*

The psychotherapy reaches completion when the client feels that the initial reason for coming to psychotherapy has been resolved, especially when there was a specific presenting problem or issue. Psychotherapy is completed when the client is able to live in daily life equipped with the awareness developed in the therapeutic sessions, or when the therapeutic relationship has run its course and reached the limitations of either client, psychotherapist or both. Sometimes this will be the occasion for suggesting another psychotherapist or therapeutic approach. In general Chiron Holistic Psychotherapy involves ongoing weekly sessions for 6 months for short-term psychotherapy, and 2 to 5 years for longer-term psychotherapy.

