

AUTHENTIC MOVEMENT AND SUPERVISION

Dr Helen Payne, University of Hertfordshire.

(First published in EMOTION, Newsletter for ADMT.UK, Winter, 13, 4, 2001)

This paper explores the ways in which the discipline of Authentic Movement (Pallaro 1999) might be used as an avenue for developing the ‘wise inner teacher/higher self’ (Rowan 1993) or the ‘internal supervisor’ (Casement 1985 and 1990).

In the process of practising authentic movement there is an experience of being both a ‘mover’ and a ‘witness’. The author is proposing the witness may be similar to the benign ‘observing other’ of the individuated internal supervisor.

THE INTERNAL SUPERVISOR

Casement (1985) speaks of the external support for the beginning therapist being like the baby experiences the mother’s holding (Winnicott 1965), that is from the outside, by the supervisor. This then transitionally becomes internalised, during which the therapist hears the voice of the supervisor and uses their thinking, superimposed upon what is actually going on in the session. Finally this internal support becomes ‘autonomous and separate from the internalised supervisor’ (1985:24). It is more responsive to the moment in ways that are more appropriate to it (ibid 1990).

He argues that the therapist’s presence needs to be a transitional or potential presence (like that of a mother who is non-intrusively present with her playing child). In this way there is potential for the client to invoke the therapist as representing an absence or a presence. This space or freedom is possible because the therapist does not attempt to understand or empathise from a place of knowledge or theory, but from a place of ‘not

knowing'. Resisting the temptation to prompt or direct the client the therapist leaves space for new understanding to emerge.

During the process of therapy Casement says therapists may learn to watch themselves within the session, in their developing capacity for spontaneous reflection, alongside the internalised supervisor. He claims they can do this using an 'island of intellectual contemplation as the mental space' (ibid: 32). During their development as therapists Casement believes they develop a dialogue between the external supervisor and the internal supervisor whereby there is more of the independent capacity required of a qualified therapist in the process of becoming. Part of this capacity involves a deep empathic understanding of the client. That is being able to share in the experience of the client as if it were our own, partially identifying with the client by introjection before reflecting back by re-projection. The therapist's experiencing ego has to shift 'between herself and the client, between thinking and feeling' (ibid 34). The boundary between conscious, rational thought is crossed and she enters the primary process of irrational thoughts and feelings, in which a free 'reverie, alongside the client', is entered into where it becomes easier to monitor what it feels like to be the client.

ACTIVE IMAGINATION

This ability to be in two places at once is an aspect of authentic movement training. In authentic movement the two roles of mover and witness are crucial. It is a meditative, contemplative process whereby the place of not knowing can be entered into in response to impulses at a primary level from deep within the body. The resulting movement (or stillness) is the guide for the mover to enter her imagination and to follow. Ego is dropped and she enters an active imagination in movement (Jung 1916). The fact that movement cannot easily be fixed in the mind or repeated may be advantageous to the process of 'letting go' into the experience. Jung (1968) claimed active imagination was a

process in which, while the consciousness looks on, participating but not directing, co-operating but not choosing, the unconscious is allowed to appear in whatever form it likes. Something much deeper than personal ego is represented, sometimes connecting with universal human phenomena. (Adler 1992 and 1996).

Adler (1948) defines active imagination as:

‘A definite attitude towards the contents of the unconscious whereby we seek to isolate them and thus observe their autonomous development. We may also say that ‘we make them come to life’, but this is incorrect in as far as we merely observe what is happening...it is not unlike watching a film or listening to music, where in each case one sits back and ‘takes in’ something which one has not made but which happens, with a concentration which is a definite kind of activity. Only the difference is that in active imagination the ‘film’ is being unrolled inside (ibid: 43).

THE WITNESS AND MOVER IN AUTHENTIC MOVEMENT

The witness in authentic movement acts as a container, noticing her judgements, interpretations, projections, thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, images, thoughts, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive responses in the presence of the mover. She has her eyes open; the mover has her eyes closed. After the mover has completed her experience she returns to the witness and shares this direct experience of the unconscious. Immediately she speaks that experience becomes one step removed from her. She may choose other arts media instead of speaking, for example to draw or write poetry, later she may wish to speak as well. Then, if invited by the mover, the witness shares her experiences whilst in the presence of this mover. She owns all her projections, judgements and interpretations. The dyad journey together with this practice and their stories unfold within a deep respect

and empathy for each other. The mover may choose to incorporate into her meaning-making her witness's perceptions or not. It can be profoundly important for movers to be 'seen' at times.

Originally conceived as 'movement –in-depth' in America in the 1970's (Frantz 1972); authentic movement was developed out of movement therapy and Jungian thought by leading dance movement therapist and Jungian Analyst, Mary Starks Whitehouse (1977 and 1979). She described her use of the term 'authentic' as referring to unlearned truth, genuineness belonging to that person. The movement is not a set of exercises or a choice to move. Neither is it improvisation or creative movement, which take place in a different context and for another purpose entirely. Rather in refraining from exerting any demand on the self to move it employs the opposite in the sense of 'I am moved'. It is a unique and powerfully awesome moment when this happens. In that moment the ego gives up control, and stops choosing, allowing the self to embody the physical body as it will, in a kind of 'indwelling'. This cannot be sought, repeated, nor explained. It is unpredictable, unpremeditated, spontaneous and freeing. It is this process which leads the mover into that 'place of not knowing' which is of profound importance.

Often the mover speaks of not doing it herself, or knowing what she is doing, and yet something is done. This experience brings both mover and witness into a balance between action and non-action (Whitehouse 1979) allowing them to live from a different awareness. That place where experiencing themselves can be viewed with a detachment, having these two qualities at the same time. They may be aware of, and contain, the opposites of say, suffering and enjoyment at the same time. From this, something else emerges, something new is discovered.

TRAINING POTENTIAL

During the training in authentic movement the therapist can begin to learn from her experience about the detachment required of the mover in order to be free from ego control and develop the capacity to 'dream' alongside her client. Eventually the experience of being seen by the witness outside her helps the evolving inner witness. Adler (1987) discusses the process of developing the internal witness. It begins with being seen by another, says Adler. Following this one begins to see oneself, here the internal witness is developing and the student of authentic movement can begin to witness another. From this witnessing of another develops a new ability to see oneself, as one is. As a result the witness becomes more highly tuned inside her, promoting the development of the internal supervisor Casement describes. By developing this ability to tune in to one's experiencing whilst experiencing the therapist can learn to listen to her internal supervisor whilst practising therapy. Witnessing both self and other in a compassionate, non-judgmental manner is a skill referred to in authentic movement both for groups and individual work. As the student develops the internal supervisor/witness her access to images, memories, and her own inner life is seen to be quite relevant to the process of therapy. In this way transferences and counter-transferences can be identified more easily.

Chodorow (1991) emphasises the nature of the witness experience as subjective and the fact that one of the groundrules is that each mover and witness contains part of the experience. In the 'play' between curiosity and imagination, Chodorow says, the witness fluctuates between differentiated, objective, defined ways of seeing and subjective, imaginative ways of seeing. That is, the same movement event can be seen and described in a number of ways. So as well as describing what actually was seen in terms of body parts moving and how, at the same time there is an empathic relatedness, such as wanting

to comfort a sad child. Rejecting feelings may also arise if in this case, if; for example either the witness or the mover had a neglected childhood. Chodorow states the mover/witness relationship, which serves as container and process offers a valuable resource for the training of psychotherapists and analysts.

The importance of 'inner listening' is at the heart of counselling/psychotherapy and authentic movement. Adler (1987) describes it as '[the witness] responding to a sensation, to an inner impulse, to energy coming from the personal unconscious, collective unconsciousness or super-conscious. Her response to this energy creates movement that may be visible or invisible to the witness'. (Ibid; 2). Casement (1985) refers to 'unfocussed listening' as the 'first step beyond that of familiar evenly suspended attention, with which analysts are encouraged to listen to the over-all drift of a patient's communication' (ibid 38). The therapist's capacity to stay with the 'stream of free-floating attention' during the therapy sessions, he says, provides valuable material to use in the service of the client when in supervision reflecting upon sessions as well as during the sessions themselves. This form of 'listening' or 'responding to the inner impulse' has a special quality and is one of the fundamental processes and skills developed through authentic movement.

In addition, the repeated experiences of entering the place of not knowing through authentic movement as both mover and witness the therapist learns a deep empathy and respect for herself and the mover. This can be generalised to her work with clients where empathic capabilities are crucial.

I have been enriched by my years of training and practice in Authentic Movement, as a student, teacher and therapist. I will always remember the time I worked in a large group with the late Mary Starkes Whitehouse; it was an experience, which served to germinate

a longing for more. And I found more with Dr Janet Adler,. My warmth and sincere appreciations go out to her for all her teachings. Also to my peers and the clients and students who have so contributed to my growth as a witness over the years. As a mover and a witness I continue to journey and learn about waiting, not knowing and being and doing at the same time.

REFERENCES

- Adler, G (1948) *Studies in analytical psychology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Adler, J (1987) Who is the witness? *Contact Quarterly*, Winter.
- Adler, J (1992) Body and soul. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, 14, 73-94.
- Adler, J (1996) The collective body. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, 18, 2, 81-94.
- Casement, P (1985) *Learning from the patient*. London; Routledge.
- Casement, P (1990) *Further learning from the patient*. London; Routledge.
- Chodorow, J (1991) *Dance therapy and depth psychology; the moving imagination*. London: Routledge.
- Frantz, G (1972) An approach to the center: an interview with Mary Whitehouse. *Psychological Perspectives*, 3, 1.
- Jung, CG (1916) The transcendent function. In: *Collected works of CG Jung (1969) Vol 8* Princeton Universities press.
- Jung, CG (1968) *analytical psychology: Its theory and practice*. New York, Pantheon Books, Random House.
- Pallaro, P (1999)(ed) *Authentic movement: Essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Joan Chodorow and Janet Adler*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publications.
- Rowan, J (1993) *The transpersonal: psychotherapy and counselling*. London: Routledge.

Whitehouse, M (1977) The transference and dance therapy. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, 1, 1, 3-7.

Whitehouse, MS (1979) CG Jung and dance therapy: Two major principles. In: P Bernstein (ed) *Eight theoretical approaches to dance movement therapy*, Dubuque, Iowa: Kedall/Hunt.

Winnicott, DW (1965) *Maturational processes and the facilitating environment*. London: Hogarth Press.

Dr Helen Payne, SDMT; UKCP accredited psychotherapist is Head of Counselling/Psychotherapy Education at University of Hertfordshire., where she is researching the use of Authentic Movement in practice, supervision and teaching. She is a Fellow of ADMT having pioneered the field in the UK.

NB Helen is facilitating a one day workshop in Authentic Movement on Sun Feb 3rd 2001 at the Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living, Hitchin Road, Letchworth, Herts. Tel: 0162 678804 for leaflet/bookings. There is a possibility of an on-going group arising out of this day if participants are interested. You can contact Helen on 01438 833440 or h.l.payne@herts.ac.uk for information on Authentic Movement on-going groups and individual teaching.