

## Introduction

I try to remember the first moments of Biodanza in the past, the old gestures, the encounters with friends in the frenzy of the music. Biodanza, at the beginning, arrived discreetly in my life. Slowly it has acquired strength, rousing the interest of people, supporting surprising changes in some of the participants, and above all creating a sentiment of rebirth and hope in life.

Biodanza is born out of my personal experience and, early on, I understood that its structure could find its foundations in the sciences that look at life, in particular in biology. Many forces have manifested themselves in me to guide me finally towards the ideation of this ensemble of art, science and love.

Stirring in me were paradoxical experiences, some with wonderful characteristics, others terrifying. The second world war had demonstrated that men can reach levels of inconceivable perversity; the holocaust of millions of persons under the nazi regime, the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki revealed what point the debasement of the human species could reach. The crisis of the western culture was evident.

On the other hand I had lived experiences of love and ecstasy, in a dimension of the world both mysterious and marvelous. I had fathered children, I had entered into contact with the first groups that were active in ecology. Facing the abyss created by the human contradictions, I felt the desire to gain access to paradise, but a paradise that would be shared; I could not conceive of a solitary evolution. I wanted to encounter the sources of 'Original Love'. All have for centuries heard the talking of the 'love towards the neighbor', as the most pure truth of christianity; I believe that love should also include a corporal dimension, the active one, the caress.

At different times I felt in my body all the manifestations of ecstasy, of eroticism, of brotherhood, of creative energy and of vital impetus. I felt the possibility of pure contact with the living reality, through movement, gestures and the expression of feelings. Music was the universal language, the only one that all could understand in the Tower of Babel that is the world: dancing was the ideal form for integrating body and soul, and could communicate to all the participants happiness, tenderness and strength. And I wanted to share all this with a great number of people.

It was from this whole of experiences and sensations that the desire arose to form small groups for dancing, singing and encountering each other with the music. Biodanza was thus, and continues to be a way of living together with beauty. Affective unity is generated in the exchange of intimate energy with others. In the process of coming closer together corporal contact is essential.

Research done later with both mentally ill and sane persons, during the time that I worked at the Center for Medical Anthropological Studies at the School of Medicine of the University of Chile, enabled me to structure a theoretical model, that made it possible to work within a vast range of organic responses and of new behaviors.

I found that during dancing universal patterns of expression appeared in relation with the various emotions. Thus I was able to give a structure to my work in which music, movement and emotion formed a perfect unity. I have created some dances and exercises based on the natural gestures of the human being with precise objectives aimed at stimulating vitality, creativity, eroticism, affective communication among persons and the sense of belonging to the universe.

Scientific research on the responses of the autonomic nervous system has demonstrated that certain exercises had a regulating action at the visceral level, activating the sympathetic-adrenergic or instead the parasympathetic-cholinergic system. On the other hand certain exercises stimulated specific emotions that produced highly significant effects on the perception of oneself and on the style of affective communication with other persons.

Biodanza spread and subsequently also became the subject of a university course in the department of Aesthetics at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, where I occupied the chair of the Psychology of expression. There, in fact, in 1970, I was requested to create the first department of Psychodanza, a name that I have later changed to Biodanza, dance of life.

During this journey, I was accompanied in life and in research by Pilar Acuña, who has given a poetic dimension to Biodanza.

Later, Cecilia Luzzi has helped me to bring about subtle technical improvements and has developed its application with children.

Eliane Matuk has with love and intelligence arranged my first book *The Minotaur Project*, as well as my didactic texts for the curriculum of formation. To her I have entrusted the care for the underlying book, which is the fundamental text on the theory of Biodanza; she has furthermore developed new administrative forms, restructuring a rigorous system of formation of teachers in Europe and directing the Model School of Biodanza, seated in Italy.

Claudete Sant'Anna occupies herself, at my side, with the administration and coordination of the activities of Biodanza in the whole world.

My older children Cecilia, Leonardo, Pilar, Rolando and Maria Veronica have been the initial participants during the first sessions of Biodanza in Chile; moreover, they have taken part in the theatrical performances inspired by this System. Subsequently, they have dedicated themselves to teaching and researching it.

In the Nineteen Eighties my daughter Maria Veronica and her husband Raúl Terren introduced Biodanza in Europe. Later my friends Giovanni Salvati and Emmi Mozzetti-Monterumici invited me to Italy to realize a program of diffusion of this System. I have lived there for 8 years, developing Biodanza there and in other European countries.

Many loved persons, whose names I will not mention for fear of doing injustices, have worked intensely at the spreading of Biodanza and have put their capacity and their lucidity at the service of this unique mission: the joy of living.

## ORIGIN, DEFINITION AND GENERAL IDEAS

### Biodanza

#### The origins

The conceptual basis of Biodanza comes from a meditation on life: from the desire to be reborn from our broken gestures, from our empty and sterile structures of repression, it certainly comes

forth from the nostalgia for love.

The deformation of the western spirit culminated, in the past century, in the biggest attacks against human life that history knows. The pathology of the I, characterized by the split between nature and culture, with an excessive improvement of culture at the expense of nature, and of the exaggerated predominance of reason over the instincts, was reinforced up to limits never before attained. This pathology is sustained by government institutions and by political and educational ideologies. It is shared by many of the intellectuals and thinkers of our age.

Biodanza is therefore an open transgression of the cultural values of today, of the precepts of alienation of the consumer society and of the totalitarian ideologies. It proposes to restore in the human being the original link with the species as biological whole, and with the universe as cosmic whole.

We are too lonesome in the midst of collective chaos. There is a way of being absent, but with all our presence. In the act of not looking, of not listening, of not touching the other, we subtly strip him or her of his identity: we are with the other, but we ignore her or him. This disqualification, conscious or unconscious, contains the pathology of the I. To celebrate the presence of the other, to exalt him or her in the essential enchantment of the encounter is, perhaps, the only healthy possibility. Biodanza thus participates in a different vision. It intends to investigate a new way of living, reawakening our sleeping sensitivity.

To live better, we need a feeling of intimacy, of pleasant union and of stimulating grace. In these natural necessities I have put the objectives of the Biodanza.

### The primordial significance of dancing

Dancing, in the same way as singing and shouting, is one of the innate conditions of the human being. The first knowledge of the world, before words, is that which for all of us comes through movement. In an original sense, dance surges from the depth of the human being: it is movement of life, of intimacy; it is impulse of uniting with the species.

It is thus a mode of being in the world that represents a privileged way of access to our original identity, and is also the expression of the organic unity of man with the universe. This notion of the dance as 'integrating movement' is very old and shows, throughout history, numerous cultural expressions such as the primitive dance, the orphic dances, the tantric ceremonies and the rotating dances of sufism. The Persian poet Gialâl al-Din Rumî, who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, exclaimed:

O day, arise ....the atoms are dancing,  
the spirits, in rapture of ecstasy, are dancing,  
the celestial vault, because of this Being,  
is dancing: to your ear I'll say to where leads  
their dance. All the atoms that are in the sky  
and in the desert, understand this well, are in love  
like us and each one of them, happy or unfortunate  
is dazzled by the sunlight of the unconditional soul.

A session of Biodanza is an invitation to participate in the cosmic dance that the Sufi poet speaks of. This affirmation may appear surprising within the melancholy sociopolitical panorama of our times. In a world as today, where often are found hunger and genocide, torture and informing on others, and a sense of infinite abandonment, how is it possible to think about starting to dance?

My proposal, however, does not only consist of that, but in carrying out specific exercises, inspired by the primordial significance of the dance, structured on the basis of the natural gestures of the human being and aimed at activating the affective potentialities that connect us to ourselves, to equals and to the universe.

How to change the world without changing ourselves? In searching for the causes of the failure of

social revolutions it is necessary to consider that the persons who promoted them had not realized the evolutionary process in themselves. Social transformations can lead to positive outcomes only when they originate in a 'sane' context, and not from neuroses or resentment, otherwise these changes have as their only effect to substitute one pathology for another.

Generally dance is associated with the performances of classical ballet, or with similar forms structured according to prearranged steps. This purely formal view of the dance excludes its original significance.

Among primitive peoples, it was a manner of communicating used to bring out happiness or sadness, perform celebrations and to express religious or profane tributes. The civilizing process has contributed much to the vanishing of this manifestation of the experience of life through movement. Personally, I believe in an organic dance, that corresponds to the patterns of natural movement of the human being; movements capable of incorporating musical harmony, archetypal gestures, carried out in profound resonance with the cosmos. I have searched for the coherence and I have found it.

My proposition is to focus the patterns of functional movement on a profound connection to life.

Biodanza in the historical and anthropological context of the dance

The anthropological study of primitive dances enables us to distinguish two lines of development in the history of humanity:

- a *pagan and orgiastic* line, with a Dionysiac orientation;
- a line of *artistic dance*, with an Apollonian orientation.

In the following the principal manifestations are listed:

Pagan and orgiastic line

- Dances of the paleolithic and the neolithic;
- primitive dances from Australia and New Zealand;
- dances from Congo (Zaire) and Guinea, from the tutsi and the pygmies;
- Voodoo dances;
- Roman Bacchanalia and Lupercalia;
- popular Medieval dances;
- the tarantella;
- Brazilian dances of Carnival (samba) and of Candomblé;
- tropical dances in general;
- popular dances derived from jazz;
- new popular rhythms (rock and roll, soul, boogie-woogie)

Line of artistic dances

- Ritual rhythmic dances of ancient Egypt;
- Hindu dances;
- dances from Burma (Myanmar), from Pakistan, Korea and Indonesia;
- 'aristocratic' dances from the Middle Ages;
- popular European dances (contra dance, minuet, mazurka, waltz);
- classical Russian dance in the tradition of Sergei Diaghilev;
- modern dances.

These two lines remained separate in the course of history. Serge Lifar (3), the renewer of the

dance, suggests that “the two irreconcilable brothers, Apollo and Dionysos, finally meet and embrace each other in the modern dance”.

From the psychological point of view the orgiastic dances are related to the unconscious, and the artistic ones to consciousness. In Biodanza the orgiastic dances are represented by the *musical trance*, while the artistic ones have a relation to the *strengthening of the identity*.

There exists a third line of development that possesses some characteristics common to the previous two and that is represented by the so-called *therapeutic dances*:

- shamanic healing dances, in particular those from Asia, from Africa and from the Amazon forest;
- Egyptian therapeutic dances, aimed at restoring the fertility of infertile women;
- healing dances of Delphi;
- lactating dances, aimed at provoking or increasing the secretion of milk, practiced by certain african tribes;
- dances of the belly, performed in the Middle East and aimed at invigorating the organic functions of motherhood;
- dance of liberation of tensions, practiced by various primitive peoples;
- contemporary therapeutic dances, like the Terpsichore Trance Therapy, Dance Therapy and Biodanza.

Finally, the *religious dances* and the *warrior dances* constitute two groups of important manifestations in human history.

From the beginning, dances are also connected with religious ceremonies, as happens in the Greek Orphic dances, in the sacred dances of India, those of the rotating Sufi dervishes and in those of the mandala.

The group of warrior dances, so-called ‘pyrrhic dances’, comprises also the martial arts like karate, jujitsu, and tai chi.

### The *vivencia* as method

To understand the definition of Biodanza it is necessary to know the concept of *vivencia*, that forms the basis of its methodology.

The first to investigate the meaning of the *vivencia* was the german historical philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey: he proposed the concept expressed by the german term *Erlebnis* and he defined it as “something revealed in the psychical complex particular to the internal experience of a manner of living reality for an individual”. The conceptions of W. Dilthey would influence the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the ontology of Martin Heidegger, and the sociology of Max Weber.

In the theory of Biodanza, I have redefined the concept of *vivencia* as an experience lived with great intensity by an individual in the present moment, which involves cenesthesia<sup>1</sup>, and the visceral and emotional functions. The *vivencia* lends to the subjective experience of each single individual the palpitating existential quality of the lived ‘here and now’. I have defined the essential characteristics of the *vivencia* and structured a precise methodology to induce *vivencia* aimed at integration and at human development by means of the stimulation of the archaic functions of connection with life, as the *vivencia* is the immediate psychic expression of this function.

The methodology of Biodanza envisages the induction of *vivencia* of integration, since these imply an immediate and profound connection with oneself. During the unrolling of a course of Biodanza, these *vivencia* gain force in accordance with the manner of learning established by B.F. Skinner (9),

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1 The general sense of bodily existence; the sensation caused by the functioning of the internal organs, from Greek koinos, common and aesthesis, sensation, perception. The general sense of existing, derived as the aggregate of all the various stimuli and reactions throughout the body at any specific moment to produce a feeling of health or of illness. (translators note (TN))

as they become associated with pleasant situations (positive reinforcement). He argues that learning is consolidated more by stimulating the positive than by punishing the negative. The phenomenon of learning involves the whole organism and not only the cortical functions, because the perception of the meanings that condition existence can influence the emotional sphere and the visceral sphere. In Biodanza learning is therefore proposed on *three levels*: the *cognitive*, that of the *vivencia*, and the *visceral*. These levels are neurologically connected, and can condition each other reciprocally, although also possessing a strong autonomy.

When learning does not include all these three levels, the respective behaviors turns out to be dissociated. In this way, for example, a person can *rationally* think to have the right to liberally practice his/her own sexuality, while *emotionally* s/he can experience fear or uncertainty, and *viscerally* s/he can suffer from nervous diarrhea.

The cognitive therapies that work on the verbal level base themselves on a course that goes from meanings to emotions. In my opinion, the understanding of meanings does not modify the immediate answers face to face with life, as long as it does not also influence the sphere of deciding. Biodanza therefore bases itself on an inverse course: that which goes from emotions to meanings. In Biodanza, the *vivencia* has the methodological priority, even though there is no exclusion of the cognitive functions, nor of consciousness and symbolic thought: the exercises are intended a priori to induce *vivencia* and only afterwards will it be up to consciousness, in the manner of a mirror, to register and indicate the internal states evoked. The *vivencia* has an intrinsic value and an immediate effect of integration, wherefore it is not necessary that it be analyzed afterwards at the level of consciousness. In Biodanza a personal description of the *vivencia* is proposed, as inner experiences, without analysis or psychological interpretation.

### Characteristics of the *vivencia*

The experience of forty years of application of the Biodanza System has permitted me to observe and single out the essential characteristics of the *vivencia*, that I sum up here sequentially:

#### Primary expression

The *vivencia* constitutes the primary expression of ourselves, of our identity, before any symbolic or rational elaboration.

#### Priority over consciousness

The *vivencia* is a manifestation of being that precedes consciousness: the awareness of the *vivencia* can be immediate or arrive at a later moment. So in the process of the integration of the identity and of the expression of the genetic potential the *vivencia* has the priority over consciousness.

#### Spontaneity

As water gushes from a spring, the *vivencia* emerges with spontaneity and freshness; it has the quality of originality. The *vivencia* is not under the control of consciousness: it can be 'evoked', but not directed by the will.

#### Subjectivity

The *vivencia* is subjective: it manifests itself beginning from the identity. The *vivencias* that each person experiences are unique, intimate and often inexpressible.

#### Variable intensity

The intensity of the *vivencia* can vary depending on the level of connection with oneself and of the quality of the stimulus that produces it. To the degree that the conscious activity of control and vigilance diminishes, the intensity of the *vivencia* increases.

### Temporality

The *vivencia* is fleeting. It manifests itself in the present moment and constitutes an experience of 'actual genesis', in the sense of this concept as proposed by Alfred Auersperg (10) that refers to the continuous creation of life that occurs in living organisms.

### Emotionality

Often the *vivencia* gives rise to emotions.

### *Cenesthetic<sup>2</sup> dimension*

The *vivencia* is always accompanied by cenesthetic sensations and involves the whole organism. According to my hypothesis, this is the way of access to the vital unconscious (11).

### Ontological dimension

The *vivencia* offers an intimate knowledge that is absolute, connected to being and to the perception of being alive. That is why it has an ontological dimension.

### Psychosomatic dimension

The *vivencia* is the meeting point of the psychosomatic unity, which is related to the process of transmutation of the psychic in organic and of the organic in the psychic. There are *vivencia* that produce disorganization and consequently disturbances at the organic and psychic level; on the contrary there are *vivencia* of integration that promote an elevation of the degree of health and of vitality.

### Vivencia, emotion, feeling

For a better theoretical understanding of the experiences lived during the sessions of Biodanza it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of '*vivencia*', of 'emotion' and of 'feeling', whose boundaries are not well defined; therefore, sometimes, these become mixed up within the complexity of the human spirit.

### Vivencia

Is an intense sensation of living 'here and now', with a strong cenesthetic component. The *vivencia* are passing experiences (for example, *vivencia* of fullness, of safety, of delight).

### Emotion

Is a psychophysical response with profound involvement of the body, represented by the internal impulses to action. The emotions have a centrifugal orientation and an accentuated expressivity (for example cheerfulness, anger, fear).

### Feeling

Is a more elaborate response in the confrontations of people and the world. The feelings are lasting in time (memory), involve the participation of consciousness, are differentiated (preferences) and have a symbolic character (for example, love, solidarity, happiness).

### Towards an epistemology of the *vivencia*

Currently the investigation of the nature of knowledge does not confine itself to rational knowing, but comprises also ethological, mystical and poetic aspects. This means that the roads to arrive at the knowledge of the reality are multiple and can include emotional and cenesthetic information.

The epistemology developed on the basis of the study of perception through a logical rational

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2 From cenesthesia, see footnote preceding page.

approach becomes narrow-minded, when one considers that perception does not only depend on the sense organs, but also on the emotional context of this very perception. It is not hazardous, therefore, to propose that the *vivencia*, with all its cenesthetic connotations, might constitute a model for the exploration of the origins of knowledge.

The *vivencia* is an inevitable experience that communicates us a precise content of sensations and perceptions, and that takes away the distance between what one senses and the observation of one's sensing. This experience implies a form of knowledge that, according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (12), possesses scientific legitimacy.

The *vivencia* can thus be considered as a direct form of knowledge, whose 'truth' does not pass through reason, and whose effects involve our whole being. In this connection Michel Maffesoli (13) asserts that to be interested in the *vivencia* means to enrich knowing, to show that a knowledge worthy of its name cannot but be organically related to its object, and to recognize finally that passion, besides having its place in social life, has it also in the analysis that intends to understand this life.

According to Eugenio Pintore (14), the central function of the *vivencia* in Biodanza enables the recovery of the experiential aspect of the cognitive relationship, overcoming the schism between experience and knowledge, and modifying the idea of what science is. Biodanza suggests an epistemology and a theory of knowledge that is absolutely innovative, if not downright revolutionary, and the centre of this 'revolution' concerns essentially the concept of *vivencia*.

An epistemology based on the *vivencia* can lead not only to an essential knowledge of reality, but also to wisdom, that consists in the relationship to the world, in the integration of being with the cosmos. In this way Biodanza inaugurates an extremely deep access to knowledge of oneself and of the world through the *vivencia*.

## Definition of Biodanza

Biodanza is a system of *human integration*, of *organic renewal*, of *affective re-education* and of *re-learning the original functions of life*. Its methodology consists in inducing integrating *vivencia* through music, singing, movement and situations of encountering in a group.

Music is a universal language and in Biodanza it has the essential function of evoking *vivencia*. The pieces of music used in Biodanza pass through a study of their emotional content, before being incorporated in the System, with the aim of evaluating the organic effects they promote and the type of *vivencia* they evoke.

Biodanza can not be practiced individually; it proves to be effective within an affectively integrated group, that offers various possibilities of communication and serves as 'protective container' for each one of the participants during the realization of the *vivencias*<sup>3</sup>.

Biodanza does not propose a model of behavior: each individual that enters into contact with him/herself in a process of integration offers the proper genetic model of vital responses.

The Biodanza System is open to the community: the notion of 'open system' implies forms of relationships with the external world that are characterized by tolerance in the confrontations with diversity. It therefore includes humanity as it is, without discrimination of race, sex, age, state of health, culture or availability of economic means.

## Human integration

A first approximation to the concept of 'integration' was made by the existential psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger (15). He asked himself to what degree his patients were integrated with themselves and not divided; up to what point could they become integrated with other persons in love, in sex, in affective communication, and up to what point could they integrate ecologically with

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<sup>3</sup> Plural; *vivencia* is the same word in singular and plural form in Spanish. In English the plural *vivencias* will be used when appropriate....



nature. He has furthermore studied the possibility for modern man to avoid excessive specialization and stagnation in a schema or style of life that is too rigid.

In Biodanza the process of integration is realized through the stimulation of the primordial functions of connection with life, that allow each individual to *become integrated with him/herself, with the species and with the universe.*

*Integration with oneself* consists in redeeming the psychophysical unity.

*Integration with our fellow (wo)man, our similar* consists in restoring the original connection with the species as a biological totality.

*Integration with the universe* consists in redeeming the primordial bond that unites man with nature and in recognizing oneself to be part of a larger whole, the cosmos.

To reawaken the archaic function of connection to life is one the most longed-for objectives of every therapy. This function, that permits the very existence of life, can become, through a process of internal maturation, a conscious attitude that enables the renewal of the contact with the primordial.

Plants, just as animals, develop this function fully. The vital energy guided by tropisms and biochemical affinities gives plants a precise contact with the manifestations of life that surround them, as if a thousand years old wisdom were flowing through their roots to orientate them towards the nutritious sources of the earth; also animals behave as though they perceive the energies, the calls and the signals of life in the breeze.

Man, on the other hand, through a long process of degradation of the instincts, has lost the function of connection with life, that in him has atrophied almost completely. One could therefore postulate that sickness results from the incapacity of establishing the connection with everything that is alive in the surrounding environment.

### The organic renewal

The study of living systems reveals a complex kind of functioning, within which multiple factors generate new solutions appropriate to the difficulties appearing every moment. In order to conserve the functional equilibrium, the organism sparks off adaptive reactions to the most varied biological situations.

Generally in living beings, and particularly in human beings, such solutions are not programmed in a definitive way, even though the genetic determination proposes them in a very specific way.

Biological systems possess the capacity for self-organization. Henri Atlan (16) discovered that the specificity of organisms is related to organizational principles and not to irreducible vital properties. Edgar Morin (17) asserts that the 'artificial machine', once constructed, can only degenerate, while the 'living machine', even if only temporarily, is not degenerative<sup>4</sup> and is suited for increasing its complexity.

Actually, the living organism possesses the capacity to renew itself and to establish new levels of equilibrium out of certain states of disorder. Organic renewal can be observed, for example, in the cases of 'rejuvenation' of elder persons provoked by a change in the style of life, in the restoration of the functional equilibrium after certain diseases and in some cases of spontaneous remission of cancer.

Organic renovation happens in Biodanza as an effect of the stimulation of homeostasis, or internal equilibrium, and through the reduction of factors of stress. The concept of homeostasis, put forward by Claude Bernard (18) and later defined by Walter Cannon (19), explains the constancy of the environment inside an organism:

'Homeostasis is the mechanism of self-regulation that enables the organism to maintain itself in a state of dynamic equilibrium, despite the oscillations of variable functions within tolerance limits.'

Organic renewal is stimulated in Biodanza by exercises that induces states of integrative trance and

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<sup>4</sup> Medical biological term for the worsening of the condition.

regression. In these states there is a partial reproduction of the conditions inherent in very early childhood. These have a relation with the cellular metabolism that is quicker in the little child, than in an adult; so, reproducing such conditions, the efficacy of the processes of organic repairing is increased.

### Affective re-education

Affectivity in modern man is often gravely disturbed. Already in childhood difficulties internal to relationships can be seen, above all with regard to the capacity to form affective bonds with other persons. Sometimes one finds precocious expressions of violence and destructivity. This phenomenon has repercussions in all levels of society: there is violence in families, in school, in cities, in politics, not to speak of war, supported by ever more sophisticated weapons. Notwithstanding the prodigious technological developments that have remarkably ameliorated the quality of life of a large part of humanity, it finds itself, from an affective point of view, in a condition of aridity and sterility, where love is the great absentee.

Biodanza sets as essential aim the stimulation of affectivity in human beings, through its application in the field of education right from the first years of life.

### The re-learning of the original life functions

This consists in the sensitization to the basic instincts, that constitute an expression of biological programming. Instinct is an innate behavior, that is hereditary, does not require learning and that manifests itself in the presence of specific stimuli. Its biological purpose is the adaptation to the environment, indispensable for the survival of the species, common to all living beings. There exists a cultural tendency to associate the instinct to irrationality; in spite of that, the instinctive function reveals a sort of biological wisdom of the species that has its own logic. Many instincts have their complementary opposite (for example hunger has as complementary opposite satiety). This bipolarity of the instincts is, in reality, an expression of the logic of life, permitting the resolution of problems of adaptation on a very large scale. The force of the instinctive impulse diminishes in proportion to how much it is satisfied. The self-regulation of the instincts has an organic basis formed by a neuroendocrine infrastructure of remarkable precision: that is the reason the liberation of the instincts does not form a danger, but on the contrary, reviving a coherence in one's own style of life with these innate impulses is a natural way of responding harmoniously to organic needs, and therefore, of maintaining health.

The instincts represent nature in us, and sensitizing oneself to them means reestablishing the bond between nature and culture.

Charles Darwin (20) defined a behavior as 'instinctive' when this expresses itself without previous experience and is repeated in a great number of individuals of the same species. According to William McDougall (21), instinct is an innate psychophysical disposition, that determines the perception in an individual of certain specific objects, and stimulates it to act in a precise way with respect to those. He also stated that all behaviors, including the social conduct of man, could be explained in terms of innate<sup>5</sup> impulses. The psychologists of the 'culturalist' school, instead, asserted that human behavior could be seriously influenced by learning, precisely, of cultural models. They were particularly influenced by the anthropological research of Margaret Mead (22), who observed remarkable differences in the behavior of various primitive tribes, in relation to the cultural context of each people, but without considering the universal instinctive basis of human behavior. The research of modern ethologists like Konrad Lorenz (23), Nikolaas Tinbergen (24), and Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (25) has reasserted, through accurate observations, that the instincts possess a powerful force that manifests itself in behavior, even though learning and experience modify such impulses in various ways.

'Reconciliation with the inner parents', 'return to the origin', 'recuperating the free child',

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5 Inborn.

'connecting oneself with the cosmic energy', 'restoring the function of orgasm' are some of the proposals of the modern intuition in psychotherapy. Such semantics imply the recognition of the importance of the primordial and of the idea that health be related to the original source of life.

Beyond euphemisms, I believe that we should find the significance of the instinct again and reestablish its psychotherapeutic, anthropological and educational value. There exists a sort of widespread fear for this proposal and a hostile attitude towards whatever manifestation of the primitive. My approach is aimed at freeing our 'internal jungle': I consider that it is necessary to look at the manifestations of instinct from a poetic perspective of the exaltation of life and of the natural grace derived from it.

The development of the human genetic potentialities in the context of an affectively integrated group stimulates the courage and the joy to live.

The term 'Biodanza'

The term 'Biodanza' was created after a vast semantic elaboration. A new discipline had been born with unprecedented characteristics, for which there existed no appropriate term. It was not an interdisciplinary approach that would have linked the dance to anthropological, psychological or philosophical contents, and for which I could have used the terms 'anthropodanza', 'sociodanza' or 'psychodanza'.

I had employed the concept Psychodanza at an early moment, but this had the grave defect of involving a split. The prefix 'psycho' actually comes from the Greek *psyché*, which signifies soul, so that Psychodanza would have been the 'dance of the soul'. The term implicitly contained the Platonic split between body and soul. It was necessary to reestablish the original concept of dance in its widest sense: as movement of life, that could nevertheless not be compared to ballet or another form of structured dance, just as it could not be assimilated to a particular form of psychotherapy.

This idea clearly came close to the concept of 'dancing life' proposed by Roger Garaudy (26). Based on this reflection, I decided in 1976 to call the method I had devised "Biodanza": the prefix 'bio' comes from the Greek *bios*, which means 'life'. The primordial sense of the word 'danza', is 'natural movement', connected to emotion and full of significances. The metaphor had been formulated 'Biodanza, the dance of life'.

The areas of application

Through the use of different methodological schemas Biodanza can be applied to three types of human groups with their own peculiarities.

1 *Specific groups with similar characteristics*, such as children, adolescents, adults and elderly persons; pregnant women (for pregnant women and children, methodological schemas are applied aimed essentially at prevention); groups of couples; family groups with the participation of parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

2 *Heterogeneous groups of adults with problems* such as uncertainty, want of affectivity, difficulty in establishing deep bonds, stress, lack of vital impetus, psychosomatic symptoms.

3 *Groups of existential rehabilitation* for individuals affected by disturbances of motor skills or of moods.

Action on the healthy part of the individual

The diversity of problems and clinical descriptions that Biodanza helps to resolve is due to the singular characteristic of its methodology that distinguishes it and that consists in action on the healthy part of the individual.

Traditional psychotherapies have been developed on the basis of an interest in symptomatology: they try to describe and analyze the sick part of the individual. Psychiatry, apart from some cases, has never seriously taken into consideration the possibility of curing sick persons through the stimulation of their healthy parts. Biodanza, on the contrary, acts precisely on those parts (the

outlines of creativity of an individual, that what remains of her enthusiasm, his hidden expressive capacities, her repressed need for affection, his sincerity), and is moved by a sort of “will of the light to illuminate the insistent dark” (27): if it is possible to let the ‘luminous part’ of a sick person grow, the ‘dark part’, represented by the symptoms, tends to be reduced.

Human life is something warm and musical, something magnetic that searches for contact. That is what Antonin Artaud (28) referred to when commenting on the vision of the cosmos of the Mexican Indians:

For them life is a murmuring fireplace, it is a fire that resounds; and the resonance of living reaches the whole range of the diapason.

According to Novalis (29), the mystical German poet who announced the possibility of a ‘musical sociology’, man potentially possesses all the harmonies and resonances of the universe, but lives in the modern world oppressed by rigid schemas; he has lost the harmony, he is a distraught being. To reawaken the ‘musical human being’ that lies in each of us could be the program for the future<sup>6</sup>

### **A system of affective reeducation for those ‘sick by civilization’ (30)**

Juan José López Ibor (31) pointed out the existence of a close connection between the ‘styles of living’ and the ‘styles of become sick’, which makes it possible to obtain a diagnosis and a prognosis of the pathology of an individual precisely through the phenomenology of his style of life. This psycho-anthropological vision of medicine could be formulated in one phrase: “Tell me how you live and I will tell you what will make you ill.” Thus, for example, it is not difficult to predict a heart disease in a person that lives ‘always on the run’, or a gastric ulcer<sup>7</sup> in a competitive person constantly looking for successes.

From a psychological point of view Biodanza has the effect of reducing anxiety, because the stress produced by emotional conflicts tends to diminish by specific exercises that give rise to integrative *vivencia* supporting the organic self-regulation.

The therapeutic action of Biodanza implies the awareness that our style of life can lead to specific pathologies; in this sense, Biodanza can be considered a system of affective reeducation for those ‘sick by civilization’.

### Physiological effects

The articulation of the new brain and the old brain

During the course of biological evolution, the brain has perfected itself beginning from two small bulbs that united to constitute the first outline of the cerebral hemispheres.

The brain has acquired an extraordinary volume and differentiation in the human species. The cerebral cortex, formed by around 10 billion neurons, is pleated, and forms separate convolutions of fissures and furrows. Situated in various regions are structures specialized in the perception of the external world, in language, in memory, in sensitivity and in motor skills. One knows, for example, that along the frontal convolution in the central fissure, originally called ‘fissure of Rolando’<sup>8</sup>, lies the high command that directs our movements, so each cell can order the contraction of a specific muscular fiber. It is known furthermore that on the other side of the same furrow (posterior

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<sup>6</sup> Here the citation from Rolando's letter, 1952? to make the book give a more rounded view of Rolando's lifework.

<sup>7</sup> Stomach disease

<sup>8</sup> After Luigi Rolando (Turin, 1773–1831) an Italian anatomist. As a University of Turin professor, he devoted his life in studying brain anatomy. The Substantia gelatinosa of Rolando and the fissure of Rolando are named for him.

convolution) lies the area of general, deep and tactile sensitivity. A lesion of the left parietal region provokes an aphasia, an incapacity to speak; that is why this region has been designated as the 'centre of speech'. The zone called 'area of vision', is situated in the occipital region.

Studies on the complexity of the cerebral circuits have brought out the involvement of other points of the brain in specific functions; so, in reality, one sees, speaks, and listens with the whole brain. In the act of caressing with the hand, for example, participate not just the tactile and sensitive motor areas that lie inside the central fissure, but also the internal structures of the brain, that are the seats of the instincts and the emotions.

#### The neurodynamic basis of emotion

The American school of neurophysiology has worked intensely at the study of the neurodynamic basis of emotion. The participation of the limbic system and, in particular, of the hypothalamus is very important in the emotional behavior. The frontotemporal region of the limbic cortex is, according to P.D. Mac Lean (1), the seat of oral activity and of self-preservation, while the posterior regions (cingulate gyrus and hippocampus) are relevant for sexual behavior and for the affective components.

The whole limbic region thus represents the neurodynamic base of the instincts, of the emotions and of the 'vital tone' (euphoric, depressive), which is inhibited, controlled and modulated from the cerebral cortex.

#### The importance of the functional polarity of the brain

J. Rof Carballo (2) underlines the importance of the functional polarity of the brain: the cerebral and neo-encephalic cortex inhibits the group of structures that constitute the primitive brain, where the automatic, visceral functions of affectivity, sexual desire, hunger and the other instincts are located. This complex, that is separated from the other lobes by a fissure, has been named 'old brain' or 'primitive brain'.

The cerebral cortex integrates the perception of the external world: it is the seat of thinking, of consciousness and of reflection (these functions are not located in a well circumscribed area), it controls voluntary motor activity and coordinates the visceral activity. The cerebral cortex functions of moderation, of inhibition (restraining) and modulation are well-known.

#### The neurological connection between the new brain and the old brain

The connection between the new brain and the old brain is established during the first months of life. This delicate process of neurological articulation<sup>9</sup> happens, according to J. Rof Carballo, on the condition that the child feels protected, certain of the love of the mother; otherwise the telencephalic<sup>10</sup> formations (of defense) of its brain become activated, to the detriment of the fundamental capacity of establishing affective bonds, which remains inhibited, and this can lead to permanent and irreversible damage. There is research, among which that of René Spitz (3), that tends to confirm this hypothesis.

The smile of a child when it is three months old, reveals that the articulation between the new and the old brain has been accomplished well. According to J. Rof Carballo, the smile is the first psychosocial reflex of the child.

These brief considerations permit us to understand the various levels of neurological participation involved in dance, in which certain movements are ordered from the cortex, perfectly controlled by the will and guided by thought, while others are bound to impulses and become impregnated with affectivity and emotion.

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9 To form a joint.

10 Telencephalon refers to the embryonic structure, from which the mature cerebrum develops.

### Stimulation of the right cerebral hemisphere

The current researches on the cerebral functions indicate a difference of activity between the two cerebral hemispheres connected to each other by the so-called 'corpus callosum'. Some of the research tends to demonstrate that up to a certain point the two hemispheres function as two separate brains and intervene in behavior in a different way.

The left hemisphere is the seat of language as well as of all the operations that require a linear ordering in time; also analytic thought and the cognitive and rational functions depend on this hemisphere. Associated with the left lobe are logical operations, mathematics, symbolic activity, metonymy<sup>11</sup>, the capacity to understand the significance, the content, consequential thought, analysis and a good part of consciousness. The left hemisphere tends to discriminate, to signal the differences rather than to perceive the similarities.

The right hemisphere is specialized in processes and orderings that are not linear, but spatial: for example geometry, morphology, the non-verbal, tactile functions, musical consciousness, artistic perception, similarity, the analogy, the icon, simultaneity, the significant, poetry, the form, the synthesis, the unconscious. The right hemisphere is therefore the seat of the functions that unify and integrate, the location of the dissolution of differences, of holistic and Gestalt perception. Examples of activities where this hemisphere predominates are listening to music, modeling plastic materials, and dancing.

### The action of Biodanza on the right cerebral hemisphere

According to these criteria, occidental culture has stimulated the development of the functions of the left cerebral hemisphere. Still recent is the period in which it was maintained that there had to be a predominance of this hemisphere over the right one; in reality, this is of a cultural nature. Biodanza instead stimulates mainly the right cerebral hemisphere, because it uses a non-verbal methodology, has an integrating function, stimulates the tactile sensitivity and the musical perception, so as to compensate for the disequilibrium incited by a culture that has a marked preference for the cognitive, rational and analytic functions, at the expense of the unconscious, unifying and integrating ones.

### The integrating-adaptive limbic-hypothalamic system

There already exists a wealth of knowledge on the relationship between the nervous system and patterns of human behavior. This has enabled me to establish operative relations between the human organism taken as a whole and Biodanza, considered as an integrating system at the origin of new patterns of behavior that respond to basic vital needs.

The coordination between the biological functions of the organism and the demands of survival has deteriorated with the acquisition of cultural patterns of behavior far removed from the needs intrinsic to life. The adaptation to these needs occurs through the integrating-adaptive limbic-hypothalamic system, whose functions correspond to the articulation of the new brain and the old brain.

Actually this system includes diencephalic<sup>12</sup>, subcortical and cortical structures, that carry out functions for regulating the internal milieu through integration with the autonomic nervous system and the neuroendocrine system. At the same time, these structures operate the selection and strengthening of the appropriate responses to the stimuli coming from the external environment in relation with self-preservation and the preservation of the species.

The integrating-adaptive limbic-hypothalamic system is closely linked to the expression of the

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<sup>11</sup> The use of a single characteristic or name of an object to identify an entire object or related object.

<sup>12</sup> From diencephalon: posterior part of the forebrain that connects the midbrain with the cerebral hemispheres, includes the basal ganglia, the thalamus and hypothalamus. Also called the betweenbrain.

instincts, of the *vivencias*, of the emotions and of the affections. It contributes to the consolidation of patterns of behavior and has an influence on the cerebral cortex through its neocortical connections. The cerebral cortex (neocortex) in its turn possesses inhibiting functions that act on this system and can modulate behavior through conscious stimuli.

The principal functions

In the following a list is supplied of some of the principle functions the integrating-adaptive limbic-hypothalamic system participates in:

- Control of the autonomic nervous system.
- Regulation of hunger and satiety.
- Regulation of diuresis.<sup>13</sup>
- Participation in the metabolism of proteins and carbohydrates.
- Intervention in immune reactions.
- Heat regulation.
- Cardiovascular regulation.
- Regulation of wake-sleep.
- Participation in the regulation of biological rhythms (genesis and regulation of rhythms).
- Participation in the sphere of action of sexual behavior.
- Production of hypophyseal gonadotropin.
- Control of the beginning of puberty.
- Participation in the expression of the emotions.
- Aggressive reactions.
- Determination of the attention.
- Influence on short-term memory.
- Participation in language and verbal communication.

### **The action of Biodanza on the integrating-adaptive limbic-hypothalamic system**

The *vivencias* have their physiological representation in the limbic-hypothalamic system. The limbic lobule has two important components. They are the hippocampus and the cerebral amygdala. Mystic experiences and states of ecstasy have been verified thanks to the stimulation of the upper half part of this lobule.

The hypothalamus is considered one the regulating centers of the emotions of anger and fear, of sexual desire, and of the instincts of hunger and of care for offspring. Experiments conducted on animals indicate that the stimulation of certain areas of the hypothalamus and of certain nuclei of the mesencephalon<sup>14</sup> provoke sensation of pleasure.

W.R. Hess(5) discovered in such locations the control centers of digestive, sexual and excretory processes.

So the limbic-hypothalamic system comprises the neurological formations that correspond to the sphere of flexible (adaptive) behavior, to instincts, to *vivencias* and to affectivity. These neurological formations are inhibited, controlled and modulated by the impulses of the cerebral cortex.

In Biodanza a temporary diminution of the inhibiting functions of the cerebral cortex is induced by means of either the temporary suspension of verbal language (remaining silent, except during particular exercises), or the momentary slowing-down of visual activity (through exercises carried out with eyes closed) and of voluntary motor skills (through exercises carried out with very slow movements), so as to permit a greater expression of the limbic-hypothalamic impulses.

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13 (Med.) excessive urination.

14 "Midbrain"

## The autonomic nervous system

The autonomic nervous system is the part of the nervous system that is in charge of the various involuntary functions serving the conservation of life: the activity of the heart, of the lungs, of the digestive system, of the sexual organs and the motility of the blood vessels. It regulates each of these functions and coordinates them, maintaining the equilibrium needed for the normal execution of the somatic activity and its relation with psychic activity. This explains why certain emotional factors can provoke an excitation of the autonomic nervous system and also unbalance its equilibrium. Alterations of which are at the origin of psychosomatic ailments.

The autonomic nervous system is constituted by two sub-systems (the orthosympathetic, or simply sympathetic, and the para-sympathetic) that simultaneously innervate each of the organs on which they exert a complementary and balanced action, by means of their respective neurotransmitters (noradrenaline and acetylcholine).

## The action of Biodanza on the autonomic nervous system

In broad terms, the sympathetic system acts by stimulating the circulation, which augments the cardiac<sup>15</sup> rhythm and the blood pressure, predisposing the organism to reactions of defence, for example, and making possible responses to emergency situations. The parasympathetic, instead, works as an inhibitor of these functions.

These actions are reversed in the digestive system, on which the parasympathetic operates as a stimulus and the sympathetic as an inhibitor.

There exists an alternation of action between these two systems: when one system is in activity, the other one is in rest. It is therefore only possible to stimulate by the exercises of Biodanza one of the two systems at a time.

The exercises of Biodanza that strengthen the sense of identity activate the sympathetic system, while those that induce trance activate the parasympathetic; the practice of Biodanza, consequently, contributes to the stabilization of the equilibrium of the autonomic nervous system.

Music of *joyful and euphoric rhythm* and the dances realized with it have a stimulating effect on the sympathetic system and can produce various effects, among which:

augmentation of the cardiac rhythm (tachycardia<sup>16</sup>); elevation of the arterial pressure; vasoconstriction<sup>17</sup> of the area that includes the digestive, respiratory and urogenital system; flow of the blood towards the muscles that have to enter into action; bronchodilation<sup>18</sup> to permit a better ventilation.

Music that is *slow and sweet*, dances with slowed-down movements, states of integrating trance and regression, on the contrary, activate the parasympathetic system producing various effects, among which:

a diminution of the cardiac rhythm;

an augmentation of the secretion of the lacrimal<sup>19</sup> and salivary glands; an accumulation of reserves;

a predisposition towards sleep and rest;

an activation of eros in general.

Considering these various actions, one can comprehend the effect of the harmonization of the equilibrium of the autonomic nervous system that is obtained through the exercises of Biodanza, when they are applied in the appropriate way.

## Integration of the ergotrope and trophotrope functions

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15 heart

16 A rapid heart rate

17 Constriction of blood vessels

18 An expansion of the air passages through the bronchi of the lungs

19 tear



W.R. Hess (5) proposed to distinguish two autonomic nervous states of the organism: one related to *activity and vigilance*, the other to the condition of *rest and sleep*.

The first state corresponds to the activation of the sympathetic system, that he termed 'ergotrope' (from the Greek *ergon*, 'work', activity, and *tropé*, 'change, modification'); the second state corresponds to the activation of the parasympathetic system, that he termed 'trophotrope' (from the Greek *trofé*, 'nourishment' and *tropé*).

Ergotrope activity is linked to the state of vigilance and the stimulation of the mechanism of fight and flight, while trophotrope activity is linked to the state of relaxation, to protection against stress, and to the stimulation of the mechanisms of rest, biological restoration and organic repairing.

The style of life conditioned by our culture stimulates mostly the ergotrope functions to the detriment of the trophotrope ones, inducing a disequilibrium of the autonomic nervous system; Biodanza, therefore, reestablishes the lost equilibrium.

## Table 1

### Hypothesis on the correlation between the exercises of Biodanza and the psycho-neuro-endocrine-immune system

There exists a perfect organic relation between the psyche, the nervous system, the endocrine glands and the immune system.

The psycho-neuro-endocrine-immune system constitutes a recent model for interpretation of the functional unity of the organism.

The relation between the nervous system and the endocrine system through the hypothalamus-hypophysis connection has already been known for some time, while one did not know about the existence of that between the psycho-neuro-endocrine and the immune system. Nowadays one knows that this last relation is realized by means of specific neurotransmitters (for example endorphin, enkephalin and dynorphin) and hormones (for example somatostatin, corticosteroids, prolactin, and growth hormones).

The central nervous system carries out functions of relation with the external world, and the autonomic nervous system regulates visceral activity.

Certain effects provoked by the *vivencia* of Biodanza (for example stimulating vital motivations, cenesthetic pleasure, eroticism, or inducing tranquility) are analogous to those produced by the actions of some neurotransmitters and hormones.

In psychoneuroimmunology it has been verified that dopamine has the effect of elevating the mood and stimulating erotism, that the endorphins provoke cenesthetic pleasure, that noradrenalin<sup>20</sup> incites reactions in emergency situations, that acetylcholine induces relaxation and promotes processes of organic repairing, and that GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid) acts as a tranquilizer.

These relations between neurotransmitters and psychological states suggest the hypothesis that the intense *vivencias* of Biodanza, induced by specific exercises, can provoke 'dopaminergic' effects of good moods, 'endorphinic' effects of corporeal pleasure, and 'GABA' effects of tranquility.

In my opinion, this hypothesis possesses heuristic value and should be examined experimentally.

The profound knowledge of such correlations would permit the induction of processes of integration on deep levels by means of Biodanza.

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20 Norepinephrine (U.S.)

## The biocentric principle

Antecedents: the universal principles of what is alive

The progress of biology gives new life to the ethical and philosophical conceptions that look worn-out in the labyrinth of the ideologies. It is possible to find inspiration in the search for the secret of life and references that can offer new perspectives to the destiny of man. Here some fundamental principles for the comprehension of living beings will be analyzed. Such principles are born from the discoveries made in the field of genetic biology, in the science of evolution, in the comparative study of morphological structures, in the theory of systems of regulation and in the biochemical study of memory.

### Biological filiation<sup>21</sup> of what is alive

There are about a hundred known and classified chemical elements present in nature; of these, about twenty-four intervene in the biological processes of living organisms. Some of these are present in a relevant way, of others instead one finds only traces.

In Table 2, the percentage of six chemical elements present in living organisms is put in relation to estimates of the composition of interstellar frost and of the volatile fractions of comets. The great similarity that exist between these compositions could perhaps support the hypothesis of the extraterrestrial origin of the vital organic molecules of life.

	<b>Bacteria</b>	<b>Mammals</b>	<b>Interstellar frost</b>	<b>Volatile fraction of comets</b>
Hydrogen	63.00%	61.00%	55.00%	50.00%
Oxygen	29.00%	26.00%	30.00%	31.00%
Carbon	6.40%	10.50%	13.00%	10.00%
Nitrogen	1.40%	2.40%	1.00%	2.70%
Phosphor	0.12%	0.13%	-	-
Sulfur	0.06%	0.13%	0.80%	0.30%
Calcium	-	0.23%	-	-

*Table 2.* Comparison between the chemical composition of living being and that of some parts of the universe (Adapted from A.H. Delsemme *Les cometes et l'origine de la vie*, 'L'astronomie', 94-293, 1981)

From the precursor molecules<sup>22</sup> present in the environment, like carbon dioxide, water and nitrogen, some organisms synthesize the primordial organic molecules, from which all the other derive: the proteins, the nucleic acids, the polysaccharides and the lipids<sup>23</sup>, that are common to all living organisms, from bacteria to man. By subsequent transformations these form the molecular

21 The condition of being a child of a specified parent; lineage, ancestry.

22 Molecule that precedes the formation of another molecule along a metabolic trajectory.

23 Any of a group of organic compounds including the fats, oils, waxes, sterols, and triglycerides. Lipids are characterized by being insoluble in water, and account for most of the fat present in the human body.

complexes, the organelles, and finally the cells: the morphological and functional units of life. Thus living matter is capable of organizing itself autonomously, beginning from simple molecules, by means of reactions of biosynthesis and decomposition.

#### Replication

Living matter has the capacity to replicate itself based on a prearranged code: the genetic code. The information contained therein replicates itself and forms proteins, the compounds largely responsible for the morphological and physiological characteristics of living organism. Except for the case of some viruses, the genetic information is contained in the molecule of deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA, a compound found almost exclusively in the nucleus of the cells and the carrier of hereditary factors; it consists of a double helix formed by a structure of sugars, phosphates, and nitrogenous bases<sup>24</sup>. These bases are arranged in series of three, and there exists a characteristic sequence for each species. The genetic information contained in the DNA is transmitted from generation to generation in order to perpetuate the species.

The genetic message contained in DNA is first transcribed onto a molecule of ribonucleic acid or RNA, and subsequently translated into a sequence of amino acids, that form the proteins. The ribonucleic acid or RNA is a composite that is in the nucleus or in the cytoplasm of the cells, whose principle function is protein synthesis. The genetic message is read in the DNA through the series formed by three nitrogenous bases, so there exist 'vocabularies' of the genetic code to identify each of the amino acids that form the proteins. Each series of three consecutive nitrogenous bases equates a specific amino acid, which permits the supposition that the code is universal.

It has been proved that the proteins of all living organisms are formed by amino acids that have the same chemical constitution. Furthermore, the sequences of amino acids performing equal functions are the same even in very different organisms, so one can deduce relations of kinship. The chemical metabolic reactions by means of which living organisms convert energy into forms they can use, are extraordinarily similar in all living beings. This functional similarity demonstrates that in spite of the apparently big differences, living beings obey a basic biochemical plan, that is common to all forms of life.

#### Self-organization

One of the essential characteristics of life is self-organization. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (2) have carried out in-depth studies of autonomy in vital processes. According to them living beings are characterized by the capacity to 'produce themselves' continuously. Maturana has named this 'autopoiesis'. This reveals a biological autonomy according to which cells seem to 'know' how to move in time and in space to generate the various organs and how to carry out the vital functions. Cells and tissues possess a sort of 'cognition'<sup>25</sup> that permits them to organize themselves. I have proposed the concept of the 'vital unconscious' (3) to refer to this 'cognitive' process of self-organization of living beings.

#### Reproductive invariance

Jacques Monod (4) has defined this characteristic of living beings as the capacity to reproduce a structure with a high degree of order. The contents of genetic information of each species, transmitted from generation to generation, assure the conservation of the specific structural norm. Each species has a project that corresponds to a given quantity of information that has to be expressed in order that the organic structures of that species fulfill their functions. It is this fact that determines the powerful stability of each species within a specific pattern. In multicellular organisms each cell possesses all the genetic information: this repetition secures the permanent process of renovation and the conservation of the organism.

#### Teleonomy

Teleonomy consists in the hypothesis that there is a cosmic project of life. Living beings realize a project that expresses itself through the various vital functions. The diverse components of an organism pursue particular ends that are part of a unique primitive goal: the conservation of the species and its multiplication.

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24 nucleobases

25 knowledge

## Selective evolution

Living organisms follow different evolutionary lines, in harmony with the conditions of the environment. One can say that the environment is the structure of chance: while some species, as for example insects and certain mollusks, remain within the same structural pattern for millions of years, others modify themselves and improve their biological functions; and there are others that fail in their process of adaptation and become extinct. The thesis maintained by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (5), according to which living organisms tend towards an evolutionary improvement, is seriously questionable today. It is true, nevertheless, that some functions have evolved remarkably in higher mammals and in particular in man.

The 'selective structure' of the individual enters into contact with the environment through mechanisms of affinity and rejection. This structure, that is very stable and derived partially from learning, determines to a large degree the relationship of the individual with its environment.

## Differentiation

The species are surprising not only by their strong morphological stability, but also by their diversity. The processes of evolutionary differentiation constitute one of the most extraordinary expressions of the multiple facets of the creative power of life. Not only do the species become different from each other, but also each individual within the same species shows very diverse characteristics that make it a unique being, a real and proper 'biological exemplar'.

Within each species, the individual variations are produced through combinations of the genetic patrimony, guaranteed by sexuality. Cases of genetic mutations are extraordinarily frequent, but few of these perpetuate, due to the strong coherence and proper stability, as we have seen, of the teleonomy. The process of individual differentiation is determined by the possibilities of development offered by the environment and by selections brought about by chance; human potentialities can therefore be stimulated in an extraordinary way through systems of development and integration, like Biodanza.

## Memory

One of the most astonishing phenomena of living systems is formed by the processes of codification, of decoding, of storing and evocation of information. This evocation is chemically structured through the ribonucleic acid (RNA). Memory is at the basis of each learning process, because such processes imply a biochemical modification of the organism. Instinct can be considered as the 'memory of the species': a biological expression related to the teleonomy, in the sense that it is destined to preserve life.

## Self-regulation

Living beings are self-regulating systems whose automatic functions have their origin in the perfection of homeostatic systems. Thought of, broadly speaking, as mechanisms of internal equilibrium charged with conserving organic unity, these are of a very high degree of precision.

In the higher mammals and, in particular, in man, there exist other non self-regulating systems that often seriously interfere with the functional unity. In a certain sense, the autonomy of man, his liberty, and capacity for choice constitute a risk for his survival. The disorder of the ecological equilibrium created by human society is an example of that.

## The biocentric principle

The theory of Biodanza is structured on the basis of an axiom that I have formulated conceptually as the 'biocentric principle'. Its direct reference is life, and it is inspired by the universal laws that preserve living systems and make their evolution possible .

The biocentric principle establishes a way of feeling and of thinking that takes the *vivencia* as existential reference. It springs therefore from a proposal prior to culture and feeds on the cosmic wisdom that generates processes that are alive. Such a proposal may appear surprising, because we are used to employing deductive logic: that is to say we are accustomed to drawing predicative<sup>26</sup> conclusions from certain facts. The method used here instead is not predicative: it proceeds from the

26 i.e. something is valid or not valid; true or false.

unavoidable fact of the existence of life 'here and now' to ask oneself about the origin of the universe. My approach to knowledge starts from the *vivencia* of life and from the certainty that this *vivencia* provides as initial datum.

The 'biocentric principle' that I formulated in 1970, is inspired by the thought that the Universe is organized as a function of life. This means that life is an essential condition in the genesis of the universe. According to this approach, life would be a project-force that leads, over millions of years, the evolution of the universe.

Various scientists think the other way around; that is to say, that life is the occasional result of the combining of atomic elements; this approach seems naïve. The possibility that a living organism generates itself by the fortuitous combination of elements, without a prior organizing matrix, is unthinkable.

Not in millions of years, could chance combine efficiently the atomic elements to create an organism, even if it were a very simple one.

The relations of matter-energy transformation are evolutionary and constitute various levels of life's integration. Matter-energy can only create a living organism when the cosmic dust obeys a previous matrix of organization.

All things that exist, elements, stars, plants, animals and human beings are components of a "greater living system". "The universe exists because life exists", and not "life exists because the universe exists". The evolution of the universe is, in reality, the evolution of life and culminates in the phenomenon of consciousness.

Teilhard de Chardin proposes that the universe follows a teleonomic program directed towards the "Point Omega". A state of supreme perfection. This idea has been very controversial, but represents a milestone in the conception of a cosmic program.

Eminent scientists like Paul Davis<sup>27</sup>, Carl Sagan<sup>28</sup>, Fred Hoyle<sup>29</sup> and Leo Villaverde<sup>30</sup>, have arrived at the conclusion that the universe is a gigantic living hologram.

The biochemist (cosmologist) Christian de Duve<sup>31</sup>, who received the Nobel Prize for Medicine, suggests that "life is a cosmic imperative" in his book "Vital dust".

Ilya Prigogine<sup>32</sup>, Nobel Prize in Physics, has developed the Chaos Theory, stating that the processes that generate life are initiated in the "dissipative zones", faraway from systems of order.

The dissipative zones constitute conditions of fluidity and dynamism that facilitate processes of organization (this process depends on the initial conditions), furthermore they constitute the expression of preexisting matrices of life.

I think that life is a "biological attractor" in the midst of the cosmic chaos. The concept "attractor", described by E. N. Lorenz in the Theory of Chaos, refers to an extraneous force that appears in some dynamic systems and that has the power to organize the elements. A given system can have various attractors, each of which has its proper valley of attraction in space.

The reign of life encompasses everything that exists, from the neutrinos until the quasars, from the stones up to the most subtle thoughts. Every expression, each movement, every dance is a "living act".

The disconnection of men from the cosmic matrix, through history, has generated destructive cultural forms. The body-soul and the men-nature dissociations have led to the profound crisis in which we are living. When we become conscious of what "the miracle of life" that animates us means, an absolute sense of appreciation for existence is revealed to us.

If we take as point of departure the intrinsic propositions that surge from the act of living and from the communion with living beings, we have to abandon with absolute decisiveness any type of cultural foundation based on money and on murder; thus, for example, the whole judicial delirium

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27 Paul Davies, ...bohm? *The Cosmic Blueprint*, 1987.

28 I.S. Shklovskii and Carl Sagan, *Intelligent Life in the Universe*, Random House, New York, 1966 (republished 1998)

29 Fred Hoyle, *The intelligent universe*, 1983.

30 Leo Villaverde, *Biocosmos: El universo vivo.*, Editorial Cultrix, Sao Paulo, Brasil.

31 Christian de Duve, *Vital dust: Life as a cosmic imperative*, 1996.

32 P. Glansdorff, I. Prigogine, *Thermodynamic Theory of Structure, Stability and Fluctuations*, Wiley, London, 1971.

in the East and in the West, with its codes and tribunals based on ideologies and not on life; wars are also the expression of this collective psychosis that denies the sacredness of life.

The “biocentric principle” situates the respect for life as centre and point of departure of all the disciplines and human behaviors; it reestablishes the notion of the sacredness of life. Culture must be organized according to life; our cultural forms are anti-life.

The new unified science of life is based on a fusion of all disciplines of knowledge: Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, Sociology, Ethology, etcetera. The superior phenomena of the mind, like learning, the creative function, affectivity and conscience, must be included in this real vision of the phenomenon of life.

Zibgnow Wollkovsky<sup>33</sup> affirms that living organisms are energetic fields of great complexity, and that the study of them should not only cover the chemical and atomic processes, but all the manifestations of life in a vision of the whole.

Our epistemological approach starts from the perception of the “Supreme Unity of Life”, in an implicated program that guides all of life.

Without reluctance I share the approach of David Bohm<sup>34</sup>, who states: “The real data of science only seem to make sense on some sort of implied or transcendental foundation, underlying the explicit data.”

The perception of the “Supreme Unity” experienced by the mystics, is perfectly coherent with this vision. In states of expansion of consciousness we can discover this founding reality and penetrate into the roots of a “Culture of life”.

The proposition of the “biocentric principle” is to put “life at the centre” of all human activities, in particular in sciences like Education, Psychotherapy, Economics and Jurisprudence. It is, perhaps the most appropriate approach for thinking about education in a context of wholeness.

The appearance of consciousness and of love in the evolution of life, constitute two peak events that have the power to impel new evolutionary forms of the human species. For that reason I believe it is necessary to make some comments about the evolution of life and its profound manifestations. This approach can give an original point of departure to education.

The current studies about the evolution of life have demonstrated that there is an ostensive progress in the morphogenetic and mental strategies of various species; when an organism does not evolve, it disappears from the biosphere.

Even though some biological functions are more perfect in animals than in man, the evolutionary level – that culminates in the erect position, in language, in consciousness and in love – seems to be of a different excellency due to these characteristics that confer a great creative autonomy with respect to any other animal programming.

Our approach to the enigma of life is intuitive, in a way like the understanding of a work of art. The aesthetic perception is indemonstrable and inaccessible to rational cognition, it is a matter of a vivencia and, therefore, a personal experience.

Science has acquired access to the knowledge of some biological processes of immense complexity and velocity, such processes of organization leave the impression that their components have a “consciousness of their own”.

## **A paradigm for the human sciences**

The “biocentric principle” is the paradigm that can serve as foundation for the human sciences of the future: Education, Psychology, Jurisprudence, Medicine and Psychotherapy.

The “biocentric principle” places the respect for life as center and guiding principle for all human disciplines and behaviors. (2x...)

The sentiment of love we could define as: “the supreme experience of contact with life”. Through Biodanza we reach the original source of the impulses of life. Dance, love and life are terms that allude to the phenomenon of “cosmic uniqueness”. The creative nucleus of the culture of the third

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33 Zibgnow Wollkovsky, Planeta no. 177, Editora Trés

34 David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 1980, Routledge, reprint 2002.

millennium is being born with the restitution of the sacredness of life.

From the “biocentric principle” we can conceive of the universe as a gigantic living hologram; the experience of mystic unity and supreme identity is perfectly meaningful/valid/sound for us. In this founding vivencia we can discover the “roots of a culture based on life”.

The actual codes of justice, that are based on private property and not on life, are the expression of a collective psychosis. Culture should be organized in service of life, our actual cultural forms are anti-life. The “biocentric principle”, therefore, arises from a proposal prior to culture and draws upon the impulses that generate processes that are alive.

The biocentric principle puts its interest in a universe understood as a living system. The realm of life embraces much more than the plants, the animals and man. Everything that exists, from neutrinos to quasars, from the fine stone to the most subtle thought, is a part of this prodigious living system. According to the biocentric principle, the universe exists because life exists, and not the other way around.

Life is not the consequence of atomic and chemical processes, but the guiding structure of the construction of the universe. The relations of matter-energy transformation are stages of integration of life. The evolution of the universe is really the evolution of life.

Traditional thinking holds that life is born from the various combinations of chemical elements at certain appropriate conditions of temperature and pressure, within an environment where water, carbon, phosphorus, sodium and other elements were already present. To the contrary, the universe as a whole can be considered as an organism creating life. Within this organism life expresses itself with an infinity of forms.

The strategy of existential transformation changes from the biocentric principle: the parameters of cosmic life become the parameters of *our* style of life. In other words, our behaviors get organized as expressions of life, and not as means to reach external political or socioeconomic goals. These develop to create more life within life. If the social and cultural situations are adverse, these can be changed not with the help of ideologies and political actions, but by restoring at every moment in our existence the conditions so that life be protected.

The creative nucleus of the culture of the third millennium is ready to be born with the subordination of physics to biology. From the moment in which we presume that life does not come from an evolutionary process of inanimate matter, but that matter, apparently inanimate, gets organized as a result of an omnipresent living system, the approach of these sciences is radically inverted.

### A starting point

The biocentric principle is thus a starting point for structuring the new perceptions and sciences of the future in a modality referring to existence: priority attributed to what is alive; physical determinism considered illusory; progressive abandonment of linear thought in favor of topological perceptions and of the poetics of similarities; disqualification of philosophies that search for a single truth, because behind each truth another one hides itself.

The intellectual habits of selection, evaluation and judgements applied to objects and phenomena will be substituted by perceptions of all expressions and movements as languages of what is alive. The question of the ‘why’ yields its place in favor of the ‘how’. So what counts is the presence of the

living being manifesting itself in the midst of the infinite circuits of a reality illuminated from inside, because the meaning of life is in life itself and leaves aside the elaboration of extrinsic significances. So, the phenomenon of consciousness, as it manifests itself in man, will not limit itself anymore to taking into consideration the multiple reactions of living entities corresponding to anthropological parameters. So as physics finds its place in the body of biology, consciousness puts itself in the field of emotion - if it is possible to define the emotional as the supreme experience of contact with reality. If truth, according to the traditional conception of science, is a tautological proposition, one can, notwithstanding this, reach the dimension of meaning and systemize it in a 'living' way: being therefore the sense itself of one's own life as the dancer is himself rhythm and harmony.

In the midst of the fabulous psycho-mathematical technology of the contemporary cosmology the physicist suddenly discovers the great snake that turns in the galaxies and bites itself. No beginning, no end. Only a stalk of jasmine trembling in the rays of the sun.

Faced with the terror of the origins, faced with the inexorable solitude of infinity, human beings search an answer looking into each others eyes. Our lives are not left to chance as the burning meteorites in the concave space, but are born from the millenary sap of the great creator of life, of the 'cosmic uterus' feeding itself and breathing with the love of the elements. In the light of the origins, in the paradisiacal clearing of reality, we search each other reciprocally.

## The vital unconscious

I have formulated the concept of the 'vital unconscious' to refer to the 'cellular psychism'.

The advances in cellular biology have brought to light the existence of an autonomous behavior of cells and tissues. This is verifiable, for example, in the biological mechanisms responsible for communication both within the cells and between the cells, in the structural plasticity of the



chromatin<sup>35</sup>, and in the development of the embryo and of tumor cells. The term ‘psychism’ alludes to the analogy between the autonomous behavior of the cells and our psychic behavior, because they carry out functions that are similar to our psychic functions: the cells have a form of memory, show affinity and rejection, have solidarity among each other, and they make use of multiple forms of communication.

So there exists a form of psychism of cells, tissues and organs obeying an overall tendency of conservation that is present in living beings. Such a psychism coordinates the functions of organic and homeostatic regulation. The vital unconscious is therefore a psychism that generates regularity and keeps the organic functions stable; this has a great autonomy with respect to consciousness and to human behavior. Its manifestations in daily life are the *endogenous mood*<sup>36</sup>, the *cenesthetic wellbeing* and the *general state of health*.

The importance of the concept of the ‘vital unconscious’ is given by the possibility of intervening in the physiogenesis<sup>37</sup> of our existence with the objective of raising the degree of health. The vital unconscious is in syntony<sup>38</sup> with the living essence of the universe; when the syntony is disturbed illness sets in. The act of healing will therefore be understood as a movement aimed at recuperating this ‘vital syntony’ with the universe.

#### Antecedents

In the last century various authors approached the idea of the existence of an autonomous psychism in living organisms. The difficulty was to reach a coherent and operative definition that would allow comprehension and access to the vital psychism. Only recently some scholars have tried to investigate the ‘mystic’ idea which asserts that there exists an essential and functional relationship between living beings and the phenomenon of life; such a relationship manifests itself through mechanisms that are still unknown, creating regularities and processes of self-organization. Among these authors we can name David Bohm (1), Rupert Sheldrake (2) and the inventors of the Theory of Everything (3). The problem is to configure a new image of man that represents him/her in his/her organic, psychological and cosmic dimension.

#### The vital feelings

The first author who used the concept of ‘vital feelings’ was Harald Hoffding (4), who wrote as follows:

A typical characteristic of the vital sensations of cenesthesia is that each of the particular sensations that enter in its formation cannot be localized with a lot of precision and do not appear as a quality that is very marked. Generally they are not more than elements of a general feeling about our life. So that we call this feeling that comes with the general sensations ‘vital feeling’. The composition, quantity and distribution of the blood; the rapidity of the circulation; the more or less abundant secretions of the glands; the relaxation or contraction of the muscles, both the involuntary, like those of the arterial walls, and the voluntary that move the body; the difficulty or rapidity of breathing; the normal or abnormal course of digestion: all these have an influence, so that non of the enumerated factors needs to get in action in isolation.

The description of H. Hoffding is very precise in indicating the diffuse character of the ‘vital feelings’ manifesting themselves in the whole body, and not in a particular area: sensations of comfortableness or discomfort, heaviness or lightness. This shows the corporeity of the vital feelings. They allow us to feel our own life in the variations of energy and of the state of mind when we are healthy or when we are sick; they constitute a ‘poetics’ of organic sensations.

#### The ‘cellular psychism’

What ‘biochemical wisdom’ determines the behavior of the cells, their mechanisms of growth, the suspension of their development, the movements of cellular solidarity, their morphological ‘masquerading’ during the immune ‘war’?

How is it possible that in some cases a spontaneous remission of a tumor occurs?

It seems that this ‘cellular psychism’ does not belong to a closed system, nevertheless keeping its

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35 A complex of DNA, RNA and proteins within the cell nucleus out of which chromosomes condense during cell division.

36 Mood.

37 Or physiogeny: the natural development of the organism and its various parts.

38 In tune, resonating.

great autonomy. A heuristic hypothesis is the existence of a sort of 'biological mind' that does not only include an individual or a certain species, but that participates in a 'guiding force' in the ocean of cosmic life.

The phantom limb

'Phantom limbs' is the name of those parts of the body that although they have been amputated, continue to provoke a sensation of pain. The studies on phantom limbs have made neurologists think that there exists a 'corporeal scheme', a sort of drawing of the figure of the body as an image. But from this concept remained excluded the body 'felt' from its inside, the cenesthesia, the *vivencia* of the body as general sensation.

The 'body within', the body experienced

José Ortega y Gasset has called 'body within' the body as it is experienced. Such a concept has been explained neurologically as the result of a rain of stimuli that arrive from the organs and are directed towards the sensorial centers giving rise to a diffuse image, a *vivencia* of corporeity.

The endothymic<sup>39</sup> ground

According to Philipp Lersch (6) corporeal feelings (hunger, thirst, satiety, pain, pleasure, fatigue, insomnia, physical discomfort or wellbeing), moods (cheerfulness, sadness, joviality, bad temper) and emotional states (irritation, anger, anxiety, ecstasy) constitute the 'endothymic ground', that is clearly distinct from the noetic<sup>40</sup> and voluntary dimension, even though these vital feelings are not completely isolated from the rest of psychic life. The principle of the unity of life keeps them integrated with the intentional, voluntary and conscious functions. They form thus the base on which perception and thinking are organized.

'Vital feelings', 'body within' and 'endogenous mood' are the manifestation of something very deep that also includes the cellular psychism, the functions self-organization and homeostasis. These constitute the central system of the organization of life, the context of which is autonomous and unconscious.

Corporeity

Juan José Lopez Ibor (7) pointed out the importance of 'corporeity', a term that makes its appearance in psychology by means of the important studies on the corporeal aspect of the human being (Viktor von Weizsacker (8), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (9), Jean Paul Sartre (10) and F.I.J. Buytendijk (11), for example). The corporeity is, according to J.J. Lopez Ibor not only a lived experience, but also a phenomenological reality. From the scientific point of view it is difficult to describe the corporeal feelings: literature possesses more adequate instruments.

David Bohm and the implicit order

Scientific research succeeds in understanding and describing the biochemical aspects and those related to the functional integration of living systems, but the extraordinary organization of the genetic code represents an inexplicable enigma. How do the proteins 'know' which place they have to occupy within the living organism? David Bohm (12) proposes that under the explicit order of the universe there exists an 'implicit order' without which all scientific description loses significance. This implicit order would be beyond the space-time dimensions, and would belong to a system of unknown organizing forces.

The vital unconscious and the endogenous mood

Clinical observation shows that depression has a strong genetic determination. There are families with repetitive cases of suicide; on the other hand, some organic illnesses like diabetes and cancer are often accompanied by depression. Juan José Lopez Ibor (13) conjectured that neuroses are maladies of the spirit; his hypothesis leads to a profound understanding of them, especially of depression.

Certain external circumstances such as affective losses, separations, loneliness, and professional

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39 Endo = inner, thymic = feeling.

40 Pertaining to the mind or intellect.

defeats tend to depress the immune system. One has observed that the appearance of cancer in the breast in some cases manifested itself three months after an affective loss. Special circumstances like a hospital environment, wars, privation of liberty, accidents, and family conflicts influence the expression of the endogenous mood, which almost always results from the combination of genetic factors and the general state of health.

All these considerations lead to think that the depressive process and the weakening of the immune response belong to the sphere of the vital unconscious. The latter is almost inaccessible for the traditional methods of psychotherapy.

The *vivencia* instead is the immediate way of access to the vital unconscious. Through the reawakening of the vitalizing *vivencias* of Biodanza it is possible to influence the endogenous mood.

The levels of the unconscious

The concept of the 'vital unconscious' is related to those of the 'personal unconscious' and the 'collective unconscious' defined respectively by Sigmund Freud (14) and Carl Gustav Jung (15). Here is a brief examination of the three levels of the unconscious and of the modality of access for each of them.

*The personal unconscious* has a biographical dimension and is fed by the memory of facts that have been experienced, especially during childhood. It generates itself in the encounter of the genetic tendencies with the factors of the environment that stimulate or inhibit the potentialities. The personal unconscious is accessible through the anamnesis<sup>41</sup>, especially the sexual history; through the interpretation of dreams that, according to Freud, is the main way to know the unconscious; through the technique of free association and through the analysis of the defense mechanisms of the Ego.

*The collective unconscious* is fed by the memory of the species. It studies the archetypes that are common to all of humanity. Its objective is the revelation of the Self by means of the process of individuation. The ways of access to the collective unconscious are analysis of the archetypal repertoire of the patient; the archetypes that lead to the process of individuation; the expression of the unconscious through painting, poetry or stories; guided dreams (without interpretation) and the ceremonies of the application of myths proposed in Biodanza.

*The vital unconscious* expresses itself through the endogenous mood, cenesthetic wellbeing and the general state of health. The ways of access to the vital unconscious are: nutrition; games, good moods and laughters; caresses and eroticism; the bond with nature; bathing in the sea; bathing in mud; massage; the *vivencias* of Biodanza in general and, in a special way, those of regression by means of the trance in water, induced during the course of aquatic Biodanza (16).

The three levels of the unconscious are connected. Between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious processes of qualitative transformation of libido into archetype happen. Between the collective unconscious and the vital unconscious, instead, processes of qualitative modification of the archetype itself occur, resulting in changes in cellular behavior and in the biological systems of integration and self-regulation. Thus, for example, a woman with a problem of marital infidelity lives her conflict in the field of the personal unconscious through the concrete and immediate facts, while at the level of the collective unconscious she lives the archetype of Helen of Troy, and in the vital unconscious she experiences modifications of the organic self-regulation and disturbances of the autonomous nervous system manifesting themselves through variations of the mood.

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41 Recollection of past events.

## Myths and archetypes in Biodanza

In an original sense, there are three myths that, together with the archetype of Christ, give the fundament and inspiration to the essence of the approach of Biodanza:

Demeter and the Mysteries of Eleusis;

Dionysos;

Orpheus.

Biodanza contains, in its conception, the legacy of the wisdom and the primordial intuition of ancient peoples that has been lost over time.

The sacralization of nature, its unity with man, the search for states of expansion of consciousness as way of access to the supreme experience of the cosmic unity, the aspiration to a transformation of the dissociative cultural values from inside the single individual, and the awareness that the significance of life is intrinsic to life itself constitute the heritage of *Demeter*.

The unity of man with nature, the joy of living, the search for pleasure and for ecstasy, and the liberation of the deep instinctive potentiality through dance are the legacy of *Dionysos*.

The power of the song, of music and of poetry capable of inducing processes of transformation in the human spirit, is the legacy of *Orpheus*.

The love for the neighbor, the profound respect for the humble and mercy, constitute the heritage of *Christ*.

Through these I want to show different aspects of the eternal human need to celebrate life and nature.

Various mythological dramas and ritual representations of ancient peoples find their origin in the mystery of birth, death and rebirth, comparable to the life cycle of vegetation. Cultures connected to work in the fields created cosmic religions, in which the central mystery is the periodic renewal of the world, an archetypal idea that comes from the primitive farmers of the Neolithic, is then found again in classical Greece, with the ancient Germans, in Japan, the Australian peoples and with the tribes of North-America.

In Biodanza, I have identified the mystery of the periodic renewal of the world in the process of permanent existential renewal of the human being according to which, in a certain way persons 'die' regarding some old habits of the past, abandoning the sources of suffering and conflict, to 'be born again' in a renewed body, in a healthier and happier form of life.

It is interesting to observe, in the evolution of these four archetypes in which Biodanza finds its inspiration, the passage from the matriarchy of Demeter to the christian patriarchy: while Demeter was terrestrial and carrier of nutrition, the Father God, instead, is today in the heaven, far from men. The prophets of Israel violently attacked the cults and rituals of the cosmic religion of Demeter and Dionysos; the cosmic rituals were considered 'impure'. The followers of Yahweh succeeded in desacralizing nature: the forests and the sowed terrains, the springs and the crops lost their sacred character, with the consequent decrease of the joy of living. According to Mircea Eliade (1) a 'theology of salvation' developed and a tendency to prophesy began. Through the centuries christianity has come to the model of sacrifice and repression of our era. The command of spiritual regeneration of the individual through the definitive return to Yahweh became the new orientation of spiritual energy in the West.

## Demeter and the Mysteries of Eleusis: divine presence in nature

Demeter, goddess of the fertility of the earth and of agriculture, was one of the major divinities of the ancient Greeks. The mystery rituals of her cult propitiated to the initiated the mystic experience of totality, unlike those usually practiced until then, that presupposed the divine was unreachable for man.

Daughter of Cronus and Rhea, she had no husband, even though the priestesses of the goddess initiated bridegrooms and brides in the sexual pleasures. In her youth she had various lovers and some children: with Zeus, her brother, she begot Persephone; with Jason, son of Zeus and Electra, of whom she became enamored at the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia, she begot Pluto.

### The legend of Persephone

Hades, king of the dead, brother of Zeus, abducted Persephone, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, and took her to the Underworld, the world of the dead, to have her as wife. Demeter searched for her in vain: she then abandoned the Olympus and went to live among men. During the course of her peregrinations, under human guise so as not be recognized, she reached Eleusis, in Attica, and found a welcome at the palace of king Celeus and his wife Metaneira. Demeter came to know from Helios, the Sun, who 'from above sees everything', about the abduction of her daughter carried out with the complicity of Zeus himself, and she became so sad by this that the earth became sterile and vegetation ceased to grow. Because the human race suddenly found itself in danger of extinction for lack of food, Zeus tried to convince Hades to send the daughter back to the mother. Hades consented, with the pact, however, that Persephone return to the Underworld three months of the year; on earth then would have appeared the winter. With the return of Persephone besides her mother, in springtime, the vegetation would have woken up again and have once again generously given its fruits. Demeter, satisfied, consented to reenter in the Olympus and restored fertility to the earth.

### The mysteries of Eleusis

The mysteries of Eleusis drew their origin from the legend of Persephone. Actually Demeter, before returning to the Olympus near the other gods, revealed her divine nature and, to honor the memory of that sojourn of her, a temple was erected in Eleusis: the Telesterion, that became the most important venue of her cult. As a thanksgiving to the royal family for the hospitality offered her, Demeter instructed king Celeus and his son Triptolemus in how to carry out the rituals in her honor. Triptolemus, the first initiate to the Mysteries of Eleusis, received from her an ear of grain with the task of teaching agriculture to man.

One knows that the neophytes were initiated in the Minor Mysteries with dances and ceremonies in honor of Demeter. The Minor Mysteries went on in spring, in the month of March, when Persephone returned to earth. In autumn, between the end of September and the beginning of October, coinciding with the descent of Persephone to the kingdom of the dead, the Great Mysteries were carried out. These consisted of rituals and festivities that lasted six days, of which the first four were passed in Athens; the fifth day a grandiose procession, that sometimes reached thirty-thousand participants, headed in the direction of Eleusis covering about twenty kilometers. And during the sixth day, passed at Eleusis, offers and celebrations were performed in places surrounding the sanctuary; but the final part, the most important, during which the initiation was completed, unrolled in the night, in the enclosure inside the temple, to which only the priests and the initiates had access.

The homeric hymn *To Demeter*, an epic poem from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., whose author and place of origin are unknown, records precise information about the Minor Mysteries and about the first part of the Great Mysteries, because these went on in the open, but everything that happened in the interior of the temple was kept in the most strict secrecy. It is only possible to presume the significance the Mysteries of Eleusis took on for each single individual thanks to the testimonies of great initiates like, for example, Pindarus, Cicero and Aelius Aristides, cited by Albert Hofmann (2), according to whom the participation in the Mysteries of Eleusis meant an experience whose extraordinary character was to be sought in a modification of the soul of the initiate rather than in an exterior event.

The testimonies speak of an experience of cosmic unity that allowed the perception of reality in a total and direct way, out of which welled revelations on the nature of human existence and on the significance of life and death. Such an experience came to be described as unspeakable, only metaphorically representable.

## Kykeon

Before the climax of the Great Mysteries a banquet was prepared on the basis of cereals, nectars and fruits of the earth, and *kykeon*, a sacred beverage producing a state of ecstasy, prepared with barley and mint, was offered to the initiates. The ceremony bestowed to all participants the status of 'great initiate' to the Mysteries.

Current hypotheses suggest that the essential aspect of the secret of Eleusis was exactly that sacred beverage that induced visionary states and ecstasies; it probably contained a psychoactive substance capable of modifying states of consciousness. Indeed, it was administered to the initiate before the illuminating experience that was the climax of the Great Mysteries and that formed the initiation. According to the research of Albert Hofmann (3) on the possible psychoactive substance present in the *kykeon*, it is possible that there are similarities between its active psychotropic principles and those that are used in *ololiuhqui*, a sacred drink offered to the initiates in the setting of magical ceremonies still practiced by the indians of isolated regions of southern Mexico, its use regulated and controlled by the shaman.

According to Albert Hofmann, the Eleusinian Mysteries were motivated by the aspiration for a profound change in each single individual, to bring about a transformation of the dualistic cultural values derived from a vision of the world in which the I felt separated from the external

environment:

At Eleusis one aspired to a profound vision of the foundation of being, to a transformation of the inside of the individual, that made the individual an initiate. Today there is still the problem of the transformation of each individual. The necessary change in the direction of a total consciousness, as a condition for the overcoming of materialism and for a new relationship with nature, cannot be delegated to society or to the State; the change must and can only take place within each human being.

According to Friedrich W. Nietzsche (4), cited by A. Hofmann (5), such a dissociated vision was typical of the Greek mentality from the beginning and has since characterized in a decisive manner the European intellectual history, in which it plays a decisive role even today.

The cult of Demeter lasted approximately 2000 years, from 1500 B.C. to 400 of the Christian era, and was the principal spiritual mystery of antiquity: localized initially, it progressively developed to achieve a universal importance at the time of the Roman Empire. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the emperor Theodosius abolished the cult of Demeter and, later, during the barbarian invasions, the city and the sanctuary of Eleusis, the Telesterion, were destroyed. In archaeological research carried out in our age remains of it have been found.

## Dionysos: ecstasy through pleasure

The rituals and festivities in honor of Dionysos propitiated the overcoming of the division between man and nature, in the same way as in the Mysteries of Eleusis, to which they were intimately related. I think that the myth of Demeter may have been transformed, through the ecstasy and the frenzy of Dionysos, into a different form of the original formulation of celebrating the reawakening of nature. Dionysos represents the liberator of the elementary forces repressed by the society; his devotees, especially the women, adored him in rustic places, abandoning themselves to frenetic dances and sharp cries, eating raw meat of bull<sup>42</sup> and of billy goat.<sup>43</sup>

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (6) places Apollonian art that is lucid and conscious, against Dionysian art that is vital and primitive; talking about the instinct, he refers to the primitive and unconscious vital forces. The expression 'Apollonian' represents the esthetic world of harmony and symbolization. The expression 'Dionysian' is the world of the wild expansion of the impulses and of inebriation. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he refers to inebriation with the following words:

Either through the influence of inebriating beverages, sung by all men and by primitive peoples, or through the mighty approach of spring, that joyfully penetrates all of nature, those Dionysian impulses are aroused, in whose exaltation the subjective element vanishes in a complete oblivion of oneself. Under the enchantment of the Dionysian not only is the bond between man and man tightened, but also the estranged nature, hostile and subjugated celebrates again its feast of reconciliation with its lost son, man.

Dionysos is associated with the vital explosion that annuls the perception of identity and precipitates human beings into vertigo and frenzy. It is enthusiasm without limits, and represents the obscure force of nature.

The most important literary document for the study of the myth of Dionysos is the tragedy *The Bacchae*<sup>44</sup> by Euripides. One thinks that this work has been written at the court of King Archelaus, in Macedonia, and therefore near one of the cradles of this religion. It describes a possession that is many-faceted and wonderful, delicious and cruel, and that appropriates everything: the body and the spirit, physical nature and thought, against which no resistance or refuge is possible, neither in the elements, nor in matter, nor in the mysterious intellectual world. The human being returns to the wild nature. The description that Euripides makes could not be more plastic and more beautiful:

How amiable is Dionysos when in the mountains, after the running, he lets himself fall to the earth! Covered with the sacred juniper, avid to drink the blood of the billy goat and to devour its crude meat, he clambers up the mountains of Phrygia and of Lydia. Bromios<sup>45</sup> is the first to shout: "Euoi!" From the soil he makes gush out milk, wine and nectar of

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42 In Italian: toro!

43 Male goat.

44 Also known as *The Bacchantes*.

45 "The Thunderer" or "He of the loud shout", names given to Dionysos

bees, and he gives off the fragrance of incense from Syria. From the cane that agitates his hand escapes the brilliant flame, while he hastens his vagabond running, exciting with his shouts the impetuous choirs; loose the locks of his beautiful head of hair. The bacchante, agile, happy, jumps by his side, as in the prairie the young filly jumps around its mother.

### The legend

Dionysos, the god of wine-growing, was the son of Zeus and of Semele, a princess from Thebes, daughter of king Cadmus. Zeus, in the form of a man, seduced Semele and made her pregnant. The wife of Zeus, Hera, mad with jealousy, disguised herself as an old woman and advised Semele to ask her mysterious lover to reveal who he really was. Semele was in the sixth month of pregnancy when she asked Zeus to show her his proper identity, something that he denied her vehemently, out of fear that Semele, the very beautiful mortal, would not be able to bear his sight. Semele, offended, did not welcome him anymore in her bed: Zeus then consented to the request and Semele was destroyed by the terrible sight of the god of thunder and lightning.

Hermes intervened at the right moment, took from the belly of Semele the little one of six months and implanted him in the thigh of Zeus, so that he could complete his development. In due course, Hermes assisted with the birth.

By order of Hera, Dionysos was entrusted to the Titans, who broke him in pieces and boiled him in a cauldron. From the blood scattered on the earth arose branches of ivy; his grandmother Rhea reconstructed him and give him back life. It is for this reason that Dionysos has been called 'the three times born'. By indication of Zeus, Hermes temporarily transformed Dionysos into a billy goat and gave him as a present to the nymphs of mount Nysa, in Helicon.

The nymphs looked after him, loved him and fed him; Dionysos subsequently invented the wine and got to know inebriation (drunkenness). In a grownup state however, notwithstanding the effeminacy acquired with his education, he was recognized by Hera, who made him insane.

Dionysos started to travel all over the world accompanied by his tutor Silenus and by a court of satyrs and maenads, whose arms were the thyrsus, a staff encircled with vine leaves and ivy, serpents and instruments of horn producing sounds similar to the bell of deer and the roar of bears, imbuing terror.

His grandmother, Rhea, purified him from the many murders he had committed during his madness, and initiated him to the Mysteries.

The principle of pleasure spread. The women of Orchomenus (Arcadia) abandoned their looms and their domestic works to follow Dionysos and, dressed as bacchantes, scattered over the mountains, abandoning themselves to orgies.

When Dionysos visited Thebes, he invited the women to take part in his orgies on mount Kithairon. Pentheus, king of Thebes, said about him:

He is a stranger, an enchanter... with red curls, attractive and perfumed, rose-colored cheeks and the grace of Aphrodite in the eyes... On the pretext of teaching practices sweet and amiable, he corrupts the girls... He incites the women to abandon their own homes and to run by night on the mountains, dancing to the sound of kettledrums and flutes.

Pentheus wanted to oppose himself to the orgies of Dionysos and arrested him with all his maenads, but became mad himself and, instead of putting Dionysos in chains, he chained a bull<sup>46</sup>. The maenads ran away furiously on the mountains and shred to pieces all the lambs that they found. Pentheus followed them to observe them, and was also torn to pieces by the maenads inflamed by wine and by religious ecstasy.

The dionysiac feasts were celebrated on the top of the mountains, in the darkness of the night, by the uncertain light of torches. The strident sound of the cymbals of bronze, the deep sound of the great drums, the resonant flutes, that were like a call to madness, produced a bewildering music, excited by which the crowd of celebrators danced with exclamations of jubilee. One did not hear songs, as the impetus of the dance did not allow rest to the lungs. The unbridled stream of people hurled itself down the slopes of the mountains in circular movements driven by furor, in frenzied courses. The women agitated themselves till exhaustion in the whirl of the dances. Also their garments were strange: they covered themselves with large fluttering dresses, over which they wore

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46 Toro in Italian and Spanish.



hides of foxes and bears; the hair swayed, curling behind their heads adorned with antlers; the hands carried serpents or brandished daggers and thyrsi that hid their spear points beneath ivy. Dressed-up like this, when the vehemence of the desire had excited the sentiments up to the maximum degree, they abandoned themselves to caresses and to pleasure. Nature was transmuted into ecstasy.

When all the peoples had recognized the divinity of Dionysos, he travelled across the islands of the Aegean sea, simultaneously spreading cheerfulness and terror.

The dionysiac rituals passed to Italy and spread rapidly. Dionysos took the name of Bacchus among the Romans, and his feasts were called bacchanals.

The roman Senate prohibited the celebration of the bacchanals in the year 186 B.C., but the mystic cults secretly kept the dionysiac tradition. The popular carnivals of today, that go on in various countries, are remains of those dionysiac rituals of sensuality and ecstasy.

Orpheus: the power of the music

Orpheus taught new Mysteries and preached to the men of Thrace that homicide in sacrifices was pernicious; under that aspect he can be considered as the spiritual predecessor of Christ.

Orpheus used the power of music as force of transformation. He was capable of descending to hell by love. As an enemy of assassination and of sacrifices, he was persecuted, and because he revealed to men the divine secrets, he was considered a traitor by Zeus and Aphrodite.

Son of the Thracian king Oeagrus and of the muse Calliope, Orpheus was the most famous singer, musician and poet of all time. His song moved the plants, the wild animals, the stones, and obtained transformations in the human spirit. Apollo gave him the lyre and the Muses taught him to play it. The forests danced when he began to sing his song, and the trees and the rocks displaced themselves to follow the sound of his lyre.

Orpheus was one of the Argonauts, and with his music helped them to overcome many difficulties during the expedition for the conquest of the 'golden fleece'.

The legend of Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus loved Eurydice and took her to wife. One day Eurydice, fleeing from Aristaeus, who desired her, put her foot on a serpent and died from his bite. Orpheus, desperate, descended to the Underworld to try to find her; with his song he moved in such a way the ferryman Charon, the dog Cerberus and the three judges of the dead, that Hades, the god of the Underworld, freed Eurydice so she could return among the living, on condition however that Orpheus would not turn around until Eurydice had returned to the world of light. Eurydice followed Orpheus in the dark, guided only by the sound of his lyre. Arrived at the threshold of light, Orpheus turned his head to see if she followed him, and lost her for ever, as she walked slowly because of the wound caused by the bite of the serpent and had not yet reached the open air.

There are different versions of the death of Orpheus; I will cite the most common ones.

According to the mostly noted, he died being torn to pieces by the women of Thrace because he opposed certain of their orgiastic feasts, or because, after the loss of his Eurydice, he was not interested in other women, who by that were offended. They threw in a river his head, that continued to sing till arriving at the sea, whose currents brought it to the island of Lesbos. There the muses recognized the limbs of Orpheus and, crying, they buried him somewhere near mount Olympus, where the birds sing more harmoniously than anywhere in the world.

According to another version, Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt to punish him for having revealed the divine secrets to men: according to Pausanias, cited by Robert Graves (7), he had instituted the

Mysteries of Apollo in Thrace, those of Hecate on Aegina and those of subterranean Demeter in Sparta.

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke (8) wrote in the *Sonnets to Orpheus*:

Only who already raised high the lyre  
also among shadows,  
can in presentiment draw  
infinite praise.

Only who has tasted with the dead  
their poppy  
even the lightest sound  
will never loose again.

For us also darkens often  
the reflection of the pool:  
We know the image.

Only in the double reign  
become the voices  
eternal and sweet.

Only one who knows heaven and hell has access to divine secrets.

Christ: love and mercy

With Christ a new stage begins for humankind. The vital nucleus of his doctrine is the feeling of love and mercy; Christ is the archetype of sweetness united with the strength of faith in the Father who is in heaven. For that reason christians confronted without fear the opposition of authority, the ambition and the cruelty of the powerful, even if that costed them persecution and death.

The infinite love that some people have experienced in particular states of expansion of consciousness (trance, for example) has been considered by many mystics and intellectuals as a feeling whose essence derives directly from Christ.

This capacity to love that belongs to all human beings, even when often repressed, is also able to promote health and even to cure chronic illnesses. The invocation of Christ by means of prayer can moreover induce states of peace and bliss.

I will not speak here of how the official christian Church, whose dogmas accentuate the dualism of Creator-creature, making religiousness extraneous to nature, has developed the doctrine of Christ, nor of the fact that the love for our fellow man has ever less space in the world of today. In spite of everything, however, one can say that this proposal of love, has meant, in its time, the greatest revolution in all the history of humanity; today, more than ever, it is an agonizing call.

Christ, in his sweetness, wanted the spiritual salvation of humanity.

Subsequently, however, the sacrificial model of the human being was spread by religious and political authorities, that made themselves accomplices in the exploitation of thousands of persons dominated and resigned in the hope of a future 'eternal life' in Paradise. C.G. Jung cites an apocryphal *Gospel* of saint John in which Christ dances with his apostles and sings in the middle of a circle. This vision seems incompatible with the sacrificial model; yet the usual representation of Christ is that of the crucifixion.

The idea that Father God be in heaven and not on earth is at the origin of a process of moving away from the immediate divine dimension and from the pleasure of living. In this way injustices are perpetuated and sufferings are accepted as something natural. Christianity proposes a passing life and an immortal spirit, so life on earth transforms into an immediate task of self-denial, renunciation and sacrifice in order to earn, after death, the eternal life with the Father.

Application of myths and archetypes in Biodanza

C.G. Jung wished, in his autobiographical reflections, that the study of the myths and of the

archetypes of the collective unconscious, carried out by him on a theoretical level, would in future attain an important corporal dimension for psychotherapy. His hypothesis has stimulated me to experiment with the myths and archetypes of cosmic religions in order to obtain personal integration, an idea that has shown itself to be extremely fruitful.

I have accomplished the application of these myths and archetypes with the methodological instruments of Biodanza, and this has brought out, that in their contemporary version, they possess a great energy of transformation. On the basis of this, therefore, I intend to redeem archetypical models of extraordinary power for a civilization of the future.

## THE THEORETICAL MODEL OF THE BIODANZA

### Introductory considerations

#### Origin of the 'theoretical model of Biodanza'

In 1965 I began the first experiments of dance with mentally ill, at the psychiatric hospital of Santiago in Chile. At that time I worked at the Study Center for Medical Anthropology at the School of Medicine of the University of Chile, directed by Francisco Hoffman. Our concern was to try out various techniques of development so as to 'humanize medicine': group psychotherapy in

the line of Carl Rogers, art-therapy (painting, theater), psychodrama, etcetera.

So I have directed meetings of dancing with patients interned in the section of the hospital headed by Agustin Tellez.

During the first meetings, I observed that some pieces of music had as effect to facilitate states of trance. In this case, the hallucinations and deliriums increased and could last several days.

Without doubt, the patients who, by definition, had a badly integrated identity, became even more dissociated when they carried out certain movements. So then I selected a series of musics and of dances that could strengthen the sense of one's own identity. The result was interesting: many patients manifested a better judgement of reality; the hallucinations diminished, while at the same time the communication increased.

Identity and trance seemed to depict a pulsating *continuum*. Certain exercises increased the sense of identity and of consciousness of the body, while others led to a decrease of the perception of the limits of the body and to the state of trance. It was therefore possible to construct a scale, that by successive degrees, would go from identity to trance and vice versa. It was like this that the first axis of the 'theoretical model of Biodanza' was outlined.

### *Continuum*

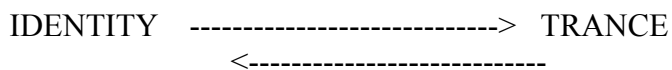


Figure 2. The first of outline of the theoretical model of Biodanza. Afterwards, the concept of 'trance' was substituted by that of 'regression'.

The experiment had shown me that it was necessary to prescribe to psychotic patients exercises and musics belonging to the sphere of identity. Later on, I observed that persons that were stressed, tense, anguished or suffering from psychosomatic disturbances like arterial hypertension (high blood pressure) or gastric ulcers improved their condition considerably when they did exercises characteristic of the sphere of trance. The trance, once induced during the meetings, evidently had tranquilizing effects.

With time, I have come to the conviction that the states of identity and trance are entirely complementary, and span the totality of human experience. During the trance the individual tends to perceive himself as part of the whole universe, while in the state of identity, of consciousness of oneself, he feels like a 'center of the perception of the world'.

Identity and trance have subsequently been modulated by means of exercises of contact and communication. Later, the results appearing from the in-depth analysis of the research have brought me to add the vertical axis and the 'five lines of *vivencia*', that represent the expression and the integration of the human genetic potential. Further experiments have permitted me to perfect the theoretical model and to apply it also to more categories of people: children, adolescents, elderly persons, families, etcetera.

The theoretical model of the Biodanza, really, is a model of the 'cosmic man'. It approaches human beings in their biological, psychological and, precisely, cosmic dimension.

'The question of being' can be answered only within a vision of man as 'being-in-the-world', that is, as cosmic creature. The theoretical model does not consider isolated individuals, but regards them in complete connection with the 'all'.

It is important to emphasize that this model gives rise to a biocentric methodology that can be applied to education, to psychotherapy and, generally, to the various human sciences.

### Significance of the notion of a model in the sciences

Contemporary science reconstructs all the theory of knowledge starting from the notion of a 'model'. A model is an instrument for research and for manipulation of reality. A model is a 'picture' made by the researcher for acting on reality. The theoretical picture has semantic and

plastic characteristics that have equivalents in an ensemble of external phenomena. The model enables demonstration of the relations that exist between a formal system (created by man) and the 'natural' system that is being studied. One could say that the researcher makes a 'mythical' proposition about reality and subsequently establishes relations between the facts and this proposition. Intuition, imagination and the previous experiences of the researcher are present in the creation of a model. The conception itself of the model, though, results from a sort of a priori all-consuming vision. What counts, deep down, is not the model conceived as a mythic and aesthetic image of reality, but the relations of homology<sup>47</sup> that link the model to that reality.

These relations between the model and the system being studied are not unambiguous, but recurrent: they go from the model to reality, and vice versa. When logical and mathematical relations are established within a model, new characteristics appear that reveal unknown aspects of the natural system.

The model therefore enables both the discovery of new relations and the formulation of questions such as one could never do if one were content with observing the facts; and the orientation of research, the creation of new hypotheses, the manipulation of unfamiliar relations and the comprehension of the facts within a unified vision.

The advantage of a model over a simple description is that its use permits the establishment of absolutely unforeseeable relations, opening new options in the practical field.

#### The evolution of scientific models

Scientific models have been very fertile for the comprehension of reality. Among the most famous, one can mention, for example, that of the helicoidal chain of the genetic code created by Watson and Crick, an ingenious structure of extraordinary beauty; the model of hexagonal organization of Kekulé was conceived in a dream and gave rise to the chemistry of benzene; the psychoanalytic model of Freud with the three psychic instances (Unconscious, Ego, Super-ego).

Scientific models are in permanent evolution. The confrontation of the model with the corresponding reality implies partial and sometimes fundamental modifications. Thus, Ptolemy's model of the universe was modified by Kepler and by Galileo, improved by Newton and then, later, by Einstein, Eddington and others. The Bohr-Rutherford model of the atom found a new form in that of the wave mechanics of Louis de Broglie and Planck.

The theoretical model of Biodanza has gone through modifications during 45 years of confrontation with reality: it has adapted its purpose and was enriched with components, yet, after all, conserving its original structure. It is conceived as a system of closed homeostatic relations, that nevertheless presents subtle openings for new possibilities of equilibrium, represented by contact between humans, in an open process of co-creation and integration.

The model of the Biodanza proposes the pulsation between an afferent (centripetal) tension accompanied by an increase of the *vivencia* of identity, and an expansion (centrifugal) accompanied by a *vivencia* of dissolution in the totality. The openings permit discrete transformations, of an evolutionary character, arising from a constant biological reorganization brought on by integrative *vivencia* supported by the genetic potential.

At the basis of the vertical axis lies the concept of 'genetic potential', that expresses itself on the weave of the 'lines of *vivencia*'. The evolutionary development is realized insofar as the genetic potentials find options for expressing themselves in life.

#### The theoretical model of Biodanza

The theoretical model of Biodanza is articulated along two axes placed within a spiral. The vertical axis is stable and the horizontal axis is pulsating. Both axes are virtual, because they do not denote a rigid trajectory; they are directional projections. The spiral represents the openness of the model to

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47 Showing a degree of correspondence or similarity.

the universal processes of gestation of life.

#### The phylogenesis

This is the history of the evolutionary development of living species, from the time of their appearance until our time. In the theoretical model of Biodanza, it represents the natural context of the human species, from which the genetic inheritance of each single individual derives.

#### The genetic potential

At the base of the vertical axis, that represents the ontogenesis<sup>48</sup>, the concept of 'genetic potential' is placed. This alludes to the collection of potentialities inherited genetically by each individual contained in the human chromosomes, that hold hundreds of genes and mini-genes, of which many manifest themselves, while other remain 'silent' during the course of an entire life.

#### The protovivencia

This is about the experiences that a newborn baby undergoes during the first six months of her or his life; these are characterized by its first responses to internal and external stimuli.

#### The lines of vivencia

I have grouped the genetic potentialities in five big sets, and called their manner of expression 'lines of *vivencia*'. These develop in a spiral around the vertical axis of the model, and their interactions form a weave across which the genetic potential expresses itself. The five lines of *vivencia* are listed in what follows:

*Vitality*: potential of equilibrium, of homeostasis, of biological harmony; vital élan, energy that the individual possesses for confronting the world.

*Sexuality*: capacity to feel sexual desire and pleasure; capacity of fertilization<sup>49</sup>.

*Creativity*: capacity for renewal applied to one's own life, i.e. to put creativity into each act.

*Affectivity*: capacity to give protection; acceptance of the diversity of humanity, without prejudice.

*Transcendence*: capacity to go beyond the Ego and to identify with the cosmic totality; capacity of experimenting states of expansion of consciousness.

#### The eco-factors

The evolutionary development fulfills itself to the degree that the genetic potentialities find options for being realized in life. Such potentialities can be obstructed or stimulated by contact with the environment. The stimuli of the environment that are able to inhibit or foster the genetic expression, are represented by the 'eco-factors' in the theoretical model. These eco-factors are considered positive when they stimulate the expression of the genetic potentiality, and negative when they inhibit it.

Biodanza creates very concentrated fields of positive eco-factors so as to permit the stimulation and the development of the genetic potentialities. The levels of ascent along the evolutionary spiral depend on the encounters with others; these encounters are fresh experiences, new data that appear from time to time in everybody's life and that condition the evolutionary process.

#### The integration

In the theoretical model of Biodanza, the integration is a peak<sup>50</sup> process towards which the development of the lines of *vivencia* is headed. It consists of the reciprocal, dynamic and creative interactions that happen in the expression of these five lines of innate impulses.

#### The continuum identity-regression

On the horizontal axis of the model is the 'continuum identity-regression', that represents the natural alternation of the states of consciousness. The two poles (of the identity and of the regression) form a circuit in perpetual motion that progresses in a spiral towards integration. I have

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48 development of an individual organism

49 Insemination.

50 In the form of a spire, moving towards a cusp.

chosen the Latin word continuum to identify such a movement.

### The identity

The 'identity' is our essence. This is, according to Saint Augustine, the innermost of what we are intimately. It is the center from which I feel the world and become different from it. It is at the same time consciousness and *vivencia* of being.

The identity changes at each moment; it is not static, and yet the essence is preserved: I am the same child that I have been; even though I am different, I continue to perceive myself as 'the same me'. This is first of all corporeal: when one has to describe somebody, one appeals to his or her physical peculiarities. In the corporeal dimension, one of the characteristics of the identity is movement; from this originates the connection established between identity and dance. One cannot understand the concept of identity without that of 'regression'. We can strengthen our identity so as to act on the environment, or reduce it going progressively towards regression. The identity of each of us is unique and different, but in a state of trance we feel ourselves as identical to the other and perceive our common essence. The experience of the return to the undifferentiated where our own identity becomes sensed as a part of the identity of the 'All' constitutes the point of union between identity and regression.

### The regression

The regression is a passage towards the undifferentiated. To the extent that we lower the level of the expression of our identity, we enter in a different state that manifests itself by the decrease or disappearance of voluntary and cortical activity. In Biodanza the regression is harmonious and progressive; it is a biological regression through which the primordial physiological patterns are reactivated. This is wholesome, not only because it integrates and harmonizes the organism, but also because it brings us into contact with our healthy essence, stripped of the pathologies resulting from repressive cultural values; furthermore it reinforces the equilibrium and the stability of the living system.

### The layers of the unconscious

The three layers of the unconscious are connected among each other (see Figure 3 (the theoretical model)). The personal unconscious is placed in the upper right quadrant, the collective unconscious in that of the lower right. The *vital unconscious* is on the left side, between the upper and the lower quadrant, placed slightly towards the outside because it has a great autonomy even while being in connection with the two other layers. It has a direct relation with the collective unconscious on the one hand and on the other with the 'cosmic regularities'.

### The initial conditions for the genesis of life

According to Ilya Prigogine (1), Roger Lewin (2) and others, the initial conditions of life occur at the 'limits of chaos'. The associations of elements in the 'cosmic broth' generate the multiplicity of initial factors that lead to the creation of complex systems as, for example, the biomolecules, the proteins, the protozoa, and the cells. When the cosmic temperature, the pressure, the gravity, the light and other conditions are appropriate, the elements associate themselves in various forms to create the 'complex adaptive systems', characterized by equilibrium. The 'chaos' is the locality with the greatest capacity for interactions, where it is really possible that complex system be generated.

### Chaos

Chaos is a state of matter that implies low levels of organization. Within every situation of chaos there is a principle of order; the creative process of life is a road that goes from chaos to order. I. Prigogine (3), who has put forward the Chaos Theory, has shown that living structures, capable of realizing self-regulation and duplication, produce themselves in the so-called 'dissipative zones', that lie far from the zones of equilibrium. The cosmic regulatory systems orient the genesis of life

through the chaos of matter.

### The principles of cosmic life

If one starts from the hypothesis that the universe is programmed with an orientation towards life, then the principles of cosmic life are 'regularities' of matter and energy that produce the 'initial conditions' favorable to the appearance of complex adaptive systems capable of generating themselves and evolving. The cosmic regularities are the constants that characterize the universe in its structural and energetic aspects, examples of which are:

the mass, the density, the pressure, and the temperature; the atomic structure, the number of elements and the laws of combination between them, rendering possible the formation of molecules and proteins; the structure of DNA, the intervention of cosmic rays and of gravity.

Life is generated within the universe, because it has constant characteristics, notwithstanding the immense complexity of the processes of transformation. Cosmic regularities constitute the factors that give the universe its own structure, which is not purely chaotic.

### The axis genetic potential - integration

The axis 'genetic potential - integration springs from phylogeny<sup>51</sup> and represents the ontogeny<sup>52</sup>.

### Phylogeny

The evolutionary development of the various species happens according to very rigid programs. There exists a concordance and a pact between a creature and the environment in which it develops: if it transgresses the limits, it is destined to disappear. A fish, for example, can only live at a certain depth, because in that way it remains close to the algae that feed it. Jakob van Uexküll (1) has discovered that the organisms are not isolated products of a biochemical message, but that they correspond to a plan: each organism has its proper environment.

The differentiation of the species in the course of the evolutionary process separates the characteristics of particular groups and specifies the nature of structural lines.

A completely new situation appears with man, whose genetic program permits various options and numerous schemas of development.

According to Julian Huxley (2) human evolution is characterized by a multidimensional development that creates real options of expression. The genetic potentialities follow ways of development and expression that are very differentiated, to such an extent that some can be repressed or obstructed, while others express themselves to the maximum of their possibilities. It is this phenomenon that creates the differences between one human being and another. On the level of intelligence, for example, the expression of the mini-genes that determine it can make an ordinary person appear, or a genius such as Leonardo da Vinci or Albert Einstein. The difference in intelligence between two individuals in terms of genetic expression, can therefore be larger than the structural difference that exists between a shellfish and a primate.

One can thus say that the human species is genetically 'open', because the possibilities of genetic expression that it possesses, create a diversity within the species that can be greater than that existing between dissimilar species.

Human expression in the field of poetry, of art, of music and of intellectual activity is capable of creating within a strict universe with highly determined laws the most extraordinary forms of organization and of integration with the cosmos. Man is not a finished biological form, precisely because he shows a surprising bundle of possibilities of development. One is thus faced with a phenomenon of inconceivable dimensions: the unlimited development and interactions of the genetic potentialities, that combining in unprecedented ways, reach unforeseeable expressions.

There actually exists an axis that could ensure an organic unity to this development of potentialities and that would create the indispensable borders for the security and survival of the species: that of the knowledge of the fundamental conditions that constitute the common starting point for all

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51 The evolutionary history of an organism; the historical development of a human social group

52 The development of an individual organism.



human beings. The search for our biological similarities is the search for our similar, our fellow man. The development that we have to realize during existence, however it be differentiated, will never lose, in this way, the link that unities it with life.

If we are 'an unfinished poem', a project, or an embryo whose program includes all the possibilities of monstrosity, of sweetness, of stupidity and of intelligence, these options should, at least as a directing force, have states of expanded consciousness capable of guiding the unprecedented forms of differentiated expression in accordance with the unity of life.

#### Phylogenetic evolution and cultural evolution

The diversity among human beings is apparent: while one can observe from a cultural point of view the great differences that separate them (e.g. ideas, technological expressions), one can note instead that from a biological point of view they share an inescapable resemblance. The enormous cultural diversities disappear when one studies the biological processes, the strong genetic determinedness and the force of the phylogenetic adaptations. According to research by Konrad Lorenz (3), Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (4) and others in the field of ethology (...), man does not manifest but a pseudo-specificity of cultural nature. In his deep behavior, he is programmed: the learned attitudes are simply modulations of innate models. The behaviors that the individual develops with the others of his species, such as the patterns of aggression and social rituals, cannot be modified in depth by learning; actually there exists a repertoire of behaviors that we possess right from birth, as for example the expressive patterns of the smile, weeping, the cry and the caress.

Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt(5) has verified that on the one hand human social behavior is preprogrammed, while on the other humanity has shown a surprising capacity to learn: while attitudes of relating to the external environment, with technology for example, have a good chance of being learned, behaviors of relating amongst individuals of the same species have been preserved during the course of millions of years. The comparative study of diverse cultures demonstrates that, beneath diverse appearances, both patterns of aggression and socializing rituals (greeting, contact and caress, for example) present the same innate biological structures. This invites reflection on the naiveté of certain political, religious or educational systems that direct their objectives of transformation towards the invariants of human behavior. I, for my part, believe that the psychotherapies based on the model of learning have to be put up for discussion again, and that practicing therapeutic work to modify certain patterns of behavior that resist learning is a childish effort. The only therapeutic action possible, I think, consists in increasing the level of health, that is, in strengthening the biological invariants.

With regard to the pattern of aggression in man, it is necessary to recognize that social control in this field has been entirely inefficient. The only practice that seems feasible to me lies in strengthening the biological control of aggression and in stimulating the behaviors of relating within the species.

In my opinion, illness is the result of collisions, obstructions, interferences or perturbations brought about by the environment in the living system, disorganizing innate impulses towards integration. My proposal therefore consists in working on the healthy part, by stimulating the preprogrammed lines of integration and not in trying to provoke changes in the invariant and stable part of the human being. This would be a matter of taking hold of cultural evolution and directing it in the sense of the development of five modalities of genetic expression represented by the lines of *vivencia*.

According to B.F. Skinner (6), the evolution of culture is a gigantic exercise of self-control. In my opinion, this self-control should be attributed to the autonomous mechanisms of living organisms, and not to the external objectives of a technological ethics.

The acknowledgement of the autonomy and the genetic preprogramming of man should not however lead towards fatalism, in the Greek sense of the term. It should rally us in the search for our biological divinity.

## Genetic potential

The totality of our genetic potential is contained in everyone of our cells; nature, to preserve the information, has reproduced it millions of times. Certain genes permit, or prevent, the expression of specific characteristics. Thus, for example, intelligence, the tone of the voice and cenesthetic sensibility all depend on the combined action of different genes. In the process of genetic expression certain potentials remain silent, because they do not find the specific eco-factors necessary to manifest themselves. So, genetic potentials can be considered as highly determined elements that are endowed with a great stability, whose expression will depend on the conditions offered either by the external environment, or by those internal to the organism.

It has been shown that there are genes expressed early in life and genes expressed late in life; therefore it is important to stimulate genetic development during the whole arc of existence.

I propose a new type of intervention, that consists in activating genetic expression through the solicitation of specific emotions aimed at increasing the secretion of natural hormones. Such emotions become aroused through *vivencia* that stimulate vitality, rest, eroticism, the joy of living and being part of the universe.

One of the biological mechanisms of action of Biodanza consists in the activation, by means of specific *vivencia*, of the production of hormones, sexual, adrenal and thyroidal for example, that function as stimulating factors for genetic expression.

Another mechanism of action, related to the preceding, consists in activating the secretion of certain neurotransmitters that in their turn facilitate genetic expression.

Experience in Biodanza has demonstrated that certain exercises and certain group situations activate emotions of which the effect of spurring the autonomic nervous system modifies the state of the stimuli inside the organism as well as the consumption of energy. One could extrapolate this and say that the lines of *vivencia* are producers of eco-factors. If this hypothesis is true, a selection of exercises and group situations of Biodanza should facilitate the expression of specific genetic potentials, that are often of repressed by values imposed through culture.

### **Quantity of genetic information and evolution**

Living beings appeared on earth about 3 billion years ago. Since then genetic information has been added to what already existed, and living beings have been able to realize new functions and to grow in complexity also. This translates, generally, into a strengthening of the autonomy with respect to both the environment and the genetic programming itself.

In some cases, however, the evolution of living beings has manifested itself through the loss of certain genes that were not indispensable: this explains how some 'superior' organisms have lost characteristic properties, that 'older' organisms still have.

An example, cited by Linus Pauling (7), is that of the production of vitamin C: horses possess this function, as do cows, pigs and mice; man, on the contrary, just as the gorilla and the chimpanzee, has to consume vitamin C in its food, because he does not have the capacity to synthesize it. The common ancestors of man, gorilla and chimpanzee around 24 million years ago lost the capacity to produce this vitamin through genetic mutation.

The loss of a gene or of a group of genes can be interpreted as the loss of a function that is no longer advantageous. It must be understood that evolution does not occur through modifications of essential vital functions, but on the basis of new functions that are added to those that already exist.

Figure 4 illustrates the quantity of genetic information of man in relation to other living beings; the

*Escherichia coli* is chosen as a unit of reference. Living systems can be arranged according to the quantity of genetic information they possess; this is contained in DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid), that is found almost exclusively in the nuclei of cells. On this scale, human beings occupy level  $10^3$ , that is, they have about 1000 times more DNA than *Escherichia coli*.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to be aware to what degree we are included in the cosmic totality, within which we form part of the unitary phenomenon of life. To consider that we are, in a certain way, 'brothers' of the frog and of the iris, implies states of expansion of consciousness.

## The five lines of *vivencia*

The genetic potentialities express themselves both through organic structures and vital functions, and through the form and constitution of the body. The psychological expressions of the genetic potentialities are *vivencia*, emotions and feelings.

The initial conditions necessary for the expression of the identity are generated at the biological level, at the conjunction point of the psychosomatic unity, with neither the participation of consciousness, nor of logical-rational thought. The *vivencia* has priority over consciousness in the psychological expression of the genetic potentiality and in the process of integration of the identity. Many years of research on the *vivencia* in Biodanza carried out with various groups of people have permitted me to make a survey of the correspondence between the expression of genetic potentiality and the principal human aspirations.

I have ordered the results in groups with respect to their affinity, an operation for which I have used the phenomenological method, and five sets have emerged into which the aspirations common to all participants could be condensed.

My hypothesis is that each set arises as a form of expression of genetic potentiality, and I have defined each one with a term that summarizes the respective human aspirations, as follows:

*Vitality*: greetings, vital impetus, cheerfulness.

*Sexuality*: sexual pleasure, reproduction, sexual bond.

*Creativity*: innovation, construction, fantasy.

*Affectivity*: love, friendship, altruism.

*Transcendence*: bond with nature, sense of belonging to the universe, states of expansion of consciousness.

It is in this way that I arrived at differentiating the five modalities of expression of the human genetic potential. I have defined these as 'lines of *vivencia*' with the aim of representing them schematically in the theoretical model.

My thesis is that all aspects of human life that have traditionally been considered as part of the psychic sphere, have a biological origin. They are generated in the heart of cellular processes. Through differentiation they attain the quality of impulses, of pulsations and of instincts and in man they transform themselves into *vivencia*, emotions and feelings.

## Line of vitality

The line of vitality is generated from the collection of functions aimed at maintaining homeostasis<sup>54</sup>. It includes the instincts of conservation, of hunger and of thirst, as well as the responses of fighting and fleeing, and the functions that regulate activity and rest.

It is surprising that one does not find any definition of the concept of 'vitality' in biology and psychology. This omission is typical for the analytical thinking that predominates in the sciences.

Jose Ortega y Gasset (8) develops a profound reflexion on the concept of 'vitality' and proposes to include the values of vitality in the axiology.<sup>55</sup> Juan José Lopez Ibor (9) shows the importance of

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<sup>53</sup> *Escherichia coli* a bacteria commonly used for genetic studies.

<sup>54</sup> Balance

<sup>55</sup> The study of the origin, nature, functions, types, and interrelations of values; value theory

‘vital mood’, as an endogenous<sup>56</sup> manifestation and its consequences in the field of psychiatry. The concept of ‘vitality’ is essential for the Biodanza System that works with categories as ‘life style’, ‘biocentric principle’ and ‘*vivencia* of vitality’. The semantic contents of this concept are vast and complex, and that is perhaps what refrains biologists from approaching it in a scientific way. Medicine, as a science for the control of health and the fight against illness, has established many ‘indices’ that could be applied to vitality (for example, the arterial pressure, the level of cholesterol, the basic metabolism, etcetera). When one approaches the concept ‘vitality’ from a systematic perspective, one can see it as the outcome of multiple factors that combine to maintain functional stability, to permit genetic expression and to conserve the harmony of the system, in spite of changes in the environment. One could study the factors determining biological regulation and their potent resources of self-organization, as well as the factors of disorganization that lead to illness and death. In this way the indices of vitality would reveal either the level of order (health), or the level of imbalance (illness). It is a question of choosing among hundreds of biological indicators those that are most representative of the integration of the human living system. This selection can be accomplished with some success based on the progress of medical technology. A small set of indices of health can, indirectly, represent the level of order of the system.

For the valuation of health in Biodanza, I have selected some ‘indices of vitality’ that I deem particularly important:

- resistance to strain;
- vitality of movement;
- stability of the autonomic nervous system;
- power of the instincts;
- nutritional state.

Several external characteristics that are easy to recognize, can give a general impression of vitality: facility of laughing, strength of the instincts, agility of the movements, sound and expression of the voice, light and intensity of the look, harmony and power of the gestures.

During the sessions of Biodanza it is easy to discover, through lecture of the movements, who are the most vital persons. The simple power of movements, however, is not synonymous with vitality: apparently strong persons can actually suffer serious ailments such as hypertension, diabetes, epilepsy, or psychological problems. On the other hand, transitory emotional states of euphoria or depression, as well as phases of great existential motivation, can alter the level of vitality without revealing the real state of integration of the human living system.

Vitality contains important genetic components that can be more expressed or less expressed during life. One of the aims of Biodanza consists in guaranteeing the eco-factors that permit the expression of the genetic potentiality of vitality.

One should know that the indices of vitality of an individual are not constant: these vary noticeably in the course of various periods of life. Existential motivations like love and creativity, as well as changes of environment and, in particular, contact with nature, have an extraordinary influence on the value of these indices, that, undoubtedly, are nothing else than the technical-experimental expression of the style of life and of the reality of ‘being-in-the-world’.

The field of vitality, however, extends well beyond clinical indices, and includes that what one could call ‘existential vitality’. Certain persons whose clinical indices are at their optimal values suffer nevertheless from serious emotional conflicts, from difficulties of communication, from an absence of an overall vision of existence, etcetera. Sooner or later, the clinical indices of vitality become affected by the other lines of *vivencia*: sexuality, creativity, affectivity and transcendence.

Vitality should thus be approached from a holistic perspective, keeping in mind the complexity of the relations that bind the living system to the ecological context. Viktor von Weizsäcker (10) has admirably clarified the trajectory that goes ‘from emotion to injury’; what remains to be done is the description of the trajectory that goes ‘from emotion to health’. The activation of the five lines of

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56 Coming from inside

*vivencia* in Biodanza works in that direction.

### Line of sexuality

The line of sexuality finds its genesis in the complex mechanisms of sexual differentiation, and of the functions of the gonads<sup>57</sup> and the genital organs. This includes the sexual instinct and the function of orgasm, desire and the search for pleasure, as well as multiple emotions involved in the manifestation and the satisfaction of the sexual instinct, of which the biological aim is reproduction. For centuries, the body has been considered as the slave of the spirit; this concept should be revised. The body sends precise information to the mind, that we generally underestimate: we are tired but do not rest, we are hungry or thirsty and do not answer those needs, we lack love but we neglect that, and because we have something else in our mind, for example a project or an obligation, this makes us postpone until later the answer to the sensible question of the organism.

In Biodanza, we discover instead that the body is gentle, is tender and possesses a wonderful harmony, is voluptuous and intrinsically beautiful.

Experiencing an intense sexual desire for someone mobilizes the whole organism. The desire activates the sexual glands, accelerates the pulsation of the heart, and the respiratory rhythm and induces to perform actions aimed at gratifying it.

One reaches the most intense pleasure in the moment that the most intense desire is satisfied. In the realization of a sexual act without desire there is no pleasure.

Techniques of sexual rehabilitation have as principal preoccupation the overall sensitization and the attainment of orgasm. It seems to me that the obsession with the orgasm is one of the factors that most of all obstruct the obtaining of pleasure; people should rather have as objective an excellent communication that satisfies their reciprocal objectives, without anxiety.

It is important to distinguish desire from anxiety; the latter always contains a component of fear and guilt. One knows that the fear of impotence is the principle cause of impotence itself.

To exercise the capacity for experiencing sexual desire requires learning at the cortical level (erotic fantasies), emotional level (power of the emotions) and visceral level (activation of the hypothalamus, the hypophysis, the sexual glands and mechanisms of the autonomic nervous system).

The preparation for sexual pleasure can not be reduced to a simple loosening of the genital sensibility, but must involve the growth of the capacity for enjoying daily pleasures; for example, taking a bath at the preferred temperature, choosing and tasting what one eats, submitting oneself to a relaxing massage, walking on grass or on the sand of the beach, etcetera.

Since time immemorial, the idea of the body has been associated with pain, with illness and suffering. This vision has led to behaviors and styles of life that are conformist and dependent. The fear of suffering can not be overcome but through the development of one's own capacity for pleasure; this is however so denigrated on the scale of conventional values that for many it is synonymous with superficiality, frivolousness and materialism. Still, there exists no real pleasure that does not come from deep inside and from the natural leap towards life.

Strengthening one's own sensibility for finding ways that lead to pleasure forms part of the learning proposed in Biodanza. Learning to take delight in all the great and small pleasures of life is the most important. The pleasure of dancing, in the sense that Biodanza gives it, is the first opening. To learn to feel the music in a state of trance is another one. To become conscious of daily pleasures is the third way. To develop all the possibilities of eroticism is the fourth.

The question of pleasure should be approached from a psycho-pedagogic perspective that involves all human beings, without distinction of social class, political party, or religious belief. Every action that implies a suffering should be considered as a pathology. The act of living is in itself a delight.

### Line of creativity

This line is linked to the instinct of exploration and to the impulses of innovation that are present in

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<sup>57</sup> A sex organ that produces gametes; specifically, a testicle or ovary.

living organisms. According to current research in the areas of immunology and cellular biology, living systems show phenomena of spontaneous creation at every instant, in every point of the system.

Cellular complexes are not mechanical systems, but react in each moment of life in an innovative way and with an absolute coherence faced with changes in the external environment. This process of adaptation and integration is definitely creative. Ethologists study exploratory behavior even in animals that occupy the primitive stadia of the zoological scale. The impulses of innovation inherent in biological systems culminate in the creativity of man.

If the act of living is a subtle manifestation of the prodigious movement of a universe biologically organized and in permanent creation, human creativity can be considered an extension of these bio-cosmic forms expressing themselves through each individual. We are at the same time the message, the creature and the creator.

I understand that this idea may be difficult for those who are used to see the creative phenomenon only as a manifestation of the mind. The time has come to take on our greatness, not as being part of the mind, but as part of existence. To say it in an even more radical way: our greatness lies in our life. So it is a matter of abandoning the traditional approaches of the psychology of creativity, by entering fully into the narrative of the extraordinary.

The elitist idea that separates creators from common people represents nothing but one of the numerous cultural prejudices that, basically, reinforce the tragic dissociation between man and his work.

From the moment in which we are separated from our work, each of our movements finds itself dissociated from our emotion. The most important systems of alienation that are carried on through institutionalized work consolidate the split between what we feel and what we do. In a disguised way, civilization represses the natural function of creativity.

My approach to creative activity does not come from psychotherapy, as in the systems of art therapy, dance therapy or music therapy. Though the therapeutic effects of these are acknowledged, their objectives are limited to people who are ill. For me, creative activity is the natural development of a biological function.

The biological conception of creativity is near to the theme of creative innocence: it supports the appearance of the genius of the species at an individual level. In reality it is about facilitating and not repressing the act of the production of fruits.

My proposal consists in permitting the expression of the natural creative impulses. Creation is, just as the sexual function or that of self-transcendence, an extension of the process of life.

### Line of affectivity

The biological genesis of the line of affectivity is related to the instinct of solidarity within the species: gregarious impulses, altruistic tendencies and socializing rituals. Cellular biology demonstrates the existence of true communities of cells that integrate some biochemical operations among themselves. Living systems are potent mechanisms of coherence in which the principles of affinity and rejection function, and within which each part puts itself at the service of the biological unity. In a brilliant way, Jacob von Uexküll (11) proposed the idea that the individuals of a species be the organs, the species itself being the organism. Thus an individual dissociated from the species represents an illness for the totality. These biological impulses of cooperation, of integration and of solidarity culminate, in man, in feelings of altruism, and constitute the genesis of love.

Through affectivity we identify ourselves with other persons and are capable of understanding them, loving them, protecting them, or also, to the contrary, of refusing them and attacking them.

According to José Ortega y Gasset (12), affectivity includes any passion of the heart, especially love, tenderness and hatred. It can have the dimension of 'differentiated love', directed at one person only, and that of 'undifferentiated love', directed at humanity.

Different from the *vivencia* (that are fleeting states, belonging to the 'here and now'), affectivity is

complex and lasts in time (memories are proof of that); it implies the participation of conscience and a symbolic representation.

In Biodanza the line of affectivity has its preferred expression in love. The pathological forms of affectivity express themselves in self-destructive impulses, in social discrimination, in racism, in injustice. Among these a little known form is 'ethical relativism', that consist in justifying infamous actions with intelligent reasoning and that is a typical attitude of individualistic persons and totalitarian governments.

By 'affectivity' I mean a state of profound affinity towards other human beings, capable of bringing about feelings of love, friendship, altruism, motherhood, fatherhood, solidarity. Without doubt, also opposite feelings as anger, jealousy, insecurity and envy can be considered components of this complex phenomenon.

In my opinion, however, affectivity is not only the expression of an individual feeling or a subtle form of communication, but is also the manifestation of relational messages in each of us, that predispose the affective bonds among human being; we are actually united by multiple channels of connection, of which we are not aware. This hypothesis of mine has been inspired by some scientific studies:

- the psychotonic dialogue of Julius Fast (13), who demonstrated, attaching sensors for muscle tensions to the bodies of two persons, that just their vicinity changed the level of that tension; this signifies that everyone has, with respect to the other, a relaxing or a tensing effect;
- tomographic studies carried out with couples during kissing, caressing or the sexual act have revealed changes on all neurophysiological levels: changes in the equilibrium of the autonomic nervous system, in the level of endocrine secretion and in the action of the neurotransmitters, also modifications of cellular metabolism and repercussions on the immune defenses.

The fact that the sole presence of a person provokes modifications in the muscle tone and at the neurophysiological level indicates that there exist an affective *continuum* among human beings. The interesting thing is that these changes reveal distinct levels of reciprocity. I can suggest that the perception of the other provokes responses that comprise the totality of the organism, and not only the emotions. Human beings are 'organs for receiving and sending affectivity'. As a rule, this phenomenon is unconscious, and it is therefore that people love without really knowing why.

The opinion of J.J. Lopez Ibor (14), according to whom people install themselves in others organs, is not just a metaphor,: in reality it is the result of his clinical experience in psychopathology that informs him on the reciprocal influence that people exercise among themselves, changing specific organic functions (for example, one of his patients suffered liver problems when his mother-in-law stayed in his house; the subsequent departure of this 'toxic' person brought about a noticeable amelioration of health).

The movement of love from an individual towards another is of the same nature as the infinite movement of cosmic energy that fights to express itself in our desperate lives, in the midst of fratricidal wars and often inadequate cultural modes.

Some people ask themselves questions about the significance of life, about politics and the laws of nature. The significance of life is implicit, it is in the act itself of living, without any final purpose<sup>58</sup>. This act itself of living, the act of connecting ourselves, is nothing but a hesitant step on the long road of love.

#### Line of transcendence

Also the line of transcendence has a biological origin and an instinctive infrastructure: the phenomena of tropism and of biological resonance that integrate ecological systems constitute the conditions of life itself. The search for harmonization with nature in its totality is an organic function: this culminates in the supreme experience of identification with the universe. The mystic impulse is visceral, and such an experience provokes profound modifications in the homeostasis both on the organic level, and on the existential level.

In Biodanza, the concept of 'transcendence' refers to the surmounting of the force of the own I and

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58 N.T.: R.T writes: apart from any teleology.

to the possibility of going further than self-perception, to identify oneself with the unity of nature and the essence of persons.

The routes that bring to a wider and deeper awareness of reality are various. Religion, art, and science search, through their own means, the way that can lead to the unified knowledge of man and the universe.

The saint seeks the unification and the 'connection' in contemplation and in love.

The sage becomes the humble servant of the movement of nature. To be able to know it, he must respect its course, describe its morphology and listen to its secret palpitations.

The artist, for his part, tries to reveal the internal realities that, after all, are cosmic realities. He thus becomes a lucid instrument of forces of organization and creation that manifest themselves to him in an imperative way. The artist puts himself to the test as co-participant of universal creation. More than an innovator that constructs, he is a woman in labor or a revealer of occult forms and harmonies. His work consists in transforming 'chaos' into 'cosmos'.

The effects of Biodanza in the sphere of transcendence shine a new light on the mystic experience of the totality.

The sensation of intimate bonds with nature and with others is a culminating experience that one tries only a few times in life. To experience it even just one time, permits the changing of one's attitude towards oneself and towards others. 'Knowing with certainty' that we are not isolated beings, that we participate in the unifying movement of the cosmos, is an experience sufficient to shift our scale of values. But this 'knowing with certainty' is not intellectual: it is moving and transcendent.

The possibility of reaching a superior state of consciousness, in which everyone can liberate themselves from mental and emotional habits that have alienated them, is rare for the people of this civilization, that are obsessed, oppressed by standardization, sick of the tension they have to support, and tyrannized by mechanization.

This suggests that the practice of Biodanza as an access to the experience of the totality represents a great hope for humanity and constitutes, from an anthropological perspective, a remarkable conquest in the human evolutionary process. Its importance surpasses the clinical field and that of psychiatric research to span anthropology, pedagogy, art and the other sectors of culture.

### The *protovivencia*

The five lines of *vivencia* all find their origin in the original, intrauterine, experience, defined by Jung<sup>59</sup> as 'oceanic experience'. The differentiation<sup>60</sup> of this experience starts in the *protovivencia*, the experiences of the newborn during the first six months of life, characterized by its primary responses to internal and external stimuli. Such responses are learnt, and leave an imprint on which the subsequent *vivencia* grow.

The *protovivencia* are related to rapid learning, or *flash learning*, that occurs during the very early period in life. This was studied by N. Tinbergen (15) in small babies and some animals. In this sense, the *protovivencia* are the first way of learning.

The *protovivencia* of vitality is constituted by movement and the functions of action and rest; the *protovivencia* of sexuality by contact and caresses; that of creativity by expression and curiosity; that of affectivity by nourishment and protection; and that of transcendence by the harmony perceived in confrontations with the surroundings in which the child lives.

The following Table gives a description of the *protovivencia*, of the five lines of *vivencia*, the associated sensations, emotions and feelings and the evolutionary experiences that correspond to each line of *vivencia*.

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59 Is it not rather Freud?

60 Differentiation much used, central to Rolando's evolutionary vision. In developmental biology, cellular differentiation is the process by which a less specialized cell becomes a more specialized cell type. Differentiation occurs numerous times during the development of a multicellular organism as the organism changes from a simple zygote to a complex system of tissues and cell types.



<b>Protovivencia</b>	<b>Line of vivencia</b>	<b>Emotions and feelings</b>	<b>Evolutionary experiences</b>
Movement Vital energy	Vitality	Cheerfulness Vital impetus Enthusiasm	Autonomy
Contact Caresses	Sexuality	Desire Pleasure	Orgasmic fusion Voluptuousness
Freedom Expression Curiosity	Creativity	Creative exaltation	Artistic creation Scientific creation
Protection (security) Nourishment (food)	Affectivity	Tenderness Love Friendship	Altruism
Harmony (harmonious relation with the environment) Free breathing	Transcendence	Bliss Serenity	Ecstasy

Table 3. The *protovivencia* and their evolutionary development

### The evolutionary development of the genetic potentialities

In addition to the closed circuits of homeostatic equilibrium and of neurohormonal regulation, man possesses those of creation and evolution making his existence a free and singular adventure. From the genetic potentialities and the stimuli of the environment, the evolutionary process generates its differentiation. When the environment prevents development, three types of disturbances can take place:

an obstruction of the potentiality, an arrest of the evolutionary process (for example, the absence of sexual desire or of creativity);

a disorganization (instead of maintaining itself, the homeostasis gets lost and becomes a decline of the evolutionary process, examples of which are auto-immune diseases, cancer and schizophrenia);

a dissociation (the homeostasis maintains itself, but at the cost of neuroses and psychosomatic illnesses).

Biodanza stimulates and promotes evolutionary development strengthening the expression of the genetic potentials represented by the five lines of *vivencia*. By means of specific exercises for each line and by facilitating the contact with profound identity, it liberates from the masks and roles that the culture imposes. This whole process happens in the field of the group. It is not a matter of a solitary development, but is through the other and with the other.

The evolution of each line of *vivencia* leads to specific emotions and feelings. The normal individual develops all of the five lines; if only one of these is absent or atrophied, he is deficient and can show psychosomatic symptoms.

In Biodanza the process of integration and development is accomplished by carrying out specific exercises to stimulate the lines of *vivencia* that have not progressed. Some individuals have strengthened some lines at the expense of others: thus, for example, some people have developed the line of transcendence through mystic experiences, to the detriment of the line of sexuality; others have favored this last line, neglecting the affective one. The study of the development of the

five lines of *vivencia* permits the formulation of the prescriptions necessary for each person.

## Integration

The integration of a system is the ensemble of processes that put the parts in correlation with the whole, that assure the unity of the system and that tend to increase its stability. One could say that each atom, every molecule of a living system obeys the orientation and the strong inertia of the processes of regulation that keep the organic equilibrium stable.

From the concept of 'integration' one could deduce a provisory definition of health and of illness:

the healthy organism would be the one that welcomes the eco-factors which strengthen its unity and refuses those that put it in danger;

the sick organism instead would be the one that, by lack of deep biological selectivity, refuses the eco-factors which could assure its stability and welcomes those that put it in danger.

In this sense, the important thing would not only be protection from the agents that threaten the unity, but also to increase the number of eco-factors which strengthen the intrinsic stability of the system.

In Biodanza the process of integration is realized through the stimulation of the primordial functions of connection with life, which allow each individual to direct itself, with an intense selective force towards forms of action that strengthen its development and integrate it with itself, with the species and with the cosmos.

## Integration and dissociation

When the components of a system are not integrated among each other one speaks of 'dissociation'. 'Integration' and 'dissociation' are opposite terms from a functional point of view; the integration proposed in Biodanza comes from observations on the various levels of dissociation of contemporary people.

Dissociation is the separation of the parts within a totality; from the point of view of Gestalt (16), this means the loss of relations between the parts and the whole.

Dissociation of the organism represents the various levels of disintegration of the organic unity; it is a matter of an illness, of a disturbance of the living system. This expresses itself as a separation and can objectively be detected in the body, while integration expresses itself as an intimate union, and is tantamount to health.

## Dissociations

Dissociations arise as responses to certain inner conflicts, and even though they depict a personal element, these are characteristic of the whole humanity, since the disagreement with oneself is a sign of the 'cultural' man. The neurotic is only a specific case of an individual in conflict with himself/herself, who tries to reconcile internally the nature-culture combination.

The dissociations at the corporal level reflect a psychic dissociation. Actually psychic discomforts can often be diagnosed clinically through the simple observation of the posture adopted by the individual and by his bodily movements.

Dissociations can manifest themselves at the motor<sup>61</sup> level, at the sensory-motor, the affective-motor and ideo-motor level. The motor dissociations consist in experiencing one's own body not as an integrated unity, but in isolated parts. The sensory, affective and ideo-motor dissociations indicate a psychic dissociation that if reflected in the motor behavior; objectively, it means thinking, feeling and acting in a split way. Such behavior generally derives from excessive sense of guilt and fear of punishment for transgressions of cultural values.

One of the gravest dissociations of our civilization is that between affectivity and abstract thought.

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<sup>61</sup> Motor pertains to muscular motion, to movement.

Such dissociations are at the origin of ideologies; and from it spring either ethical relativism, or cruel and inhuman behaviors.

#### *The most frequent corporal dissociations*

Dissociation of the face (contrast between the look and the smile).

Dissociation of the face and the rest of the body ( dissociation between thinking and feeling. For example: great mobility of the body accompanied by an indifferent facial expression).

Dissociation of the arms and the torso ( dissociation between feeling and acting. For example: inauthenticity, inconsistency).

Dissociation of the arm and the forearm.

Dissociation of the hands and the rest of the arm.

Dissociation of the upper and the lower part of the body, beginning from the waist. It indicates conflicts between sexual inclinations and moral concepts. The upper part is seen as sublime, while the lower part is considered degrading.

Dissociation torso-legs (is related to conformist adaptation to norms. Reveals inauthenticity and formalism).

Dissociation between knees and legs.

Dissociation between the left part and the right part ( emotional enhancement of one part).

Dissociation front-back (defensive tension of the back).

Dissociation between the vertebral column and the rest of the body. The tension of the muscles that keep the column straight indicates chronic self-affirmation and inflation of the I. Inversely, the relaxation of the same muscles indicates deflation of the I and repression.

Dissociation between the distant and the near parts (separation between peripheral and central movements).

Dissociation of the synergy of the walk (alteration of the reflex movements of the arms).

Independent movements of each finger of the hand (schizophrenia).

Local dissociations due to neurological lesions or to a partial destruction of the motor apparatus.

Dissociations of the body correspond to psychic dissociations, and vice versa.

#### *Dissociations of the organism*

There are various levels of dissociation of the organism. Here are some selected examples:

Dissociation of the perception of the surface of the body in relation to the depth. It can happen that the cenesthetic sensibility is altered, and that the internal organs are perceived with an excessive intensity. This usually happens in hypochondria.

Dissociation cortex-hypothalamus, described by Juan Rof Carballo <sup>17</sup>(17). According to this author, the cause for such dissociations is found in the abandonment by the mother during the first few month of life. The disturbance is translated into the ineffectiveness of the modulating and integrating functions of the neocortex in confronting the impulses that come from the archaic brain. It occurs in psychopathy and schizophrenia.

Dissociation of the genetic functions of growth and cellular duplication in relation to the organism in its totality. It shows up in cancer and in certain skin diseases, as for example psoriasis.

Psychomotor dissociations. Schizophrenia is characterized by very deep psychic and motor dissociations. Various mental functions separate from the totality of the living system and lose their coherence. The sick person disconnects from himself and from the external reality. The motor skills can dissociate from the instinctive impulses, from the cenesthetic sensibility, from the affects, from sensory perception and from ideas.

#### *Existential dissociations*

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1 7 J.Rof Carballo *Urdimbre afectiva y enfermedad*, in *Introducción a una medicina dialógica*, Labor, Barcelona, 1961.

It is possible to distinguish four forms of existential dissociation, recognizable by various motor and psychological signals. They are listed here:

- 1 Psychosomatic dissociation.
- 2 Dissociation between life and work.
- 3 Dissociation between the individual and the species.
- 4 Dissociation between the individual and nature.

The diagnosis of dissociations enables the establishment of the therapeutic prescriptions to be followed in Biodanza.

### **Differentiation**

Psychological and neurophysiological models used correctly in clinical medicine and in psychosomatic medicine enable the comprehension of important mechanisms of the functioning of the living human system. The schema of homeostasis of Walter Cannon (18) permits the explanation of the stability and equilibrium of the organism; the schema of Ivan Pavlov (19), the mechanism of stimulus-response and the principles of conditioning; the model of the 'general adaptation syndrome' GAS of Hans Selye (20), the hormonal system implicit in stress. In the comprehension of the relations between organism and environment, all these models bring decisive changes; they are however not sufficient because they take into consideration only the system of reactions to modifications in the environment, excluding the various factors of elaboration and of internal adaptation that each organism develops in conformity with its genetic code.

If one sticks to the cited schemata, the responses of an organism to the environment would be nothing but the result of mechanisms of stimulus-response, of self-regulation and of biochemical equilibrium and neurological compensation. What would be missing is the endogenous factor, the modification of the responses provoked by the potentiality of the individual, his/her genetic history and his/her biography. It is the endogenous factor that ensures a differentiated and evolutionary character to the overall responses towards the world.

The insufficiency of the considered models can be understood historically, if one thinks about the fact that man has shifted his center of gravity towards outside himself. Indeed, cultural values, religious or ideological authority, prejudicial ideas and socio-economic demands exercise such pressure on the functioning of human life that the functional center of gravity had to move from inside to outside. The phenomenon of alienation does not just belong to the field of sociology, but involves the most profound organic structures.

In Biodanza, the center of gravity is put back inside of man, by considering his creative potentialities, his interior dimension, his biographic destiny, without disregarding the mechanisms of biological adaptation by this. According to the theoretical model of Biodanza, man does not suffer an inevitable destiny determined by the closed circuits of homeostatic equilibrium and the circuits of neurohormonal regulation.

Beyond the functions of adaptation and self-regulation, he possesses those of creativity and evolution. It is really the evolutionary process that, starting from the genetic and biographic potentialities, creates his differentiation. Through the route of creation or struggle, consciously or desperately, man comes to fulfill the expectations that are born from plain functional structures of adaptation. Taking off from his own structure of selection, he goes forward with passion in open circuits, with all the risks that this entails, towards an unknown world, unforeseeable and often uncontrollable.

The theoretical model of Biodanza therefore takes into consideration the closed circuits of stability and adaptation, as well as the open circuits of evolution and differentiation.

*Evolutionary differentiation and selective differentiation*

Through the process of selective differentiation the organism modifies itself in accordance with the combined actions of the genetic impulses, of learning and of the choices of consciousness. Selective differentiation designates a biographical process that depends on the individual selective structure. Through the process of evolutionary differentiation the organism transforms itself, in harmony with the internal laws, faced with an environment that does or does not stimulate its genetic potentiality. One could define evolutionary differentiation as an ideal process of transformation in connection with the species.

### *Differentiation and dissociation*

The response of the body can be differentiated or instead dissociated.

Dissociation is always a sign of a deviation from the functional unity of the organism. Differentiation, on the other hand, always represents a harmonic variation in connection with the totality of the organism. Each differentiation demands the presence of integrating tendencies.

The case of the schizophrenic whose fingers move spasmodically without any relation to a unified movement, is an example of dissociation. The dance of the hysteric done with great movements of the body and an indifferent expression of the face is another example.

The face of an individual in a state of voodoo trance, with the eyes out of orbit, the lips tight and the corners of the mouth downwards, while the limbs of his body agitate in convulsive uncoordinated movements, reveals neuromotor dissociations at various levels.

The chronic dissociation of certain muscles facilitates the dissociation of the motor system. Thus there are forms of psychic dissociation that project themselves onto motor behavior. Many persons think, feel or act in dissociated ways: thus, for example they have a wish to eat and refuse the food.

The differentiated motor response is very different. It appears in an expressive dance at the moment that all the limbs unite in service of a potent emotional impulse even while performing diverse, rich and varied movements. Other examples of differentiation are given by a grand pianist who with one hand plays a melody and simultaneously with the other the accompaniment, in a way that produces an effect of a harmonious and coherent whole, or of the percussionist who enriches a simple rhythm with more complex and varied elements without losing the unifying tempo.

The differentiated response therefore requires the presence of a unifying principle. The dissociation is the testimony of the dramatic loss of the unity of the system. One could consider that each form of dissociation in human beings, whether it pertains to the cosmic or the social dimension or simply the organic, is the expression of a pathology and that, inversely, each pathological process starts from a dissociation. Contrariwise, differentiation that derives from a rhythmic tempo, an image, an idea, or a function, always represents an evolutionary process of integrated development.

## The continuum identity-regression

### The identity

The revision of the concept of 'identity' is the principal task of contemporary philosophy. When the classical principle of identity expounded by Plato in the formula 'A=A' was surpassed by Martin Heidegger (1) in the formula 'A is A', subsequently studied by Jean Piaget (2) in the field of psychology and by Erik H. Erikson (3) in that of sociology, it became evident that the concept of identity hid unexpected riches. The two paradoxes regarding the identity make of this concept an enigma that seems unfathomable.

1. The identity only manifests itself through the other. This proposition overtakes in depth and in dynamism the ancient distinction between the Self and the other that was influenced by neoplatonism and Cartesianism.

2. The identity possesses an invariant essence that nevertheless transforms itself constantly, except for its spatiotemporal dimension.

The definition of S. Fischer and S.E. Cleveland (4) according to whom the identity is “the experience of oneself as center of the perception of the world” works, but does not but minimally deepen the dynamics of this concept.

The ‘process of individuation’ of Carl Gustav Jung (5) (the search for the Self in the labyrinth of the existential choices) has the dynamism of genetic conceptions, but suffers from the solipsism typical of all jungian theory.

The Anglo-Saxon individualism has declared holy the conviction ‘I am I’ as expression of the identity. This conception of man has been overcome by the ideas of E. Pichon-Rivière (6) and Martin Buber (7) who have actually shown the reality of ‘We’: we do not exist as isolated creatures, but we are fundamentally ‘relationals’.

The integration ‘I-You’ and the formulation of the concept of ‘We’ by Martin Buber also represent an enrichment of the concept of identity and go beyond the conceptions of the I proposed by Sigmund Freud (8), Otto Fenichel (9), Eric Berne (10) and Fritz Perls (11), which remain prisoners of the platonic schema already surpassed by Heidegger.

The ideas of Jacques Lacan (12) on the structuring of the identity in the ‘mirror phase’, during which the child supposedly has the early experience of itself, find themselves complemented by those of René Spitz (13), according to whom this takes place much earlier, at the time of the initial affective contact with the mother.

Two components are involved in the genesis of the identity: one hereditary, that furnishes the potentiality of differentiation, and one acquired, relative to the environment, that is at the origin of the tactile, cenesthetic and visual structures.

In my opinion, the importance that Jacques Lacan (14) attributes to language in the structuring of the identity must be taken into consideration, but should not mask the primary antecedents: the *protovivencia* and the preverbal languages.

Without doubt, the scholars that have contributed most to enriching the concept of ‘identity’ during the past century were Martin Heidegger (15), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (16) and Jean Piaget (17).

Psychology in the twentieth century has carried out its researches around the concept of the ‘I’ and the study of the personality, within an individualist perspective. Most recent developments have instead lead to a vision of the identity of an individual as an essential part of the identity of the others with whom he coexists; in this perspective, the preceding concepts of the ‘I’ and of ‘personality’ seem to be almost without meaning. Still, for many scholars the concept of ‘We’ is inconceivable as a psychological category. The access to ‘We’ requires a systematic and holistic perception, referring, that is to say, to the reciprocal relations between the parts and the whole, and between the whole and the parts of a living system. For example, the ‘I’ is present in the ‘You’ and vice versa: it is not about establishing communication with the other, but about the real fact that the one forms a part of the other. Therefore what happens to the others happens to myself within a universe of essential participation. In my opinion, the notion of ‘I’ referring to the individualistic concept of man constitutes a fundamental dissociation that denies the ‘We’ of Martin Buber. I reckon that the psychology of the future will work, rather than with the concept of ‘I’, with that of ‘identity’, that today is so complex, mysterious and unknown as was that of the atom in 1925. I will

nevertheless try to develop a reflection on the concept of 'identity', with all the risks that such an intellectual adventure implies.

My considerations about the subject have taken as a starting point the concept of 'genetic differentiation', which refers to the biological potentialities assuring the process of natural selection and evolution.

This differentiation is intimately linked to the mechanisms of visceral self-regulation, homeostasis, organic correlation and immune defense that are dedicated both to the conservation of the unity of the individual and to its survival. In this way, that which has been called 'angst' or 'fear of life' would be nothing else but the expression of a biological crisis of these mechanisms.

The fundamental *vivencia* of the identity appears as the feeling of 'being alive', that comes from within. The intense and moving sensation of being a living being, generated from the unity of the organism, constitutes the earliest experience of the identity. Although having a visceral origin, it would be constantly influenced by the endogenous mood and by external stimulation.

Two differentiated stages could derive from this *vivencia*: one relating to the first notion of own's own body; the other relating to the first notions of the fact of being different.

### **The first notions about one's own body**

The perception of one's own body evolves with time, following the various ways of 'feeling oneself as oneself' (being in the world). Several experiences organize structures that can be summarized in two patterns:

the body as source of pleasure;  
the body as source of pain and suffering.

The pattern of response of the body as a source of pleasure can be stimulated by oneself; it is linked to sexuality. The two patterns (source of pleasure and source of pain) develop a very stable structure of selectivity, which permits the individual to know what he desires and to search for its self-fulfillment

### **The first notions of the fact of being different**

These notions are born from the contact with the group. The identity becomes manifest in the mirror of other identities. The first notions of the fact of being different lead to the conscience of one's own singularity and to the act of thinking of oneself facing the world. The 'thinking oneself' shapes the self-image, which gives rise to behavioral tendencies with respect to both personal expectations, and to the acts for realizing these. These behaviors are not self-regulated, as they function in relation to specific patterns of motivation of which one can be fully or partially aware.

### **The esteem of oneself**

The *vivencia* of one's own worth and of self-acceptance is complex; it comes from the sensation of being alive, from feeling oneself to be oneself, from feeling the body as source of pleasure and from knowing what one desires, from considering oneself unique and singular, from thinking oneself, from assuming one's own self-image and from deciding on its praxis.

Between knowing what one desires and doing it comes the process of self-realization and existential self-creation.

From the first notion of the body and from the first notion of being different emerges the consciousness of oneself. This consciousness of oneself generates instinctive response patterns of fight, flight, gentleness and ecstatic rapture, and also rational patterns of roles.

The complexity of the components and structures of the identity is what makes this, in a certain sense, a notion that is inaccessible and difficult to handle. If one follows the 'Dynamic schema of

the identity' (see Figure 5) one discovers a way of access to the structures of the identity that one could call the 'royal highway', as it is the instrument that is most subtle and most potent for penetrating in this complex mechanism: *the dance*.

The dance activates the central core of the identity: the moving sensation of being alive.

The first notions of the body and the perception of it as a source of pleasure both become actual from this visceral sensation. At the same time, the sensation of being different and unique increases in the contact with other persons. Self-esteem and the consciousness of oneself rise to unusual levels. The tendency to perceive oneself as 'being-in-the-world', as an integral part of a whole, enters into resonance with the self-image and the sensation of being different and unique.

To feel alive by means of the other and with the other, yet holding one's own characteristics in high esteem, has the effect of strengthening all the circuits of the healthy identity, as well as the vitality.

During the exercises of Biodanza, the participant is, more than ever, him or herself; respected, valued, loved and accepted. He/she feels his/her body as a source of pleasure, and at the same time, as potential of creative expression.

### Identity and music

I can, in a given moment, identify myself with Händel's *Halleluja*. What does that mean? Simply that I let myself be transported by this musical movement in order to reduce to such an extent the distance between the music and the very perception of myself, that the border external-internal is abolished.

So I am no longer listening to the *Hallelujah*, but 'I am the music'. This phenomenon should be the paradigm of our meditation on 'identity'. From a phenomenological examination of it, one can already deduce its quality, evanescent and presumable at the same time, as if being and not being would barely be fixed by an act of consciousness that opens itself and closes again to reality. In my opinion, the ontology of Martin Heidegger has remained incomplete, because he has not found the opening through musical identification. I think that the center of attention for the elaboration of an ontology should be directed towards a musical ecstasy, because music is the form by excellence in which consciousness transforms in *vivencia* and the *vivencia* returns to consciousness. In the same way, it is the phenomenon of musical identification that makes accessible the comprehension of the unity body-soul, of the psychosomatic *continuum* and of the visceral filiation of poetic language.

### The healthy identity

Here some characteristics of a healthy identity are listed:

- absence of gratuitous (uncalled-for) aggression;
- capacity to put a limit to external aggression;
- capacity to flee faced with a superior force (instinct of survival);
- capacity for intimacy;
- stability faced with difficulties;
- absence of a spirit of competition;
- absence of authoritarianism;
- high level of vitality;
- creative capacity;
- perception of oneself as a creature carrying an intrinsic worth;
- perception of the similar (fellow man) as unique, different and carrier of an intrinsic worth;
- motor functions characterized by equilibrium, vigor and synergy.

		<b>Genetic Potential</b>		
	First notions of	SENSATION	OF	First notions of



	the body	LIFE (endogenous)	being different	
CONTACT AND CARESSES	Feeling oneself	CONSCIOUSNESS of ONESELF	Thinking oneself	CREATIVE EXPRESSION – WILL- ACTION-ADAPTATION
	The body as a source of pleasure or pain	SELF-ESTEEM	SELF-image	
	Selectivity (knowing what one desires)	PATTERNS of RESPONSE	Decision to act	
TROPHOTROPE (restoration)		SELF-REALIZATION EXISTENTIAL SELF-CREATION		ERGOTROPE (fight/flight)
	Fascination adaptation affect		Creativity sexuality	

Figure 5. Dynamic schema of the identity

## The trance

The term ‘trance’ comes from the latin *transire* which means ‘to pass’.

Its meaning indicates a change of the state of consciousness that is always accompanied by cenesthetic modifications. The expressions ‘falling into trance’ and entering into trance’ refer to a physiological mechanism through which the individual enters into a state of extreme receptivity and abandons him/herself to internal and external forces, with the partial or total loss of his/her own identity.

A natural form of trance is the dream, in which one loses one’s own identity to identify with the characters that appear in it, and that, after all, are entities of the unconscious.

The phenomenon of trance can be achieved in various ways. The persuasive effect of rhythm has been used back from the origin of humanity to reach the experience of trance. The sense of communion gained through the dance provokes a regression towards the primary stages, accompanied by a loss of personal identity. The trance is a frequent and even daily experience in religious dances and in the shamanic ceremonies of all the primitive peoples of the world.

There are other ways to provoke the trance: for example, suggestion and individual or collective hypnosis, mediumistic self-induction, the guided dream and certain orgiastic dances.

In Biodanza, the trance becomes induced through a process of deep identification with the music, in which the individual lets him/herself be transported by the musical movement in order to annul the perception of the boundary between the external and the internal and ‘to become the music’.

## Integrating trance and psychotic trance

Music and dance can therefore induces changes in the perception of the body and states of trance with the loss of one’s identity. This process can be described phenomenologically and can be induced for experimental and clinical ends. The pathological variations of the perception of the body, as well as the serious alterations of the identity implicit in psychotic trance, should not be confused with the modifications of consciousness induced by music inside a therapeutic group. So it

is necessary to define the important difference that exists between the *integrating trance* and the *psychotic trance*. This enables one to understand and distinguish the psychic dynamism of the various forms of trance practiced in different cultures.

### The integrating trance

The integrating trance is a state in which the Ego is reduced; the perception of the body is harmonious, the muscle tensions disappear, the corporal sensibility moves towards the skin which becomes ultra sensitive.

It is frequent in healthy persons; the trance that leads to sleep and to the happy dream and which brings lovers towards communion in sexual ecstasy are examples of integrating trance.

Also mystic trances, accompanied by emotional bliss and by supreme physical wellbeing, can be considered integrating.

The state of trance reached by the practice of Biodanza is, without doubt, integrating: the anguish and the anxiety disappear, the individual experiences a physical wellbeing beyond comparison and a sensation of intensity and love for life that is difficult to describe. The limit of the body becomes infinite, the body acquires an evanescent quality, it is voluptuously receptive. In certain moments the ecstasy is so intense that the musical stimuli are perceived as pleasurable discharges that run through the whole body. Furthermore, a sentiment appears of fraternity with everything that exists.

During the *vivencia* of musical trance induced by Biodanza, the one that dances 'is' the music: s/he opens her/himself to her/his joyous unifying lines, charges her/himself with vital energy that is preserved also at the moment that s/he recuperates his/her identity. In the course of this process, the tired or ill body renews itself.

In Biodanza the trance happens within a group that is structured, permissive and very welcoming. The state of trance is thus a group phenomenon through which the individual abandons him/herself to the others.

### The psychotic trance

The psychotic trances or those of toxic origin are linked with serious alterations of the perception of the body, that in extreme cases, take the form of cenesthetic hallucinations.

The perception of one's own body is a *vivencia* that changes. In normal persons, the variations of the corporal perception are moderate and never chronic, whereas in the mentally ill one can observe profound specific alterations, that are localized and that tend to become chronic. The normal individual perceives the different regions and organs of his body with an intensity that varies with the physiological and psychological circumstances. Sometimes the attention will be focussed on the hands, at other times on the stomach or on the sex.

The variations of the corporal perceptions are very intense in the neurotic and the psychotic; one has been able to find this out both on the basis of statements of the ill themselves, of certain experiments and of specific psychological tests, and through plastic expressions: paintings, drawings, engravings, sculptures. The images of the body plastically represented by ill persons constitute a particularly valid testimony for research on the alterations of the corporal perception.

### Alterations of the perceptions of the body during the psychotic trance

The perception of the body implies two complementary aspects:

the body as it is known;

the body as it is experienced.

The first aspect refers to the cognitive activity and has been scrupulously studied by J. Piaget (18), Herman A. Witkin (19), Seymour Wapner and Heinz Werner (20). The second refers to affective activity and has been studied by H. Wallon (21), R. Spitz (22), S. Fischer and S.E. Cleveland (23).

### The body as it is known

The knowledge of one's own body manifests itself through the corporal schema, that is, the mental image that each individual has of his or her body and its appearance. According to Juan Rof Carballo, (24) the corporal scheme is the image that the individual forms of himself, and of the offensive-defensive opposition with the rest of the social world.

This image changes during life. The little child begins to discover his corporal schema little by little, in contact with other children or adults, through processes of identification. Jacques Lacan (25) asserts that at the moment in which the child begins to contemplate its image in the mirror, the perception of the Ego and narcissism arise. Persons that keep themselves physically distasteful suffer from the 'narcissistic wound'. According to Paul Schilder (26), the mental image of the corporal schema derives from complex impressions; those that come from the sensory organs; emotional and erotic impressions; the motor activity; the perception of pain; the states of anguish and depression. The corporal schema can become integrated or dissociated depending on the personal experience of life; in schizophrenia, for example, the ill person suffers serious disturbances relative to the perception of his or her corporal schema; in states of trance the limits of it are lost.

Studies on the corporal schema have attributed great importance to the stimuli coming from the vestibular system as decisive factors in the organization of the corporal schema (27); these stimuli enable us to determine the positions of our body and its direction in space. H.A. Witkin (28), S. Wapner and H. Werner (29) have concentrated their research on the question of the interdependency between the alterations produced in the positions of the body and the indices of the referential visual perception. In a series of experiments, they have demonstrated that both the length of a limb and the size of the head are overestimated when they are in an open space. They conclude from this that the perception of the internal world depends on that of the external world, and the other way around.

#### The body as it is experienced

The investigations of R. Spitz (30) have demonstrated that there are levels of organization and disorganization of corporal perception, which correspond to levels of organization of the affective functions. While the cognitive relations are based on the sensory-motor schemas influenced by spatiotemporal references, the affective schemas are based on sensory-visceral and direct sensory-motor mechanisms, and never become completely independent from the reactions of the muscular tone nor from the postural ones that enable their expression.

R. Spitz asserts that the system of the Ego as corporal Ego begins at the end of the third month of life, an opinion that coincides with the ideas of a large number of psychoanalysts. But according to J. Piaget (31) this would not develop before the second year. For A. Gesell (32), the perception of the body as something isolated from the environment occurs in the twenty-eighth month of life, when the child sucks the big toes of its feet.

The research of S. Fischer and S.E. Cleveland (33) has brought out the interdependence of the cognitive and the affective activity in the organization of the perception and the knowledge of the body. The limit of the body, given by the skin and by the muscular structure, is felt in a different way by each individual, and its permanence or its disorganization depends on affective maturing.

An affective disturbance that interferes in the cognitive activity of a person can provoke a disequilibrium in his or her corporal schema; the other way around, a disturbance of the sensory-motor and cognitive functions will have a repercussion of the affectivity.

All the alterations of the perception of the body that appear in the mentally ill, either slight or profound, indicate an insufficient level of integration in the cognitive-affective integration. Thanks to studies carried out on hundreds of ill persons suffering from discomforts of asomatognosia<sup>62</sup> or of cenesthetic hallucinations, and to the registrations of their comments on the corporal sensations before during and after the session of Biodanza and also to the observation of their drawings and paintings, I have been able to achieve the following classification of the disturbances of the corporal

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62 A deficiency in the awareness of parts on one's own body.

perception during the psychotic trance:

alteration of the consistency;  
alteration of the integrity;  
alteration of the form;  
alteration of the dimension;  
alteration of the dynamism;  
alteration of the weight;  
alteration of the temperature.

#### Alteration of the consistency

The body is perceived as composed of inanimate and homogeneous matter: chalk, wood, plastic, air, stone, glass, snow, hollow forms, silhouettes, etcetera. The corporal consistency is changed. The living content has been replaced by inert material.

The variations in the consistency are deeply related to those of the mood. They appear principally in pathologies like depression, hypochondria, neuroses of anxiety (distress), manic-depressive psychoses and schizophrenia.

One who studies the psychopathology of expression cannot not be struck by this fact: the alterations of the corporal schema in the plastic work of certain psychotics and certain artists show the same patterns of disequilibrium and of breakage of the schema of the body. It is not a question of confronting the works of a mentally ill with those of an artist, as the differences on both the aesthetic and the motivational level are evident, but about establishing the pathognomic parameters that these present. Certain artists belonging to pop-art and to hyperrealism, that fabricate sculptures in papier mâché, in plastic, in metal en in plaster, show the oppressing *vivencia* of the alteration of consistency.

Expressing him- or herself just by means of the material, the artist speaks of the man that mixes himself, undifferentiated, with the world, and communicates his inanity to us. He/she projects him- or herself into a terrifying dimension, because the real and living, the human, transforms him/herself into a ghost of pure matter.

When the schizophrenic expresses the alterations of the consistency in a verbal and plastic way, he asks for help; he tries to communicate the dreadful *vivencia* of inanity.

The alterations of the consistency reveal an impoverishment of the content of the identity and a fall into inanity. The corporal perception has lost all its nuances, as if the proprioceptors that allow the cenesthetic perception have been disconnected.

#### Alterations of the integrity

These have their origin in the partial or total loss of the perception of the corporeal and psychophysical unity. The corporeal scheme is experienced as divided, separated into disconnected parts. The alterations of the integrity can be subdivided into various groups.

*Spatial division*: the body is perceived as separated transversally at the level of the waist, with a superior part (sublime moral connotation) and an inferior one (degrading moral connotation). Another type of spatial division is the vertical separation of the body, with a sinister left side (unfavorable) and a deft right one (favorable). There is finally the frontal division of the corporeal scheme, with an anterior zone (of confrontation) and a posterior zone (of persecution). These three types of spatial division of the corporeity appear especially in certain clinical cases: for example the frontal division in the sensory delirium of self reference and in schizophrenia.

*Exaggerated separation of one organ within a corporeal scheme*: this type of alteration is characterized by perception centered on an organ that acquires prominence in a chronic way. This disturbance can be due to an organic illness, to a localized psychosomatic tension, or to hypochondria.

*Corporeal incoherence*: the corporeal scheme is experienced in a fragmented way, as if it were traversed by lines that break its continuity and give rise to incongruous forms (for example an arm that ends in the form of pliers). This alteration appears in schizophrenia.

*Expressive incoherence*: in the expression of the face a split transpires (for example, sad eyes and laughing mouth). This alteration of the integrity occurs in schizophrenia, in hysteria, in depression and in toxic psychosis.

*Disaggregation, breaking-up*: the body becomes perceived as disintegrated in multiple fragments. These alterations appear in certain toxic psychoses and in schizophrenia.

*Mutilation*: the body becomes perceived as torn to pieces, fragmented, castrated. Separated limbs and stumps are typical of the symbolism of this alteration, that happens in states of profound frustration and moral pain, in anxious reactive depression and in schizophrenia.

#### Alteration of the form

The body is experienced as deformed, disproportioned and completely transfigured. Among these types of alterations one can cite:

exaggeration of the organs;

nihilism (absence of the organs);

variations of the number of organs (one eye, two noses, six arms);

transformation into animals;

transformations into plants and objects;

transformations into monsters, demons and other teratological entities.

The alterations of the form appear in schizophrenia, in oligophrenia, in states of anxiety, in neuroses of distress, in those of obsession, in epilepsy, in toxic psychoses, in deaf-muteness. It is actually a matter of disturbances of the consciousness of the identity and of space-time perception.

#### Alterations of the dimension

The body is experienced as enlarged (titanic, omnipotent) or reduced (small, of minimal dimensions). These alterations show themselves in the disturbances of self-esteem, in states of panic and terror, in depression, in manic-depressive psychoses, in toxic psychosis and in schizophrenia. These alterations of the dimension are caused by disturbances in the perception of the own identity. Self-esteem and the appreciation of the other are distorted.

#### Alterations of dynamism

The body is experienced by the sick person as something that can neither be directed nor controlled. Among the disturbances of dynamism we can cite: rigidity, spasticity, contraction, excessive slowness, the uncontrolled tendency to move oneself, paralyses, etcetera.

The body is portrayed as a robot, a scarecrow, a static figure.

These alterations are produced in states of terror, in neuroses of anxiety, in depression, in manic-depressive psychoses, in epilepsy, and in schizophrenia, and they represent grave disturbances of the functions of the will and of voluntary control. These are really alterations of the 'control of the identity'.

#### Alterations of the weight

The body is felt as something excessively heavy, inert, or to the contrary as without weight, light, ethereal. These alterations are linked to disturbances of moods (depression, euphoria) and of the experience of the contact with the reality.

#### Alterations of the temperature

The body is perceived as cold, totally, "as if there were ice in the bones", or in certain localized

area: the hands, the head, the sex, the feet. At times instead it is experienced as something hot: the sick person feels feverish “ as if a ball of fire is circulating through my body”, or also “as if I am burning myself”.

The cenesthetic sensations of cold are to be related to the sentiments of isolation and of abandonment, of need for love and contact; those of heat are sometimes related to sexual deliriums. The cenesthetic alterations of temperature have a relation with affectivity, Eros and alterations of the autonomous nervous system.

#### The various types of trance

The genesis of many forms of trance belongs to the haitian and african voodoo cults, to the *candomblé* (34) and to the afro-brasilian macumba (35); this is related to the magical-religious context to which these cult forms belong.

The links that unite the voodoo to the religions of Dahomey and Nigeria can be verified with a study of history and of the similarities of their sacred words. It is more difficult instead to explain the subtle analogies that are found with the Sudanese bori (36) and the primitive religions of Ethiopia and Egypt; one observes here an extremely old religious phenomenon in which the trance acquires a universal character.

Possession and trance appear in the most diverse religions of the world, as a phenomenon that presents few variations in its manifestations. With regard to that I have developed a comparative analysis and a psychodynamic study of the various types of trance.

#### Trance of possession

In the voodoo trance, a spirit takes possession of an individual after having driven away the ‘good big angel’, one of the two animas that each person carries in him/herself. The immediate loss of this anima provokes trembling and shaking, phenomena characteristic of the beginning of this type of trance.

When the ‘good angel’ goes away, the individual feels him- or herself invaded by a sensation of total emptiness, as if he/she lost consciousness. So then he/she transforms and becomes not only the receptacle of god, but also his instrument. The personality of the god will express itself, with its behavior and its words. The physiognomic games, the gestures and also the tone of the voice reflect the character and the temperament of the divinity that has descended into the individual.

The possession is thus an invasion and appropriation of the body on the part of a supernatural being; that is why one says that the spirit ‘remounts its horse’ (in this specific case, the body of the possessed).

Table 4. t.b.d.

#### Mediumistic trance

The states of trance obtained in the sessions of spiritism have some affinity with the voodoo, in the sense that the spirit of a dead person takes possession of the body of the medium to answer questions verbally, in writing or with magical procedures.

In this case, therefore, the medium is not stimulated, neither by dance, nor by recourse to rhythms and to music.

#### Collective mystic trance

In the ceremonies of trance of the pentecostal and charismatic churches the believers are possessed by the Holy Spirit. The crowd of the faithful starts the ceremony with prayers, with canticles and and shouts of hallelujah. The collective atmosphere is psyched up with expectations and waits for the manifestation of the Spirit. The believers dance in a state of trance, and finally reach great bliss, serenity and peace.

Some researchers associate these manifestations with hysteria; such judgements have been disproved by clinical studies obtained on the members of these communities.

#### Hypnotic trance

In the individual or collective sessions of suggestion and hypnosis, the subjects delegate their own identity to the hypnotizer. To induce this type of trance sounds of the gong and musical rhythms can be used, even though these are not indispensable: what is most important is the personality of the hypnotizer, his voice, his regard, his gestures.

#### Shamanic trance

In the shamanic ceremonies of the Amazon and Asia, the healer embodies in him-/herself the powers of nature to put into action certain pacts (of intimidation, of domination, of exorcism, of healing).

So, during the trance, the body of the shaman is 'inhabited' by some animal 'divinity' (tiger, crocodile, etcetera) or by other expressions of nature made divine (the wind, the mountain, the sea); the characteristics belonging to these entities are directed towards the healing.

#### Sufi trance

Within the context of sufism, the dancing dervishes reach a state of trance, and then of ecstasy, with rotating dances. In that way they abandon their identity to enter into a transcendent unity.

The trance of the dervishes is different from that of voodoo and that of the medium. There is no taking possession, but simply the entrance in a larger unity: God.

#### Individual mystic trance

The mystic experience, that happens rarely in the course of life, has however been described by people of various times and places. It is characterized by the loss of identity, experienced as a pleasant fact, with a sensation of pulsating energy and the loss of physical limits. The notions of space and time disappear to be replaced by a *vivencia* of eternity. Then a state of supreme happiness sets in that accompanies the sensation of fusion with Divine Essence (or cosmic essence, for who has no religious beliefs).

To a certain approximation, this experience is described in the same way in various religious texts; buddhists, early christian mystics, and also persons that, though not belonging to any religion, have experienced the mystic trance, all assure that this is an indescribable experience.

#### Trance induced by psychoactive drugs

The various psychoactive drugs frequently provoke states of trance whose phenomenological description is still in a phase of elaboration. It is necessary to clarify the radical difference that runs between the psychoactive substances that induce dependence and damage the organism and those called 'hallucinogenic', whose effect is to produce the expansion of consciousness. The first (the amphetamines, cocaine, tobacco and caffeine, for example) activate vigilance and the intellectual and motor functions in an exaggerated way, while the others (LSD-25, mescaline, psilocybin, for example) provoke states of trance with completely different characteristics, among which we can cite the amplified perception, the intensification of the emotions, and the accentuation of the significances of real facts on the basis of an existential prospective, independent of cultural criteria.

Drugs similar to opium induce a state of trance completely different than the preceding (for example morphine, a derivative of opium, produces an elimination of pain, of anxiety); far from intensifying the forms and structures of the reality, these transform it in a fantastic way.

Taken in variable quantities, also alcohol produces states of trance that have specific characteristics, as for example the increase of confidence in one self, a euphoriant effect, and a possible heightening of aggressiveness.

#### Musical trance

Musical trance is induced in Biodanza and is distinguished from voodoo trance, from that of *candomblé* or of the pentecostal rituals, because in this case the individual is not 'possessed' by some magic or religious entity, but simply integrates him/herself in a larger identity, the group, following a preceding decision.

Such a state of trance becomes induced by allowing the access of rhythm, melody and musical harmony to the identity, with the objective of bringing on a *vivencia* of plenitude. The indication of the therapeutic success of Biodanza comes exactly from the ineffable sensation of harmony experienced by the participants that have retrieved their identity.

## **Regression: the return to the origin**

There is evidence in some animals and in man of phases of regression that are succeeded by periods of growth and of maturing; in the case of man, this tendency to regress towards the origins has been observed by anthropologists among some primitive tribes. The 'eternal return' corresponds to a behavior that is recorded in an archetypal way in myths of rebirth, for example that of Demeter, and in the feasts connected with agriculture.

The tendency to return to the initial order and to 'recycle' the original biological models is a constant in all peoples. This goes side by side with its contrary, which is the tendency to integrate ever larger totalities: to aim for the perfect fusion with the cosmos, for example. The ceremonies of trance and of existential renewal are manifestations of this tendency.

Human beings, exercising their self-determination, run the constant risk of losing the original 'keys' of life. The nostalgia of the return to the origins reanimates the strength of the vital project.

Regression towards the origin and fusion with the totality are two movements of the same process of renewal, that only takes place through phases of progression, on the basis of a sort of permanent resonance with the original.

There exists a strict relationship between the seed and the fruit, between the genetic program and the organism in its process of maturation; the secret of the renewal of life lies in this coherence with the origin. Without the capacity to recreate itself, no organism could survive.

The psychoanalytic approach to regression as a pathological fact has been overcome by a series of discoveries in the field of biology carried out by Adriaan Kortlandt (37), Sidney G. Margolin (38) and others. These researchers have demonstrated that each biological process, that is, each step forward towards a more integrated, complex and autonomous structure, requires a preliminary regression. A. Kortlandt (39) uses the term 'reprogression' to describe the process of 'regenerative regression' in the development of the cormoran. J. Rof Carballo (40) affirms that if biological systems were not capable of retrogressing towards an earlier phase of development, that is towards an embryonal de-differentiated phase of their structure, organisms would lose one of their most important safety devices.

Although it is true that certain highly differentiated cells have only a scarce capacity for regeneration, the majority of tissues, when they become destructed, incite a process of de-differentiation through various mechanisms in the remaining cells. These cells thus regain the capacity for reproduction, which enables them to regenerate the tissue. According to J. Rof Carballo, the result of the regenerative process depends to a large extent on the possibility of regression and on the depth of the level of the de-differentiation.

In human beings, the possibility of regression appears at all levels; biological and existential renewal is blocked nevertheless by cultural structures that strengthen the rigidity of the Ego. The regressive trance of rebirth requires a real humility: to return from the quality of person to that of seed represents an anti-cultural action. To face the immensity of the other in order to reach the 'completely-oneself' asks for de-differentiating oneself, for leaving the historic time. We can expand our scale of consciousness, or on the contrary, restrict it.

In Biodanza, the process of regression is facilitated by particular dances and musics that lead to ecstasy within a 'uterus' of communal love, namely the group.

During the state of regression, the participant, as in archaic ceremonies of primitive peoples, returns



to primordial conditions, to the undifferentiated. This is not simply a symbolic representation, but the induction of a biological state of renewal and of reintegration in the bio-cosmic unity. The human being loses its form to be reborn in a new body, free from all physical or mental rigidity.

The music plays a very important role in these ceremonies of regression. It facilitates the dissolution of the Ego, its abandonment in the 'uterus' formed by the group; it penetrates bit by bit the insensitive and rigid zones, and the spaces of the body expand, full of vibrations, more and more as the abandonment increases.

Many exercises realized in Biodanza prepare the organism of the participant for the process of 'reprogression', susceptible to the raising of its level of health by means of a return to the earth as to the mother breast, renewing the experience of the foetus, in resonance with the way of the cosmos in full and sweet delight. The 'new born' is touched by grace once again and restored to its interior vision. On a symbolic level, the great union of the Father, the Mother and the Child is reestablished. And this 'rebirth' is not only an individual matter, but also an integrating change in the social process. The *vivencia* of regression in Biodanza is produced through the induction of states of integrating trance.

### Integrating regression and psychotic regression

Some therapists fear the regressive phenomenon, considering it typical of immaturity and of psychological incompetence. Some examples may help to understand better the meaning of this phenomenon: a man who after a year of tiresome work goes on holiday, and because of this fact starts to 'jump and make sounds of joy like a child', or a person who has gone through some humiliation, and returning home in the evening 'lets himself go' in the arms of his wife, do they not perhaps show a state of regression? The answer is certainly positive. And, in these cases, such regressions are they not perhaps a sign of health?

In no way is it dangerous to evoke infantile *vivencia*. The phenomenological description shows that integrating regressions are completely different from the psychotic ones. Study of the dissociative process at work in neuroses and psychoses has revealed their character of 'laceration' (being torn apart), of 'separation in fragments', of 'multiplication of entities inside an individual' that is perceived as a great distress and with a loss of access to reality.

The *vivencia* of regression in Biodanza happens by the induction of states of profound integrating trance. Accurate phenomenological study of the states of trance and regression during the session of Biodanza demonstrates that such a *vivencia* is very different from dissociation; on the contrary, the individual abandons his or her identity to integrate a larger unity, which in this case is the group. The sensation of plenty and of inner beauty, the clarity of judgement of reality and the *vivencia* of authentic connection with the others, that the individual experiences after having come out of the regressive trance, are manifestations that the majority of therapists classifies under the name of 'good health'.

## ELEMENTS OF METHODOLOGY

### The Gestalt

#### music-movement-vivencia

The methodology of Biodanza is composed of the integration between music, movement and *vivencia*. These three elements form a Gestalt in a strict sense, that is, an 'organized whole' whose components are inseparable, because the functionality of the whole requires the simultaneous participation of each of them. In the definition of Kurt Lewin (1):

A system whose parts are dynamically connected, in such a way that the change of one part produces a change in all the others.

### The relations between music, movement and vivencia

The coherence of the relations among these three elements assure the effectiveness of the methodological unity that they form. The semantic separation of them, instead, would constitute a sort of experimental reproduction of a schizophrenic dissociation, in which motor functions and emotions operate independently.

Each exercise of Biodanza implies a music and the movement of the body stimulated by it and coherent with it; each exercise, moreover, is aimed at inducing a specific *vivencia*, whose effects correspond to a methodological objective inherent in the process of human integration and development. The exercises of Biodanza constitute models that induce *vivencia* and can be carried out without difficulty whatever an individual's motor possibilities.

The *vivencia* can be disturbed, stimulated or be exaggerated by situation of the group; the subtle mirror of the soul (*animo*) can be made opaque by sometimes imperceptible circumstances, inherent in the dynamics of each group. The models inducing *vivencia* need to have a strong intentionality to succeed in conserving, in spite of the disturbing factors, their essential efficacy; the 'field' (as Kurt Lewin (2) intends it), must possess a high degree of dynamic unity. The same dance of affective communication, when realized in different groups, can induce a sense of brotherhood, of guilt, of eroticism, or also, aggressiveness; all these *vivencia* however are part of the 'field' of communication and of affectivity.

The *vivencia* of Biodanza will have a different resonance and degree of intensity for each member of the group; nevertheless, the inducing model will always point to one of the five lines of *vivencia* in particular. In this way, a music combined with the gestures and movements of the body coherent with it, will produce similar *vivencia* in everyone, although of different intensity, nuances and shades depending on the personal level of repression and sensitivity. For example, a student having more experience of Biodanza will experience with more intensity, even within a group of beginners, the *vivencia* evoked by the inducing model, inasmuch as his or her capacity to feel has been facilitated and the repression diminished.

The reciprocal influence between music, movement and *vivencia* becomes evident when the same exercise is realized with different musics: the result is the appearance of *vivencias* that differ from each other. For example, the exercise of 'the integration of the pelvic(hips), pectoral(chest) and cephalic(head) centers', whose objective is to strengthen the cohesion between erotic, affective and mental aspects should be carried out with a music that stimulates the integration among these three centers. If it is done with the Adagio of Bach's Brandenburg Concert No.1, a *vivencia* of harmony and an increase of 'cosmic consciousness' is stimulated, so a *vivencia* of transcendence, but it does not achieve the objective of the exercise. If instead it is carried out with the love song *Graças a Deus*, interpreted by the brazilian singer Maria Creuza, this produces a state of integration that corresponds precisely to the objective. The nature of the *vivencia* derives from the emotional significances of the music that is used and from the musical categories prevailing in it. For example, a piece of music, in which harmony predominates over rhythm and melody, predisposes *vivencia* of transcendence, and a piece in which melody predominates induces *vivencia* of affectivity. Therefore, the achievement of the objective of each of the exercises of Biodanza is possible only through the use of the adequate music.

## The music in Biodanza

### Antecedents

The universe can be perceived as a symphony. A whole of particles that move forming circles of atoms, infinitesimal vortices or galaxies and suns that travel. A *horologium* of infinite rhythms, or, sometimes, a *great organism* that transforms itself.

Harmonic forces maintain the unity within the most extraordinary diversity; in the bosom of this cosmic symphony, man is a participant and also a spectator. The perception of this ontocosmologic unity is one of the most ancient forms of 'cosmic consciousness'. The words quoted in what

follows, taken from the *Book of the Dead* (Verse 125) of the ancient Egyptians, express the feeling of the human being of belonging to a larger unity.

I am a particle of the particles of the incandescent Great Spirit

The consciousness of being an integral part of a musical universe shows itself from the beginning of human history, in the ancient legends and in archaic myths. In the dim and distant past man perceived that the universe was reigned by rhythmic lines, by events that repeated themselves cyclically, by phenomena of pulsations and vibration, and all this seemed to be arranged within a harmonious plan, as a 'cosmic symphony'.

In China, India, Egypt, among the Inca from Peru, the Aztecs and the Maya from Mexico, to list just a few of the ancient civilizations, the perception of this dynamic and rhythmic unity was constantly present. Knowledge of the rhythm and of the music formed an element of religious power, because, in some way, who has a good command of rhythm, melody and harmony shares in the divine intelligence.

In primitive man the perception of the 'cosmic totality' was something natural: the harmony of the universe resided also within him.

The musical guidelines of nature impressed a profound resonance on his life. The succession of the day and the night, the phases of the moon, the sunrise and the sunset, the rhythm of the four seasons, the coming and going of the sea, the melody of the wind: everything seemed to follow rhythmic forms. The flight of the birds and the migrations of certain species were expression of rhythm and harmony. In their own body was the rhythm: the beating of the heart, the cadence of walking, the respiratory rhythm, the oscillation of sleeping and being awake. Such musicality induced man to perceive a sort of admirable ordering force; all creation was a music lesson.

This real state of grace was lost over the centuries. Our actions abandoned their naturalness, the fluidity and eurythmy; man lost the contact with this original music and made his entrance into a strident world.

Old Chinese, Indian and Greek legends describe the mysterious relationship between music played by an illuminated man and its influence on nature. In reality, the 'holy' musicians were not creating new processes of development, but rather they were reinforcing the natural ones thanks to the sense of harmony that they had learned from nature itself before.

This consideration is important if one does not want to fall into therapeutic omnipotence, searching at all costs for new solutions that perhaps do not quite respect the natural 'wisdom' of the organism. Biodanza proposes only to stimulate, through a cenesthetic-musical mechanism, the latent potential of health and well-being.

A Chinese legend tells that the master of music Wen Cheng, after a long inner preparation, was able to produce strange changes in nature, playing the strings of his instrument: it was spring and when they heard the chord *chang*, the shrubs and trees burdened themselves with fruits. It was summer, and when he played the chord *yu*, snow fell and the rivers and lakes suddenly froze over. When the winter arrived, he let the note *chih* vibrate, and the sun started to shine, while the ice melted. Finally he started to play the chord *king* and combined it with the other chords: then gentle winds were murmuring, clouds of good fortune appeared in the sky, a soft rain fell and in the waterfalls one saw mighty water.

This legend, that to many seems wonderful, from my point of view does not show wisdom, because, using sacred knowledge of the music, this master produced only disorder and an inversion of the laws of nature.

The Indian legends of Shiva, god of dance and of transformations, have a creative and a destructive meaning at the same time. In his right hand the god holds a tambourine, to the rhythm of which he creates the universe, while with the left hand he destroys the old world that has to be renewed. Death and rebirth are the themes of this 'cosmic dance'.

Also the Greek myth of Orpheus alludes to the relation of man with the music of the universe and to this legendary intimacy with nature. The poet and musician tamed wild animals with the harmony of his lyre, seduced the hearts of men and women, let the fruits ripen, and even the stones jumped in front of his music.

The Chinese poet and philosopher Lu Pu-We (3<sup>rd</sup> century a.C) thought that music thrusts its roots in the Great Being, the 'universal principle', invisible and inconceivable. For the Chinese, time and space, matter and music were only different aspects of the same principle and, therefore, their differences were congruent. Music was in relationship with the seasons of the year, with the elements and with the infinite forms of reality.

The Greek philosopher Pythagoras was the first to succeed in establishing objective relations between music and mathematics, and through numbers, to link the sounds produced by men with the astronomical relations between the Earth, the sun and the moon.

The musical chords that correspond to simple numerical proportions suggested the notion of a harmony of the cosmos as totality. Pythagoras, in proposing the existence of the 'music of the spheres', conceived of the universe as an immense symphony, and the Creator as the one who lets it pulsate in the musical genesis of nature.

## Levels of musical experience

There exist two levels of experiencing music that, to my way of seeing, present a biological infrastructure: they refer to *organic music* and to *inorganic music*.

### Organic music

I will define as such almost all the musical forms that show biological attributes like fluidity, harmony, tone, and unity of feeling. Within this group I will include all those musics structured on the basis of an emotional nucleus or of a strongly expressive purpose, as happens, for example, in the *Concerto Grosso in D minor* of Vivaldi, in a *Partita* of Bach, or in a *Quartet* of Beethoven.

In organic music the musical structure forms a unique whole with the emotion that it contains; it would be useless, for example, to try to separate the signs from the significances in the Adagio of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No.1*, or the semiotics from the semantics, or the musical structure from the sweet emotion that transports. Actually, in spite of the sensitive intelligence that can intervene in the structure of the composition of this form of music, it contains emotion and expressiveness; it can provoke a profound visceral stimulation and arouse integrating *vivencia*.

*Fig. 6 World Monochord* by Robert Fludd, from his *Utriusque Cosmi, Maioris scilicet et Minoris, metaphysica, physica, atque technica Historia I, book III, De Musica Mundana, 1617*. Representation of the esoteric world of sound, by means of a cosmic monochord, an instrument with only one string, on which the notes of the musical scale are distributed with their intervals, and also the elements Earth, Water, Air and Fire, the planets and the various spheres of resonance, in relation to the four fundamental numbers. This cosmic instrument is played by the divine hand.

### Inorganic music

The coming of contemporary music is characterized by the fact that it has freed itself, progressively, from the attributes of the organic, abandoning, in time, the coherence and becoming ever more reflexive and abstract. Electronic music, music of the computer, concrete music, serialism, synthetic music, music of chance or randomness, while showing great differences among each other, reflect these characteristics.

Contemporary music unexpectedly broke the thematic unity, became discontinuous, denied harmony, introduced the dissonance and strange random elements, broke the rhythms, became atonal, played with silence and the various volumes of sounds, made use of screeching, and finally of noise. A true passion for experimenting brought the composers to the discovery of new and unsuspected sonorous and acoustic structures. Igor Stravinsky affirmed

If, as happens often, the music seems to express something, it is a matter only of an 'illusion', and not of a reality.

The purpose of contemporary music was the investigation of the universe of sound as mystery and as act of bravery, for a purely auditory use, without an emotional implication. It turned intellectual and became more important as aesthetic thought than as expressive phenomenon.

One could say that this music, both in the 'abstract' form (based on new relations, unknown before, between sounds, that do not have an emotional coherence among each other), and in the 'concrete' (based on sonorous structures that have a separate value), was generated operationally by the cerebral cortex. In this conception one finds analogies with Chinese music, whose most appreciable qualities are the tessitura of the sound (the grand and dark tone of the bronze gong or the light currents of sound of the pipe), by its capacity to fill the sense of hearing.

Great geniuses of contemporary music, as Edgar Varese, John Cage, Lejaren Hiller, George Crumb, Erick Salzman and many others, in their passion for experimenting, have reached levels of musical experience absolutely unknown before. Thus, for example, Hiller, in his *Triptych for Hieronymus Bosch*, a drama in three movements ('Paradise', 'Orgy', 'Hell'), based on the painting by Bosch *The garden of earthly delights*, uses ancient Asian music, musical themes from the circus and electronic sounds, and the *ouverture* of *Wilhelm Tell* of Rossini, played backwards and forwards simultaneously in two keys, on two pianos. The opera ends with a registered montage of television commercials in slow motion.

George Crumb, in *Eleven echos of autumn*, chamber music for piano, flute, violin, and clarinet, directs the flute player and the clarinet player to walk towards the piano and play directly on the open instrument, producing vibrations on the piano itself. In another part, the pianist has to whistle in quart intervals, against the *Pianissimo* played by the violinist. Various times one can hear the musicians say in a low voice "The broken arches where time suffers", from a poem by Federico Garcia Lorca.

The combination of heterogeneous factors, like the strange effects, the dissonances, the elements of shock and surprise, can sometimes lead to sonorous experiences that are indisputably interesting. The fact however that inorganic music breaks with every possibility of a musical prolepsis capable of inducing coherent movements and *vivencia* prevents that it can be used in Biodanza; exceptionally, one can do this to induce special *vivencia* in the context of a thematic choreography in the scope of the line of creativity. In spite of that, even for this line this is an adaptation of extremely dissociative elements, when one considers the creative function as an extension of life and the creative act as a profound expression of the human being.

In my opinion, what has been defined as 'organic music' is, in reality, a projection of the music of the universe: the composer uses, with being aware of this, patterns of processes of biological organization. When the music is chaotic it also constitutes an expression of the eschatological processes of the universe.

## Towards a musical semantics

Musical semantics is a research proposal aimed at the study of emotional meanings contained in music.

I disagree with Stravinsky when he affirms that a musical work never expresses anything. The commitment of many contemporary musicians to reduce music to simple sonorous structures seems to me a hypothesis of little heuristic value. The semantic studies of, for example, G.H. Grundlach (1), G. Campbell(2) and K.B. Watson(3) tends to demonstrate that there exists a real convergence of content among the responses of various individuals, faced with the same piece of music or with a group of pieces of music that show analogous formal characteristics. This semantic convergence of the responses seems to be relatively independent of the level of musical education.

Research conducted by Michel Imberty(4) holds extraordinary interest for me. Imberty let various persons hear the same piece of music, asking them to describe the received emotional impact with adjectives and he noticed analogies that occurred between single individuals, in spite of the perceptual differences. Here an example of this type of semantic analysis on various musical pieces taken from the *Preludes* of Debussy is reported (*see* Figure 7).

Fig. 7

*Upper left quadrant:* dull, slow, solitary, desperate, sleepy, nostalgic, sentimental, serious, ominous, quiet, gloomy, grey, difficult, sensitive, tired, dying, monotonous, languid, romantic, dark, dreamy, sad, melancholy, nocturnal, relaxing, painful, tender, profound, sweet, calm.

*Lower left quadrant:* clear, flowing, glad, joyous, transparent, fresh, silvery, limpid, rolling, aquatic, smooth, evasive, easygoing, light, pure, crystalline, agile, marine, springlike.

*Lower right quadrant:* cheerful, laughing, lively, ironic, provocative, funny, loving, trotting, running, mischievous, happy, hopping, galloping, spirited, dancing, alive, living, unrestrained.

*Upper right quadrant:* tumultuous, brutal, dangerous, diabolic, impassioned, fiery, thundering, terrifying, strong, tormented, fighting, resolute, glaring, enthralling, quick-tempered, flaming, aggressive, furious, violent, hard, catastrophic, rough, inflamed.

## Semantic analysis in Biodanza

In Biodanza a methodology is used that is simpler than that proposed by Michel Imberty (5), but within the same conception. The adjectives are organized in relation to the five lines of *vivencia*: so, for example, in the sphere of the line of vitality, the musics proposed are those described with words like, 'happy, vital, euphoriant'; in the line of sexuality, 'erotic, sensual, passionate'; in the line of creativity, 'profound, different, strange, intense, grandiose'; in the line of affectivity, 'tender, sympathetic, amiable, warm'; in the line of transcendence, 'harmonious, sublime, oceanic, eternal, without limits, mysterious'.

This enables, for instance, combining musics generally perceived as 'erotic' with exercises of stimulation of eroticism. So, when one wants to induce an erotic *vivencia* through exercises of caressing, it is more probable to achieve the desired effect with a brazilian love song than with a solitary 'ballad' of music from the Andes. When instead one wants to induce a *vivencia* of transcendence, one reaches better results using some *Preludes* by Bach or the *Halleluja* from the *Messiah* of Händel, rather than a symphony by Tchaikovsky. When one works on the line of affectivity, the *Meditation* from the opera *Thais* by Massenet, for example, or the *Samba in Preludio* of Vinicius de Moraes are suitable, and not the creative violence of the Rolling Stones.

By means of the phenomenological method it is possible to describe the musical effects on the state of the body and on the moods, for example, the sensations of euphoria, tranquility, harmony, agitation, anxiety, solitude, eroticism, vitality, transcendence, enthusiasm, and sadness. It is in this respect that the phenomenology integrates with the musical semantics, and a piece (of music) can be

studied from the point of view of its emotional contents, through a methodology whose rigor depends on the sensibility of the researcher.

#### The selection of music in Biodanza

In Biodanza the music is the first component of the methodological unity music-movement-*vivencia*, and its function is that of inducing integrative movements and *vivencia*. Many years of experimentation and research have enabled me to single out the requirements that confer to a music the possibility of performing such a function. These are:

the coherence between prolepsis and musical development;

a clear and intense emotional content;

the presence of a stable musical theme;

the presence of a musical theme moreover, that expresses an elevated mood.

#### Coherence between prolepsis and musical development.

In the first measures of a piece of music there is, in a certain sense, the embryo of its totality; this constitutes the musical prolepsis, in which one or more elements are anticipated and then subsequently taken up again. For this reason a piece of music initiates in the first measures the activation of a scheme of affective-motor-expressive responses, that will determine the successive movements of the dance; from the coherence between music and dance springs the *vivencia*.

In Biodanza only musical pieces whose prolepsis can induce coherent and integrating movements and *vivencia* are used, excluded therefore from its methodology are all dissociative musics that reinforce the immobility or the hieratic<sup>63</sup> attitude and that stimulate the realization of repetitive and mechanical gestures and movements.

#### Clear and intense emotional content

The musical theme should express a clear and intense emotional content, that allows the recognition of the line of *vivencia* to which the music corresponds. It can be, for example, sad, cheerful, erotic, nostalgic, euphoric, melancholy, serene, happy, gloomy, desperate. When songs are used, moreover, these should have a text that is coherent with the *vivencia* to be induced.

#### A stable musical theme

The induction of *vivencia* requires an emotional intensity of the music that occurs only when this presents a theme that remains stable during the musical development.

A stable theme is present in musics in which the development is characterized by the deepening, through successive resumptions, of the elements anticipated by the musical prolepsis. The stability of the theme generates the musical force and intensity necessary for the induction of *vivencia*, while the random combination of different musical significances in the same piece of music rules out the possibility of obtaining the same results.

#### A musical theme that expresses an elevated mood

It is important to distinguish clearly whether the musical theme expresses an elevated mood. The musics whose theme is 'depressing' tend to depress the endogenous mood, which is a manifestation of the vital unconscious within the sphere of consciousness. (*see* the chapter 'The vital unconscious').

Because Biodanza proposes to stimulate the vital unconscious, it much prefers the musics that express an elevated state of mind, without however, because of that, excluding completely sad and melancholy themes that represent the *chiaroscuro*<sup>64</sup> of the soul.

Such requirements must all occur at the same time in the same piece of music, because the absence of only one of them prevents the induction of *vivencia*.

If it does not conform to these conditions, a piece of music can present interesting meanings, but it

---

63 Priestlike, solemn.

64 Light and shade, contrasts, ups and downs

is not functional for the methodology of Biodanza.

## Human movement

### 1. Introductory considerations

During the last 50 years numerous disciplines for the body and techniques of human development based on physical exercises have appeared. The improvement of the body as an important aspect in the experience of living stimulates millions of people to practice gymnastics, jogging, corporal expression, martial arts, dance, etcetera. In spite of that, there does not exist a real and proper science of movement; there are isolated studies, sometimes very specialized, in some of its aspects. Until now the so-called 'corporal disciplines' are still empirical, and there does not exist a model that can show the relations of complexity between the various types of movement and the unity of the human system. In this sense, the theoretical fundamentals of psycho-motor functions and of physiotherapy are insufficient. The conviction that the science of movement is only psycho-motor functionality has retarded access to an integrating conception. Kinesiology is not much more than an assembly of neurophysiological concepts organized around measurement and partial aspects of movement. The contributions of A. Lapierre (1), proposing to research the emotional nucleus of motor disturbance, announce a more profound vision with respect to the intricate mechanisms that intervene in human movement.

I believe that it is indispensable to consider the need for a science of movement. A science that determines the essential differences between the multiple aspects of movement, in order to examine the relations among them. In this sense, I propose a systemic model in which I try to gather in groups the various modalities of movement as, for example, the intentionally controlled movement, the spontaneous movement, the caress and the organic automatism, in relation to a holistic vision of the human being.

This model consists of a diagram, organized along two axes, on which I have distributed various typologies and characteristics of human movement, so that each of these can be described through criteria of entirety; in this way the various proposals (as, for example, dynamic tension, stretching, jogging, aerobic gymnastics, the techniques of relaxation and massage) can be appraised within a vision of the whole. The 'systemic model of movement' has a provisional character, and just proposes the opening of new fields of research, in which the movement of the body shall be considered as an integral expression of the human being.

### 2. The systemic model of human movement

#### The four poles of the model

All the human movements are organized by the genetic programming, the expression of which differentiates and modifies itself through ontogenetic development by means of learning, impulses of consciousness and interaction with stimuli from the environment.

Four forms of organization of movement are distinguishable, of which the first refers to the



immediate and instinctive expression of the motor potentialities; the second to the experiences inherent in affective and erotic communication; the third expresses the integration and evolution of natural organic movements, and the fourth can be traced back to conscious motivations, to learning and to training.

Therefore the four poles of the model group the movements according to their origin, that is:

- I. movements organized by the instincts;
- II. movements organized by the *vivencia*;
- III. natural organic movements (grace);
- IV. movements organized by consciousness.

#### *Movements organized by the instincts*

These are located at the bottom pole of the model. The vertical axis groups such movements in an upward direction, some oriented towards the right, others towards the left side of the model. To the extent that they become integrated, the movements evolve and become more refined, more fluid and lighter, thus generating as result an expression of profound harmony and interiority that characterizes the grace of the movement.

#### *Movements organized by the vivencia*

These are in the right pole of the model. They are spontaneous and express emotional contents.

Fig. 8

#### *Natural organic movements (grace)*

Grouped at the upper pole of the model, they represent the most evolved forms of the movements organized by the instincts, and they are characterized by *grace*, which is the intrinsic attribute of natural movements when they are integrated. The human walk, when it is well integrated, has the same quality of natural grace that one can observe, for example, in the tiger.

#### *Movements organized by consciousness*

They are by the left pole of the horizontal axis of the model. These are related to learning and training.

#### *The categories(classes) of movement*

I have defined as 'categories of movement' the following modalities of expression of the motor functions, that are highly differentiated on the neurophysiological and psychological level:

rhythm;  
synergy;  
power;  
flexibility;  
elasticity;  
equilibrium;  
expressiveness;  
agility;  
fluidity;  
lightness;  
voluntary and intentional control;  
resistance;  
coordination.

*Rhythm* is the regular succession in time of movements and cadences, and constitutes the fundamental characteristic of vital movements. The human being manifests various rhythms as, for

example, those of the heart, of respiration and of walking. The adaption of movement to rhythm is a basic degree of motor integration.

*Synergy* is the simultaneous action of various organs and neurophysiological mechanisms that participate in the realization of one single function. On the motor level, this refers to the alternating movement of the coxofemoral (hips) and scapulo-humeral (shoulder-arm) axes. Such an alternation is inherent in the physiology of walking.

*Power* is the muscular strength expressed in movement; it can develop with training, even though its genetic component remains the same.

*Flexibility* is the possibility of the human body to assume various positions thanks to the joints.

*Elasticity* is the capacity of certain structures of the human body, like the muscles and the skin, to become deformed by the action of a force and to regain the original form at the cessation of the stimulus. This is an intrinsic characteristic of the muscular tone, that permits the alternation of states of tension and relaxation.

*Equilibrium* allows keeping the natural posture at every moment, without oscillations or deviations. The orientation in space, or dynamic equilibrium, depends for a large part on visual information and on information from the receptors of the auditory labyrinth, where the reflexes originate that contribute to the adaptation of the position of the torso and the limbs to that of the head.

*Expressiveness* is the possibility to express one's mood in a clear way, through gestures, looking and the postures of the body. Expressive movements are spontaneous and result from inner impulses full of emotion.

*Agility* is skill and ease in movements of the limbs.

*Fluidity* is the capacity to realize movements endowed with continuity. The fluid movement is free from rigidity and from stereotypes.

*Lightness* of movement depends on the absence of sensations of weight. The light movement is delicate and not strained. One who dances lightly tends to feel almost free from the effects of gravity.

*Voluntary intentional control* is the capacity to direct one own movements by means of the will and to aim with a purpose. Furthermore the voluntary movements intensify the consciousness of one's own corporal structure.

*Resistance* consists in opposing or resisting external forces while maintaining one's own position. This is linked with the control of exertion and the appropriate use of energy.

*Coordination* is the modulation, the control and the regulation of the movements of the body.

To each pole of the model belong the categories corresponding to the origin of the movements attributed to that pole:

pole I (instincts): rhythm, synergy, power, flexibility, elasticity, equilibrium;

pole II (*vivencia*): expressiveness;

pole III (natural organic): agility, fluidity, lightness;

pole IV (consciousness): voluntary intentional control; resistance, coordination.

### **3. The quadrants**

In each quadrant it is possible to place the movements that are organized by a minimum of two components and that involve at least one of the categories of movement connected with it.

On the outside of each quadrant a level of integration is indicated, that refers to the aspects of the movement that combine and integrate within it. In what follows the quadrants and the respective levels of integration are described.

## **Lower right quadrant**

This is the location of movements that express the interaction of the instinctive component either with stimuli inherent in affective communication, as for example cradling and caressing, or with stimuli inherent in erotism, like the movements of the sexual act.

### *Affective-motor and affective-erotic integration*

There are two levels of integration connected with this quadrant: affective-motor and affective-erotic integration. The first regards the coherence between emotion and gesture, the second the coherence between emotion and sexual desire.

## **Upper right quadrant**

This is the location of the movements that combine *vivencia* and grace, as for example those related to the exercises of Biodanza that induce *vivencia* of transcendence, states of trance and expansion of consciousness.

### *Integration with the cosmos*

The integration with the cosmos refers to the bond between the human being and the universe and implies the archetypical gestures.

## **Upper left quadrant**

This is the location of the movements in which learning and grace are combined, like in those performed in tai chi chuan.

### *Sensitive-motor integration*

The sensitive-motor integration pertains to the capacity to move oneself with sensibility.

## **Lower left quadrant**

This is the location of movements where the instinctive component and that of consciousness combine and that require learning, as is the case for example in artistic gymnastics.

### *Idea-motor integration*

Idea-motor integration happens in the intentional and voluntary movements, that express specific choices of consciousness.

## **Biodanza in the systemic model of movement**

The movements characteristic of the five lines of *vivencia* represented in the theoretical model of Biodanza are localized in the lower right and the upper right quadrant and around the vertical axis.

Biodanza proposes to restore the integration of body and mind by means of a methodology that includes all the aspects of human movement and their correlations of complexity and unity.

## **Conclusion**

Examining the systemic model of movement attentively, one can observe that the major part of the corporal disciplines orient themselves from the basis towards the left. I want to point out the almost total absence of disciplines that involve movements united with the *vivencia* and with the emotion, because this lack reveals an affective-motor dissociation that prevents the profound change of the style of life.

#### **4. Movement in Biodanza**

The natural movements of the human being (walking, jumping, stretching...), the gestures connected with so-called 'socializing rituals' (2) (giving hands, embracing, cradling(rocking), caressing...) and the archetypical gestures constitute the natural models on which the exercises of Biodanza have been formed. Such gestures and movements, when carried out with a music that intensifies the cenesthesia stimulated by the active categories of movement, transform into dances in the original conception of dance as movement of life.

The exercises of Biodanza are structured with the greatest care in relation with the 'theoretical model', and their effects are foreseen and always under control. There are various types of exercises:

- Individual, in pairs, in little groups, and those involving the whole group as unity;
- Of integration, of sensitization and of expression of the genetic potentials; and
- That have an archetypical symbolism.

Most of the exercises are carried out with music; in some of them, however, we express ourselves through song or through silence. When one proposes Biodanza in the natural environment, the music is substituted by the sounds of nature; in that case only those exercises are done whose structure can be adapted to such a substitution.

No verbal exercises are foreseen in the session of Biodanza, apart from exceptional cases like the 'narration of the *vivencia*' and the possibility of expression by means of onomatopoeic sounds, proto-language and the use of poetic language.

The sequences of the exercises follow rules that have precise objectives, for example the increase of resistance to stress and the stimulation of the autonomous nervous functions.

In the following I give three examples that illustrate the application of the natural models of human movement in the structuring of the exercises of Biodanza. Each example includes a natural model of movement and the exercise that derives from it.

##### **1. Natural model of movement: walking**

##### ***Exercise: 'Physiological walk'.***

###### *Walking*

The walk is an existential expression. In a phenomenological language the walk represents the way of 'walking in the world' inherent in each human being, reveals the deep internal states and reflects the dissociations of the individual. The human being does not only walk with his or her legs, but with the whole body. The movements of the legs are carried out in perfect synergy with the arms. The lifting up of the face, the general harmony, the vivacity of the movements, the size of the step, the force of the propulsive impulse of the leg that is behind, the fluidity, the motor elasticity and the posture constitute an expression of the structure of the personality.

Those steps across the abysmal thread of destiny can show the infinite delay of an existential project never accomplished, or the triumphant quality of an existence that advances without hurry.

I will not look at the major motor disturbances here, like for instance, hemiplegia<sup>65</sup>, the

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65 Total or partial inability to move one side of the body.

results of infantile paralyse, Huntington's chorea<sup>66</sup>, akinesia<sup>67</sup>, athetosis<sup>68</sup>, myasthenia<sup>69</sup>. The pathology of the walk reveals not only the ailments of movement, but also the emotional conflicts. The walk of a depressed person, for example, reveals flabbiness of the paravertebral<sup>70</sup> musculature and of the muscles of the face, and absence of vital impetus while the head presents itself fallen forward. This is very different from the walk of the maniac, in which the paravertebral muscles straighten the vertebral column with a strong tension, while the 'omnipotent' walk is full of exaggerated impetus. The walk of the schizophrenic is spastic and dissociated. The walk of hysterics is capricious, unstable and shows remarkable rhythmic variations, mannerisms and theatricality. The obsessive shows rigidity, stereotypes and symbolic movements in the walk.

One of the most frequent causes of the dissociation found in the walk is sexual repression. More than 90% of normal persons have different degrees of dissociation in their walk because of sexual repression. Wilhelm Reich (3) brilliantly describes the chronic tension of the abdominal and pelvic muscles resulting from the repression of sexual impulses. In hiding own's own sex in a movement of retraction of the pelvis in a backward direction, the individual creates a chronic tension of the abdominal muscles, of the psoas major, of the iliac, and of the accessory muscles (the rectus femoris muscle, Sartorius muscle, tensor fasciae latae muscle and the adductor muscles of the hip). The knees tend to join in knock-kneed deformity to keep the thighs straight, producing an inversion of the feet towards the inside. This stance changes the flexor and extensor muscles of the knee. The vertebral column deforms, accentuating the lumbar lordosis<sup>71</sup>, because of the effort to hide one's own sexual organ. The accentuated lordosis becomes compensated by an alteration of the curvature of the back and of the cervix of the vertebral column<sup>72</sup>, which is reflected in the walk.

### *The 'Physiological walk'*

The methodology of Biodanza proposes the restoration of the physiological walk by means of the exercise with that name, that consists in walking, adapting oneself with precision to the rhythm of a music that stimulates synergy and the vital impetus.

The 'Physiological walk' has to meet the following requirements:

- synergy;
- integration of the movements of the legs and those of the trunk (upper part of the body);
- integration of the movement of the chest and that of the pelvis;
- affective motivation for the walk;
- regulation of the personal velocity of the walk.

The restoration of the physiological walk has the effect of regulating the motor functions, because it restores the appropriate muscular tone, not only of the legs, but also of the pelvis, of the chest, and of the cervical and facial muscles. The 'Physiological walk' tends to bring back the normal curvature of the vertebral column and to facilitate blood circulation and respiration. Moreover, it reactivates the primordial *vivencia* of stepping into the world, of advancing in life with animal elegance and with the vital impetus of savages.

## **2. Natural model of movement: the embrace**

### ***Exercise: 'The encounter'***

#### *The embrace*

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66 A hereditary disorder of the basal ganglia that leads to progressive loss of motor coordination.

67 The loss of the ability to control motor muscles.

68 A series of involuntary writhing movements of the limbs, typically bilateral and symmetric and predominantly affecting the distal parts of the limbs.

69 Abnormal weakness of the muscles.

70 located near the vertebral column

71 An excessive curvature of the spine, causing a hollow in the back.

72 Vertebrae immediately inferior to the skull.

Often, when we greet each other, we cordially give each other a hand, we say 'see you soon' perhaps exchanging a ritual kiss, but apart from a few occasions (departures, birthdays, New Year's festival...) rarely do we embrace each other.

The emotion connected with this gesture has an irreplaceable quality, that comes from the act of supporting the other in all his or her humanity. The embrace has a significance that is more religious than sexual; it includes friendship and generous communion, and is a supreme means to perceive the 'other', not as a stranger, but as our 'similar'.

It is easier to embrace someone that we esteem and that we love, than someone with whom we are not on friendly terms. But, the encounter of King Salomon with the Queen of Sheba was commenced with a joint and emotional embrace; saint Francis of Assisi has shown the lepers his affective sharing with this gesture. Each person discovers in his or her capacity to embrace his(her) own level of 'humanization' and the degree of evolution of his or her feelings.

### *The encounter*

In Biodanza, the embrace is a moment of encounter of oneself with the other. The exercise called 'Encounter' has the character of a 'socializing ritual'; this implies a learning of the behavior of approaching, communication and contact. It is necessary to distinguish between the usual formal encounter and the ritual encounter that is realized in Biodanza, in combination with a music adequate for the stimulation of expressiveness and within a group that is integrated affectively. The personal relations that occur in daily life can be improved thanks to this situation of ritual encounter.

The exercise of the 'Encounter' is carried out in pairs. The two persons gradually go nearer to each other, looking each other in the eyes, until they accomplish an embrace, and after an instant they separate from each other delicately. The affective communication happens progressively through nonverbal signals of acceptance and welcome, transmitted through the look, the smile and the gesture of receiving.

The essential condition for the exercise is the rule of reciprocity of the gestures. If one of the two persons involved expresses a strong affective intentionality, while the other feels more restrained, it is necessary to try to find a form of encounter that does not entail any type of imposition. The rule of reciprocity implies both respect and sensitivity in the confrontations with the other, and the capacity of expressing with clarity one's own limits, so as not to be abused by the other's power.

The exercise consist in a twofold existential experience: the affective interaction with the other on the one hand facilitates and intensifies the perception of oneself, on the other hand it stimulates the respect for whom one has in front. It is possible that two people that do not know each other, carrying out the exercises of the 'Encounter' in a session of Biodanza, 'awaken' to a new experience in which the 'stranger' transforms into a 'similar'. Such an exercises therefore stimulates an undifferentiated form of affectivity that will later, in daily life, tend to lessen discriminating and prejudicial behaviors.

### **3. Natural model of movement: the archetypal gestures**

#### ***Exercise: 'Postures generating dance'***

#### *The archetypal gestures*

From the dawn of history until our days man has performed some gestures that I would call 'eternal'. They are archetypical gestures that appear in the bas-reliefs, in the sculptures and in the paintings of each epoch and that express, for example, adoration, sensation of motherhood, of intimacy, or they refer to archaic activities connected with nature, such as agriculture.

Rudolf von Laban (4) asserts that the movements of dance are the movements of life.

Etienne Decroux (5) has selected twenty-two basic postures that generate the movements of classical art of mime. Also in Biodanza I have selected twenty-two archetypical gestures whose combination permits the creation of spontaneous dances of great human richness and depth.

They belong to the collective unconscious, described by C.G. Jung, and constitute real expressive matrices. They are actually the result of a long research of mine on the repertoire of gestures of various cultures: Hindu, Egyptian and Graeco-Roman; I have selected those that I consider highly evolved, capable of inducing profound and transcendent *vivencia*.

### *The 'Postures generating dance'*

I have called these archetypical gestures 'Postures generating dance', as specific dances can derive from them. Each of these postures has a deep psychological meaning. Unlike the expressive dance, which is a combination of movements organized by the personal emotion of the dancer, the one that springs from the combination of 'Postures generating dance' has a more universal dimension and it alludes to the greatness of man.

The realization of each 'Generating posture' lasts approximately one minute. Afterwards one suggest to the participants to realize a spontaneous dance, bringing personal variations. The combination of three or more 'Generating postures can give life to dances of an extraordinary beauty and expressive strength.

### **The movement 'in slow motion'**

This consists in decelerating with respect to the natural velocity of the gestures and movements of the human body. I have tested this modality with positive outcome in many exercises of Biodanza. My research on this subject has enabled me to verify that such motion causes an increase of the cenesthesia, facilitates the integration on the motor-affective and the sensory-motor levels and predisposes towards states of trance and of expansion of consciousness.

Natural or quick movement is intentional; it actually results from the pyramidal tracts, the whole of nerve fibers coming from the pyramidal cells of some sectors of the cerebral cortex, that transmit the voluntary nervous impulses. But in slow movement the extrapyramidal and cerebellar processes of integration predominate; these respond to cenesthetic and emotional impulses, and not to voluntary intentional ones. One could say that the slow motion causes a stimulating resonance in the limbic-hypothalamic region, facilitating the expression of the emotions and of the sensations of the body.

Movements with natural velocity are neurophysiologically structured around objectives outlined by the will or by muscular-skeletal automatisms. They seem to correspond to a motivation dictated by the demands of efficiency or of productivity conditioned by a life style hardly fitting with one's own deep needs, and can generate states of stress. The slow motion, instead, is induced by emotion and develops at a pace appropriate for the motor-affective and the sensory-motor integration. The exercises of Biodanza based on this modality of movement produce a surprising therapeutic effect in persons whose motor functions are altered by anxiety over performance or efficiency. And because it does not have practical objectives, slow motion favors the cenesthesia that, together with the annulment of the Ego, is functional in inducing states of trance and of expansion of consciousness.

# Physical contact and the caress

## 1. Foundations of therapies of physical contact

In a repressive society such as ours, where the tyranny of the sexual prejudices manifests itself on all levels, the appearance of therapies that imply physical contact represents a real and proper conquest.

The function of the touch as a therapeutic method has a double origin: historical-anthropological and clinical-experimental.

In the following I will provide a review of the antecedents that I consider most relevant.

### Historical antecedents

Christ gave sight back to a blind person by laying a hand moistened with saliva on his eyes. The word or the belief in divine power was not enough: to induce the change the touch was necessary.

Also Saint Louis<sup>73</sup>, king of France, healed the sick by means of the 'imposition of the hands'.

Dances of collective physical contact, orgies, Lupercalia, Bacchanalia, among several peoples in various epochs, have the character of renewal of life (1). Erotic traditions of India, such as those told in *Kamasutra*, *Anaga Ranga* and *Hevajra Tantra*, underline the importance of caresses and the touching of the body.

Julius Evola, in his work *The Metaphysics of Sex*(2), provides ample documentation on the sacralization of sex and the most varied forms of physical contact, for the purpose of ecstasy or religious initiation, in ancient civilization.

### Anthropological antecedents

The studies of Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (3) on the natural history of basic patterns of behavior (for example the availability for physical contact, also among animals; its various forms, including kisses and caresses, among Waika indians, that live along the upper course of the Orinoco, among Pygmies and among the Papuan people, the Woitapmin and the Kukukuku of New Guinea, etcetera), and their comparison with european, american and asian patterns make evident that the tendency towards corporal contact (touching of the body), in its multiple modalities, answers a primordial need, both in the higher animals of the zoological scale, and in human beings.

Mircea Eliade, in his book on shamanism(4), describes several primitive forms of healing through the physical contact between the medicine man and the sick person.

### Clinical-experimental antecedents

The research of H.F. Marlow, M.K. Marlow and E.W. Hanson (5) has demonstrated that tactile and cenesthetic stimulation is important for the development of young monkeys. During an experiment, some of these young monkeys were left with their biological mother, others instead were entrusted to inanimate substitute mothers, of two kinds: one made of a structure of copper wires, the other covered with a hide. The first was also provided with a baby bottle. Notwithstanding this last detail, the small ones preferred to stay as long as possible in the arms of the 'mother' covered with the hide; those that had grown up with the 'mother' of copper wire showed visibly more neurotic behavior.

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73 Louis IX, (1214-1270)



Later experiments have, moreover, confirmed other hypotheses:

- apart from the tactile contacts, the monkeys needed a mother that moved;
- the young ones that played with the other companions of their age developed better than those that remained in physical contact only with their mother; those grown up in total isolation showed deviations in their sexual, playful and defensive behavior; those looked after only by the mothers, without other companions, suffered serious troubles in sexuality and in play;
- the tactile and kinesthetic stimulation with the mother and the other creatures of the same age held a great importance; the breast of the mother is therefore not only a means of nutrition, but also, precisely, of tactile and kinesthetic stimulation.

According to the studies of Margeret Ribble (6), small children need three kinds of sensory stimulation, in addition to oral nutritional activity:

- tactile stimulation (touch);
- kinesthetic stimulation (movement);
- auditory stimulation.

Tactile stimulation requires direct physical contact between the mother and the child. The author makes clear the importance of sweetly caressing and pressing (tactile stimulation), gentle rocking or cradling(kinesthetic stimulation), and talking and singing to the child (auditory stimulation).

The clinical syndromes produced by the lack of affection in early childhood have been studied and analyzed by Rene Spitz (7) among small children in hospitals. He observed that children grown up in institutes deprived of maternal love in the first months of their lives suffered from irreversible damages in their motor functions, affectivity, language and intellectual development. Such syndromes have been classified in two groups by him:

- *psycho-toxic diseases*, for example the three months colic<sup>74</sup> or infantile dermatitis<sup>75</sup> (resulting from the difficulty encountered by the mother in accepting or carrying out her role);
- *diseases from lack of affectivity*, for example a greater disposition towards infections or an interruption of the process of psychological maturing (resulting from the partial or total maternal absence).

According to his researches, the development of affective perception and the exchange of affection and love precede and give birth to all the other psychic functions: for example, when between two and three months old the newborn reacts to the human face, while it is only two months later that he will recognize the baby bottle, even while from that object he repeatedly receives the satisfaction of his need for nutrition. In my opinion, these researches are a real revolution in pediatrics.<sup>76</sup>

Arnold Gesell (8) has described the evolution of the personal and social behavior of children and their sexual and affective manifestations from birth to adolescence. It is one of the most objective studies on the development of the natural impulses for touching and for affective communication.

Frédéric Leboyer (9) expresses in a masterly fashion the importance of the physical contact with the body of the baby:

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<sup>74</sup> pains that grip the abdomen (due to intestinal or bowel related problems).

<sup>75</sup> inflammation of the skin

<sup>76</sup> the medical care of infants, children, and adolescents

Through the touch of the hands the child picks up everything: nervousness or calm, uncertainty or safety, tenderness or violence. It knows when the hands desire it. Or when they are distracted. Or, what is worse, when they refuse it.

In the presence of kind, affectionate hands the baby child abandons itself and opens itself.

In the presence of rough, hostile hands, it isolates itself, hides itself, closes itself.

So that, before deciding to pursue the waves that run through his little body, it is enough to let the hands rest motionless on the baby. Hands that should not be inert, distracted, or absent. But attentive, alive hands that may follow or observe the slightest tremor of the baby. Hands that are light, and not domineering. That ask nothing. That 'are' simply there. Light, but full of tenderness. And of silence.

There are mothers who give little knocks to their own child. Or that shake it thinking they are cuddling it, fondling it.. There are women that have hands without warmth, without life, without intelligence...There are women finally, that immersed in their own emotions, suffocate, yes literally drown their own child...

Which hands should support the baby? Those of its mother, evidently. Always that know...that what I have just said. What cannot be taught. And is often forgotten.

## 2. Physical contact and caresses

Physical contact and caresses produce emotional and visceral effects upon our bodies. From the psychological point of view, the caresses reduce the sexual repression and the tendency towards authoritarianism, facilitate the integration of the identity and induce an increase of the self-esteem.

When a person feels loved and caressed by another, he or she actually reinforces his or her own sense of self-esteem and appreciates his or her own body as something nice, capable of arousing desire and giving pleasure. In organic terms, there are started, together with these reactions, a series of neuroendocrine processes that raise the vital tone: numerous researches demonstrate that caresses stimulate the production of hormones that strengthen the immune system and contribute likewise to the regulation of the level of sexual hormones and to the maturation of sexuality in general.

J. Rof Carballo (10) emphasizes the importance of caresses in the formation of the proper corporeal image, for example in the significant act of the embrace. P. Schilder (11) asserts that in the structure of the corporeal scheme the erogenous zones play a very important role: the repressions undergone during early childhood can, in fact, generate blind or insensitive zones.

Many cases of frigidity result from precepts as: "Do not touch yourself", "Do not let yourself be touched" transmitted by the parents. There is a gradation in the sensitivity of the erogenous zones: the various levels determine the structure of the corporeal image. The psychosexual tendencies of an individual are in strict relation with such an image, and the lack of caresses brings about serious distortions in these. The relationship with our body is conditioned by the touching of the other: we live our corporeity when we caress or are being caressed.

In Biodanza we consider the function of physical contact as therapeutic, because this can dissolve the chronic muscular tensions. The caress, moreover, activates, mobilizes, transforms and strengthens our identity, which projects itself into the skin, that together with the musculature represents our corporal boundary. When this boundary is insensitive, our real identity becomes altered, hidden, or 'imprisoned'.

When the musculature and the skin form a genuine 'container', we can make and hold authentic bonds with other people and with the universe. The love of a couple is the encounter of two identities that create and inhabit, through the caresses, a single container.

Disturbances of the identity are, in reality, mistaken forces for maintaining a container that does not contain us; it is simply a matter of an attempt to strengthen a harness that is already rigid. In Biodanza, by means of the *vivencia* of affective physical contact, we mobilize the container of our identity, we make it evanescent and osmotic so that this harness progressively transforms itself, becoming more adaptable. The skin, therefore, does not only serve for separating and protecting us, but also to unite us with the others, to merge us with what is around us.

It is important to understand that mechanical physical contact by itself is not therapeutic. It

must happen in a progressive process of affective communication and empathy, and reach the quality of caress. In Biodanza, the *vivencia* of affective physical contact while in a light state of trance allows the participants to relearn the primordial eros and to become sensitive to their own capacity for caressing and for being caressed.

The touch is the most important therapeutic act. To find the ways through which all, from baby up to the highest age, have access to caresses may be the one 'revolution' that makes sense. Our skin is the threshold of a marvelous mystery. In physical contact rich with affective intentionality, in the act of coming nearer searching intimacy, the circuit creating vital energy is contained.

## Appendix I

### The silent languages

The dialogue between two people is not only composed of words. When looks are exchanged, in reality two angels are in dialogue, perhaps the angel of love with the angel of desire, or the angel of beauty with the angel of chaos.

The language of the look comes from very profound regions of being and has the characteristics of mystery, of acceptance, of fear or of anger. When we are sensitive to the look of the other we can enter into empathy or remain outside, locked up in our solitude.

When we can 'see' the other, we begin to love him/her. We can close the eyes to protect ourselves, or to feel the moment with intensity, but also to light up a dear image.

The need to 'see' a dear person can become very intense, especially when one sees them for the last time. The poem of Li Tai Po communicates this need to us in an admirable way:

*Already grazes close to me  
the obscure buffalo of death.  
I would like to see you just one more time  
so that beneath my eyelids  
your image would light up.*

The silent language of the looks can lead to ecstasy and in this exchange of sweet light time disappears and one enters into the 'for ever'.

Emmanuel Levinas has described the state of the essential bond through the look. When two persons are looking from the own sacredness they unify the sacred of the one with that of the other, arriving at the supreme ecstasy, the 'epiphanic experience'.

The language of the look can also communicate desire and eroticism. It is not necessary to declare the passion with words; the look expresses the illusion or the voracity of tenderness. Like that, in the dialogue of the look a hallucinatory element is generated, a shared space in which there exist other, unconventional, laws for saying that which cannot be expressed with words.

The language of the gestures has something archaic, an evanescent set of archetypical matrices. The smile, for example, is the oldest psychosocial reflex. It appears in the child when it is about three months old. Peoples are distinguished by the smile; there are so many cities with inhabitants that

have faces of sad animals in the fierce depression of their souls!

Gestures of approximation, the expressions of the hands, posture, and the levels of tension and relaxation provoke in the other a contagious state of alertness.

“Psychotonic dialogue” is what Fast has called the changes of muscular tension that the mere presence of the other provokes. The psychotonic action can be registered with an electromyograph connected to those in dialogue; just the presence of the other modifies the muscular tone, generating various states of tension or relaxation.

The endocrine dialogue is also a silent language. A physical contact is enough for the deflagration of various levels of sexual hormones. The dialogue of kisses induces a torrent of estrone, testosterone, and neurotransmitters like noradrenaline<sup>77</sup> and dopamine. The kiss is not only the “union of two mucous membranes with discrete interchange of microbes”, as one clinician defined it.

The immunological dialogue is also a scientific reality. Evidently there are toxic persons that hurt us, depress us, irritate us or disqualify us; and there are also nutritious persons that raise our mood, give us peace and enthusiasm. These changes of mood have their reflection in the reactions of immune defense.

Thus it is affirmed in the expression of Juan López Ibor: “People install themselves in our organs”. Some house themselves in our brain, others in the heart, some in the stomach or in the sexual organs. The presence of our similar is not simply an external circumstance: “We are part of the others”.

The silent languages constitute a network of mental and neurochemical messages facing which we are not immune. That is why it is healthy to cultivate the “poetics of the human encounter”. The dance in pairs, the embrace and Biodanza are practical forms to carry forward this “poetics of the encounter”.

## Appendix II

### Evolutionary scale of the levels of human bonds

The form in which individuals bond themselves with their similars has changed throughout history. Originally the forms of bonds were solidary and organic; the instinct of intraspecies bonding and the necessity of survival lead naturally to living together (*co-vivencia*).

The bond between man and woman was complementary and not authoritarian. The relations with nature and the care for the children gave to the woman a special place within the community; healing, foodstuffs, rituals of fertility and harvesting were preferentially feminine. Hunting, protection of the territory and the fabrication of tools were the tasks of the men. The discovery of the so-called “First Venus of Willendorf” (30 thousand years b.C.) emphasizes the woman's organs of reproduction and nutritious breasts, which seems to confirm this hypothesis.

With the appearance of patriarchy, authoritarianism and machismo emerged. The evolution of human relations entered a process of decadence through the centuries.

Pantheism, that manifested itself in the cosmic bond with divinities of nature, became replaced by religions with anthropomorphic gods. The fear of terrible gods lead to the belief that it was necessary to appease them by means of sacrifices and sufferings; this religious structure has remained until the present day.

Nowadays the human bond is egocentric, characterized by exploitation and murder. The current wars have reached a destructivity without precedent. International organizations, like UNESCO, the

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77 Also called norepinephrine

United Nations, and Peace Conferences have proposed forms for regulating the violence, laws, ethical and moral concepts, but have failed spectacularly; the obscenity of war continues witnessed by the world.

In this text I want to give an approximate view of the evolution of the forms of the interhuman bond. This scale of the bond is incomplete, but it permits us to see clearly the nature of the changes.

## 1 Individualism

The notion of individualism emerged in Great Britain, with the ideas of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham.

Often one has understood the individual as a 'social atom'. This idea is related to economic liberalism, in which liberty exists to manage existence independently from the rest of the world. Economic speculation is practiced at the global level. Individualism was conceptualized by de Tocqueville.

There is an abyss between this 'selfness' and the 'otherness', described by Ortega y Gasset. This individualistic form of the bond is the most common; its consequences are aggressiveness, solitude, injustice and suffering, encompassing millions and millions of human beings.

### **Individualism and authoritarianism go together**

Theodor Adorno thoroughly described the authoritarian personality, its characteristics and its social and political effects; it is enough to mention the authoritarian regimes in which human beings are dispensable.

In racism the perception of the Other as human creature does not exist. His life is the property of the State. The Jewish Holocaust constituted the extreme expression of racism. The Russian gulag, and the bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki represent the most barbaric vision of the human being and the action of great psychopaths.

In the psychological and psychotherapeutic perspective, individualism has associated itself with self-reference, with the confidence in oneself, with mechanisms of defense, with the liberty to decide, with autonomy and the right to property. In this line, the notion of bond does not exist, and persons are reified. Thus for example, the individualists consider the person they love as their property.

Fritz Perls, in his famous oration, synthesized the individualistic spirit of the bond with psychotherapy:

*I do my thing and you do your thing.  
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations,  
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.  
You are you, and I am I,  
and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.  
If not, it can't be helped.<sup>78</sup>*

Individualism is on the lowest scale of the evolution of bonds.

## 2 Personalism

Personalism consists in the capacity of certain human beings of "letting their voice resonate through the mask". Etymologically the word "person" derives from "mask". Greek actors let their voices resonate through a mask during the presentation of tragedies.

In personalism the protagonist condition emerges of an individual that "lets himself be heard" by

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<sup>78</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt\\_prayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_prayer)

his personal characteristics or his capacity of representing a character.

Personality, according to Socrates, is more representative than Being. The person is beyond being, the cosmos and the State.

Leibniz proposed that “the person is a rational creature with the feeling of being the owner of his own actions”.

Kant specified that “the individual is subject to his own law established by his own reason”. Personality is the capacity to exercise one's freedom as a rational being that poses its own moral rules. However, Kant insists on the importance of the ethical as something inherent to the individual.

Freedom of action means to have independence facing the mechanism of all of nature; there is no integration with the cosmos.

Max Scheler also bases his acts in himself. He thinks that the person is not a natural being nor dependent on a cosmic spirit. Man has a place “facing” the cosmos and does not form a structural part of it. Is it a matter of a dissociation between man and universe? Paradoxically, personalism can turn into collectivism, directed by an absolute leader that proposes an ideology and is capable of attracting supporters; this situation is for example the experience of nazism and of communism.

### 3 Priority of we and the dialogue

Martin Buber, Paulo Freire and Enrique Pichon-Rivière have taken an important step in the evolution of the bond. They recognize that the human being is “a relational being”. They propose the affective dialogue, the critical judgement and the practice of an education for freedom and social justice.

This opening represents an advance on the evolutionary scale of the human bond.

In these authors the theory of the dialogue is principally oriented towards affective and solidary verbal communication.

However, science has now described other “silent languages”, like the dialogue of caress, Fast's psychotonic dialogue, the gestural dialogue and the dialogue of the look. One has been able to measure the influence of these various forms of dialogue on the hormonal and immunological system. The embrace and caresses are dialogical forms that are nutritious and therapeutic.

Martin Buber has called attention to the profound importance of the eroticism of the dialogue.

### 4 Expression of the identity with the Other

Piaget has shown that the identity only manifests and develops itself in relation with other persons. The Other is indispensable for the reciprocal expression of the potentials. Solipsistic systems do not result in existential growth.

The Other is a factor of the enriched ecological environment that in coexistence (convivencia) stimulates the expression of the identity.

In Biodanza the interhuman bond is stimulated in its multiple aspects and one learns to qualify the Other, to value him/her affectively and to celebrate him/her with love.

Piaget raised the paradox that to be unique it is necessary to be with others.

### 5 Empathy

Empathy is the capacity to perceive and understand the mental states of another person. It is an indispensable condition for social development and is rooted deeply in our brain.

Theodor Lipps was the first to develop the concept of empathy. Initially he applied it to the aesthetic experience face to face with a work of art and proposed establishing the relation between the artist and his work.

In psychology and neurosciences the term refers to “the capacity to perceive, imagine and

directly understand the mental state and behavior of the Other”; it is, basically, putting oneself in the position of the Other. Empathy permits recognizing the Other as Similar.

The incapacity to recognize an emotion in an Other corresponds to the incapacity to sample it in oneself.

Empathy does not only consist in perceiving the emotion of the Other, but can also simulate the sensation.

The masculine brain shows a smaller empathic capacity than the feminine.

Other thinkers that have deeply studied the phenomenon of empathy are Edith Stein<sup>79</sup> and S.M. Aglioti, A. Avenanti and V. Betti.<sup>80</sup>

Today empathy is an intensive theme in relation to the mirror neurons of the brain. Empathy can be cultivated by appropriate education.

Empathy is a faculty of the vital unconscious, a form of neurological resonance of coherence with the identity of the Other; it constitutes a visionary capacity in which consciousness participates later on.

Hearing and guessing what happens in the Other is a phenomenon of expansion of consciousness and an evolved form of bond.

## 6 Epiphany of the encounter

The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas has revealed the most elevated form of bond, “the look in the eyes”; the ecstasy of fusion with the other; it is about arriving at being one with the other.

Here the interhuman relationship is not asymmetrical as in empathy. It is a reciprocal bond with the “infinite-Other”, with the stranger the we never know completely.

The Other accommodates him/herself and reciprocally in his/her turn is accommodated through the face-to-face confrontation; it is the absolute approach of the private world of the stranger. Through a look, both reach the union of the sacred in an act of epiphany<sup>81</sup> and ecstasy.

Emmanuel Levinas, I believe, has described the most evolved level on the scale of the bond.

## Synthesis of the evolutionary scale of the bond

*Anarchic individualism* (Max Weber, Fritz Perls): I am opposite the other and the cosmos;

*Personalism and collectivism* (Stalin, Hitler): Listening to my voice through the mask. Danger of false or toxic information. Authoritarian leadership;

*Priority of we and of dialogue*: Reciprocal nutrition of the identity with the Other (Jean Piaget, Psychology and epistemology of the identity): Allows the expression of the potentials;

*Empathy* (T. Lipps, Edith Stein): Putting oneself in the position of the other; and

*Epiphany of the encounter* (Emmanuel Levinas): Uniting the sacred of oneself with the sacred of the Other.

Note: From the fourth point of the evolutionary scale of the bond onward, the progress of the relations between humans begins. The first two grades are dissociative and highly destructive. The following are integrative. These integrative levels of bond are stimulated by the System Biodanza.

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79 a dissertation under Edmund Husserl, Zum Problem der Einfühlung (On the Problem of Empathy).

80 Correlati neurofisiologici dell’empatia per il dolore XXXII seminario sulla Evoluzione biologica e i grandi problemi della Biologia sul tema “Neurobiologia della coscienza” Accademia dei Lincei, Roma, Italia, 135-153

81 manifestation of the divine

## Appendix V

### Introduction to the Numinous Unconscious

I will illustrate for you a new aspect of the theory of Biodanza that will enable you to have a broader vision of the human being, an important vision for the healing for many illnesses.

Until now I have claimed that there are three levels of the unconscious:

1. Personal Unconscious
2. Collective Unconscious
3. Vital Unconscious

### Numinous Unconscious Theory

4. The Numinous Unconscious is the fourth and new level of the unconscious, the most profound, it represents the greatness, the splendor and the sacredness of man.

The concept of numinous was initially developed by C.G. Jung, who stated that in each human being there live two opposing tendencies:

- the tendency towards light, that favors the positive, health, kindness and beauty;
- the tendency towards the shadow, instead, that reinforces the negative, illness, wickedness, and the ugly

My opinion is that not everything that the human being expresses, is worthy of being called 'human', but only those expressions that let man evolve in a positive way, that favor the development of the healthy part, that is, his greatness.

What are the contents of the Numinous Unconscious?

First of all the cosmic force that organizes life, Love.

1. Love: the intrinsic need of the human being to love and to be loved. But we have fear of love.

It is extraordinary how religion, traditions, habits and ideologies have taken taken effect: we have fear of love.

It is necessary to love to receive love, to give tenderness, to consider the other as part of oneself, to act with empathy, to cultivate friendship, yes, structured affective containment.

Love has qualitative forms:

- Communion that is to say "to unite with";
- Tenderness;
- Passion;
- Epiphanic Love, the union of the spirits(souls) to which Emmanuel Levinas referred.

2. Illumination: Jung, talking about 'light' and 'shadow' in the human spirit(soul), called the shadow blackness and the light whiteness. He proposed to learn to know one's own shadow to seek to transform it into light, but he advised not to deny own's own shadow, because we are both shadow and light.



One considered, therefore, that the ideal were to become more luminous; there was talking about “enlightened ones” and the enlightened was the pure man, sweet, transparent, without an atom of violence.

I had a special vivencia on this theme in France: after an encounter with a group of madmen, one approached me and said “they say you are enlightened one”, I looked at him and gave him a caress over his hair and he “It's true! You are really an enlightened one...” and he went around saying I was enlightened.

The fool therefore has the intuition that the enlightened one is a tender person.

I do not share the conception of enlightened that Jung had, like those gurus, 'masters', that travel around the world saying they are spreading light. I believe instead that enlightened is the one who is able to see the other, to catch a glimpse of the spirit(soul) as if he were in possession of a lantern with which he can illuminate the shadow of the other, dissolve the sense of guilt, the rancor, the competition, the malignancy, and succeeds in discovering him in his essence, in unveiling in him (or her) the will to live and to be happy. The enlightened for me, is the one that has the capacity to understand, to be aware of the other, a cognitive function.

3. Courage: it is necessary to act with courage, to defy one's shadow to overcome the fear to express oneself, the fear of the unknown, the fear to love, the fear to live.

I have toiled to write about this content, the courage about which I am speaking is not that of heroes who after having massacred many people receive a medal for valor. The real hero, in my opinion, is the one that deserts! The courage that I am talking about to you, represents the capacity to enter into chaos and to come out of there, connecting oneself with a strange attractor (chaos theory) that leads beyond the chaos, a strange attractor that enables advancing in the midst of chaos, to come out of there and to flower in the desert.

4. Intasy: the interior ecstasy, the entheogenous experience ( entheogenous: derived from old Greek and formed from ἔνθεος-entheos and γενέσθαι -genesthai, that literally means “ that has god in his interior”, can liberally be translated as “divinely inspired”).

It is necessary to connect oneself with the eternal man that lives in each of us, with the interior god, to gain access to the *vivencia* of cosmic force, to feel oneself part of the universe, and not facing it, as many philosophers maintain. To feel in the body, cenesthetically, the presence of the cosmos: if it were like that, it would be impossible to knock down a forest, to pollute a river...man would feel part of the cosmos and would not be able to change it.

The sequence therefore, will be Love, because it is only through love that one can reach Enlightenment, then Courage with which we will arrive at Intasy.

**LOVE**

**INTASY**

**ENLIGHTENMENT**

**COURAGE**

I am thinking about making this graphic grow in a cross, a spiral.

I have searched dances and musics to exit from the repression of greatness, and instead be able to assume it. To find these pieces of music I have worked very hard, I was looking for musics that would induce the *vivencias* regarding these contents, some I knew already, others not.

Let us listen now to some musics inherent to the four poles.

Cenesthetic: important to introduce this central word Organic: relating to organs, also how organisms function, breathe, eat, digest, organism: organism, body

ansia: anxiety, eagerness

centrifugal: outwards (from inside the body to the surroundings)

ontogenetic..

motricita..

corporal, corporeal