

# From Aggression To Power



Written by Ljiljana Klisic-Djordjevic PhD

This article was written by Kelley-Radix practitioner, Ljiljana Klisic-Djordjevic, PhD., in Belgrade, Serbia who translated it into English. Some errors occur but were left in as they add to the flavor of the article.

Ljiljana wrote this article to further develop Charles Kelley's concept of feeling and purpose.

## PRAXIS IN TEPSSYNTHESIS DURING WAR

We are working with various types of clients: clients with psychosomatic symptoms; all types of psychoneurotic clients; psychiatric and borderline clients; traumatized clients; clients who are not mentally ill but wish to enhance life skills, relationships, communication skills, or psychosomatic functioning.

Because of our specific area district, and a long period of wartimes during the 20th century, our fields of enquiry are very large. We are a multiethnic community, with a long history of misunderstandings, conflicts and hatred. Chronic stress, fear, grief are strong and common. That makes a special field of enquiry: the victims of the war.

A specific psychological structure has developed under these circumstances. Our culture differs from other cultures (i.e. European, American). There is a need for special approach because of multilevel defences, which have to be explored carefully. We cannot say that we meet with any clear character structure. Defences are very strong, complicated and have many levels. Every person is needed to be observed carefully, in order to find a way as to how defences are formed and how to handle them. Under these circumstances the application of body psychotherapy is very specific.

As psychologist and psychotherapist in last 10 years I have been working with participants of this war: victims, killers, refugees, people with PTSD, confused, desperate people, etc. Also, in our school we have been much more exposed to the work with aggression than ever before. During this work I felt a need to classify aggression development. To find a practical way which can help in praxis. I would like to share it with you.

Historical background in psychology of aggression is really huge and we can speak about at least 4 paradigms: 1. Academic science based on behavioral and cognitivistic theories – too reductionistic; 2. Humanistic psychology theories of aggression – idealistic and they reject, more or less aggression; 3. Psychoanalytical theories - different systems are giving really detailed and good development, but not the full spectrum, spiritual part is missing; 4. Phenomenological-existential theories – too eclectic.

All that was of help, but I needed a practical full spectrum to try to understand and deal with war. It is not yet finished, but I would like to share with you what comes to my mind:

## PSYCHOTHERAPY AND AGGRESSION

I think that we can freely say that the time in which we live is a time of naked instincts. The old recipes for coping with them are no longer effective. Puritan repression is no longer functional and has become very unpopular. Judging by current preferences - as shown in the majority of films mostly dominated by violence, reaction is a strong anger that is blind to any other solutions. Thus we have now an explosion of aggression in former puritan countries that is destroying our planet. If we could find and popularize a way as to how to help direct aggression to real power, maybe we would stop turning our beautiful planet into a hell.

In psychotherapy the rule for psychotherapists is first to work on themselves. Are we ready for it also in the dimension of mass aggression? Or is idealization more comfortable for us?

We must face the fact that we are living in a world in which aggression is growing, terrorism is more frequent and bombing is making a real hell of our Earth.

It opens up the questions: How should our profession, psychotherapy, act in this situation, which will, unfortunately, happen more often in the future? Unprepared, maybe we are responding from a much lower level of aggression development than we would like to think? Is our idealized image about ourselves preventing us from seeing reality as a whole? If we choose to interfere, neglecting the old therapy rule: PRIMUM NON NOCERE (first of all, do not do any harm), do we have a clear perception, or maybe, we are taking for granted politicized and superficial explanations given by the media, seeing only one side – which is disastrous. We are overprotecting one side and persecuting the other without real perception and deeper wisdom. This can lead only to tragedy.

It raises the issue: can a psychotherapist be somebody who is so easily getting influenced by the media and involved into power games? What happened in my country is a case in point.

Generally, without entering into detailed political analyses, we can say that the bombing resulted in destruction of most good things, reinforcing the bad things. It was a disastrous failure in the achievement of the proclaimed objective. Of course, the killing did not stop in that way. I was so astonished with the reactions of most of my colleagues from almost all modalities of psychotherapy: they failed the test disastrously. They supported the simplified management of the war, failing to search for real understanding and mature solutions. Conformism probably prevented them from delving deeper and communicating with us. They have breached a large number of the rules of our profession smugly thinking that they have good intentions and cultivating an idealized image of themselves. All the evidence points to the fact that they responded from a catastrophically low level of aggression development.

I wish it never to happen again to anybody. What are we to do? Maybe the proposed classification can help us to look for a better understanding:

## AGGRESSION DEVELOPMENT -- CLASSIFICATION: AGGRESSION-POWER

In order to develop primitive aggression into mature power there are different steps:

### 1. INSTINCTIVE, PRIMITIVE AGGRESSION

It is archaic behavior. Fight for food and survival. Instinctive reactions in the most primitive form. Simple discharge of aggression without the need to postpone reactions. Consequently, no prediction. Simple sensorimotor cognition or the beginning of mental realms, which includes simple images and symbols. It characterizes early phase of human development and the level of consciousness that is closer to the animal level.

### 2. DESTRUCTION

In the most intensive level it is blind destruction. Total surrender to the destructive drives. Rage is convulsive in discharge, without control. It is characterized by the feeling of omnipotence. Animistic thinking. Often it is a confusion of the image and the object. Magical reasoning helps to identify with false Higher Values. Actually it is blind passions and selfish ego system. Personality Dynamic is very primitive with primitive mechanisms of defense: isolation, fusion, grandiosity, etc. There is a lack of perspectivism, or inability to clearly take the role of other. We can associate it with primary processes, preoperational thinking, preconventional morality, safety needs, etc.

### 3. MANIPULATIVE AGGRESSION

Impulses are still strong, but control has started. It often results in neurotic mechanisms of defense like projection, identification with aggressor, manipulation, etc. Thinking is often mythic in its operation, we can find beginning of concrete operational thinking. Aggression is neurotic, easy to be directed in projection by manipulative media. Inability to resist to persuasion and looking to easy and superficial discharges of aggression.

In aggressive communication, opinions, feelings and wants are honestly stated, but at the expense of someone else's feelings. Aggressive communicators are usually loud and focused.

### 4. PASSIVITY

Aggression is blocked and controlled. Feeling of aggression and anger is totally not accepted, often not aware. In passive communication, opinions, feelings and wants are withheld altogether or expressed indirectly. Rational thinking is developing in this stage, conformist attitudes, and conventional morality.

Psychotherapists in daily praxis must help client to come back to the moment when anger is blocked, re-experience it, learn a better alternative and then the function of anger can be unblocked and can start to develop and socialize again.

### 5. ASSERTIVENESS

Assertive communication involves clearly stating your opinion, how you feel and what you want, without violating the rights of others. It is mature aggression. Taking care about your rights and rights of others. Formal operational thinking is developed, introspection and advanced capacity for perspectivism. There is post-conventional morality and self-esteem needs, etc.

## 6. POWER

Stage of True Power is integration of rough aggressive impulses with developed psychological functions like intelligence, moral sense, together with the highest value system. Channeling it toward wisdom in behavior. It is transformation of aggression into True Power. It is necessary to have a clear perception of the situation and finding the best solutions for all in this event. Of course, it means centering Will from ego to Self.

Cognitive operations are very developed on this level, it apprehends a mass network of ideas, how they influence each other, what their relationships are. It is thus the beginning of truly higher order synthesizing capacity, of making connections, relating truths, coordinating ideas, integrating concepts. It culminates in what Aurobindo called the “higher mind”. Maslow – self –actualization needs.

In the most developed part of this level you have insight into archetypes, illuminations, transcendent insights, etc. It is known as savikalpa samadhi in Hinduism, or illumined mind – Aurobindo. Maslow calls it self-transcendence needs.

## 7. ALL-MIGHTINESS or NON-DUAL POWER

This is Universal Power over the Universe. Non-duality in all and also in Power. God Power. Unmanifest source or transcendental ground of all other levels. Aurobindo called it overmind or supermind. In Hinduism nirvikalpa samadhi.

In the words of Sri Ramana Maharshi: The notion that the See-er is different from the Seen abides in the mind. For those that ever abide in the Heart, the See-er is the same as the Seen.

We can express it also in this way: how can the Universe be aggressive toward itself? What is the sense if the Universe manipulates itself? It is a state of unlimited love and power.

Duality ceases to exist and we enter into eternal Oneness. War of two separate polarities is abolished and we enter into non-dual existence. This is the state where there are no splittings, hate or misunderstanding. Wise men who have been in this state say that it feels like bliss, tranquility and peace. This is unity of Bliss and Wholeness. Harmony with everything that exists. We can say that aggression is replaced by JOY. According to psychology perennis and transpersonal psychology this is the only reality there is. All other levels of reality are illusions, but we have forgotten it. This is the essence - direct contact with the whole of reality. Unprepared and blocked, we cannot stand it more than a few seconds without falling into aggression.

## AGGRESSION ESSENCE

In the process of development from primitive aggression toward mature power it is necessary to learn to postpone reactions in order to increase the degrees of freedom in decision-making. To postpone, not to block or suppress or repress. The problem is that in this process blocking or impulsivity often happens. The hardest is to integrate surrender with control and cognition.

Are we aware that it exists POWER TABOO ? Real power development is discouraged and power is distributed to the minority.

Probably we can connect our discussion with one branch of experimental psychology - called cognitive information processing. Cognition is understood as an act of communication between the environment and personality. From the perspective of hypoxia and dreams research, consciousness is a composition of distinct cognitive processes of different phylogenetic age. It consists of several levels of decision-making.

Surface processing levels enable fast reactivity, but as the decision level becomes deeper it allows higher degree of freedom - enables choice. Out of all findings a conclusion can be drawn: consciousness is a composition of cognitive functions.

The meaning of this arrangement of spaces (functions) of various depths is this: our early ancestors were primarily reactive creatures, and the development of our species was directed towards the more and more mediated (re)acting, which made prediction possible. From primitive aggressive reaction toward power. Consciousness has thus developed from the need to postpone reactions, and its main purpose is to increase the degrees of freedom in decision-making.

## AGRASM

What is the peak of aggression or power? We do not have a name for it. But it is pretty visible if you work with it. The closest is aggression discharge. But too narrow. Describes only beginning of spectrum.

Maybe the peak on the line aggression-power we can call AGRASM.

For the beginning, we can understand agrasm like basically life expression in action, or approach. This metaphysical essence has paradoxical nature and is Universal ground of all levels in the spectrum.

The nature of AGRASMS is always the same, our experiences differ. How long and with what distortions the essence of agrasm can be tolerated depends on the level of our consciousness. This is where the differences in the classification come from.

These are some hypotheses we can think of, but the reality of present wars is warning us that we need to understand the nature of aggression and power much better than till now.

## LITERATURE

8. Brauer, Alan & Donna, ESO - Ecstasy Program, Warner Books, New York, 1990.

9. Douglas, N., Slinger, P.: Sexual Secrets, Arrow Books, 1979.
10. Kelley, Charles: Education in Feeling and Purpose, Santa Monica, Radix Institute, 1974.
11. Klisic, Ljiljana: Telesna psihoterapija - Do orgazma i dalje (Body Psychotherapy - To Orgasm and Beyond), Eko-primat Zemun, Beograd, 1995. Second enlarged edition: Skripta international, Beograd, 2001.
12. Klisic, Ljiljana: "Orgasm Development", in Energy and Character, Volume 28, no.1, May 1997.
13. Klisic, Ljiljana: The Orgasm Concept, Body-psychotherapy or the Art of Contact, EABP, Berlin 1992.
14. Klisic, Ljiljana: Reichian Understanding of Sexuality Toward Tantric Understanding of Sexuality, Radix Review, Vol. III 1 / 1993, ERTA, Augsburg, Germany.
15. Klisic, Ljiljana: Evaluacija uspesnosti edukacije psihoterapeuta u primeni Radiks psihoterapeutskog metoda, Doktorska disertacija (Doctoral Research, An Evaluation of Successfulness of Psychotherapeutic Education in the Application of Radix-oriented Psychotherapeutical Methods) 1989. Belgrade.
16. Klisic, Ljiljana: "Sexuality versus Spirituality", Brain and Consciousness, ECPD, 1997, Belgrade
17. Laski, Marghanita, Ecstasy, Jeremy P, Tarcher, Inc., Los Angeles, 1961.
18. Ognjenovic, Predrag: Consciousness as a (Psychological) Function, Consciousness, ECPD, Belgrade, 1995.
19. Pajin, Dusan: Mind and Body in Indian experience, publ. KBC Misovic, Beograd, 1983.
20. Reich, Wilhelm: The Function of the Orgasm, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1972.
21. Reich, Wilhelm: Cosmic Superimposition, Orgone Inst., Press, Rangeley/Main, 1951.
22. Vujicin, Petar: Planes of Consciousness in esoteric practise, Brain and Consciousness, ECPD, 1997, Belgrade
23. Wilber, Ken: The Spectrum of Consciousness, Quest Book, USA, 1977.
24. Wilber, Ken, Up from Eden, Anchor Press, New York, 1982.
25. Wilber, Ken, Eye to Eye, Anchor Press, New York, 1983.