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Psychological Energy: Early Theorists in the Analytical Tradition

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Since the dawn of Western psychology, theorists have used variations of the term "energy" to describe the dynamic forces at work within the psyche and the soma and the psychotherapeutic processes of change. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, terms used for psychological energy included "libido," "psychic energy," "orgone energy," "bioenergetics," and "psycho-energetics." This paper uses philosophical hermeneutics to compare the major theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: William James, Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud, C. G. Jung, Wilhelm Reich, Alexander Lowen, and Roberto Assagioli. The analysis reveals that these theorists generally agreed that psychological energy is (a) a nonrational force that the rational mind attempts to harness, tame, or understand; (b) can be felt as part of an emotional experience, but is not, strictly speaking, the cognitive components of emotion; (c) characterized by a movement whose directionality and intensity are directly related to psychological well-being; and (d) fuel for action that can be directed by the conscious will or desire. The major point of disagreement is the nature and source of this energy. Some theorists argued that it is a physical energy as defined by the natural sciences, some contented it has a metaphysical or supernatural source, and others have placed it somewhere between the physical and metaphysical.

Keywords: *psychological energy, libido, biofield, psycho-energetics, orgone, psychoanalytic, depth, William James, Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud, C. G. Jung, Wilhelm Reich, Alexander Lowen, Roberto Assagioli*

Theories of psychological energy were cornerstones of psychology and psychotherapy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, using terms such as "libido" (e.g., Freud, 1899/2012b, 1922/2012c, 1895/2012d; Jung, 1969/2014b), "psychic energy" (e.g., Jung, 1969/2014b), "orgone energy" (e.g., Reich, 1942/1968), "bioenergetics" (e.g., Lowen, 1958/1979), and "psycho-energetics" (Assagioli, 1973, 1974a). Following Lowen's work, theories of psychological energy have branched into other lines of thought, often framed in terms of biofield theory (e.g., Rubik, 2015) or polyvagal theory (e.g., Levine, 2010). Some psychologists and psychotherapists (e.g., Gallo, 2005; Wehowsky, 2015) have insisted the concept of energy—particularly as represented by modern biofield theory—is essential to psychotherapy, particularly body psychotherapy. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) committee that coined the term "biofield" stated that the types of phenomena included in biofield theory—for example, *qi*, *ki*, *prana*, and so on—were likely different phenomena, but that current technologies could not measure these phenomena, much less differentiate between them (Rubik, 2015). A similar problem of measurement and differentiation applies to the breadth of energy-related concepts within psychology and psychotherapy.

This paper uses philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960/2013) to analyze the similarities and differences within the major works of theorists of psychological energy in the early analytic tradition so these overlapping concepts can be better understood and perhaps even operationalized for research purposes. The theorists analyzed in this paper are William James (1902/2004), Pierre Janet (1924, 1932), Sigmund Freud, (1899/2012b, 1922/2012c, 1895/2012d), Carl Jung (e.g., 1969/2014), Wilhelm Reich (e.g., 1942/1968), Alexander Lowen (e.g., 1958/1979), and Roberto Assagioli (1973, 1974a). It is argued here that the

shared qualities ascribed to psychological energy by these early analytical theorists are common human experiences with implications for human well-being, and they are thus worthy of deeper examination and understanding in psychology and psychotherapy. This analysis reveals that these theorists generally agreed that psychological energy is (a) a nonrational force that the rational mind attempts to harness, tame, or understand; (b) felt as part of an emotional experience, but is not, strictly speaking, the cognitive components of emotion; (c) characterized by a movement whose directionality and intensity are directly related to psychological well-being; and (d) fuel for action that can be directed by the conscious will or desire. The major point of disagreement is the nature or source of this energy. Some theorists have argued that it is a physical energy as defined by the natural sciences, some have argued it is metaphysical or supernatural in nature, and others have argued it lies somewhere between the physical and metaphysical.

The ensuing discussion reviews the major works of these theorists and discusses their possible implications for human well-being and the field of psychology. This review attempts to stay as close to the authors' original text as possible with a tight focus on their theories of psychological energy. Block quotations are used to capture as much of the authors' context as possible within the limitations of the journal format. Analysis is provided in the discussion and conclusion, but before that, interpretation is limited as much as possible to that which is required to draw connections between authors' ideas and create a cohesive narrative. These authors' theories of psychological energy are embedded within their broader psychological theories, as well as psychological theory in general. However, because this paper focuses on psychological energy, discussions of the authors' broader psychological theories are truncated. Examples include Freud's (e.g., 1920/2012a, 1922/2012d) ego theory, Jung's (e.g., 1953/1972) and Assagioli's (e.g., 1973) theories of the unconscious, Reich's (1933/1972) and Lowen's (e.g., 1958/1979) theories of character analysis, Janet's (e.g., 1924) psychotherapeutic process, and James's (1902/2004) broader theory of religious experience. It is hoped this paper's focus on psychological energy serves to distill this topic from the broad scope of theoretical work among the early 20th century theorists.

William James: Fields of Consciousness

William James's (1902/2004) seminal work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, attempted to bridge psychology and spirituality by describing psychologically transformative experiences that occurred as a result of spiritual, or transcendent, experiences. James frequently used energy as a metaphor for psychological processes that was intentionally broad, encompassing both personal volition and divine intervention. James understood the limitations of early psychological science, and he left open the question of whether his descriptions of psychological energy were ontologically accurate:

> Whether such language [describing energy and its related processes] be rigorously exact is for the present of no importance. It is exact enough, if you recognize from your own experience the facts which I seek to designate by it. (p. 174)

Accurate or not, James described energy as a medium for psychological transformation in ways that elucidate two main questions that have persisted throughout the history of psychology and continue to this day: (a) Is psychological energy a physical (or natural) concept, a metaphysical (or supernatural) concept, or some sort of medium that bridges the physical and the metaphysical? (b) If one can infer energetic psychological processes, but they cannot be measured outside of human inference, what is an appropriate standard for clinical assessment and intervention?

James (1902/2004) generally referred to a psychologically healthy state as one having "energy" or "vigor." Presciently, and more specifically, James's conception of psychological energy provided an early foreshadowing of biofield theory in psychology. James attempted to relate the term "soul" to both Buddhism (and, by extension, other non-Christian, especially Eastern religions) and empiricism (and, by extension, the natural sciences) by using the term "fields of consciousness:"

> When I say "Soul," you need not take me in the ontological sense unless you prefer to; for although ontological language is instinctive in such matters, yet Buddhists or Humians can perfectly well describe the facts in the phenomenal terms which are their favorites. For them the soul is only a succession of *fields of consciousness*: yet there is found in each field a part, or sub-field, which figures as focal and contains the excitement, and from which, as from a centre, the aim seems to be taken. (p. 173, emphasis added)

Using "field" as a linguistic bridge between science and spirituality allowed James to describe in greater detail what he saw as the energetic phenomena in human psychology.

The things one cares most about are more central to one's field of consciousness, and therefore have more energy. James (1902/2004) described the intensity generated by this energetic proximity as "hot and vital" (p. 173). The things that are more personally distant are more distant within the field of consciousness, and they are therefore less energetic—relatively "cold" (p. 173)—within one's psychological being. Even though James's description of this field was rudimentary, his perspective is reflected almost perfectly in current psychological perspectives grounded in biofield theory (cf. Feinstein, 2012a; Gallo, 2005).

James (1902/2004) argued that the best explanation for the psychological changes that occurred as a result of a transcendent spiritual or religious experience were the result of a divine, or "transmundane," energy penetrating the individual's "centre of personal energy," and thus producing "regenerative effects unattainable in other ways" (p. 457). According to James, consciously and actively engaging with the divine "prayerful communion," (p. 457) opens a portal "'subliminal' door," (p. 457) through which an energy transfer can occur that allows God's qualities, energy, or will "transmundane energies, God, if you will," (p. 457) to be expressed within ordinary experience "immediate effects within the natural world to which the rest of our experience belongs," (p. 457). To use James's fields of consciousness framework, this is a process of aligning the center field of one's consciousness with the divine; this aligns what is "hot" in one's consciousness with the divine will and thus allows a transfer of energy to occur through this center field.

James's explanation of divine intervention through the medium of an energy that penetrates and transforms ordinary experience lies at the heart of the ongoing debate about how open the discipline of psychology should be to studying the influence of religion and spirituality on human well-being and therapeutic outcomes (e.g., Weaver et al., 2006; Worthington et al., 1996). For his part, James (1902/2004) argued that this debate could not be settled with the tools available to the psychological science of his day, particularly because it lacked detailed explanations of the psychological mechanisms of attention, motivation, and behavioral change:

> Now if you ask of psychology just HOW the excitement shifts in a man's mental system, and WHY aims that were peripheral become at a certain moment central, psychology has to reply that although she can give a general description of what happens, she is unable in a given case to account accurately for all the single forces at work. . . All we know is. . . when one [idea] grows hot and alive within us, everything has to re-crystallize about it. We may say that the heat and liveliness mean only the "motor efficacy," long deferred but now operative, of the idea; but such talk itself is only circumlocution, for whence the sudden motor efficacy? And our explanations then get so vague and general that one realizes all the more the intense individuality of the whole phenomenon. (pp. 174–175)

Psychological science has certainly made great progress in addressing many of these mechanisms. However, an argument persists that some aspects of human psychological change remain beyond the reach of science because science's ever-receding descriptions of cause and effect can never reach a final explanation for an essential or first cause for the types of transformative experiences James was investigating (Teo, 2018).

James (1902/2004) argued that the psychotherapy of his day had more in common

with Indigenous perspectives on the will—i.e., that the natural laws obey the individual will—than it did with positivistic views of science, in which individual will was presumed to be a byproduct of otherwise inanimate natural forces. James viewed this as psychological science talking out of both sides of its mouth. He further saw this as an argument in favor of a place of transcendent, non-physical forces in psychology. James's argument on this point is worth reviewing at length because it persists to this day, particularly in transpersonal psychology (cf. Hartelius, 2017; Taylor, 2017). First, James (1902/2004) argued that the burgeoning field of psychotherapy employed a type of idealist, existential philosophy that encouraged confirmation bias; personal energy applied through the will would tend to create outcomes that verified participants' expectations as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy:

> But here we have mind-cure, with her diametrically opposite philosophy, setting up an exactly identical claim [to Indigenous views of the individual will and the laws of nature]. Live as if I were true, she says, and every day will practically prove you right. That the controlling energies of nature are personal, that your own personal thoughts are forces, that the powers of the universe will directly respond to your individual appeals and needs, are propositions which your whole bodily and mental experience will verify. (p. 109)

This passage does not directly reference the work of Alfred Adler, but it seems to be an indirect reference to the influence of existentialist philosophy in psychology, which was especially associated with Adler at the time it was written. Adler's psychological theory was influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's (1883/1976) notion of the "will to power." James's phrase, "live as if I were true," appears to be a play on Adler's (e.g., 1917/2014a, 1927/2014b) idea that individuals "act as if" their desires were true, and psychotherapy could help them intentionally create new life trajectories for themselves. James (1902/2004) further saw the results of psychology and psychotherapy as relying on subjective (existential) experience, rather than scientific measures: "That experience does largely verify these primeval religious ideas is proved by the fact that the mind-cure movement spreads as it does, not by proclamation and assertion simply, but by palpable experiential results" (p. 109). In this way, James argued that psychotherapy was applying the language of science in a way that more resembled religion, placing the discipline of psychotherapy in the role of God:

> Here, in the very heyday of science's authority, [psychotherapy] carries on an aggressive warfare against the scientific philosophy, and succeeds by using science's own peculiar methods and weapons. Believing that a higher power will take care of us in certain ways better than we can take care of ourselves, if we only genuinely throw ourselves upon it and consent to use it, it finds the belief, not only not impugned, but corroborated by its observation. (p. 109)

If psychology resembled religion more than science, James argued, then the barrier to psychology's accepting religious or transcendent experiences on positivistic grounds was hypocritical. Implicitly, James was arguing that whether one took a psychotherapeutic or a spiritual view, the hierarchical process was similar. The main difference between contemporary psychotherapeutic theory and James's theory was who was in the position of higher power—the therapist or God. If it was the therapist, then the highest source of psychologically transformative energy was placed in the hands of the patient. If it was God, the individual might have access to a greater source of transformative power.

As this paper will further demonstrate, the debate between science and religion in relation to energy in psychology continued throughout the analytic tradition, and it continues to this day. James was an early framer of this debate, arguing that sudden and dramatic psychological and behavioral change could occur as a result of opening oneself to, and aligning oneself with, the divine. While James distinguished between the mundane, natural world and a metaphysical divinity, he argued that the will of God could be transferred to the natural world through a transfer of energy, and this energy could result in immediate psychological and behavioral change.

Pierre Janet: Force and Tension

Pierre Janet was an early pioneer in the field of psychotherapy, a contemporary of James, and a professional rival with Freud (Cassullo, 2019). A detailed review of the long-running debates between Janet and Freud is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say. despite the fact that Janet's foundational work preceded Freud's, Freud effectively won their debate in the eyes of mainstream psychology (for a review of this debate cast in a light that favors Janet, see Cassullo, 2019). As a result of Freud's success, Janet's framing of psychological phenomena, including psycho-energetic processes, was largely abandoned within the field, and most of Janet's major works remain untranslated from their native French. Even though Janet's concepts, terminology, and psychotherapeutic processes are cumbersome to translate into modern psychological language, their reverberations can still be seen in modern psychological dialog (Craparo & van der Hart, 2019).

Influenced by the breakthroughs in physics in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Janet theorized that there was a psychological energy that was similar to various physical energies, such as heat or electricity (Baral & Meares, 2019). In contrast to James (1902/2004), Janet conceived of this energy as decidedly non-mystical. Psychological energy was "not a mysterious power" (Janet, 1932, p. 310) and "had nothing mystical to it" (p. 318, as translated in Baral & Meares, 2019). Yet, it was also not strictly biological (Baral & Meares, 2019). Many of the metaphors Janet used to describe the functioning of this energy, and psychology in general, were economical, as evidenced by his treatment of mental exhaustion, succinctly summarized as follows:

> Janet organized the treatment of this mental exhaustion around three economic principles: increase psychological income by promoting sleep and diet; reduce expenses by curing coexisting medical conditions and relieving crises and agitation; and liquidate debts, by resolving traumatic memories. Janet advocated two strategies for treating mental disorganization: channeling energies that would otherwise be wasted on agitations constructively; and stimulating the mental-energy level by such methods as performing progressively more difficult tasks. (van der Hart et al., 2019, p. 166)

Janet used the concepts of "force" and "tension" to describe the ways that psychological energy was expressed (van der Hart & Friedman, 2019). Force was the degree to which thoughts could be translated into action. Tension represented the efficiency with which these translations from thought to action occurred. An imbalance in either force or tension would tend to result in psychopathology. Psychological energy was an expression of the way that one's thoughts and emotions were focused for the purpose of completing an action (van der Hart & Friedman, 2019). The more a person's mental energy was able to synthesize thought, the more one's actions and emotions would be focused on the "reality" of the present moment. Janet's psychotherapeutic techniques combined hypnosis, art, and work-related tasks as methods of alternately relaxing and focusing psychological force and tension. James (1902/2004) framed his theories in terms of the mind, but in his concept of psychological force, Janet presaged the concept of the self as a body-mind system: a psycho-physiological phenomenon that combined "muscular force," the body, with "moral force," the mind (Janet, 1932, p. 89, as translated in Baral & Meares, 2019).

A few modern scholars (cf. Craparo et al., 2019) have argued that some of Janet's ideas about dissociation, trauma, and even psychological energy have been vindicated by modern research in cognitive neuroscience. Janet's conception of muscular force and moral force as part of a body-mind system are echoed in modern trauma theories that employ polyvagal nerve theory, which views the psychological symptoms of trauma as resulting from energy within the body's nervous system (e.g., Levine, 2010; Porges, 2001). Barral and Meares (2019) argued that the tracing of neurological activity through neuroimaging techniques is a modern iteration of Janet's work.

Sigmund Freud: Libido as a Sexually Charged Energy

Sigmund Freud (1895/2012c) first introduced the concept of libido as an addendum to a paper

"On the Right to Separate from Neuroasthenia a Definite Symptom-complex as 'Anxiety Neurosis.'" In this paper, Freud laid out his basic concept of libido as an energy that originated in physical, somatic sexual excitement and was energetically translated into psychological desire; if this desire was not properly relieved, it resulted in anxiety. In a step-by-step walkthrough, Freud described a process in which a pressure due to sexual excitement is produced in the male testes. This pressure impinges the nerves in the testes, which sends a signal up the spine to the brain. Once this nervous excitement reaches a certain threshold, somatic sexual excitement becomes repetitive sexual thoughts. These thoughts become psychological tension, which, if not released, becomes anxiety. This tension, Freud insisted, could *only* be released through "a complicated spinal reflex-act" (p. 148), by which he presumably meant a sexual type of motion. Freud's early explanation for libido demonstrated the level of detail to which he conceptualized the physiological mechanisms of this process, and it spoke to both the essence of his conception of libido as a process that starts in the soma, becomes energetic within the nervous system, and then transfers to the psyche.

Four years later, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud's (1899/2012b) theory of libido became more psychologically oriented. Here libido was sexual desire that "has been deflected from its object and has found no employment" p. 191). Anxiety in dreams "corresponds to repressed libido" (p. 316). Freud theorized that dreams were primarily driven by wish-fulfillment fantasies. The frustration of an unresolved sexual desire (a wish unfulfilled) resulted in anxiety. In Freud's words, "anxiety-dreams are dreams of sexual content, and [the] libido appertaining to this content has been transformed into anxiety" (p. 191). Anxiety in general, and in dreams, is the result of libido—the energy of sexuality—in a state where it does not attach to an object of sexual desire in a satisfying way.

Freud (1899/2012b) argued that this anxiety and unattached desired followed from a frustrated will. Libido was conceptualized as a phenomenon that occurred between will and action—action being the function of the nervous system, or the "motor system." In other words, libido was a medium between the mind and the body:

> Now an impulse which is conveyed to the motor system is none other than the will. . . Anxiety is a libidinal impulse which emanates from the unconscious and is inhibited by the preconscious. Therefore, when a sensation of inhibition in the dream is accompanied by anxiety, the dream must be concerned with a volition which was at one time capable of arousing libido; there must be a sexual impulse. (Freud, 1899/2012b, pp. 485–486)

The sexual expression of libido was seen here as a symptom of frustration. An individual has a desire for something; this desire cannot be fulfilled; the energy produced by the frustration from lack of fulfillment is experienced alternately as anxiety and sexual desire.

As a medium between mind and body, libido was not a mental phenomenon per se. There was an association with Freud's concepts of id, ego, and superego, but these were psychodynamic forces that responded to libido, rather than representing libido itself. The libido appeared within the psyche as an untamed force associated with the id, which it was the superego's task to keep in check on behalf of the ego. This force was often symbolized in dream by wild animals:

> By wild beasts the dream-work usually symbolizes passionate impulses. . . One might say that wild beasts serve to represent the libido, feared by the ego, and combated by repression. (Freud, 1899/2012b, pp. 581–582)

This association with wild animals speaks to the energetic, rather than physiological, aspects of libido as a sexual force. Here libido and the psyche have biophysical analogs, but they are not specifically bound by physiological structures.

In *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, Freud (1922/2012d) refined his theory to distinguish between two types of libido: libido per se, alternately called "object-libido," which was a sexually-oriented energy not bound by the mind; and "ego-libido," alternately called "narcissistic libido," which represented desires about the self.

Because sexualized expressions of desire were closely related to psychopathology, libido was the energy with which psychotherapy was primarily concerned. Freud described his shift in thinking this way:

> We have determined the concept of *libido* as that of a force of variable quality which has the capacity of measuring processes and transformations in the spheres of sexual excitement. This libido we distinguished from the energy which is to be generally adjudged to the psychic processes with reference to its special origin and thus we attribute to it also a qualitative character. . . We thus formulate for ourselves the concept of a libido-quantum whose psychic representative we designate as the ego-libido; the production, increase, distribution and displacement of this ego-libido will offer the possible explanation for the observed psycho-sexual phenomena. (p. 148)

Freud made two important points here regarding libido energy and clinical observation. First, libido is not observed directly, but can be inferred by a clinician when the psyche is directed toward sexual objects. This is doubly true for ego-libido, which must be inferred secondarily from an analysand's relation to external objects. In Freud's (1922/2012d) words, "This ego-libido becomes conveniently accessible to psychoanalytic study only when the psychic energy is employed on sexual objects, that is when it becomes libido" (p. 149). Second, Freud used the term "libido-quantum," implying that he did not conceive libido as a metaphorical concept, but a potentially measurable, physical phenomenon.

In terms of its phenomenological qualities, Freud (1922/2012d) claimed that libido was masculine in character: "*The libido is regularly and lawfully of a masculine nature, whether in the man or in the woman*" (p. 152, emphasis in original). That is, libido was sexually aggressive and externally directed. However, both the subject and object of libido could be male or female. The attachment of the libido to generally male or female objects was determined at puberty owing to a number of factors, such as the emotional availability of the parents and "the authoritative inhibition of society" (p. 163).

Freud (1922/2012d) viewed psychological disease as a rerouting of the flow of "the primitive and universal disposition of the human sexual impulse" (p. 165). In this way, the flow of libido was like a river that formed branches due to variations in geology. The geological features in this metaphor were biological and social factors, and the branches were neuroses or "perversions." Freud referred to this routing of the flow of libido to develop psychopathological characteristics as "side branches caused by shifting of the main river bed through repression" (p. 167). Freud argued that that a person's "character" was determined, in part by the ways in which libido was sublimated based on developmental life experiences. The ways in which libido is sublimated results in "reaction-formation:"

> What we call the *character* of a person is built up to a great extent from the material of sexual excitations; it is composed of impulses fixed since infancy and won through sublimation, and of such constructions as are destined to suppress effectually those perverse feelings which are recognized as useless. The general perverse sexual disposition of childhood can therefore be esteemed as a source of a number of our virtues, insofar as it incites their creation through the formation of reactions. (Freud, 1922/2012d, p. 176)

Freud's supposition that a person's aptitudes and limitations was the result of forming reactions to stimuli based on the sublimation of sexual desire would become a pillar of Reich's (1972) subsequent theory of character analysis.

The preceding description somewhat oversimplifies Freud's (e.g., 1920/2012a) changing views on psychological drives, which later added the "death instinct," which was coined as "Thanatos" by other writers (Jones, 1957). However, Freud did not conceive of Thanatos energetically in the same way as libido. Some of these developments will be discussed in terms of the reactions of later theorists, namely Wilhelm Reich, who thought the introduction of Thanatos undermined the integrity of Freud's libido theory.

Freud originally conceived of libido as a specifically physiological process that, in males at least, began as a pressure in the testes, traveled up

the spine, and caused anxiety in the brain. He later developed this into a more holistic theory involving dreams and frustrated desires. Eventually, he developed this into a kind of theory of personality types, or character, where the patterns of libido created through a frustrated will shaped a person from early childhood. Freud's theory of libido thus laid the groundwork for later theorists who either built upon or reacted against it.

Carl Jung: Libido as a Tension of Opposites

Carl Jung adopted and adapted Freud's concept of libido energy for his own analytical theories. Rather than the sexually-charged libido of Freud, Jung (1953/1972) conceived libido as an energy that resulted from the tension between the polarities of the conscious and the unconscious: "There is no energy unless there is a tension of opposites; hence it is necessary to discover the opposite to the attitude of the conscious mind" (p. 53). For Jung, libido was an energy that followed the "gradient" (a combination of steepness and directionality, like the slope of a hill) of psychological change or adaptation as the contents of the unconscious were brought into consciousness.

Jung's (1953/1972) theory of libido attempted to loosely integrate Freud's (1922/2012d) theory of ego-libido (inwardly focused) and object libido (outwardly focused); Freud's (1920/2012a) theory of the life instinct (Eros) versus the death instinct (Thanatos), Adler's (1912/2014a) theory of the will to power, and Janet's (1932) theory of force and tension. However therapeutically valuable Jung's theory of libido might have been, his invocation of other theoreticians' concepts was arguably more of a grab bag than a truly integrative framework. For example, Jung characterized Freud's view of libido as Eros, or love, and Adler's view of the will to power as an opposing psychic force. Jung conceived of libido as the energy generated from the tension between these opposites. However, Jung's description of Freud's concept of libido, Adler's concept of the will to power, and Janet's concept of mental tension all lack fidelity to their source material, and it is not entirely clear how Eros and the will to power fit neatly within Jung's description of libido as a tension between the conscious and the unconscious. In any case, Jung's attempts at integration among these various theories was only sporadic. Jung mostly contrasted his own theory of libido as a generalized psychic energy with Freud's theory of libido as a specifically sexual energy.

For Freud (1922/2012d), libido was an expression of a frustrated will creating a sexualized attachment to an external object. Jung (1953/1972) theorized that libido's object was a "psychological fact" in the unconscious, but it was projected onto a substitute in the conscious mind. The unconscious was "the source of the libido from which the psychic elements flow" (Jung, 1953/1972, p. 166). Libido, in turn, was "unconscious creative energy" (p. 216)—a more positively framed take on Freud's (1899/2012b) conception of libido as a wild and untamed force within the psyche.

Freud and Jung were contemporary with the rise of experimental psychology, as behavioral psychology was often referred to at the time. Jung was constantly defending his work from critiques from behaviorists, who generally took a view of psychology aligned with theory and methods associated with the natural sciences. Jung (1969/2014b) countered that his version of analytical psychology is analogous to physics, "but differs from the physicist's conception of energy by the fact that it is essentially qualitative and not quantitative" (para. 441). "Feeling" the quantity of energy in psychology, Jung argued, was analogous to measuring the quantity of energy in physics. Critiques from experimental psychologists led Jung to further develop theories that merged physics and psychology for the purpose of explaining his theories of energy. Jung (1969/2014b) dismissed the "materialistic belief that the psyche is secreted by the brain as the gall is by the liver" (para. 10). He nonetheless maintained there were quantifiable processes at work, but these processes were simply unavailable to measurement. He attempted to explain how the psychic energy of libido was not a measurable substance, but a description of relationships within a process of movement:

> Physical events can be looked at in two ways: from the mechanistic and from the energetic standpoint.

> . . The idea of energy is not that of a substance moved in space; it is a concept abstracted from relations of movement. The concept, therefore, is not founded on the substances themselves but their relations, whereas the moving substance itself is the mechanistic view. (Jung, 1969/2014b, para. 2)

Even more than Freud's and Janet's faint hopes that psychic energy might one day be measurable, some of Jung's attempts to place psychic energy within a model of physics arguably elucidated the weaknesses of his theory, rather than strengthened it, especially in light of the scientific viewpoint of the 21st century. For example, Jung (1969/2014b) responded to critics who argued that psychic energy could violate the law of conservation of energy, a raging academic debate of the day (e.g., Bernard, 1923). Jung (1969/2014b) stated that at the time, science simply did not have sufficient tools and theories to resolve this, but argued that in the meantime, the psyche could be regarded as a "*relatively* closed system" (para. 10), meaning that it was a system that was permeable to such phenomena as the collective unconscious or susceptible to social influences. From the perspective of Newtonian physics, Jung's attempted explanation seems naïve. However, Jung's argument that science of his day was insufficient to adequately address the question is still actively debated with regard to the science of the early 21st century. In fact, modern biofield theories (e.g., Oschman, 2001; Rubik, 2015; Tiller, 2010) attempt to address the more fundamental problem of the physical lens through which this question is viewed.

Even though Jung's attempts to explain psychic energy through the perspective of physics were weak, Jung may have been more in his element when relating psychic energy to Indigenous concepts related to energy and power. Jung (1969/2014b) argued that concepts such as *mana* in the Melanesian tradition, *wakonda* in the Dakota Indian language, or *mulungu* for the Yao people of central Africa, among other (perhaps essentialist) cross-cultural comparisons, invoke ideas related to the human soul, the divine, creative power, and magic. Jung used this analogy to argue that libido was a mediation between the mind, or the will, and physical objects—also a recurring theme in the work of James, Janet, and Freud, as well as later theorists. Jung argued that Indigenous people regarded such energies as observed, operational, efficacious phenomena, rather than philosophical concepts, and this practical status lent credibility to the psychological concept of libido.

Jung (1969/2014b) theorized that libido was expressed through "faculties" of the conscious. These faculties are ways that people orient to the world. They included, thinking (interpreting what is perceived) and feeling (assessing the value of what is perceived), which were opposed to one another; and sensation (perception of the world) and intuition (the determination of space-time relationships), which were opposed to one another. Jung theorized that two people who expressed opposing faculties would demonstrate relational conflict because the conscious content of each person in a dyad would be the unconscious content of the other person. These conflicts would result in an observable, externalized expression of libido as unconscious and conscious material was exchanged between the individuals in the dyad. That is, the tension in their relationship would represent the tension between the conscious and the unconscious—that is to say, libido.

In a therapeutic innovation, Jung (1969/2014b) claimed that symbols and images were important psychological mechanisms for funneling and transforming, or "canalizing," libido from the unconscious to the conscious at a faster rate than would occur naturally without any intervention: "The psychological mechanism that transforms energy is the symbol" (para. 87); and, "Only where a symbol offers a steeper gradient than nature is it possible to canalize libido into other forms" (para. 91). This use of images to access libido was, in part, an outgrowth of Jung's (1953/1972) revision of Freud's (1922/2012d) notion of object libido. Just as Freud argued that libido could only be recognized by the objects of sexual desire, Jung (1969/2014b) argued that fantasy images were the expressions of libido and the working material of the psychotherapist:

> Libido can never be apprehended except in a definite form; that is to say, it is identical with fantasy-images. And we can release it from

> the grip of the unconscious by bringing up the corresponding fantasy-images. (p. 215)

Images, in other words, represented a kind of portal into the unconscious. Images appeared to the analysand, and their unconscious meanings could be interpreted through the process of psychotherapy. In turn, the experience and interpretation of these images could be used to encourage the flow of libido, which was a medium of transfer between the unconscious and the conscious. Among the theorists of the analytic tradition, Jung stood alone in his emphasis on polarities and the use of imagery.

Jung aimed to integrate principles from several of the major thinkers of his day into his theory of libido, including Freud, Janet, and Adler, and possibly James through his association between psychological energy and Indigenous magic. He further attempted to defend his theory from the standpoint of physics. Arguably, Jung was not entirely clear or successful in this integration or defense. Nonetheless, his conception of libido as the energy generated from a tension of opposites and his use of images as therapeutic tools to access unconscious material remain influential in psychotherapy.

Wilhelm Reich: Orgone Energy as a Universal Principle

Wilhelm Reich (Reich, 1942/1968, 1933/1972) developed a body and energy-based branch of analytical psychology by focusing upon and amplifying three aspects of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis: libido as an energy, the concept of "character," and the quality of the orgasm as a reflection of psychological health.

Freud (e.g., 1922/2012d) described the character of a person as the ways they adapted to the demands of society; talk therapy was a way of freeing up libido energy within the structure of one's character. Reich (1933/1972) further developed this idea into a kind of typing system, called character types. Character types could be identified by markers in the body, which were ways of holding, which he called "armoring." According to Reich, these character types revealed deep patterns within the individual psyche.

Freud (1959a, 1959b, 1920/2012a) could not make sense out of what he called the masochistic character using his analogy (1922/2012d) that the sublimation of libido resulted in character by creating streams off a branching river. Common features of the masochistic character included dreams and sexual fantasies that involved being beaten or punished. This led Freud (1920/2012a) to introduce the concept of the death instinct, or Thanatos. The death instinct was thought to be a contrary psychic force to libido, which tended to break things down, rather than put things together. The introduction of the death instinct to Freud's psychoanalytic theory was highly controversial (cf. Jung, 1953/1972), and Reich (1933/1972) viewed it as a mistake. Reich developed a theory of the masochistic character that explained masochism in terms of expression and sublimation of the libido through a natural process of expansion and contraction of organismic (sexual) energy that resulted in an association between pain and sexual pleasure, rather than a drive toward death. For Reich (1933/1972), the masochist's desire for punishment was actually a subterfuge that represented "a special kind of defense" (The Armoring of the Masochistic Character section) against an even harsher punishment or anxiety. Thus, masochistic behavior represented a particular expression of the pleasure-seeking libido. This explanatory model did not require the introduction of an opposing force, such as Freud's death instinct.

Reich's (1933/1972) theory of the masochistic character led him to expand his theory to four additional character types—schizoid, oral, psychopath, and rigid (a full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper)—and a theory of character formation, or how these character types take shape. Each character type could be identified by the ways people looked or carried themselves; armoring, or points of holding or stiffness in the body; and psychological characteristics that were often belied by their outward appearances and the ways they presented themselves to the world. For example, the compulsive character's face is described as appearing "'hard', almost mask-like" (Reich, 1933/1972, The Compulsive Character section). The genital subtype of the rigid character is described as literally "holding back" psychological content

with physical characteristics, such as "pulled-back shoulders, thrust-out chest, rigid chin, superficial, suppressed breathing, hollowed-out loins, retracted, immobile pelvis, 'expressionless' or rigidly stretched-out legs" (Plasmatic Expressive Movement and Emotional Expression section).

Among the diagnostic criteria he used for assessing psychological health, Reich (1933/1972) held in especially high regard the strength and quality of the orgasm. Reich demonstrated through case histories the ways in which his patients' physiological and orgasmic functions appeared to be weak or blocked at the start of treatment but began to improve through working with character. Reich's position was inspired by Freud (1922/2012d), who held that the strength and quality of the orgasm were indicators of psychological health, and inhibitions in orgasmic function were pointers to the source of psychological problems. However, Reich substantially amplified Freud's position to make it a central feature of his character analysis.

Between 1933 and 1937, Reich fled first from Germany to Norway as a result of persecution from both the Nazi Party and the Communist Party because of his writings—namely *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (Reich, 1933/1946), in which he positioned sexual liberation and psychological health in opposition to authoritarian structures that included collectivist political movements in general, the Nazi regime specifically, patriarchal family structure, and organized religion (Sharaf, 1994). While in Norway, Reich began conducting experiments in which he claimed to have discovered a type of energy he dubbed "orgone." Orgone was a term intended to invoke a reference to an energy that governed the organism as a whole being, undivided between psyche and soma (Reich, 1942/1968). For Reich, (1933/1972) orgone was the actual substance of libido: "The organismic orgone energy is the physical reality which corresponds to the classical, merely psychological, concept of 'psychic energy'" (Preface to the Third Edition).

In this later iteration, Reich (1933/1972, 1942/1968) no longer focused on the strength of the orgasm as an indicator of psychological health; rather, he began to see both orgasm strength and psychological health as symptomatic of the functioning of orgone energy in the body. This later view was loosely analogous to a biological basis in psychology—the idea that psychological function is related to physical characteristics of the brain—except that Reich related psychological function to the functioning and flow of orgone energy within the organism, instead of Western physiology. Reich became convinced that orgone energy was essential to human functioning—not simply psychologically, but also biologically. He claimed that cancer was caused by the inhibition of orgone energy, particularly an inhibition in sexual function (Reich, 1942/1968). Among his arguable excesses, Reich claimed that he had demonstrated "beyond any reasonable doubt" (p. 352) that nuclear radiation did not cause radiation sickness and its side effects, such as hair loss; instead, such effects resulted from the way nuclear radiation interfered with orgone energy and its associated particles, called "bion vesicles." With this in mind, Reich argued that therapies that could increase or balance the flow of orgone energy could combat the effects of nuclear radiation.

As he conducted this research, Reich (e.g., 1933/1972) began adapting his therapeutic techniques to focus on orgone energy rather than psychological content. Reich began to describe orgone energy as a "biophysical" phenomenon, and his therapeutic work became more of a blend of psychology and body techniques. For example, Reich (1933/1972) wrote, "A memory is not nearly as capable of achieving the emotional outbreak, for example, as the loosening of a block in the diaphragm" (The Function of Emotion in Orgone Therapy section). Reich (1942/1968) claimed that under a microscope, and under certain experimental conditions, orgone energy could be seen as a vibrant blue. He further claimed that practitioners trained in this orgone-based work could see these energies in their patients and interpret their import for psychological and physical concerns:

> The bio-energetically well-trained observer, who by his professional daily activities is used to seeing and judging emotional movements and bio-energetic expressions and to reading their meaning without a word spoken on the part of

> the patient, will readily, and often even before understanding the physical functions, grasp the "meaning" of these microscopic orgonotic phenomena. (Reich, 1942/1968, p. 422)

This era of Reich's research was in some ways an advance in the conception of energy in psychology, but it is also widely regarded as the start of his veer into grandiosity.

Reich (1942/1968) saw orgone energy as a unifying force that acted as a bridge between not only psyche and soma, but also between science and religion. Reich came to believe that orgone was not only a human energy: It was an animating force that accounted for weather and the movements of the planets and cosmic events. In the way that Jung (1969/2014b) linked libido to the concept of energy in Indigenous cultures, Reich saw animism as the spiritual perspective that came closest to resembling the "orgonotic" perspective. Reich (1942/1968) saw a materialist perspective as being deceived by the sense organs, but he also saw mystical perspective as being deceived by a denial of sense experience, in which adherents apprehend the universality of orgone, but miss its phenomenal specificity. Mystics—those who view sensation as illusory, according to Reich—misperceive the world because their perceptions remain "stuck in the absolute" (Reich, 1942/1968, p. 289). In other words, mystics miss the practical, living truth that the world is alive and in motion. Animists, on the other hand, perceive "natural, undistorted sensations," (p. 283, emphasis removed for clarity). In fact, Reich felt that orgone-based therapy could effectively cure mysticism, which he regarded as a kind of character type: "If the orgone-therapeutic dissolution of the armor in the mystic is successful, then the 'mystical experiences' disappear" (p. 288).

Reich was an innovator in psychotherapy. He appeared to resolve Freud's divisive employment of a death instinct to explain masochism, and then he extended his theory of character types and added therapeutic interventions for treatment. Reich's later replacement of libido with orgone as a principle more fundamental than Newtonian physics made him a hero to many critics of materialism. However, the extent to which Reich committed to the importance of his insights as a truth that was superior to all others signified for many a form of megalomania.

Alexander Lowen: Bioenergy as a Life Force Unifying Psyche and Soma

Alexander Lowen focused upon and amplified aspects of Reich's work to develop a system of psychoanalysis and bodywork called bioenergetic analysis (Friedman & Glazer, 2009; Guest et al., 2019). Lowen (1958/1979) emphasized theories of energy in psychotherapy, but he backed away from Reich's conception of orgone as a universal, all-pervasive life force. Instead, Lowen coined the term "bioenergy" to replace the orgone concept in psychology, which Reich had eventually overburdened. Similar to Reich, Lowen (1958/1979) claimed that bioenergy was unitary, influencing both somatic and psychic processes:

> We work with the hypothesis that there is one fundamental energy in the human body whether it manifests itself in psychic phenomena or in somatic motion. This energy we call simply "bioenergy." Psychic processes as well as somatic processes are determined by the operation of this bioenergy. All living processes can be reduced to manifestations of this bioenergy. (Development of Analytic Techniques section)

Despite this unitary quality, Lowen limited his hypotheses to the human body and psyche, demonstrating a significant, conscious fidelity to individual psychology. This represented a course correction for Reich's (1942/1968) grand claims related to biological and cosmic phenomena. While Reich ran experiments and developed a more universal theory of orgonomy, Lowen's conception of bioenergy was left as a rather vague, undifferentiated, unitary phenomenon—a "life force"—that is said to exist in all humans, but whose source and qualities are largely unspecified. (Lowen's framing of psychic energy in terms of a life force is sometimes associated with the pre-20th-century notion of a "vital force" in biology; e.g., Barak et al., 1997.)

Once Reich (1933/1972) began to fully focus on orgonomy, he attempted to unify (perhaps conflate) working with psychological issues directly

through the body with orgone energy, mostly forgoing talk therapy. Lowen (1958/1979) shifted Reich's approach on this point and conceptualized the exterior of the body as a kind of interface, or membrane, between the analysand's inner world and outer world:

> The analytically oriented therapist approaches his patient from the outside. His contact is always from the surface inwards, and deep as he may penetrate into the inner life and deep-seated biological processes, the surface phenomena is never ignored or overlooked. For the problem of the patient as he presents himself to therapy is based up on a difficulty in his relationship to the external world—to people, to reality. (Development of Analytic Techniques section)

In short, Lowen analyzed external character armor through external observations, and he worked with bioenergetic blocks through touch, but he maintained a focus on the psychological concerns of the client, rather than reducing these concerns to bioenergy alone.

Lowen (1958/1979) retained Reich's character types and even expanded upon them in a number of meaningful ways after Reich had largely abandoned character analysis in his orgonomy phase, and psychoanalytic theory at large had otherwise generally failed to move Reich's theory forward. First, Lowen unified the theory of character types by distinguishing between neurotic symptoms and neuroses themselves. Second, he clarified that character types were symptomatic of pathological conditions, and that they would tend to loosen with therapy but not disappear entirely:

> I would suggest that we limit the concept of character in analytic therapy to pathological states. Health must be distinguished by the absence of a typical mode of behavior. Its qualities are spontaneity and adaptability to the rational demands of a situation. Health is a fluid state in contrast to the neurosis which is a structured condition. (Lowen, 1958/1979, Character Formation and Structure section)

Third, Lowen clarified the relationship between Freud's psycho-sexual development stages of early childhood, character structure, and bioenergy in terms of deprivation, suppression, and frustration in early childhood. Lowen's (1958/1979) succinct, stepwise explanation is worth including here in its entirety:

> The infant and baby have a need to take in sustenance which includes affection. Bioenergetically, we say simply that the infant has a heed to take in energy. If this energy (food, love, etc.) is not forthcoming, there is deprivation. At about the age of three, the child is less dependent on the adults for his energy intake. He can still suffer deprivation but it is less serious. He has a growing need now to give, to express his affection, to discharge energy. He enters the genital phase when the need to discharge arises, whether in play with other children or affectionately towards the adults in his immediate environment. His libido, formerly turned inward, is now directed out into the world and it needs an object. The lack of an object, or what is the same, of response by the object, causes a frustration. Bioenergetically, frustration describes the inability to discharge, deprivation, the failure or lack of charge. Suppression involves a denial of right. The child is forced into a passive position. His will is subverted. The ego of the oral character is more or less empty, that of the masochist is crushed. The rigid character has a rigid ego, hard and inflexible. (Character Formation and Structure section)

This theory of deprivation, suppression, and frustration follows from Lowen's restitution of Freud's death principle, or Thanatos, with Freud's original "reality principle." The reality principle represented the resources available in the external world. These resources were dynamically juxtaposed with the internal desires of the individual, which, in alignment with Freud, Lowen called the pleasure principle. Finally, Lowen extended and revised Reich's character types and added several new ones—a topic that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Lowen's work remains influential in somatic and energy-oriented psychotherapy. Modern therapists familiar with energy-oriented therapeutic techniques are likely intimately acquainted with the two main

branches of theory and practice that emerged from Lowen's work: the modern biofield-oriented therapies, which draw on the work of Pierrakos (1990), a student of Lowen; and trauma-oriented somatic therapies exemplified by Levine's (2010) work.

Some of the important ways that Lowen's theory and interventions have been revised and expanded since the peak of his career have revolved around shifting the therapeutic relationship from a one-person, doctor-patient relationship style associated with the early psychoanalytic tradition to a two-person, relational model associated with humanistic psychology. Resneck-Sannes (2005) summarized the overall thrust of these developments:

> Research has been showing for years that clients report that neither insight nor body interventions heal by themselves. . . [Somatic interventions] must occur in the context of an attuned, empathic relationship. This means that the therapist must no longer be separate from the client, but now must enter the room as a human being. (p. 49)

These various developments have mirrored overall advances in psychotherapy, particularly influenced by the humanistic tradition—now considered the common factors for the therapeutic relationship—and corroborating neuroscientific research that supports their use across psychotherapeutic traditions (Pla, 2017).

Roberto Assagioli: Psychoenergetics as a Fifth Force in Psychology

The work of Roberto Assagioli (e.g., 1974a), called psychosynthesis, included influences especially from Jung and James but also from later integral theorists, such as Buckminster Fuller (1963) and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1959). In its focus on mustering psychic energy for action through force of will, Assagioli's work also appeared to be at least indirectly influenced by Janet and Adler. Assagioli (2018) regarded transpersonal psychology as part of a "fifth force" in psychology, which he called "psychoenergetics." Psychoenergetics, Assagioli argued, included "all forces existent in the universe and their interaction" (para. 70), including physical energies, biological energies, "psychic energies of all qualities at all levels," and "spiritual, transpersonal, transcendent energies" (para. 70). Assagioli's work has not had the far-reaching influence of some prior analytical theorists, but his work represents an important bridge between the analytical tradition and the field of transpersonal psychology.

Assagioli (1974a) considered the hallmarks of psychological growth to be the ability to effect change through both action in the world and intrapersonal transformation with a particular emphasis on the transpersonal influences behind action and transformation. Assagioli considered the "will" to be a directed expression of synthesized psychic energies that could be applied to effect such psychological changes:

> Psychological energies must be set into motion and used with clear intent in the service of a higher good; must be mustered and combined so that the will can effectively proceed to action that will lead from goals to accomplishment. (pp. 148–149)

This "higher good," Assagioli (1974a) argued, was a drive toward transpersonal, inner growth, which was driven by a transcendent sense of purpose:

> *Inner* development, *transpersonal* realization is the goal, the (comparatively) lower drives and energies have to be transformed and sublimated through the action of the higher motives and the attractive pull of the higher goals. (p. 148)

Assagioli saw this transpersonal realization as a teleological process, in line with Teilhard's (1959) theory of the development of the personality being drawn toward an "omega point" by a transpersonal (or divine) purpose, or will:

> We can experience [personal development] as an *intelligent energy*, directed toward a definite aim, having a *purpose*. These are also the specific characteristics of the *will* as an expression of the *synthesizin*g self. We need not discuss how the unifying, synergetic force operates at the biological levels. What matters is to realize that we can be aware of its higher manifestations in the conscious human being, and also at transpersonal levels. (Assagioli, 1974a, p. 32)

In short, psychosynthesis is primarily concerned with "transpersonal" or "spiritual" processes, rather than how these processes might operate on "biological levels." The ultimate transpersonal level for Assagioli was the "unification of the personal center of consciousness, the 'I' or ego, with the Transpersonal Self" (Assagioli, 1974a, p. 32). Assagioli considered one of the highest levels of psychosynthesis to be an effortless expression of will in which the will of the transpersonal self, or the "Universal Will" flows freely through individual action; in this state, a person's "activities are accomplished with free spontaneity, a state in which he feels himself to be a willing channel into and through which powerful energies flow and operate" (Assagioli, 1974a, p. 20).

Assagioli (1974b) largely agreed with Jung's theory that energy (libido) was a kind of integrative energy that helped synthesize parts of the personality as unconscious material became conscious. However, unlike Jung, Assagioli did not regard the unconscious as an object, but rather a quality that described any material that is not presently conscious within an individual. Unconscious, Assagioli (1974b) said, "should be considered an adjective, not a noun" (p. 40). In this way, libido was not merely an intrapersonal psychic energy, but it also described an energetic movement from outside the personal psyche to inside it. This bears some similarity to James's theory regarding the interpenetration of an external energy into the human psychic energy system, especially from a transpersonal or "transmundane" source.

Assagioli (1974b) argued that Jung's work was primarily focused on what Assagioli called the lower unconscious. Assagioli theorized that psychic energy was integrated, or synthesized, into consciousness from a kind of sphere (depicted graphically as an oval) that could be conceived as three levels: the "lower unconscious," an analog to Freud's (e.g., 1899/2012b) unconscious, which included such psychological material as past traumas and early childhood experiences; the "middle unconscious," which included any information that is not in conscious knowledge about the world around one in present time, such as interpersonal relationships and cultural pressures; and the "higher unconscious," or superconscious, which included any information or realities not yet realized about transpersonal aspects of the self (Assagioli, 1974b).

Assagioli (1974a) saw effective application of the will in alignment with the transpersonal aspects of the self to be a method of "transmutation," not unlike Jung's (1944/2014a) alchemical analogies. Effectively, Assagioli conceived of this transformative process as an exchange of psychic energy from the transpersonal aspects of the self so that the concerns of the "lower" aspects of the self could be expressed in a healthier and more constructive way. Assagioli (1974a) argued that getting in touch with the higher, or transpersonal, aspects of the self was potentially an antidote to the primary concerns of Freud and Adler, namely sex and aggression:

> This process of transmutation of the psychological energies. . . constitutes the most effective and constructive method of dealing with two major and potent sources of energy—sex and aggressiveness. (p. 145)

In this way, Assagioli offered transpersonal psychology as a resolution to the early psychoanalytic tradition.

Assagioli (1974a) recommended various techniques for changing the state of psychic energy—for example, emotional catharsis for decreasing energy, or focusing attention on an object for increasing it. However, he did not go so far as to theorize what this energy might be from the standpoint of physics or biology. Rather, Assagioli suggested that psychic energy was a felt sensation that one simply understood intuitively when it was experienced:

> Naturally, no instrument, no "psychic voltmeter," exists for measuring the potential of emotional and impulsive charges, but introspection and observation of spontaneous manifestations can give an approximate idea of their intensity. (p. 193)

Assagioli's argument that energy had a felt quality is likely key to understanding perspectives on psychological energy as a whole. Regardless of the ontological nature of such energy, Assagioli and the preceding analytical theorists seem to have picked up on a theme that human beings feel variations of energy, whether through excitation or relaxation, expansion

or contraction, sexuality, aggression, or mood. This is likely one of the reasons that theories of energy persist in psychotherapy. It also represents a reasonable point of transition between the early analysts and the more recent psychotherapeutic modalities that have been influenced by biofield theory.

Discussion

The analytical tradition offers perspectives on psychological energy that converge in some ways but diverge in others. The first point of convergence is that *psychological energy is a nonrational force that the rational mind attempts to harness, tame, or understand*. For James, this nonrational force is a "field of consciousness" open to penetration by the divine and capable of transformative psychological effects that are not possible through rational faculties alone. For Janet, it is a bridge between thought and action. For Freud, it is a manifestation of desire. For Jung it is a tension between opposites or a transfer from the unconscious to the conscious. For Reich and Lowen, it is an essential force of life. Assagioli conceived of it as multilayered and hierarchical, including aspects from all of these theorists, with Freud's, Reich's, and Lowen's sexualized desires at the bottom of the hierarchy, James's transpersonal aspirations (or something similar) at the top of the hierarchy, Jung's transfer from unconscious to conscious (or something similar) as an overall principal of intrapsychic processes, and Janet's transfer from thought to action (or something similar) as a principle that describes how effectively people act in the world.

The second point of agreement between the major analytical theorists is that *psychological energy can be felt as part of an emotional experience, but it is not, strictly speaking, the cognitive components of emotion*. James (1902/2004) discussed psychological energy, or "vigor," as indicative of changes in "emotional excitement" (p. 173). Janet saw energy as contributing to emotional agitation, but it could be redirected to more constructive tasks, thus dissipating the emotional charge. Freud saw emotional energy, particularly anxiety, as largely an expression of the tension and release of sexual energy in the body. Jung saw emotion as an aspect of interacting with the world that was in tension with thinking, and that this tension, rather than feeling itself, was the nature or source of libido. Reich and Lowen saw positive and negative emotions, such as joy and anxiety, as expressions or repressions of energy in the body. Assagioli (1974a) saw positive and negative emotions as reflections of the efficiency with which one was expressing one's will in accordance with the achievement, or "realization" (p. 148), of one's transpersonal purpose.

A final point of general agreement among the analytical theorists is that *psychological energy is characterized by movement that varies in directionality and intensity, which is directly related to psychological well-being*. For Janet, Freud, Jung, Reich, Lowen, and Assagioli these are key aspects of their theories of psychological energy. Even though they vary on how they frame this movement and how it works, they all generally agree that blocks or inefficient flow of energy in the psyche and soma negatively impact psychological well-being. James discussed the flow of this energy from a divine source through the individual out into the natural world, and that this was dependent upon an alignment between the center of one's field of consciousness and divinity. Thus, James's theory involved direction and intensity, even though it was more in relation to "God" than the other theories.

Beyond these three main points of agreement are some points of alternating overlap and contention among the analytical theorists. The most important point of contention is whether psychological energy is physical, metaphysical, or some sort of medium between the physical and metaphysical. Among the major psychological theorists, this question was first elucidated by James, who admitted he had no convincing explanation for the mechanisms of psychological energy from the natural sciences and deferred to religious explanations, namely from Buddhism (fields of consciousness) and Christian explanations for the intervention of God. Of all the major analytical theorists, James's explanation is the most explicitly supernatural. Jung and Reich both proffered theories that attempted to appeal to the natural sciences. However, both of these theorists may have offered more coherent arguments that psychological energy was a medium between the individual human will and the natural world, akin to

magical and shamanic techniques found within many Indigenous traditions. While both stopped short of calling the phenomenon metaphysical per se, they clearly saw it as outside the capabilities of observation and measurement within the natural sciences of their day. Assagioli and Janet also directly associated psychological energy and the will, but in very different ways. Assagioli's view of a transpersonal purpose as a source for psychological energy is a teleological explanation that, while stopping short of explicitly calling his explanation metaphysical, implicitly relies on a metaphysical source, the "Universal Will," for this purpose. Janet saw psychological energy as a medium between thought and action, which could be translated as something along the lines of effectiveness of will. However, Janet explicitly stated that he did not think this was mystical or metaphysical. Instead, he believed it was within the purview of the natural sciences, but simply had not yet been identified in a measurable way. Of all the analytical theorists, Freud was the most insistent that psychological energy was located within the physical anatomy as understood by Western allopathic medicine. Freud changed his theory over time, and he made nuanced distinctions among various types of libido, but broadly speaking, he argued that libido was related to sexual energy in the physical body. Lowen offered a revision of Reich's orgone theory that brought Reich's character analysis process more in line with Freud's theory of libido.

This point of disagreement appears to have resulted in two major branches of theory and praxis regarding psychological energy subsequent to the analytical branch: a branch that locates psychological energy within the physical anatomy as understood by Western allopathic medicine and a branch that considers psychological energy to be located somewhere beyond the physical anatomy, which is alternately explained by theories grounded in either physics or spirituality. (For a brief review of these branches, see Da & Hartelius, 2024.)

The final point with some overlap has already been alluded to: *Psychological energy is a fuel for action that can be directed by the conscious will*. This explanation of psychological energy is most essential within Janet's and Assagioli's theories, but it is also important for Jung and Reich. Neither Freud nor Lowen emphasize energy and the will directly, but it can be inferred from their theories. Freud and Lowen emphasized the association between psychological energy and desire. The bridge between will and desire can be easily crossed, for example, in the German *wollen*, which can be translated into English as both "will" and "want." James focused on the association between transcendent experiences, which he explained as a penetration of divine will and the personal, and its capacity to help individuals do things they might not otherwise be able to, such as overcome addiction. He explicitly contrasted this with his view of psychological theories such as Adler's, which he saw as focusing on directing energy through the personal will.

Conclusion

Following the threads of theory within the analytic tradition, the mentor-student relationships among these competing theorists are notable, and these could be read metaphorically and playfully as a kind of family drama. Freud and Janet shared a teacher and mentor in Jean-Martin Charcot, and they became bitter rivals with each other when they embarked on different paths of theory and practice (Cassullo, 2019). Jung and Reich both had mentor-mentee relationships with Freud. Freud and Jung had a well-known parting of ways over their theoretical differences (Jung, 1961/1989). Reich's evolution of Freud's theories largely succeeded Freud's death, but his daughter Anna Freud was instrumental in expelling Reich from the psychoanalytic community for ideological reasons (Rubin, 2003). Lowen was a student of Reich who attempted to recast Reich's theory. The splintering among theories of energy could be read as the teachers in the relationships, especially Freud, responding something like a frustrated father: "That's not how I taught him to think. That boy has a mind of his own!" In creating their own theories, the students in the relationship might be read like sons who rebel against their fathers to forge their own ways in the world.

Despite its playful presentation, this reading as a family drama might nonetheless something about why different perspectives on psychological energy may be both inevitable and necessary. If an average person on the street were asked, "How energetic or vital do you feel today?" their responses might

have aspects of the broad areas of overlap between these theories. They might say something about their emotional states, movement-oriented sensations, or their ability to accomplish tasks. However, if 20 people on the street were asked *why* they thought their experiences of energy or vitality were as they were on a particular day, the respondents might give a range of different answers. Among the analytic theorists, there seems to be an intersection at the basic, human experience of what one is likely to mean by psychological energy. The differences in viewpoint seem to play out lines of logic that attempt to explain what causes these experiences and how to change them.

The way the descriptions of these theories intersect in a group of common, overlapping human experiences represents a theme for ongoing questions in psychological theory and research and the practice of psychotherapy. To take just one example, the association between mood and a sense of directionality is one of the common themes the early analytic theorists associated with psychological energy. Jung (1969/2014b), for example, saw negative mood as an introverted energy that was directed inward and downward and positive mood as an extraverted energy that was directed outward and upward. This might be reflected in the eye position of a psychotherapy client: A depressed client may look down toward their feet or lap, and a client who has just experienced a personal success, such as a job promotion, might look out toward the sky as if seeing a world of possibilities. There are many possible lenses through which to examine this seeming association between eye position and mood. Examining this association between emotional state and directionality in a way that considers other purported qualities of psychological energy, including the will (or efficacy) and the possible presence or experience of a nonrational force could yield a new understanding of psychological mechanisms and interventions.

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