CENTER OF TRUTH, TRUE SCENE, AND PILOT IN PESSO BOYDEN SYSTEM PSYCHOMOTOR

by

Albert Pesso

In the years of co-developing and practicing Pesso System/Psychomotor (PS/P) with my wife, Diane Boyden Pesso, I often lectured and taught about motivation, contract and the relationship between the therapist and the client -- for even then I was struck with the realization that some therapeutic change and outcome was finally determined by how the client went about the therapeutic process itself and how the alliance between the therapist and the client was arranged. However, in the main, I focused on the use of body feeling and expression, under the aegis of the ego, as a way to overcome the effect of childhood deprivation and abuse on adult behavior and quality of life.

My background being emotional movement, I was very adept in discerning clients' tensions, gestures, facial expressions, and subtle signs of unconscious (to the client) but outwardly apparent evidence of dissociated and split off parts of the self. I could lead clients, with the assistance of the techniques of Psychomotor "structures" (the name for the individual work in a PS/P group) and role playing, into deep areas of the unconscious, and was able to assist them in bringing those elements to behavioral and cognitive realization. I naturally gravitated toward, and intensified my awareness of, the therapeutic effects of motoric structures and the elemental satisfactions and shifts in perception and behavior that resulted from them. I was always careful to monitor the ego levels of clients as they worked on unconscious material, since I wanted to avoid any anti-therapeutic regression and acting out.

I knew well how to deal with the maps of the world and the image of the self that developed as a consequence of old negative events, and could help create, as an antidote, symbolic counter-events with ideal parents. This would enable more positive images of the self and the world to supplant the old maps and would help clients create better living conditions in the present and increase the possibility and likelihood of a more satisfying future. Concern with the truth of one's emotional being was paramount and the search for information that would demonstrate, illuminate and then realize that truth led naturally to the body as the source for what was most real for the individual.

The work produced good results, but I was struck by reports from a small number of clients that they had little memory of what had happened in their structure a day or so, or even hours, after it had ended. To hear that some clients -- though they felt profoundly changed and affected by the work -- had little idea of how it all came about, was not entirely satisfying to me. To some, I was seen as a kind of magician who could and would bring into realization hitherto unknown parts of themselves, with little effort on their part. Although this was satisfying to my vanity, it was less than satisfying to my therapeutic intention of increasing ego awareness, consciousness and control in the client's life. I began to concentrate on developing ideas and techniques that would help these and all other clients become

more fully conscious and in control of the therapeutic process. My aim was to provide them with ways of making more apparent and manageable their defenses against the materials surfacing in their minds and bodies.

Although concern with the truth of one's emotional being was still paramount, I decided to limit attempts to circumvent resistance, (via my knowledge of unconscious processes and body movement) even at the risk of doing less motoric work. I was determined to help clients expand that part of their consciousness and personality that is in charge of their existence and began to apply new techniques and theories, within the PS/P framework, that would implement that goal.

In that endeavor I now ask and assist clients -- as part of the initial phase of the work -- to be in their "center of truth". By center of truth, I mean that interior collecting point of attention and awareness where one has access to affective body states (via emotional/physical signs), and to mental states (via thoughts, values, ideas, injunctions, and resistances) associated with those feeling states. One can imagine this center as the psychological command headquarters --a kind of "master control room" -- where one can assess all the information coming into awareness, which is figuratively displayed on monitors. When in that center, clients can access -- and are asked to report upon -- their current feelings/emotions and the internalized values and attitudes they live by.

This working from the center of truth is not too different from what occurred naturally before in the therapy. In the past, clients would simply begin to talk about how things were and would comment on how they felt and what they were thinking. That process was understood as the client "telling his or her story". During that time I would listen silently, and in my own mind collect and organize the material coming from the client. I would sort that information in terms of highest energy, the resistances to that energy, and the historical elements that could be attended to later in the work.

Before going further in telling how the new approach differed from the old, I would like to offer some definitions. In PS/P we consider that what is felt in the body derives from life guiding impulses emanating from the "soul", and that what is thought in the mind reveals life guiding principles arising from the "ego". I realize that others have devoted serious attention to formulating definitions of the "soul," the "ego," and the "self," and I wish to emphasize that the definitions presented here are simply those I have found useful for PS/P therapy.

Definition of Soul

"Soul" is the name we use in PS/P for that particular assemblage of meaning, truth, reality and procedures for successful living (immanent in the species and tested through evolutionary time), available to individuals from their personal, unique combinations of genes. It includes those pressures which push human beings to be born into reality and consciousness, and those tendencies which incline them to be receptive to the world. Further, soul connotes the entire range of human emotions and potentialities existing in the continuum between the use of force and the experience of undefendedness.

Definition of Ego

"Ego" is the name we use in PS/P for that particular assemblage of truth and reality learned and collected from personal history and stored in an individual's memory. Ego contains that controlling part of the personality that results from the soul's contacts and interactions with the outside world: interactions which determine which part of the soul shall be acknowledged and internalized into the "self," and which part of the soul shall be rejected and stay hidden in the body or in symptoms -- out of conscious awareness. Thus, the ego is that part of the "self" that is conscious; that exercises control and has the capacity to moderate the energies of the soul; and that converts reality into meaning and symbols. It is the agency by which we consciously carry out the energies and experience the meaning of the soul and have the image and identity of ourselves as beings separate from the rest of the world.

Definition of Self

"Self" is the name we use for the organization of the personality that is the outcome of the integration and combination of energies and information coming from the soul and ego. It consists of the life springs of energy and directedness coming from the soul via the genes and the laws and lessons about life coming from the ego via the memory of meaningful individual experiences. When a person is living as him/her self, it is assumed that he/she is expressing those parts of the soul that are owned, conscious and in accordance with the way his/her experiences have taught that person to be. The integration and combination of the soul and ego is organized unconsciously via automatic conditioning processes and through the agency of the "pilot" aspect of the self.

Definition of Pilot

"Pilot" is the name we use for the conscious, coordinating, executive, and choice-making aspect of the self that selects and combines elements of the soul and ego through which the self is expressed at a given moment in time and space. The pilot is at the apex of consciousness where the highest level of integration takes place. There the information about what is felt (if not feeling itself), what is seen (if not seeing itself), what is heard (if not hearing itself) is collected and synthesized to become what is experienced and understood. The pilot is not simply the observing ego, for included in the pilot concept is a highly developed capacity and responsibility for the choosing and executive function of the person.

Figuratively speaking, the pilot is that part of the personality that can overview all the information showing on the monitors in the metaphoric control room and can then make choices, assess reality and carry out decisions. The pilot can access memories, although it does not live in the past. It can consider the future, although it only lives in the present. It can utilize memories to make images of the self and project them into a frame that is called the future to consider what actions the self might make in that hypothetical space.

With the notion of the pilot and center of truth, I could recognize that in the past I had taken some of the position and responsibilities of the pilot within myself. As an external pilot, I would make silent inferences about the content on client's interior emotional and cognitive monitors from the outside, while observing them as they expressed and demonstrated their motoric and emotional states and listened to them as they reported ideas, thoughts, etc. The difference now is that I am insisting on -- and helping clients cultivate -- the presence and awareness of their own pilot as well as continuing my own observations from the position of a very attentive co-pilot.

Therefore, when people are in the center of their truth, they can themselves access the monitors in the master control room where the information coming from the soul and the ego can be organized and combined. To repeat, this information can be organized and combined either automatically or by making a choice that is guided by the pilot. Nowadays, my goal is both to awaken the pilot -- so that choices about what to work on and in what contexts are made with more participation and responsibility coming from the client's pilot -- and to supply that pilot with enriched sources of information about the soul and the ego, via the process of creating the "true scene".

Definition of True Scene

"True scene" is the name used for the symbolic, role-played event created in a PS/P session that illustrates, and makes visible and interactive (externalizes and interpersonalizes), the information arising from, and available at, the center of truth. It is not a primal scene, it is not a traumatic scene. It is not even a scene of something that has happened in the past. It is a scene constructed that illustrates the truth of the client at the very moment the client is in now. It is a way of making the immediately present elements of the client's consciousness and experience externalized, and audible.

The true scene is created by having the experience and meaning found in the soul (body and affective states) be seen and commented on by a "witness figure"; and by having the values and thoughts coming into the mind from the ego be spoken aloud by "fragment figures" in the form of statements about the laws of life, injunctions, and warnings.

Thus, the true scene converts the information at the center of truth into a form that is interpersonal and interactive, making inner processes more visible to the pilot and therefore more accessible to change.

The true scene process is where the change in styles from old to new is most apparent. In the past, in my assumption that all of the client's ego was active and alert, I would have immediately helped to create some historical scene dependent on the highest energy showing in the body. My internal question to myself was, "What is the client showing and telling me about how he or she will be working on their therapy?" I then made decisions about which historical figures should be present in the structure. Now, I want to help clients show themselves, so to speak, how they are about to go ahead in their own work via the construction of the true scene, By this new way, they can become more conscious participants in the preliminary selection of the areas to work on as they are presented from the outside with more information about themselves from the role-played witness and fragment figures (information which I had collected silently before).

Definition of Witness Figure

Witness figure is the name used for the role-played, symbolic figure (a fore-runner of an ideal, need-satisfying, validating figure such as an ideal mother or father) who sees, validates. accepts and gives names to the sentiments and states of the soul which are revealed by the facial expressions, posture, gestures and words of the client. In so doing, the witness figure helps the pilot aspect of the self to include more of the soul into awareness. For the witness may be able to see more clearly from the outside (than the pilot aspect may be aware from the inside) the client's bodily expression of those elements of the soul that may have been denied consciousness and acceptance during the development of the self.

Thus the witness figure can be a bridge or transition figure who can supply the pilot with information about the soul that had not been available to it heretofore. Of course the witness figure needs to be supplied with the information to speak about -- and that is provided by the therapist. In a way, the attentive alert, accepting attitude within the therapist is now generalized into a principle which is placed in -- and experienced from -- someone other than the therapist. Further, the witness is also a template from which the further development of the client's pilot can be modeled. As the witness sees and accepts affect that might have been unconscious, so is the pilot more able to do the same.

Definition of Fragment Figures

Fragment figures are the names used for the role-played, symbolic figures (fore-runners of historical figures role-played in structures, such as the negative aspects of one's parents) who represent the codes of behavior, values, injunctions and hesitations (usually in conflict with the not fully realized soul impulses, information and feelings that are surfacing on the body) that come into the client's mind when in the center of truth. Whereas the witness figure is a single figure, there are numerous kinds of fragment figures defined according to their function. For instance, there might be a figure enrolled as the voice of truth. That figure would announce whatever basic truths the client would report in response to something happening during the structure like, "It is not manly for boys to cry".

A warning figure might be enrolled when a client would say something like, "I have to be careful what I say because it might crush my mother if she knew what I really thought." The warning figure would place that comment in the imperative by saying, "You have to be careful of what you say because it might crush your mother if she really knew what you thought". When hearing that from a warning figure, the client would respond, "Exactly".

Thus the fragment figures announce what the client has come to believe as a consequence of life experiences. Frequently, those bits of learning can be traced to figures who said things implying those learnings -- leading to the introduction of those historical figures later in the structure. More often what the voice of truth says is not something that someone literally said in the client's history, but the client's own conclusion drawn from interactions with significant figures.

In the true scene, the witness figure notices, names and accepts soul truths and the fragment figures verbalize and uphold ego truths, producing the tension resulting from the input of those usually contradictory feelings and attitudes -- the conflict between what is felt in the body and those values and attitudes learned from bitter experience, arising in the mind. That situation is sometimes referred to as the "crossfire" where the client is at the juncture between two powerful, but contrary life guiding directives.

Both classes of figure interpersonalize what is ordinarily an intra-psychic state, thus making the consciousness of the client externalized, visible and more subject to control by the pilot aspect of the client.

What is also new is the realization that the client's pilot is not always present or awake during therapy, even though the client might appear totally awake and conscious. My experience has led me to believe that a person in a therapeutic session may sometimes be surprisingly unaware of what he or she is saying and doing as well as the implications behind it. As I said above, I have made it a habit to examine

all the information coming from the client in order to assess what is coming from an emotional state and what is coming from the client's history and resistances that is thwarting or inhibiting the client's true self from being owned and realized. In doing that I sharpened my own pilot capacities on behalf of the client and assumed that as I was seeing and listening, so was the client. But this was not always the case. It is clear that clients can do and say many things without the pilot's awareness and understanding of the implications and significance of what is being displayed.

Though the center of truth may be revealed on the monitors in the client's control room and made externally visible and audible by what is done and said, it is not necessarily true that the inner pilot is actively observing and noting those phenomena. At such moments it is as if the client is actively being the monitors in the master control room, but not overseeing the monitors, or making cognitive connections between them from a pilot position.

Thus, in those therapy sessions when clients might switch from emotional state to emotional state and speak aloud their many fears, values and attitudes, they may sometimes do so in a pilotless state, quite like a multiple personality --each immediate aspect of feeling, acting and speaking not quite connected or conscious of the other aspects which follow.

In an attempt to make this notion more clear, return with me to the metaphor of a control room filled with banks of monitors. Consider now that one bank of monitors displays information coming from the emotions and the body (soul information) and the other bank of monitors displays information coming from the mind (ego information). Imagine the pilot not only seeing and hearing what is on the monitors, but also reacting to, and being influenced by, what is seen and heard. In fact, the monitors are also part of the person -- so imagine the pilot not only able to look at and hear what is on the monitors but also connected to them by neural processes. Because of that connection, the client can both be the information as well as see the information that is coming from the monitors. (One could say that clients have regressed when they can only be the information without also being able to have the perspective that they are having access to a memory rather than being that memory.)

Now let us see the influence of the true scene. From what the client reports verbally and ways the person behaves non-verbally, the witness figure (coached by the therapist) can say, "I see how sad you are", or ".....how angry you are" etc. These statements provide acceptance of the affect that is being revealed and, with the agreement of the client, can provide a fitting name for that affect. Thus the pilot now has two avenues for receiving vital soul information. The first, from the inside, via the monitors that provide body/emotional input, and the second, from the outside, via the enriched report on soul states, provided by the witness. This report is based on the external, visible manifestation of that kind of body/emotional truth showing in behavior and gestures and is coupled with the names and acceptance of the meaning implied in those states.

This is regarded as enriched information because there are times when the pilot, from the inside, has insufficient grasp of the meaning and names of some of the body/emotional states even though they are being lived on some soul (but ego-less) level. Not consciously lived, because what is being felt has been denied existence long ago by parental or other significant figures. (This procedure is part of what is called ego-wrapping where unconscious emotion showing on the body is met, interacted with and given acceptance, validation and meaning by an ideal symbolic figure. The soul energy is thus "wrapped" with ego consciousness and meaning.)

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With the addition of the fragment figures in the true scene, the pilot not only "hears" the reports of the values, injunctions etc., coming via thoughts and inclinations showing up on the cognitive bank of monitors, but hears from the outside those ideas, values, etc. as externalized, interpersonal statements and orders. This addition too, enriches the pilot's informational pool. For what had only been thoughts -- implanted no doubt by long forgotten experiences, events and significant episodes -- now once again become interpersonal events.

Now the final schematic picture shows the pilot in the control room with information flowing to it from the interior (soul and ego monitors) and flowing to it from the external witness and fragment figures. This state highlights the goals behind the creation of the true scene. The first is to awaken the pilot function in the client; the second is to enrich the pilot with other facets of the information available to it so that control and change can more easily come about; the third is to provide a clear constellation or crystallization of the client's consciousness and conflicts of the present which provide clues and patterns for finding the base of those conflicts in particular historic events. Those events are later reconstructed and "antidoted" in typical PS/P structure fashion.

Now you can see why I might say that it was not the client's pilot that was providing me with information in the past, but that it was the client's monitors sounding off in an empty master control room that was the source of that information. As such clients would speak and experience themselves in the session, one could say that they shifted from one state to another without the consciousness that such states were contradictory or representing various levels of emotional conditions and values.

Thus, I no longer assume the pilot function to be automatically turned on in clients simply because they are reporting and living all those different levels of experience and thought. Instead I am active in making sure that clients are as busy as I am. They can then be more active in figuring out the implications of what they are saying and doing and understanding the meaning it might have for their lives.

Following the development and creation of the true scene, the structure can turn, with great precision, to that historical event (handled in typical PS/P structure fashion) which provided the foundation of the present reality problems. Thus, when clients enter the historical phase, they know exactly how they got there, for during the entire structure, the client's pilot has been active, conscious and responsible about choices in every phase of the work. Therefore, after the structure is over and during the ensuing days and weeks, the client is better able to link the memory and meaning of the past with the therapeutic experience of the antidote with the symbolic ideal figures (provided to counter the trauma and psychological losses created by the original negative event) to the real life difficulties in a way that illuminates and clarifies the present problem and better provides the client with the energy, capacity and insight needed to make changes in his/her actual life.