

CONTEMPORARY REICHIAN ANALYSIS
and
CHARACTER-ANALYTICAL VEGETOTHERAPY
from 1933 to 2022

By Genovino Ferri



PART 1

About Contemporary Reichian Analysis

Contemporary Reichian Analysis represents a model for Analytical, Clinical and Body Psychotherapy that has been developing, uninterruptedly, along the arrow of time since 1933. It has always moved on, passing in continuity, from Wilhelm Reich to Ola Raknes and to Federico Navarro, until reaching me, and I still have the honor of sharing it today, in 2022.

It is a model which reads the body in psychoanalysis and reads psychoanalysis in the body, connecting and implementing data from the neurosciences, which have been validated over time. Furthermore, our model maintains open channels of communication with all the other schools of psychotherapy.

In this article, I will introduce a set of grammar clarifying body psychoanalysis, which extends not only to psychopathology, itself primarily interpreted as being bottom-up in terms of evolutive time, but also, to clinical psychotherapy, that follows. Perhaps I am outlining a new position, certainly it takes the Reichian paradigm deeper, or is, rather, a "*change in the visual gestalt*" as Kuhn might put it. It represents a change in the mental architecture of observation which emerges from a different way of feeling, I might add.

It is a paradigm which reads the *unconscious* in its entirety, because the unconscious is undoubtedly a "mirror" for what has been deposited in the body.

I will go on to 3D Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy space-time-depth in three-dimensions, which I hold to be an improvement on the methodology developed in 1935, which has revealed itself to be highly appropriate in psychotherapy.

Today's Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy certainly involves the Analysis of the Patterns of Character Traits followed by appropriate Body Psychotherapy through specific, targeted activations. Most bodily activations, or "actings" are phylo-ontogenetic movements deposited in each of us during the development of the evolutive stages. In the setting, bodily activations work like real passwords, which can activate "that time" of relational experience for each person, allowing entry into the depths of the evolutive stages and the stage transitions, as if they were "drawers of time".





"3D" Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, in fact, acts along the ontogenetic arrow of time, along which lie the sequence of marks incised during the person's life, together with their etiology, as a narration of the individual's successive evolutive stages. Primarily, life takes a bottom-up direction, with bottom-up and top-down circularity, and it has negentropic evolutive movement from conception and intrauterine time onward.

In "What is life?" (1944), Erwin Schrodinger, a Nobel prize-winner in physics (1933) and the father of quantum mechanics, defined negentropy as "a negative variation in entropy compared to an original value, such as the birth of an individual, the origin of life or the beginning of biological evolution". Ola Raknes (1972) also talks about negentropy, saying, "Orgone energy is negatively entropic and negentropy is essential to the creation and maintenance of life" (p. 68-69).

Body to Mind is, thus, the direction of Negentropy. From the body to the mind is, in fact, the evolution of a person's Arrow of Time. This means that the new necessity, arising for psychotherapy and psychopathology, is reaching aspects of pre-subjective relationships, starting from the intercorporeity of the Primary Object Relationship in the first 500 days of life. In ontogenesis, Intercorporeity, precedes and then accompanies Intersubjectivity, reflecting the passage from Self-Object to Self-Subject in the Primary Object Relationship. It is a journey from Conception to Weaning, from water to air, from amniotic fluid to skin contact, from

darkness to light, from the uterus to the breast, from inside to outside, from the umbilical cord and placenta to lips and nipple and from the 6th relational bodily level (umbilical-abdominal area) to the 2nd relational bodily level (mouth).

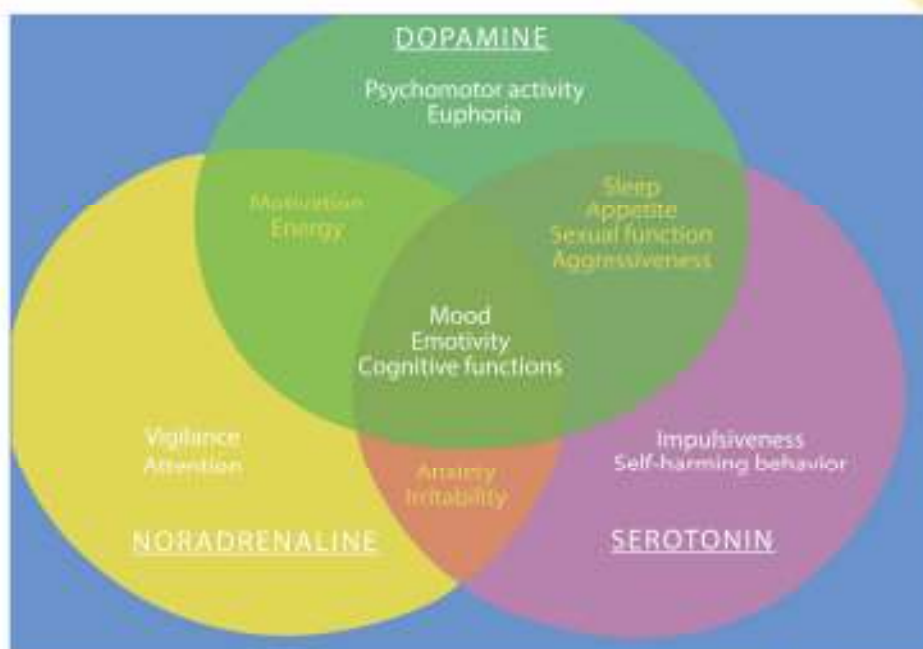
As you will have gathered, Contemporary Reichian Analysis assumes a highly-coherent, three-dimensional, complex, systemic, observational position, which considers the entire life-time of an individual from Intrauterine Time onward. It is an observational position, which considers the relationships which have been experienced and marked at the time of the evolutive stages; it considers the characterological trait patterns that have been incised by those relationships; it considers the corresponding dominant bodily levels during those stages of development; it considers the corresponding brain areas and the corresponding trait-thought patterns for those stages. All of this can be traced, being tied together by the intelligent sense of the life-story connecting them.

It is this precise interpretation that makes the precise insertion into psychotherapy of personalized, deep, structural "Action" possible without running the risk of liquid psychotherapy, or liquid body psychotherapy. If, at a cerebral level, words modify synapses (etymologically derived from the Greek *syn-àptein* meaning "with" and "join"), which is to say "connections," then the "how" the words are said can modify them even more, alignment with what Dr. Stephen W. Porges calls prosody. I would add, however, that the "how" belongs to the language of the whole body and not only to the voice prosody, which accompanies verbal content when you are speaking.

The "how", if we listen carefully, can tell us from "where in the body" that voice and that content is emerging. The "how" is the expression from a particular evolutive stage, from the trait patterns incised during that stage of development, and from the relational bodily levels marked by the imprinting of that stage. It tells us how our Self has been built, with its stratification being like a multi-story apartment building in which the evolutive time of each apartment is co-habiting with its own "Trait Mind".

Each apartment has its neuromediator balance, which I will go into in greater depth shortly. This analogy should make it clear that (compared to words and how they are said alone) the use of an appropriate bodily activation can modify the synapses and the neuromediator dynamic in that story of the "apartment building" even more. In other words, activations can rebalance the specific "Trait Mind" in question. I define a Trait Mind as being a functional, organizational complex that combines an evolutive stage, the trait patterns of that stage and its dominant peripheral relational bodily level, as well as the central brain areas which are, in turn, prevalent during that stage, but we will come back to this.

The principal neuromediators can be considered to be Noradrenaline (NA), Serotonin (5HT) and Dopamine (DA). They can be associated with the three As - Alarm for Noradrenaline, Affectivity for Serotonin, and Action for Dopamine. These three neuromediators have been present in phylogenesis since some of the earliest steps taken in the evolution of life; they have reached a high degree of specialization in humans. Serotonin (5HT), for example, is also present in vegetables; I was surprised to learn it is found in artichokes. In humans, it regulates affective loss and upwellings of joy, that is to say mood. In order to explain the functionality of these extraordinary molecular building-blocks in relation to the heights evolution has reached, I could mention prolactin, a neuropeptide, which in the pre-mammalian world did not appear to play a highly significant role, but which, as we climb the negentropic column of life, in mammals (and we humans are neopallial, three-dimensional, stereoscopic, optical mammals) has become vitally important during pregnancy and breast-feeding.



Coming back to the three neuromediators, they are in a continuous dialogue among themselves, meaning that they are interdependent. An increase in the level of one of them causes an adaptive response in the other two, seeking equilibrium for the Self in the relationship with the Other-than-Self. An increase in Noradrenaline and in Dopamine, for example, caused by affective loss of an object, can be lowered by an increase in Serotonin, which placates the fear provoked by the loss. In psychodynamic terms, we could say that affectivity reduces alarm caused by loss and reduces any of the angry, reparative, dopaminergic action, which may often be correlated with alarm. Everything depends on the specific life-story from that time of that evolutive stage of development that the person is reactualizing. That is like saying it depends on which floor of their personality's apartment building they are on, and which trait pattern they are expressing, in that moment.

From a bottom-up, body-to-mind, complex-negentropic viewpoint, I would like to underline that this interdependent-neuromediator dialogue should be read and interpreted for every floor of the apartment block we inhabit and thus for each individual trait mind. A bodily activation proceeds from the body's peripheral afferent pathways, along the cortico-spinal pathways, towards the central areas and, completing the loop, returns from the central area's efferent pathways towards the body, again along the cortico-spinal pathways - you cannot know without feeling and you cannot feel without the body. When an action is performed, the cortico-spinal pathways are, indeed, activated. But, when an action is only imagined, only the motor-cortical network is activated - the real action is not being produced. We can each revisit and, in part, rewrite our life-stories with new incised marks (etymologically "character" means "incised mark") by means of appropriate bodily activations. This can allow us to open up parts of our life-stories, and of ourselves, reactivating *that time* and *Bergson's "élan vital"*, which was so dear to Reich, the flow of which is interrupted in historical bodily blockages.

At the same time, by doing activations in this way, we have access to both the analytical content, that is to say, the history of relationships marked on the bodily levels during the evolutive stages, and the clinical-symptomatological aspects of the person, together with the opportunity to cure them. Actings allow us to have insight into our life-stories directly *from the body*, that is often telling us something even before cognitive awareness of it emerges, so let's listen to the body.

In this regard, Contemporary Reichian Analysis listens to Corporeity using three separate languages – verbal language, body language and trait language. I would like to underline that, in the contemporary Reichian-analytical setting, as well as the Analysis of Characterological Trait Patterns and 3D Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, the Analysis of the Character of the relationship is also of fundamental importance. This, last, is an analytical-therapeutic tool that permits direct dialogue between the analyst and the person being analyzed's trait language, together with the implicit requests deposited in them. In Contemporary Reichian Analysis, we, therefore, give great importance to the analyst's awareness of their own trait and bodily-level counter-transference, both to ensure appropriate construction of the relationship in the setting and, even more so, for when the analyst suggests an acting to the person being analyzed.

“The relationship is a complex living system” (New York Academy of Science, 1999) and, as such, has its own history and evolution. There will always be three of us in the setting, the person being analyzed, the analyst, and the relationship born from the interaction of the person being analyzed's trait patterns with the analyst's trait patterns. Lastly, in this complex interpretation, the setting should be seen as a *small biosphere*, representing an energetic field in which Vegetotherapy's bodily activations will flower, revealing and marking new negentropic life-experiences, to differing degrees of depth, in the person's life-history.



PART 2

A Focus on Vegetotherapy in Contemporary Reichian Analysis

Three stages of development between 1935 and 2022

Although the third revolution, after Copernicus and Darwin, that of the subconscious, could be said to have started in 1895 with S. Freud and J. Breuer's studies on hysteria, W. Reich, a brilliant student of Freud's, began his psychoanalytical period in 1919. In 1922, W. Reich was already holding his seminar on psychoanalytical technique and in 1933 he made a vital contribution to psychoanalysis with the publication of Character Analysis. Publication of this work was the first "vitally important" negentropic, bifurcation from classical psychoanalysis. Complex, systemic thought had now, in fact, been introduced, which was able to consider a series of connected patterns defining a functionally-greater system and already actually including corporeity. . . "Character", etymologically, means "incised mark" and we might ask - incised by who and where? The answer is incised by relationships in a series of peripheral locations (the bodily levels) and in a central location - the brain areas. However, at the time, there was intense scientific debate permeating society about whether C. Darwin's evolutionism or N. Carnot's determinism was correct because Carnot's 2nd Law of thermodynamics about entropy was in apparent contrast with what Darwin had said about Life emerging through evolution.

This contrast in observational position reflects two opposite directions on the psychoanalytical world's arrow of time. The first, that is top-down, led Freud to the concept of regression; the other, that is bottom-up, led Reich to suggest the concept of reactualization. It would not be until the 1960s that I. Prigogine demonstrated that the law of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, had not been violated, because, by additionally calculating the negentropy and entropy of an open, complex, living system, it becomes clear that the negentropy produced is at the expense of external order and that by calculating all values of order and disorder, the overall disorder increases. Both Darwin's and Carnot's observational positions were correct, as were both those of Freud and Reich, and they can be integrated in the light of the theory of complexity.

Allow me to share my enthusiasm for the extraordinary *Project*, that sees the contemporaneousness and interdependence of negentropy and entropy on this our Intelligent, Living Planet and focus on the three stages of development of Vegetotherapy.

The 1st Stage, Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, appeared in the horizons of psychotherapy in 1935. Many wrote about their emerging understanding:

"Reich noted that when the armoring dissolved, a wave of spontaneous, involuntary movements occurred in the body from the throat downwards. If the patient were lying supine with their knees raised at 45° (the position on the couch in the Contemporary Reichian Analytical setting), breathing deeply, then their head would tilt backwards slightly, and their shoulders would move a little lower, as would the chest and abdomen, while the pelvic area would rise slightly. These movements were very similar to a reflex which Reich termed the orgasm reflex." (W. Reich e l'Orgonomia p. 60).

O. Raknes wrote, *"When the orgasm reflex was discovered in 1935, the emphasis of treatment was moved from the Character to the body. The term Vegetotherapy was intended to recognize this change . . . We speak of Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy to include the analytical work on the psychic and physical apparatus as being one and the same thing (Character Analysis, p. 438).*



W. Reich also noted in his publication, *The Function of Orgasm* that: *By loosening chronic characterological behavior, we can obtain reactions from the Vegetative Nervous System and free the corresponding muscular behavior . . . (p. 307). Neurosis is not only the expression of a disturbance to psychic equilibrium, but is also the expression of a chronic disturbance of the vegetative equilibrium . . . (p.308). It is surprising to see how dissolving muscular rigidity recalls to mind the memory of the situation in which the repression of the impulse occurred... (p.308). Muscular behavior makes it possible to avoid complicated deviations through the psychic*

structure..." (p.309).

From 1939 Vegetotherapy was unaltered and unquestioned for four decades, remaining unsystematized until 1974, being used only to intervene on "state". Thus, albeit a meaningful experience, it remained in the background and was almost propaedeutic to orgone therapy. Wilhelm Reich had identified the seven bodily levels and had connected them – he had discovered that there was a type of "corporeity" to the body that underlay the characterological psychodynamics that could be treated by bodily activations. And he had defined the bodily level as being "*the set of those organs and muscle-groups which are in functional contact among themselves... and are capable of inducing an emotionally-expressive movement*" (Character Analysis, p. 453). He identified them, from 1st to 7th bodily levels, in a vertically, top-down arrangement.

The 2nd stage. On careful reflection, as I underlined before, Corporeity is implicit in Character Analysis because Character Analysis involves reading *the signs, or marks, incised by relationships in a peripheral location (the relational bodily level) and in a central location (the brain areas)*. Given this premise, I would also, similarly, introduce implicit development along *the evolutive arrow of time* for Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy – it is an arrow that passes through and aligns four generations of analysts and therapists. From this perspective, the figure of Federico Navarro emerges, who continued with Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy, but, together with Ola Raknes, led it in a new direction.

Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy evolved beyond its forty years of stasis thanks to F. Navarro's work of clinical systematization, with the approval of O. Raknes, that structured and organized W. Reich's precious active principle. To asystematic Vegetotherapy for state, he added Vegetotherapy by bodily level, with appropriate, designated actings for each of the seven bodily levels (although it was still from a linear, top-down perspective).

From the Preface to Somatopsicodinamica by F. Navarro, p. 10, I offer Navarro's perspective:

"It was during his vacation on the island of Stromboli, in 1965, that F. Navarro discovered W. Reich. He had taken a collection of Reich's work with him which had an introduction by Luigi De Marchi and was entitled The Theory of the orgasm and other writings. On his return to Naples, he found that his enthusiasm was shared by a number of colleagues and friends. The idea of taking a training-course in Reichian Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy was put forward, but it seemed close to impossible to do.

The only solution would be to contact the Norwegian, Ola Raknes, who was a faithful disciple of Reich's and had been trained directly by him. Once contacted, O. Raknes (who was a psychoanalyst, having been trained by K. Horney, and was a trained vegetotherapist, having done three years of training under W. Reich) accepted the idea of spending his holidays in Italy for a few years. In this way, for three years in a row, Navarro and his colleagues received practical teaching from Ola Raknes that would form the basis of their therapeutic activity."



During an interview in Synthesis, Navarro explains: "At the end of the Vegetotherapy training course I did with Ola Raknes, Reich's student, friend and collaborator, Raknes asked me if I had any observations that I wanted to make. Marked, as I was, by my more traditional training in neuropsychiatry, I told him that the clinical methodology had not been organized properly and that you felt the need for coherent systematization... Reich had not actually developed a proper type of method. Raknes gave me a crafty look, told me that I was right and, after a brief pause, added that Reich had not done it because, at a certain point, he had become completely absorbed by his orgone research, but that, if I wished, I could do it. I

worked a lot on the methodology, and I showed it to Raknes before he died. This is how Vegetotherapy reached this point – as progressive methodical work on the seven bodily levels, starting from the eyes in order to move energy, to allow it to circulate from the top downwards, to then be expressed in orgasmic potency" (pp. 18-19).

The 3rd stage I hold that a psychotherapeutic intervention is not fully complete if it does not pass along the cortico-spinal pathways, that is to say if it does not pass through the feeling and enacting that together produce awareness. I repeat – you cannot feel and you cannot act without the body. The etymology of the words "sapience" and "sense" indicate the journey from sensing-savoring in the mouth to sensing-smelling in the nose, to then go on to the brain "having sense" and "making sense" of the world. Sensing and feeling have played a key role in our journey to sensing and knowing, together with the fundamentally indispensable impressions and expressions of the body.

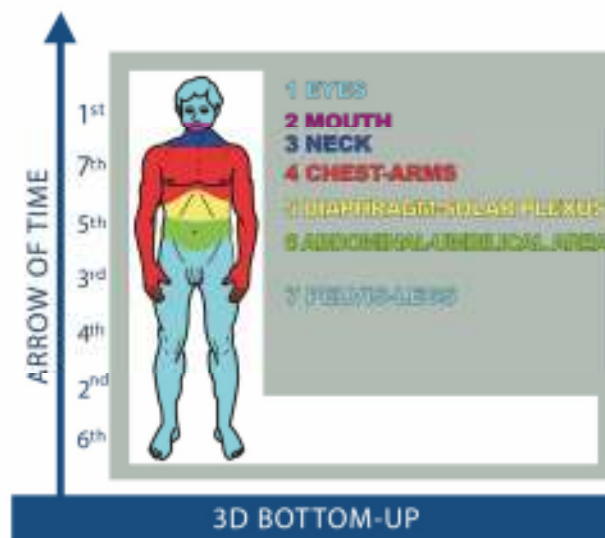
I was trained in linear, top-down Vegetotherapy by bodily level under F. Navarro for more than ten years, and I collaborated with him professionally until his death in 2002. He had been the honorary President of the Italian Society of Reichian Analysis (SIAR), which provides and runs the post-graduate, School of Specialization in Psychotherapy, for those with university degrees in medicine and psychology. I now have the honor, and pleasure, of directing this school. It has been recognized officially by the Italian Ministry of Higher Education and Research. My personal training experience in Vegetotherapy with F. Navarro gave me the indispensable foundation for what I consider to be its, direct implicit, subsequent development - Vegetotherapy by evolutive stage. This is derived from a complex, ontogenetically-bottom-up reading of an individual's development and it includes and completes the preceding top-down interpretation.

Looking back, I would date the start of this further transition to 1983. It carries us through to the concept of "Trait Mind" and Contemporary Reichian Analysis. It was in 1983 that I witnessed what was, to tell the truth, inadvertently, me taking the first step. There was a rather heated debate in Valencia in Spain, at a, then, European School of Orgonotherapy (S.E.OR.) conference, about which bodily levels were implicated in psychosis. In the end, F. Navarro, with his typical, great intellectual honesty, agreed with my theory that "the peripheral area with greatest involvement in psychosis was the 6th relational bodily level (the umbilical-abdominal area) and that, although it was certainly still involved, the 1st level (eyes, ears and nose) was only secondary, following on from an *earthquake* in the 6th. Clinical, beyond-threshold symptomatology of the Self's field of consciousness, therefore, only represented the consequence that was most easily visibly to the observer making an objective examination of the patient in a case of psychotic decompensation.

It was an accidental revolution, and, from there, hitherto unimaginable developments became possible. That agreed definition of psychosis would reveal itself to be an extraordinary key, facilitating entry to the individual's bodily levels in their (ontogenetic) bottom-up sequence, from the very beginning of the person's life. As a consequence, two significant modifications followed: The bodily levels were re-ordered by their (successive) "evolutive relational functioning" giving the 6th, 2nd, 4th, 3rd, 5th, 7th and then 1st, as the revised order and - the concept of the negentropic arrow of time was introduced.



The evolutive stages were redefined three-dimensionally (in 3D), while the bodily levels were linked with the *relational objects for each stage*. These relationships leave incised marks, that are then expressed in the Character Trait Patterns deposited during each specific stage of development. In this way, we can see that the person's real life-story, rather than their phantasms, come into the setting and can carry us, from the peripheral afferents to the central nervous system.



Intrauterine time burst tumultuously into Character formation, modifying and revolutionizing psychopathological nosography and anchoring it to the person's real life-story and to their personal expression of corporeity. This made psychopathology seem less alien and more human, and it made it, three-dimensionally, more comprehensible. Psychopathology has become easier to reach, therapeutically, in the setting, using our three appropriate, active principles – The Analytical Therapeutic Relationship, Bodily Activation by stage Vegetotherapy, and Character-Analytical Psychopharmacotherapy.

The great attention paid to the relationships for the bodily levels led to the introduction of the Analysis of the Character of the Relationship between the analyst and the person being analyzed in the setting, in 1992. This highlighted another type of counter-transference - trait and bodily-level counter-transference. Character Analysis has been the identifying fractal of our school of psychotherapy, and it moved onto a greater order of magnitude by applying it to the analytical-therapeutic relationship, defining it as being like a complex living-system. It is a third, complex living-system in the setting, in addition to the analyst and the person being analyzed and it has its own character, its own history and its own language.

In an article published in 1999, in annual no. 879 of the New York Academy of Science, I underlined that a new subconscious language was revealed in the setting - *the language of relationships*. *This permits the analyst's and the person being analyzed's traits to have a dialogue, or, to be more precise, it allows the implicit requests present in their traits to have a dialogue, with the possibility that a new relationship can be born and develop.*

How can we fail to notice the parallels, in the setting, with DNA's double-helix?



Conclusions

In 2016, coming back to clinical-therapeutic considerations, a new functional-organizational complex was identified involving the evolutive stage, the trait patterns, the relational bodily level and the prevalent brain areas at the specific stage of development. The Trait Mind, which agreed with G. Bateson's Embodied Mind and with F. Varela's Enactive Mind. The arrow of Time had led to its emergence. The concept of the Trait Mind allows us to avoid foreshortening ontogenetic time; it allows us to read the progressive, bottom-up emergence of the relational bodily levels according to the evolutive stages, and it allows us to plan every therapeutic intervention that we make with three-dimensional precision. That is to say, we can carefully plan every therapeutic intervention into the "apartments" of the "Building" representing our Personality from a privileged, informed position.

Character-Analytical Vegetotherapy in today's setting has become geometric "psycho-surgery", using appropriate bodily activations, which are efficacious passwords permitting entry to Time in the Body and into the "dysfunctional apartments" in the "Building" of the person being analyzed. With regard to this, I cannot fail to mention that my latest book "Tempo nel Corpo", (published as a paperback in Italian and Greek, to be published in September, 2022 in Portuguese and, shortly, to be published as an e-book in English, entitled "Body Time"), contains descriptions of the 20 main bodily activations that have marked the life-story of our school of psychotherapy, from Reich to Raknes to Navarro to Ferri.

Today, we can *reduce* the time psychotherapy takes by individuating the nature of the implicit and explicit requests more precisely and, at the same time, we can increase the depth of the intervention made in the setting, by entering the right "apartments", with our phylo-ontogenetically-targeted bodily activations. The Reichian analytical model, over the four generations of analysts, has been able to perfect its guidelines, to become ever more appropriate for psychotherapy, for psychopathology and for psychopharmacotherapy.

Our model is, epistemologically and scientifically, highly-coherent and places it, at the very least, at the cutting edge of the latest developments, or, more probably, somewhat ahead of its time. The actings elaborated by W. Reich, O. Raknes, F. Navarro, and by G. Ferri (SIAR), form a continuous line covering almost all of the possible windows throughout the evolutive stages of an individual's development. Thus, they permit more precise insertion of the vegeto therapeutic bodily activations into the "apartments" of Evolutive Time that our "Trait Minds" inhabit in order to return them to equilibrium.

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