

THE BODY AS CONTAINER AND EXPRESSER

Authentic Movement groups in the development of wellbeing in our bodymindspirit

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Introduction

This chapter examines a developing discipline named Authentic Movement (AM), which can be used to promote emotional wellbeing and health. It is one of many methods found in the practice of dance movement therapy (DMT) – soon to become a state registered profession alongside the other three arts therapies (art, drama and music). I will begin with an overview of authentic movement, its history, why it is used and with whom, and will follow this with sections describing authentic movement groups from both a practical and a theoretical basis together with examples. In brief, authentic movement as described here aims to increase connections between body, mind and spirit in the context of a group approach to health and healing, embodiment and wellbeing through movement.

AM is a powerful way of developing personal wellbeing using a unique form of free association in movement to bring mindfulness through kinetic meditation (in other words, contemplation of our internal world through movement of the body). The participant can learn to engage with a direct experience of themselves, of the group and of the transpersonal; an experience often beyond words and concepts. AM can assist, for example, in developing emotional literacy (intrapersonal intelligence), interpersonal skills and processes, body awareness, somatic intelligence, leading to body–mind–spirit connections. By gaining access and giving creative expression to inner worlds the invisible becomes visible or ‘authentic,’ claims Californian founder Mary Starkes Whitehouse (1979), although the term ‘authentic’ in DMT is found prior to this in Dosamantes-Alperson (1974).

The concept of authentic might appear confusing in this practice. However we could liken it to ‘congruence’ in the person centred approach (Rogers 1961, 1970; Payne 2004) which emphasizes the need for the feeling state in the therapist, as provoked by the client, to be maintained as truthfully as possible, whether or not this is disclosed to the client. It is sometimes difficult to know what is or is not congruent or authentic from any perspective, whether inner or outer. Congruence is

experienced though, as a felt-sense of truth. Authenticity encompasses both polarities; what we might poetically call the darkness as well as the light: respecting the shadow while learning to hold the tension between these opposites in ourselves is part of the process in Authentic Movement.

Originally termed 'Movement-in-Depth' by Whitehouse in the 1970s, the method grew from its roots in dance, in Jungian thought, in mystical practice and in the pioneering work in dance movement therapy (Frantz 1972). Mary Starkes Whitehouse was a dancer, teacher and early movement therapist. She had a Jungian analysis and studied at the Jung Institute in Zurich. Her papers explore such issues as the role and experience of spontaneous and creative movement (Whitehouse 1958); the importance of following an inner impulse (Whitehouse 1970), the nature of embodiment in the process of change and transference (Whitehouse 1977) and the complexity of Jungian thought in relation to dance therapy (Whitehouse 1979). Two of her students, Joan Chodorow (1991, 1997, 1999) and Janet Adler (1995, 1999, 2002), have each developed Authentic Movement further, incorporating understanding from analytical psychotherapy and the mystical disciplines respectively. AM in Europe has absorbed elements from other disciplines, for example from body work, DMT, Laban movement, psychotherapeutic group approaches, transpersonal development, research methodology, dance performance, and individual psychoanalytic psychotherapy (Penfield 2006).

Although more commonly a form of small group work with a teacher, AM may also be used as group psychotherapy with a facilitator. Authentic Movement practitioners work with adults in group or individual psychotherapy, working with those who seek wellbeing, and other outcomes, through embodiment in a body-based discipline. Most participants have had some personal development before. In one-to-one psychotherapy, AM will involve working more directly with the transference.

As with dance and DMT (and for that matter counselling and psychotherapy), men participate in AM far less often than women, which is a pity as more of a balance between male and female would nourish the masculine and feminine in each of us. Perhaps men are more likely to feel inhibited using movement in such a receptive way in the presence of other men and women. This phenomenon may connect to society's marginalization of the use of the body as an art form resulting in women, for whom cultural stereotypes may allow greater interest in dance and in connectivity, taking more of a lead in this discipline. The composition of AM groups is mostly middle class, similar to that of participants found both in group and individual psychotherapy and counselling, and in training programmes. Much more attention needs to be given to encouraging participation from others, including those from ethnic minorities, indeed anyone from any walk of life interested in learning from the body's wisdom.

AM has been used successfully with those with organic and non-organic medical conditions. Other ways in which AM groups are being used is to provide continuing professional development for dance movement therapists, counsellors, psychotherapists and psychoanalysts, dancers and artists. Those untrained in dance

as an art form could be at an advantage over professionals who may first need to unlearn their dance technique.

Authentic Movement groups

AM is entirely suited to group psychotherapy, where the holding capacity of the circle of external, conscious witnesses extends beyond that of any one therapist. Groups are self selecting, although the facilitator would normally interview participants to assess their suitability prior to starting in an ongoing group

AM groups are certainly suitable for anyone interested in wellbeing and spiritual growth, regardless of gender, ethnicity or class. However, in my view these groups would be unsuitable for those suffering from mental health problems such as clinical depression, psychosis, borderline conditions, or those needing ego strength building as AM group work demands so much self-direction.

When offered in a non-judgemental environment, or with 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers 1957), AM provides a safe climate for moving in the presence of others. It is a good way to heal a trauma, to become your own person, to re-energize and to make timeless, deeper connections with others. It is the facilitator's task to prepare participants for the AM group as with any other group, for example by negotiating, clarifying and maintaining the ground-rules. It is also important in setting up an AM group to describe the nature of AM as a form including the different roles, the structures (such as time frames and group/spatial configurations), and the concept of moving from within. Therefore an educational role, particularly at first, is needed from the facilitator. My own style is to carefully design preparatory experiences and collaborate fully with the group for example, in setting ground-rules and time frames and in planning the sessions which might range from a couple of hours to ongoing/intensive weekends or residentials.

As with any personal development group, safety is essential (Payne 2001b). The participant in an AM group needs to be offered the 'good enough' relaxed environment of which Winnicott (1971) speaks, to be able to release into their movement impulses, thoughts, sensations, images. 'Reciprocal free association', so termed in Winnicott's Squiggle game of 'no rules' (Winnicott 1971: 16), where the therapist makes an impulsive mark on paper, then invites the client to turn it into something, after which the client takes a turn, simply cannot take place if the group members feel too much anxiety and too unsafe. This is of particular importance when starting in AM as the work is done in ways usually unfamiliar to the participants, such as moving with closed eyes, which may be difficult to do sometimes due to fear and anxiety. Changes in the structures or type of form used, new members joining and so on can threaten safety in the group from time to time as illustrated by the following participants' comments:¹

I would say difficulties revolved around adjusting to the changes in structures. Because [the] work is structured I feel safety in that, then when ways of using the form are changed or altered it can feel quite challenging yet also very important.

When new members join an established group [in an open group format] it is good, because it helps remind me of the ground form and makes me realize what I have understood and gained. However, it can feel unsafe when perhaps I have been at a different level in my own journey with authentic movement and again brings up issues of trust and safety.

Roles taken in Authentic Movement groups

During an AM group, participants are invited to enter one of two distinct roles, and variations of these, as described by this group member:

Authentic movement groups enable the work to be broken up into component parts to explore, for example being the witness (silent, verbal or collective) and being mover. By exploring how the roles of witness and mover can be used by initially almost exaggerating separateness between them I am becoming skilled at experiencing them.

The primary form in AM is the 'dyad' (within which are the roles of the mover and her witness),² which is normally referred to as the 'ground form'. Each role is now described in turn.

Movers

A person moving with eyes closed in the presence of another, the witness, is termed 'the mover'. In AM group work this role may be undertaken in a dyad in their own space, or in a circle formation where the movers move in the centre with one or many witnesses sitting in a circle around them. With their eyes closed, the mover is more able to attend to their inner world of thoughts, sensations, images, feelings and movement impulses. Sometimes group members resist closing their eyes, to begin with, as this participant recalls:

When I found out that the practice of Authentic Movement included moving with eyes closed I had an immediate negative reaction. To see is one of the main vehicles of communication between people (eye contact). I need to see, I need to look if I am looked at, and I need to look where I go and what I do. When I close my eyes I lose control of me, of others, of the environment. Now I know that when I move with my eyes closed in a trusted environment created by the facilitator, I go with my sight inside, and there I see more.

Movers endeavour to maintain an awareness of immediacy and to respond to inner experience with expressions such as stillness or non-directive movement. They are the first to be invited to speak about their experience, particularly any significant moment during it. They may or may not ask to hear from a witness,

whether their own ‘designated’ witness or the ‘free-floating’ witnesses (see later) in the circle. The movers learn to track their movements and the inner accompanying experience. Movers learn to wait for the next movement impulse and in this process may, or may not, recognize truthful, or authentic, movement. In the presence of one (as in the dyad) or many witnesses (sitting on the edge of a circle format) movers begin this process by listening inwardly in stillness to find a movement arising from a deep, cellular impulse.

After their movement experience, which takes place within a previously agreed time frame, movers return to their witnesses. Movers are always invited to speak first. Each mover, in speaking of her story, recalls an embodied event or ‘significant moment’ or the whole experience, as remembered, may be shared. The mover may describe the movement together with associated feelings, sensations, images, body-felt senses, and thoughts.

At first the mover, when reflecting on her experience, may feel she did not know what she was doing, in a way similar to the experience of unconscious non-duality (Horrocks 2002). This dream state, like day dreaming, is a non-ego-controlled experience, in which the mind lets go of the separateness normally experienced between the self and other resulting in a third dimension, a non-duality. In the early stages of AM work (and sometimes later too), the mover’s experience remains unconscious and thus unremembered when they recall their experience. I suggest this is pertinent to their development, this ‘unremembered’, in that by working solely with that which is remembered (even if that is nothing at all, not even the physical movements) the material emerging will be that which is ready to be processed at that time. It is crucial that both witness and mover trust in the mover remembering when the time is right. In the same way a person centred psychotherapist would only speak/reflect the material a client has brought to a session, rather than bringing in, for example their own recall of her story from previous sessions, trusting the client will bring the material with which she is ready to work at that time. Consequently in this approach the therapist refrains from probing or questioning to uncover forgotten memories. Similarly a dreamer recalls a whole dream, or only parts of a dream, either of which is the only material with which the therapist can work.

Later on the moving experience may be more frequently like lucid dreaming where there is interplay between the dreamer and the dreamed. The creativity is in the interplay. It can also connect the mover to the numinous, the universal ‘I’ or ‘big me’ rarely found in everyday life. In this experience the freedom from or loss of, ego or ‘little i’ (with attachments such as personal history, identity and so on) enables a greater connection with the collective body (Adler 1999) and a feeling of immense wellbeing.

Witnesses

The term ‘witness’ refers to the role of the participant(s) who sits on the edge of the movement space (or circle) consciously attending, with eyes open, to the mover – the ‘other’. The witness, the one who has chosen not to move, is not a watcher

or an observer of the mover, but an empathic conscious and receptive participant. From this co-creation of reality, safety and a deep respect for each other ensues. The witness acts in the role of container for the mover's embodied immersion in the unconscious which unfolds whatever, and however it likes.

The witness endeavours to be present in the mover's movement and, while attending to her own thoughts, sensations, feelings, images and impulses, to allow these to be influenced by what she sees in the presence of the mover. She is in a state of being rather than doing although still active in tracking her inner attitude. This inner embodied tracking is similar to the phenomenon of the therapist's countertransference found in psychodynamic psychotherapy. The inner tracking, akin to mindfulness, is a state of acceptance and can include noticing all sorts of phenomena, for example hearing sounds in the environment, or being aware of bodily sensations, breath, images, feelings, kinaesthetic sensations or the need to move/act, thoughts and judgements.

The witness speaks only after the mover has spoken, and only if requested to by the mover. When the witness is asked to speak her witnessing, she does so non-judgementally, with unconditional positive regard and deep respect, honouring the mover's experience. Any judgements, interpretations or projections are owned by the witness. She is encouraged by the facilitator to speak only of those elements of her experience which link to aspects of the mover's already spoken journey or significant moment/event preferably spoken in the present tense to keep the experience in the here and now.

As the inner witness develops in the mover, so the mover too desires to be a witness, to track another's movements while she sits in stillness, being conscious of her own inner experiences of thoughts, sensations, images, feelings and movement impulses although refraining from enacting them. When we witness movers in this way it is as if we are moving inside ourselves in the way of the mover herself. Perhaps we inwardly mirror the mover's motor neurons at play. Rizzolatti et al. (1996) found that when a primate watched another perform an action that was within their own movement repertoire, the frontal cortex's mirror neurons fired up in a form of kinaesthetic empathy (Moore and Yamamoto 1988). Thus, while witnessing another move, we can often make an informed guess about what the mover is feeling, imagining or even thinking.

The concept of the 'wise observer/higher self' (Rowan 1993) in transpersonal psychotherapy is relevant here. For instance, by waiting for, and listening to, an inner prompt the mover (re)discovers a consciousness of the 'wise observer' termed the 'inner witness'. By clearly seeing this inner witness in herself the mover, as a witness, (re)gains a similar consciousness or presence to herself and the other, often resulting in compassion for self and others. This consciousness reminds me of a mother who sits with her child at play, aware but without intervening in the play. The child is making use of the 'potential space' or 'space between' which Winnicott (1971) discusses, that is the place where inner and outer reality are separate yet interrelated, the intermediate area of experience. I have discussed elsewhere (Payne 2001a) the process of witnessing in AM and how the use of the space

between inner and outer reality links to the concept of the 'internal supervisor' as portrayed by Casement (1985, 1990) in clinical supervision.

Variations

Other roles in the form are specified as: (a) the silent witness, that is the one who remains in the form as a witness but does not offer witnessing; (b) the designated witness, the one who has a named mover to witness for the whole time duration – naturally in the dyad the witness is always designated for their mover; (c) the free-floating witness, here the witness is drawn to witness a mover then another mover at any one moment within the circle formations; (d) the collective witness, the one who gives witnessing as an overview or theme/story relating to the whole group or configuration of movers; (e) the moving witness, where a mover offers witnessing from her inner witness, to another mover, although she was a mover at the time; and, finally (f) the meta-witness, this is a form of free-floating witnessing normally occupied by the facilitator.

Emerging phenomena have resulted in new roles being created in those groups of movers and witnesses I facilitate including: (a) the role of the 'non-witness – non-mover', that is, the one who is outside the form but remains in the group, sitting on the edge, outside the dyad or the circle of witnesses; and (b) the 'non-mover' role, for the one who elects not to move preferring to remain as a witness throughout the form. Consequently no role is marginalized – all are included. Roles can be requested by each participant prior to the start of the moving experience commencing.

Movers and witnesses

I like Authentic Movement because it develops 'presence of the body', presence and attention to others and integration between body/emotion and awareness.

(A participant)

By using movement in a group setting as the vehicle for developing presence a unique integration can occur. The concept of presence is a familiar one to most forms of psychotherapy: the therapist aspires to being present for the client, who deserves this attending. In AM there is a desire in the witness to be present for their mover and a need in the mover to have a fully present witness. Yet this presence is not always perfect, movers may see the lack of it in their witness and are disappointed and witnesses notice they are sometimes far from being present. This desire and shortcoming in both mover and witness needs to be processed in the group. The facilitator is required to be fully present at all times which may be difficult to achieve. However, in my experience the more practised one becomes in the discipline, the easier is the mindfulness and therefore the lighter the presence offered.

In exploring the relationship between a mover and a witness (desiring to be seen, being seen or not seen, fearing being seen, and seeing/not seeing), the hidden becomes clearer as different people's perspectives intersect. Here, a participant acknowledges that the two roles entered into in turn can help to clarify processes: 'Experimenting with witness and mover roles, as and when uncertainties arise, is useful'.

The intersubjective experience between a witness and a mover can be immensely empathic. Sometimes, as the internal witness within each evolves, there is a meeting-moment between them which is termed a 'unitive experience' (Adler 1999). This is a moment when the 'witness consciously knows the experience of the mover because it is her experience at the same moment' (Adler 2002: 89). It is not a moment of merging but of a presence in both their internal witnesses, each of them is both separate and together at the same time. In this moment the mover's witness is completely aware of what the mover is doing and of her inner response to it. 'Her boundaries are porous as she consciously experiences her mover and herself as the same' (Adler 2002: 89), that is, experiencing this unity in a non-duality state of wholeness. Both the mover and the witness may later speak of being in a unitive state – a clear way of knowing, which includes intuition.

After repeatedly being seen clearly by a witness (at first this is mainly by the group facilitator) the mover begins to see herself with the result that her own inner witness develops further. Then when in the role of witness, after seeing another, the mover discovers a new ability to see herself. From these experiences, group members learn both self-witnessing and ways of being in relationship, in the here and now. In my approach the learning is supported by fully engaging organically, at different times, with both the roles of mover and witness.

The witness engages in a process of somatic-indwelling or waiting (Musicant 1994), containing her projections and her impulse to move, so that she may, without preconceived ideas, feel what it may be like for that mover. She also has to contain her desire to speak her experience when offering witnessing since the mover may not have mentioned that particular movement event/aspect of which the witness very much wants to speak. In this way her inner witness and capacity for containment and presence develops resulting in an empathic, authentic, non-judgemental connection with the self and another akin to findings from the humanistic therapies. For example, Rogers (1957) stressed the role of empathy, congruence (Payne 2004) and unconditional positive regard as three of the six necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change.

As the mover's own internal witness develops, the mover often returns after the 'dream state' to recall, in the presence of a witness, a significant event in the movement. This is a conscious experience, as it is consciously brought to mind. It could be called a conscious non-duality. Non-dual experiences normally occur where a constellation of the opposites results in a third element in which a union or synthesis occurs. The opposite or counterparts within us are in contrast to the known (conscious) aspects of our personality. This unknown 'other' (similar to Jung's concept of the Shadow) is extremely fearful of consciousness and is therefore difficult to

access in normal life. For example, the corresponding vice to the positive characteristic of compassion would not voluntarily present itself to the conscious mind. Yet without its counterpart the victory of compassion over the negative, or vice, would be unreal. This exerts a necessary psychic tension. The threat from this opposite is mediated by complementary processes in the unconscious. AM work aims to help each participant's consciousness to produce a uniting experience, and, through processing and working with this in movement, to own the menacing 'other' by recalling and verbalizing it. Once the 'other' has been embodied it can be recalled and expressed verbally resulting in integration and an increased sense of wellbeing. Outcomes from this process in AM work have included increases in emotional wellbeing, inner confidence and self-reliance, together with the capability both to separate self from other and to join with another.

The non-dual experience, uniting conscious and unconscious material, is both subjective and objective at the same time; involving both knowing and not knowing; doing and not doing. Although the emphasis in AM group work is on the here and now, it is also true that recalling in the spoken word an event from the movement experience can add another dimension when shared with witnesses, especially if spoken of in the present tense. If, when asked by a mover, witnesses respond that they saw the event described, the mover may then request they offer her the experiences they had when witnessing her movement. As an example I give below one of my experiences, as a witness, of a symbolic uniting of opposites (above and below):

I saw a windmill, its sails turning in a wind. The base was firmly in the ground and held in place by a root or chain or some sort. I felt I was a mediator between the sky and the earth, a connector.

By giving this witnessing to the mover, an increased sense of wellbeing was reported by her as her material become more fully integrated.

Witnesses, by learning to own which of their experiences are their own projections, interpretations and judgements, can give the opportunity to the mover to accept or reject their perceptions. Here, a mover speaks of her difficulty when a witness fails to manage this:

I find it particularly difficult when being witnessed by someone when interpretations are made and the content of the language not owned. Maybe this is difficult for me because in authentic movement as a mover I am inviting myself to become potentially more open than I otherwise would be.

(A participant)

In other words it is experienced as unhelpful when the witness does project or interpret rather than owning their own story in their witnessing.

Issues concerned with attachment (Fonagy 2001) can become evident from the

relationship between witness and mover, or participant and facilitator. Within the AM form the prominence of reflexivity, the capacity for verbal narratives from recalled direct experience of the self, together with the possibility of clear seeing from a witness, all held within a secure environment, gives the opportunity for healing insecure or anxious/avoidant attachments.

The collective body

The term ‘collective body’ in AM describes the group as a whole (Adler 2002). An experience which movers or witnesses may have which reflects a collective theme in the group is spoken of by a collective witness. A desire arises in the group members to participate in the gestalt experience, to explore ways of relating to the many rather than the one without losing consciousness of the self. The phrase ‘collective body’ contains an implicit reference to Jung’s term ‘the collective unconscious’: here I mean the experience that arises from the group’s embodiment of unconscious material. For example, participants may experience powerful relationships, meetings and synchronicities within a group movement, for example two movers doing the same gesture, despite having eyes closed. These go beyond the individual, and encompass a greater sense of belonging. This concerns the collective desire for consciousness – the conscious body – which Adler conceives of as mysticism (Adler 2002). Indeed, one form of this state can be a greater awareness of the spiritual. Part of the facilitator’s role here is to guide the conscious development of relationships such as those between the individual body, the collective body and a higher spiritual expansion. Moving, witnessing and sharing can enable connections between the individual, the collective and/or the universal body (the latter as a transpersonal experience). For example, archetypal figures (such as Magician, Priestess, King, Grim Reaper, Trickster, Jester, Warrior or Shaman) or myths are played out as movers embody archetypes experienced as living again in the mover and/or witness. They can provide a link from the personal to the collective body, giving images from which to give meaning to individual lives and communities. Jung reminds us that: ‘fantasies guided by unconscious regulators coincide with the records of man’s mental activity as known to us from tradition and ethnological research’ (Jung 1947: 402).

He wrote of a ‘dark impulse’ which is the ‘arbiter of the pattern created when the foot makes a dance step or the hand guides the crayon’ (Jung 1947: 402). At the moment we feel vulnerable to chance, we do not know that someone else’s consciousness is being shown the way by the very same impulse. From these and other reflections Jung surmised that there are certain collective unconscious conditions which ‘behave like the motive forces of dreams’ and ‘act as regulators and stimulators of creative fantasy-activity and call forth corresponding formations by availing themselves of existing conscious material’ (Jung 1947: 403). Jung based his theory of the impersonal collective unconscious on these unconscious regulators, which he saw as a synthesis of passive conscious material and of unconscious influences, resulting in a spontaneous amplification of the archetypes.

The stimuli in our environment (including movers' chance encounters with others in the container of the group, or movers' hearing for example, the birds' singing outside) can have a deep presence inside the mover/witness and become incorporated into their experience. Participants can then feel in direct contact with aspects in their imagination and in the real environment of consensus real-time. Movers can feel unity in suffering, compassion, joy or love for example when personal themes connect to universal themes in the collective body of experience revealed by that which is spoken of within the group. This experience of unity with others and/or a higher spiritual authority in an altered reality may increase a participant's sense of wellbeing, their understanding of personal themes and their felt-sense of 'universality' – the relief they are not unique in their suffering (Yalom 1985: 8).

Authentic Movement structures

I become interested in Authentic Movement because by comparison to other body-oriented therapy groups it has a strong, complex and flexible structure. The structure of Authentic Movement provides rules about time, organization of different kinds and boundaries. In this way safety, respect, holding are ensured to support the individual and the group process.

(A participant)

Specific and carefully designed structures or rituals are crucial to the practice of AM, including the specific language adopted. The dyadic ground form, which may take place both in the early and later stages of the group, might be considered to emphasize individual self-awareness rather than the group process. However this format is usually preceded and followed by the facilitator acting in the role of free-floating witness or 'meta-witness' for the whole group as they physically move in the space. This meta-witnessing offered from the facilitator to each of those movers who request it provides the basis for their experience of being seen by the one who holds the overall role of container/parent for the group. In my experience it is vital to the development of the group that the facilitator acts as a free-floating meta-witness and contributes in this way, as well as through her normal facilitator's role.

In the ground form where one witness and mover work together for an agreed time period, changing roles after their sharing dialogue, the facilitator may at first offer coaching in the use of language to dyads. Or she may act as a silent witness to all dyads at once. This might be followed with triads (the dyad with an additional 'silent' witness – the one who does not offer witnessing at all – or with two witnesses perhaps), thereafter working in the basic circle format in which each mover has a designated witness. At all times, in all these structures of the AM form, the facilitator holds the time frame and the role of a free-floating meta-witness for all.

To further help participants to develop their capabilities as witnesses a circle of free-floating witnesses, as opposed to designated witnesses, is formed in which

all who witnessed a mover inside the circle, can offer witnessing if asked to by a mover. The psychic elements are contained within the circle, the witness's attention is drawn towards a mover, and an opportunity is given for all the varying aspects of the individual body (participant) and the collective body (group), to be witnessed. A comparison can be drawn here with psychodrama whereby different parts of one protagonist are played out by several individuals in the group. The facilitator would again be a meta-witness throughout, sitting on the edge of the circle with the other witnesses, offering witnessing in response to a mover's request and at times offering collective witnessing. This role could be seen as synonymous with Rogers' (1970) view of the facilitator being less directive and interpretive in the development of the group process.

To continue with delineating the form of an AM group, the stage after the mover moves and before inviting witnessing is that of 'transition time'. This is a prescribed time period when movers and witnesses are usually invited to be alone in the group space to allow them, if they wish, to begin to process their experience. In my approach this is not a time for participants to leave the room. During this transitional phase, the facilitator may provide opportunities for art work, writing, poetry and clay work. Participants often create written, symbolic and other expressions of connections from the moving or witnessing experience. Sometimes participants offer these symbols or writings, as movers or witnesses, when they feel there is a direct relationship between their own experience and the mover's spoken story. Drawing and creative journal writing may bring further form and meaning to experiences, as expressed by this participant:

The facilitator encouraging the use of image-making, writing and other creative media is helpful to me as well her clarifying the language used and continually acting as collective witness.

The facilitator, by creating a safe space, also enables the group to generate their own archetypes. For example, a mover returned to her place at the edge of the circle to ask if any witness saw a particular frozen moment of stillness as she sat on the floor with a turned head. One of the witnesses responded by reading from her journal about seeing a Medusa, who had turned her (the mover) into stone and wrote a story in her journal about this moment of 'turning into stone' which could be heard as 'collective witnessing'. She told the group that, at that very moment at which she was watching the mover, she saw another mover who appeared to be embodying a Medusa's head, flailing, with hissing and squirming snakes. She wrote of her fear and of a chill going down her spine. The mover was relieved to have heard this witnessing as she too had felt and heard a terrifying presence in the room and was petrified by it. Later another mover spoke of one of her significant moments where she had feelings of rage and power as she stood tall, hissing and spitting venom at the world. A connection was made in the group to the experience of terrifying rage, the Medusa and being turned to stone by fear.

In another example, following another mover's story, two witnesses commented on how they saw the very young baby this mover had described herself as being. Both witnesses saw the baby enjoying suckling and making noises with her lips. Another mover spoke as a moving witness. She had heard the sounds and sensed a baby nearby, happily gurgling, and had painted this in her journal. Yet another witness said she had felt motherly towards this baby, wanting to cuddle her. She felt warmed by the infant. Later in that same group experience a mover described a particular moment in which her struggle to attain something precious was just too difficult. She requested witnessing. I (as a witness) recalled seeing a figure struggling to reach something high up. She was quite close to me at the edge of the circle. I had written in my journal during transition:

I looked up, and to my right to catch sight of a woman's face emerging from behind hands (I had drawn this image). She appeared distressed. I felt sad. On hearing the bell to bring the group experience to an end [the time period was finished] her eyes opened and, at that precise moment, seeing me seeing her, I felt seen in my sadness.

In the mover's reflections later in the group she told of how frustrated and disappointed she had been, unable to successfully resolve her desire for a baby. She said she had felt seen in her sadness by her witness (myself) and that being seen at that moment meant a great deal to her. It was then that I spoke from my journal (written and drawn in during the transition phase) of my experience in her presence. This illustrates the importance, in the way I work, of the procedure that the witness speaks only after the mover has spoken and then only on issues the mover has herself mentioned.

For some participants the creativity experienced in the movement process is another pathway to spirituality. In AM groups, spiritual matters, as well as group dynamics, may be explored. For example, during the 'breathing circle' or 'long circle' (group structures which begin by all witnessing the empty space) if all movers leave the space within the circle to return to the circle of witnesses the space becomes empty once again until the prescribed time has ended. Contemplation of this empty space can bring up, for example, human concerns such as loss and enrichment, but also of mortality, birth and rebirth. These may be articulated and processed in the large group, or in two separate groups of movers and witnesses.

Authentic Movement and play

AM is not a set of exercises, nor is it the same as creative movement (Payne 1990) or dance movement therapy (Payne 1992), although it may contribute to the latter (Musicant 1994, 2001). Like DMT it fosters a participant's spontaneous movement although with a witness who is not always the therapist. The way the movement is spoken about in AM is normally different from DMT. In AM there is usually

no intention to plan or organize the movement around a theme (as perhaps in improvisation for choreography) for example, and indeed the mover often ceases thinking in the usual way. AM is a completely self-directed approach in which participants may discover a movement pathway that offers a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious and between the group, the individual and the universal. It can be called the movement form of 'active imagination' (Chodorow 1991). It is particularly powerful because one moves before one knows it, for instance without conscious choice.

AM (and dance movement therapy) draws, to some extent, from the same spontaneous and creative well as is enacted in play. AM fosters personal growth by building upon our natural, dynamic, creative, spontaneous and self-expressive capabilities in an interplay of inner and outer worlds. Like play, AM permits the participants to express themselves, be themselves, accept themselves and be accepted by others without an outer task to perform. The process of play is one without an extrinsic goal conscious to the player at the time (Garvey 1986). The same could be said for AM.

In play therapy, children are encouraged to 'play out' problems, events, feelings and attitudes (Axline 1969). In this approach the cathartic element is emphasized whereby the child symbolizes a traumatic experience (such as sexual abuse) using dolls or other objects. By revisiting it with all the accompanying feeling states in the presence of a therapist, the child may move to a better integration of the experience. AM draws upon the same powerful capacities of play and self expression, again enacted in the presence of another, and witnessed by another. It similarly enables experiences to be enacted, often through the use of metaphor, even when they cannot be verbalized explicitly. The embodiment of a creative metaphor may enable regression and an integration and capacity to be oneself which was previously not possible. Winnicott (1971) suggests that: 'It is only in play that the individual is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self' (Winnicott 1971: 54).

Authentic Movement and Jung

Building on creativity and play and on Jung's method of active imagination (Jung 1968), AM uses symbolic meaning, seen in physical expression as another road to a descent into the unknown. The process of the mover (who cannot see the witness or facilitator) might be likened to Jung's concept of 'trancing' in an 'active fantasy' (Chodorow 1997: 3). Jung (1935) states in his Tavistock lectures:

[the patient] can see their [archetypal images produced by active imagination techniques] real meaning only when they are not just a queer subjective experience with no external connections, but a typical, ever-recurring expression of the objective facts and processes of the human psyche. By objectifying his impersonal images, and understanding their inherent ideas, the patient is able to work out all the values of

his archetypal material. That is he can really see it and his unconscious becomes understandable to him.

(Jung, cited in Chodorow 1997: 146)

Here, Jung uses the term archetype to describe images from the collective unconscious (as opposed to the first layer of the personal unconscious) that have existed in human life from the remotest of times. Archaic, primordial images charged with psychic energy (the numinous) he thought were a 'piece of life itself', connected with the living individual by the bridge of emotion. The archetypal experience consists of imagery and affect (instinct/somatic and psychic). Jung emphasized the universal character of the collective unconscious, and thought that instincts (inborn, unlearned tendencies) and mythological motifs were already laid down in our brain in their pre-conscious form as 'invisible ground plans', inherited from our ancestors. These then interact with our consciousness which has available to it all the history of rituals, symbols, stories and so on from our own cultural sources.

Movement arising from the collective unconscious may have a foreign, chaotic quality in a form outside recognizable human culture. Some images witnessed in AM do seem to emerge from the primitive depths of life itself as though the mover is possessed, for example, by terror (the one who is shaking holds onto another for comfort), anguish (the never-ending sobbing and wailing of a woman) or rage (the monstrous one kicking and biting, nostrils flared, fingers like claws ready to scratch). This cathartic expression is held by the imaginative movement process inside the mover and by the witness outside. At other times the movement has parallels with the characteristics of nature, animals or mythological creatures (such as huge dragons breathing fire) and are less chaotic but equally trance-like. It is as though these life forms are 'being danced' (Chodorow 1999) or metamorphosed as in the shape shifting of the Shaman, for example. It is the facilitator and/or witness who offer the necessary symbols (as above) to the mover, as a context for the individual and/or collective images experienced.

Authentic Movement and group process

The AM group process has some similarity to group analysis in the way the conductor (facilitator/witness) waits without overt action, participation or direction, empathically facilitating verbal communication to the group or to individual participants, and containing by her presence. In this approach it is crucial that participants bring back to the group any communications which have arisen between them outside the group experience in order to contain the group energy, which could be affected by any leakage of material or extra-group pairings (Bion 1961). In my experience this wider element of containment is also beneficial to the work of AM groups.

AM groups are normally open or slow-open (Yalom 1985), allowing for new members to join and others to leave, which requires time for processing in the group. The balance between action and non-action enables participants to experience the

group from different perspectives. The relationship between participants, including the facilitator, is made clear and patterns begin to emerge. The relationships of movers with other movers, witnesses with witnesses, and movers with witnesses as well as participants with the facilitator, all provide opportunities for raising awareness of group-held issues and differing aspects of the group. In this way individuals can come face to face with their projections.

Verbal groups sometimes develop a breakdown in communication. However, AM groups, by using an approach which focuses on the content of the movement expression, rather than directly on the person or group, can enrich mutual communication, each one understanding the other from the other's point of view. The greater the authenticity in the mover's experience, awareness and expression, the more likely it is that the witness will see it clearly thus fostering clearer communication. This element links strongly with Carl Rogers' approach to group work:

If the cues from speech, tone and gesture are unified because they spring from a place of congruence and unity, then there is much less likelihood that these cues will have an ambiguous or unclear meaning.

(Rogers 1961: 342)

Similarly if the expressed movement (or sound) arising in the mover stems from a place where the feeling/sensation/image and so on are truly connected to the self then the movement (or contact etc.) is authentic and consequently is clearer to the witness. This unity or congruence brings about clarity of presence in the witness and in the mover's expression. Presence entails a here and now indivisible relationship to the self, another and the divine, and is the source from which grows all that it means to be human. The practice of AM enables access to the present moment, to our authenticity and to enhanced presence.

Rogers (1970) refers to a fifteen process model of group work which offers another way of describing some of the experiences in the AM group. The formative stages in AM groups may well consist of difficulties such as participants not being able to close their eyes, take the role of witness, or of a mover. Despite several hours of educational work during which the basic whole group movement and/or dyadic structure of the mover and witness roles are experienced, participants may continue to feel they do not know what to do, in movement for example. This together with the reluctance, even shyness, is commensurate with Rogers' stages of 'milling around' and 'resistance to personal exploration'. Fears usually revolve around an assumption there will be a critical judge. An exercise to bring out the critic and acknowledge the power it has, is normally helpful at this point. The participants are encouraged by the facilitator to express negative feelings or thoughts in movement and words (similar to Rogers' identified trend of expressing negative feelings). A more meaningful trend usually follows, whereby participants are willing to take the risk of exploring personal and interpersonal material within the group, and tolerate the 'not knowing' in their movement process. Both movers and witnesses then start to show a greater openness and receptivity. The ability

to respond to immediate feelings, thoughts, images and sensations becomes the norm.

Safety has been established by the facilitator holding the group through the first two stages, and this, together with a clearer understanding of the ground-rules, boundaries, language-use and structures in the AM form, usually lead, in Rogers' term to 'the cracking of facades' (Rogers 1970: 33). Here participants reveal congruence (or authenticity) in reclaiming their projections. In this way the need for defensiveness and a safe persona is dropped and a more real, honest, accepting process is engaged with, leading to greater empathic connection and presence between participants.

At times the facilitator might be confronted by a negative transference as the group develops. After processing, the group and sometimes the form itself may evolve. A growing acceptance of each other, built on a deep respect that each is doing the best they can, is demonstrated by a caring and sharing inside the group and an increasing awareness of each person's inner witness. The group process continues to move in and out of different patterns, depending on the levels of felt-safety. Some of this clearly connects with the model described by Rogers contrasting to the linear one proposed by Tuckman (1965) where all groups follow a number of predictable, orderly stages (norming, storming, forming, performing). Regression to previously experienced trends is noticeable just as in the individual client-therapist process. This may echo relationship phases between group members and/or intrapsychic processes. Authentic movement enables a deep regression at a personal level resulting in a truly embodied integration which leads to an increase in the felt-sense of wellbeing.

Normally I tend not to interpret or probe into what is perhaps behind a mover's expression (whether verbal or non-verbal). If interpretations or judgements (positive and negative expressions) are made, they need to be recognized and owned, so that each participant is encouraged to move towards a fuller acceptance of their total being (Rogers 1970). As participants start to feel less threatened, defensive and resistant in the group, they learn to hear and see each other and themselves more clearly. This greater capacity to witness results in increased learning from themselves and each other, as this comment illuminates:

Having time to talk about experiences with group members makes links and meaning in the work for me, as does having space to integrate personal meanings to make sense of the work, such as keeping a personal journal, circle reflection time, and relating to more universal stories and concepts.

(A participant)

Communication is thereby enhanced and the desire for creative expression deepened rather than resisted or inhibited. Participants develop the capacity to offer witnessing in a congruent, healing and empathic manner. The facilitator encourages both story making and story breaking whereby participants learn to tell a story

coherently. This also allows for the story to be told in a different way by engaging the participant in a dialogue in the light of a new experience.

Participating in an Authentic Movement group can be a compelling and awe-inspiring experience. It draws participants from a range of backgrounds including the arts, the caring professions and from psychotherapy, those who are willing to open up to the power of the unconscious as contained, expressed and experienced in the body through stillness and movement.

Notes

- 1 The participants concerned have given their permission for the use of their quotations in this chapter.
- 2 Please note the terms she/her/herself have been used while recognising that participants are of both genders.

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