



## Albert Pesso – Part 1

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Albert Pesso, co-founder with his wife, Diane Boyden-Pesso, of PBSP, Pessó Boyden System Psychomotor and President of the Psychomotor Institute, Inc. was formerly Associate Professor and Director of the Dance Division at Emerson College, Supervisor of Psychomotor Therapy at McLean Hospital in Massachusetts and Consultant in Psychiatric Research at the Boston VA Hospital. He has conducted training programs in PBSP in the US, Brazil, Israel and in many countries in Europe. He and his work with PBSP for the German GTZ Mission in The Democratic Republic of Congo have been featured in a documentary film, 'State of Mind' distributed by Icarus Films. He is the author of many books and articles on PBSP, and a frequent lecturer at universities, hospitals and clinics in the US and Europe. At present, he continues his intensive training schedule in Europe, and also leads programs and sees individuals in Boston, Massachusetts.

Serge Prengel, LMHC is the editor the *Relational Implicit* project (<http://relationalimplicit.com>).

For better or worse, this transcript retains the spontaneous, spoken-language quality of the podcast conversation.

*Serge Prengel: This is a conversation with Al Pessó. Hi Al.*

Al Pessó: Hello Serge.

*SP: So Al, you started life as a dancer?*

AP: I certainly did. I've been endlessly starting life concerned with moving my body. By the age of five as a matter of fact, it was early on. Doing bodybuilding, long before the dance if that's okay with you.

*SP: Yes.*

AP: Doing bodybuilding, but I was never the big kind of muscular type. And I think I had the Greek ideal in the back of my mind: strong body, strong mind. And my wife still thinks I have something like a Greek ideal body. I kind of like that. I had a sense of grace, so I wasn't a muscleman. Although, I was (a regular and then became an instructor) in a gymnasium run by The Most Muscular Man in America (his title) for four years. And by some strange,,,,, strange, coincidence, while I was there (at age of 17), his girlfriend who lived above the gymnasium, had been studying modern dance. And here I am in Brooklyn, A Brooklyn kid, very smart—I just found I have a 140 IQ by the way, I just learned that the other day. But I had all kinds of artistic stuff (brewing inside), but in that section of Brooklyn there wasn't much artistic stuff. But she happened to be studying modern dance in Greenwich Village, so she came down and showed us some of the stuff. And I was fascinated. So I took a buddy of mine to go to that studio in Greenwich Village. The teacher was a Martha Graham disciple. And I fell in love with the stuff. So very shortly, from bodybuilding I went to modern dance. But it wasn't the dance of exhibition, it was the dance of emotional expression..... It was Martha Graham stuff. She wanted to touch the truth about existence. And she did a lot of that deep psychological stuff, and I was just enthralled. And she gave me a scholarship. My buddy, who came

with me said, 'Look at all the naked girls!' and I thought I just saw beauty. So, he didn't stick around. (and I practically lived there taking endless classes).

*SP: So, you know that sense of touching the truth about existence.*

AP: Exactly. I Just wanted to show you the root of that. There was something deeply artistic and deeply philosophical (in that kind of dance and in me). I came from an Orthodox Jewish family, Fortunately I didn't know what they were saying in Hebrew but boy the ritual (in the services which I attended regularly with my father who was very devout) got to me. And I knew (experienced) that truth and depth (that) was in ritual, and we are still doing ritual kinds of stuff (in the teaching of PBSP), but with the movement (expression and experience) but not with dogma and not with 'fundamental' stuff . How do you like that?

*SP: Yeah! It's something that feels very moving as you put this because there's a sense of connecting to the depth of motivation and that emotional drive.*

AP: What I want to highlight is that it wasn't just starting from the dance. I started I think from my core (that way) from the very beginning. That's probably what I want to tell you. It wasn't that I I danced and because I knew movement. In the dance was a seeking of (universal) ultimate truth, and by God, we found a lot of that. That came about. So, can I go a little further in the dance?

*SP: Oh, yes yes.*

AP: Is this OK with you? We became my wife and I,... I met her at Bennington College. I got a (dance) scholarship at Bennington. They needed men in the dance department so I was there (by the grace of Martha Graham). And we got married and had a child right away. Even then we did show business stuff. Then we (had other kids and) opened a dance school (and formed a dance company). And then I became the head of the dance department at Emerson College (where I taught for 11 years and became an Associate Professor). Emerson is a theater school, I don't know if you know that school. Henry Winkler (The Fonz) was one of my students. But I still tried to bring not just theater there, but the whole depth of what it means to move your body and move an audience. (I choreographed 7 musicals during my tenure) So we (my wife and I) began to develop ideas and questions), 'How does the body move? Is there just one way of moving? What's the internal state that develops into human action?' Because we wanted to see/get our dancers in control of their instrument and not just (simply) move, but (to) know *how* in the world their body is moving. And we developed ideas about there being three different motor systems. And that was like a braid. Three strands, and most people (in general) just move without taking the strands apart.

*SP: So three strands. Three motor systems. Three kinds of movement.*

AP: Yep. And the three strands we found were connected to the brain (organization). I guess I was scientific. Another part of me would've been at MIT had I not gone into dance. But that was scientific, so I was looking at brain structure, at the same time looking at the movement that comes out of brain structure. And we developed notions that there was body righting reflexive movement. That standing upright is not something we choose to do, but something that's innate and built in. And there's all kinds of balancing motions that come from it. When we trip and catch our balance, that's reflexive -- body righting reflexes. And then there's the movement we (people in general) do to adapt to the outside world. We call that 'voluntary movement.' Where you choose what to do

(actions) not because you feel like it, but because you want to have mastery and connect (adapt) to the outside world. And then there's emotional movement, and that's connected with everything that we need about life. All the limbic system stuff, all the survival stuff. So what we decided to do was teach our students to move in those separate modalities, one separate from the other two.

*SP: Right. So to be aware of the reflexive, voluntary and emotional. And to be able to select and be aware of each one and focus on one or the other.*

AP: Absolutely right. But when they would do just reflexive we say, 'Don't use control, (voluntary movement), just trust your reflexes. Don't have a feeling (emotional movement)'. So we had them eliminate as much as possible, the other two modalities. And when they did voluntary (movement) stuff. (We would say,) 'Don't let your feelings come out, but hold it.' We began to see that when they were trying to do voluntary stuff, feelings leaked into it. And contaminated their mastery of control. That was kind of interesting.

*SP: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.*

AP: Then when we did the pure emotion, we said don't control it. Let it come out (without inhibition), and by God we saw decorticated kinds of expression, on the most primitive levels. Wow, we touched their (unconscious) core at that time. We discovered, of course, catharsis. Letting this stuff come out, and it felt good. But then quickly we noted they didn't stay just feeling good, there was something missing. Can you imagine what was missing? *(pause)* Well I'll tell ya, you don't have to tell me. *(laughter)*. Because we never have emotions in isolation, emotion is an interactive process. So when you let an emotion out, I call that a shape. There's an anticipation of a response. And a counter-shape. Like when kids first move, somebody's got to respond to them. We began to see there was a linkage there. So we started to invent for every (emotional) motor (expression) thing that came out for whatever (conscious or unconscious) emotive reason (we understood then that it) needed to be accepted and responded to. So we called that (reactive, satisfying response) accommodation. You can see that as shape, counter-shape, that (with that exercise) there is stuff coming out of our genetic heritage, stuff coming out of our history. Stuff coming out because of trauma. But it still needs an answer (for it never had one before).

*SP: So you were actually describing that sense of actually healing the absence of that missing piece?*

AP: You, got it.

*SP: As you express the emotion, there's that shape. And there's the corresponding counter-shape.*

AP: That you longed for.

*SP: That you longed for.*

AP: These kids now, were letting stuff out, that had never had answers. Because what we had longed for, that doesn't get answered, doesn't disappear. It stays in the body. And our genes are expecting those answers at the right age, and with the right kinship relationship. But if they don't get answered, we get frustration. The stuff gets suppressed and it becomes symptomatic. Shows up when we don't expect it to -- as in voluntary movement. But we said okay, 'Let it out, and now you're going to get an answer.' Bingo.

*SP: So that's the completion of something that's been longing for completion.*

AP: You've got it exactly right. And we knew that, we saw that. But then when we gave them the completion, we recognized that that completion shouldn't be in the present. That completion should be in the hypothetical past. So we then began to make something like a ritual (ceremony). With the one who provided the response. They didn't improvise the response, the response had to be choreographed by the one who was feeling (the client, the feeling person). That's where I'm saying about the improvisation and the importance of the response being controlled by the one who is feeling the emotion.

*SP: Yes.*

AP: Because otherwise the other person who's responding will do what the heck they want, and they wouldn't (necessarily) be fitting what the person was longing for.

*SP: Right. So that the focus is very much on the person, one person who is exploring. And then the accommodation is the work that the other person does for the specific purpose of accommodating that need.*

AP: And they do that by taking a role. And we do that via ritual. They say 'I am now role playing your ideal mother, your ideal brother, your ideal sister your ideal father,' etc. Then we posit it at the age when it should have been. Got that?

*SP: Yeah. So now actually I'm just reflecting on the choice of words. And I know it's very clear that as you're talking about it there is a richness of a process that took a long time to mature into its form.*

AP: It took at least seven years of exploration before it clicked into a therapeutic form. (And many years after that to hone it.)

*SP: Yes, because when you simply as you're talking very matter-of-factly that this is a ritual. And this person plays say the ideal mother, your ideal father, it feels very simple when you say it. But I can see how..you know... to get to that point, it took quite an exploration.*

AP: Right, because we used to let people (in the early dance classes) just improvise, like together, all at once. And they would do things without speech and then we'd say 'what the heck happened there?' And the one said, 'Oh, I was feeling like a two year old and you felt like my father....' And the other one says, 'Your father! I thought that you were a friend!...' And we saw it was a mismatch when we would do it that way. So we decided hey, we've got to do this one at a time. When you do it all together like that it doesn't fit. So as you're very correctly pointing out, it took years to clean all that up. So that was one part of it. But then, the other part, going back to the dance side. We then looked at how to sensitize people to the spatial placement of others. To see when you move others through space, all different kinds of things happen: which direction they come from; what height they come with; what speed they're coming at; what gestures etc. So we began to elaborate. And that's for the choreographer to know what movement-action is doing to the audience. So we looked at what happens..how do you get from what's inside to show on the outside and be sensitive. And how do you get to know more accurately what's happening on the outside and what that's doing to your inside. And we looked at that for years and years.

*SP: So I'm going to slow it down a little bit. Because so what you're saying is in a way a correspondence of saying to what goes inside is not necessarily automatically communicated.*

AP: That's right.

*SP: And what goes outside is not necessarily received the same way by people.*

AP: Exactly.

*SP: And you did some work in a way clarifying what corresponds to what.*

AP: Exactly.

*SP: In order to gain control over that process.*

AP: Yep, we began to look at interaction in a very, very clear way. And then we began to get the theory behind it. That basic needs had to be met and what were those basic needs? So it wasn't just anything, we began to get elaborate systems. Very shortly after we started doing this seriously, the psychiatric community got interested. Here I am an Associate Professor, a dancer. With the psychiatric community I became a Consultant in Psychiatric Research. This happened because the chief of Psychiatric Research at the Boston VA hospital, his children were in an early dance class that my wife was doing for the Unitarian church. *(laughs)* And he says 'What in the heck is this?' And he told me (later as we had become acquainted) 'You're opening up a whole new world.' So he put me under his wing and I spent five years under his guidance. And then Mclean hospital, which is a Harvard training hospital – a psychiatric hospital (got interested), I was there (as Director of Psychomotor Therapy) for eight years. So of course, all that experience elaborated the work enormously.

*SP: So in a way, as you say that. You know the implicit part is it's still a period of transition, you don't have fully all your orientation towards psychotherapy. The movement part, that understanding of movement is still there very strong dance, theater, arts.*

AP: But then we made up our mind, we branched out. That we wouldn't continue on just to dance, we would now consciously do psychotherapy. So we were very clear. And people came to do therapeutic work. The year of transition, was 1961, just 50 years ago, but there were seven years leading up to 1961 where all that clarification came in. How's that so far?

*SP: Feels very nice. It gives a sense of the intense creativity in this process. But also even as you mentioned something as serendipitous as my wife was giving this class. The part about also the interaction with the environment, and so in a way what feels very nice is just in hearing you there is both a sense of creativity and a sense of interaction, not something that's in isolation, that is very much part of your story.*

AP: Exactly right. Everything became interaction, it's interesting you put that that way. Because one of the people who got interested early on, was a professor at Harvard in sociology, Louisa Howe. And she brought in and sharpened my whole notion of interaction, because that was such an important part. The professor she had studied with spoke about the interactive process, so that's at

the very absolute core of what we're doing. We did it innately and then much, much more consciously as time went on. Yep. Lemme tell you, in the fifty years, this work keeps changing and changing. But not dropping away things: but sharpening, heightening and facilitating, making things more rapid. Jumping so far ahead I hardly know where to go now.

*SP: Let me maybe suggest a comment. As you're describing you briefly touched upon the accommodating. And so that sense of people taking on roles in the process. So maybe it makes sense to contrast that, for instance, to a therapy where you have one therapist-one client. And that part of the process.*

AP: Ok, because what you're highlighting is, is the therapist going to be the role-player?

*SP: Yes.*

AP: And we say, 'Absolutely not'

*SP: Right.*

AP: And that of course is the relational therapy, it goes that way. That's the chapter I wrote for Halko Weiss in his book. So, how do we heal people? And is it us that does the healing? It's the role-playing on the symbolic level. The relationship is supremely important to make believability and hold the ritual aspect. But the healing is not done in the relationship. Of course psychoanalysts are gonna say, 'Everything is transference anyway, you know you think you're doing it the other way it's you and them.' Now of course we have a relationship but it isn't us doing the healing. Because if we were the healers, we're gonna get inflated on the one hand and get the marrow sucked out of our bones on the other hand. And then they're (the clients) gonna have a kind of negative transference on us for all kinds of reasons and that's gonna be a heck of a thing that they (the psychoanalysts) gonna work out. But I don't know how therapeutic that is. The analysts might not like to hear this part. Maybe you cut that out of the discussion. (laughter) But you hit a very important point. Because we did it in a role (within a group therapy session) in one to one and now we do a lot work in one to one (therapy sessions). But how we do this work and I jump this way now Serge, to the more complex way ...it's complicated enough in the way we look at it Because before we start with the body and then see what memories come up. That was sort of the bottom up. Now we work from the top down. And I'll tell you partly why. Sometimes when you work from the bottom up and then do it, they say 'I know that's very important but it doesn't connect with my present life.' So the stuff didn't have value...sometimes it didn't stick, what they did, because they saw no relevance to their present life. So as the years went on we learned to start in the present, in something we called micro-tracking. That is, micro-tracking present consciousness. So we wanted to make sure the observing ego was present, we called that the pilot. And that they were gonna talk about the absolute here and now. Is that okay so far?

*SP: Yes. So you're in the present, that's micro tracking, so really being very very conscious of what's happening in the here and now.*

AP: Okay, and we split that into two types of being very present in the consciousness. In the here and now, present consciousness consists of perception -- the body instantly reacts -- that's sensori-motor or psychomotor if you will. See/Do. The instant you see, your brain kicks off a motor system whether you do something about it or not, but your mind's body is reacting. And then just as

William James says, you only know/feel your emotions by getting a body reaction. So the third thing that happens in this sequence: you see; your body reacts; and then you *feel*. That affect comes from a body state. Then you think and (the rational part of the brain) makes some concepts about what you're (experiencing and) feeling. (Sometimes this is just plain confabulation) So what we do is we micro-track the feeling in the moment that it's showing on the client's face. And we micro-track thoughts in the moment, knowing that what we *feel now* is related to the past, and what we *think now* is related to the past. For we now know that present consciousness is a tapestry, woven of threads of memory. So we're gonna parse present consciousness, and then the memory of what's the **foundation in the past** that's making us feel like that and think like that in the **present** pops out. And what we are micro-tracking is not the body, per se, at this moment, but the face. Because when people feel, they may get a somatic reaction in their body -- it's totally unconscious and automatic. But it affects the facial expression instantly. Darwin talks about that -- facial expression -- in his book *The Expression of Emotions of Man and Animal*. The instant we feel, there's a shift in the expression, I forget who does the face stuff. He teaches all that stuff. (Eckmann). But we train all our people now to watch the face and look at all the shifts. But we report (what is noticed) via what we call a Witness Figure. We postulate a third person in the room. So it isn't the therapist saying it. Because as soon as they (the therapist) says, 'If a witness was here', the word 'witness' makes them (clients) think (and see in their mind's eye) that there's another person in the room. Here we're talking about the power of words and images that come with words. So we're very careful of the words we choose because we know every word is going to make an image and all images in the mind, our body reacts to.

*SP: So I want to – again --pay tribute to the complexity of the situation that you're evoking. And, what's happening is say in contrast to traditional talk therapy, analytical, you are not starting in a way from thoughts/feelings/evocations of the past. But you are in the present.*

AP: Absolutely, knowing that the past, we're seeing it (the present) absolutely through the past. Everybody thinks that *their* present reality is *universal* (reality). It's nonsense, no two people have (experience) the same reality.

*SP: Yes.*

AP: And let me talk about that for just a moment. Because when we see, we remember what we've seen before. Because we look at the world and we look for what's good or bad. I mean, like an infant (just coming into the world). And then we move towards it and find out whether it's good or bad. And then we better remember what's good or bad because the next time we see something like that, we have to remember so we don't make the same mistakes, or remember so we make (movement towards) the same good things. So that means we have storage in our mind's eye and storage in our mind's body, every time we see, we're remembering (what we have seen like that before), every time we act, we're remembering (how we have acted or moved like that before). And when we lose that (those accumulated old memories) we're Alzheimer's people and we don't know what we're looking at. And we don't know what we're feeling. Never forget that we're a bundle of history in every moment of being.

SP: Right.

AP: So we know that. So what we say when people are having a feeling, we postulate this, we say, 'If a witness was here,'—and we (must) use the word 'witness,' (for) the word evokes a whole other thing.

*SP: But what's interesting, in the room there is that third person. That witness.*

AP: You got it, because if I said a word...now let me say a word to you, 'See your mother.'

*SP: Mhm, but you're the one who spoke it...*

AP: Look what happens when you hear the word 'your mother,' what happened to you?

*SP: Well, what happened is I felt a sense of my mind going some place. And relating to her, and for a moment, yes, being in connection.*

AP: And your body reacted. Words make images, that's words are so powerful. Animals could only see what's in front of them and they react to what's in front of them. But words let you see what is not in front of you.

*SP: Yes.*

AP: And you can react, then to what's not in front of you. That's why stories have such power. Because, we see it and our body reacts, whether we know it or not. Okay, so when I say 'a witness is here,' people are going to imagine somebody there. And they're not gonna feel as I'm saying it. I say, 'A witness would say, 'I see how happy you feel when you think of your mother, or when you talk about your mother' I only pick up what they're actually talking about. And if I put the right word on their affective state, they nod their head 'yes' because it's the same thing as shape-counter shape. It fits. And whenever there is a fittedness, there is an immediate value -- pleasure comes in. Then I know I'm on track, because if I put the wrong affective term, they shake their head or their eyes roll around or something. And then I attach the context within which they have that feeling.

*SP: Right.*

AP: So now I'm giving the prefrontal lobes information on what's going on in their affective system. So they're not only *in* it, they're *seeing* themselves in it.

*SP: Yeah, with that sense of you as a therapist, being attuned to what it is that feels right, that's missing. And you get your information from the person's reaction, from the face.*

AP: Exactly.

*SP: So that in a way you kind of get that information and, that's right you're not interpreting as much as figuring out and reflecting and finding the right fit.*

AP: That fits *them*. Because an interpretation, the juicy interpretation is (when the therapist) knowing what's in the back of their (the client's) mind that they (clients) don't know. Wow!! And then they (the clients) go 'holy smokes did I feel...' and the therapist is getting them not where they *are* but where there's blindness. I get them where they are.(and already feeling it but with no name)

*SP: So navigating to find the blind spot.*

AP: No. Not at all.

*SP: Why?*

AP: I don't look for interpretation. I simply put a name on where they are and then they are conscious of where they are.

*SP: Right.*

AP: But they're ready to be conscious, because this (what is in their facial expression) isn't so unconscious. An interpretation is something that's beyond (immediate) reach.

*SP: Right. So essentially just helping them come across and find the expression.*

AP: Find the label for that expression and the context. Because not only did I put the label on it I put the words that they just spoke about (in the context). They say, 'Oh my mother was such a sweet woman.' Then the witness would say 'I see how much joy and tenderness you feel as you remember that your mother was such a sweet woman.' Do you follow that?

*SP: I do.*

AP: And then they say 'Yes.' Then they might say 'Yeah, but the world is not a sweet place.' That's a thought, so I posit a Voice of Truth that says 'The world is not a sweet place' and then they say 'well that's a fact, buddy.' Then they're connecting two parts of their brain. The affective part and the cognitive rational part. So both are coming up to their prefrontal (lobes), we call that the pilot. And the more you enrich the pilot of how they are feeling (and thinking) in the absolute present as they speak, then they start to remember (stored patterns) -- like in a Google search engine, you put in a couple of things and BRRPP everything connected with that comes up. Then they start remembering all kinds of things and their body immediately reacts to all those things (that have arisen in their minds) from the past.

*SP: But what I'm struck by as you're describing it is the sense of how it comes about. With a sense of amplified resonance.*

AP: That's exactly right, (resonance) that's a good word. Exactly right. They get a resonance -- it's connecting parts of themselves together. And there's (also) a resonance in the alliance. They feel, not that I'm the answer but that there's an increase in the therapeutic alliance without (me, the therapist) being the answer (to their past needs). And it's very important not to be the healer or the answer, but to support their consciousness. And then when they talk about the history, we developed a whole notion (and techniques) of what kind of things have to be done in (their maturational) history in order for people in the present to have a happy life. It's a long list: 1) Basic needs; place, nurture, support, protection, limits have to be met. 2) Integration and unification of polarities; they've got to own all of themselves: 3) The development of consciousness and language. 4) The development of the Pilot (self-ownership and autonomy); 5) Fulfillment of personal uniqueness and potentiality (adding something for the future of life beyond our own). So when they

speaking about their history, we're looking at what part of the agenda are they touching that didn't get met. They might say, 'Oh gosh, my mother was such a sweet woman but my father was a bloody pain in the ass. Every time he came home he made her cry and boy I wish he was never there.' So now we've got a negative history. Years ago, we'd let them express the feeling because we thought there had to be catharsis of what had been just felt or remembered. I don't believe in catharsis anymore. Because I'm reading now, you 'repeat that stuff and you reinforce the memory.' We make healing by making a new memory of the past as it was anticipated by the genes. We don't make just pie in the sky memories. We make genetically anticipated memories.

*SP: Right. so genetically anticipated memories is a very powerful expression. There's that part of completion, there's that part of it being part of our essential nature. So there's both something that feels very scientific and spiritual at the same time.*

AP: You got it, you got it. And it took us years to know how to play this. I'm doing it in five minutes, but remember I've been doing this 50 years. And all the time we ask 'what are we doing, what works?' So we didn't just say, 'Oh, we got it.' and stay there.' My bloody *brain* wouldn't sit still. It wasn't *me*, *it* just wanted to keep going, knowing more, knowing more. So I'm giving you some of the latest stuff. So, at this point in the session we would immediately do **reversals**. So when they talk about a mother or father who was a pain in the ass, we say...(just a moment) let me put this part out. When they say any figure that's coming up in the mind—they mention their mother or father—we say, 'Pick an object.' Now we don't role play this (figure), but even in a group we do this. I say, 'Pick an abstract object to be a placeholder for the mother and a placeholder for the father.' So it isn't as if the mother is in the room and you're doing a psychodramatic replay. We're just externalizing the associational fields in the brain. We're making a platform on the floor (to place those objects). So when they look at it, they're not gonna remember *one* event, they're gonna remember *everything* about their mother. That's a filing cabinet (so to speak), not their mother.

*SP: So that's how it relates to ritual,*

AP; You've got it.

*SP: Something that's much more symbolic than the specificity of any precise moment.*

AP: You've got it precisely. And that took a long time to get there. Because we did role plays, and we noticed in the role play, my God, people they say 'my mother when I was five years old' etc. They would go and have, the ancient feelings of those times would come over them. like we did with our dancers and it didn't do much good to feel that miserable or furious feeling, although it looks dramatic and therapeutic, it doesn't have that much value. We did a lot of that. But the real value comes from making the new memory. So as soon as they speak of a negative aspect, I say lets invent—and I do a gesture like this.. as if I'm putting something through space right beside them. So I'm making a new arena around their body where they're gonna start imagining how another figure would be there, that their genes were anticipating. And they're not (necessarily) looking at it, but they're gonna experience it. So I say, 'Let's invent now, an ideal father who had none of the characteristics of your real father. And he would say 'If I was your ideal father, I wouldn't be a pain in the ass, I would be a loving father for you and a loving husband to your mother. And I wouldn't be away all the time.' You follow that?

*SP: Yes*

And the language has to be clear and then they may see and experience (that kind of experience with such a father). And they may get a bodily reaction and say: 'Oh what a different life I would've had...' So little by little we build that up. So the therapist is not there. The therapist is postulating some figure who's gonna be there (in the client's hypothetical past)

*SP: So you say little by little. So we're not talking about catharsis, something that happens in 5 minutes. You're talking about a process that can be lengthier.*

AP: Oh sure. I'm talking about not right now, a usual one hour or fifty minute session. This would go on immediately. I would put placeholders on the floor and then reversals. Little by little they begin to now connect what they're feeling in the absolute present with a pattern in the past. Because they may.. I jump way ahead...they may at some time in the session) talk about their boss and they may say, 'I'm having a terrible time ...what a pain in the ass that guy is. I can't stand him.' So we put a place holder for their boss. And then we'll talk about it and we might invent what an ideal boss would be. However, I don't believe in making new memories in the present but in the past. But then they'll say 'But my boss you know what, he's like my father I spoke to you about' So then we talk a little piece of paper and we call it 'The Principle of Your Real Father That's Showing Up On the Boss' and we place it on there. Now you could call that projection but we're gonna do a ritual about it. It isn't just projection, this means that in the associational fields in the brain, the two are linked. Those neuronal sets are linked.

*SP: Yes. Yes. So what I'm hearing is that the connection in the brain between the history of the past and the perception of the present moment and how it affects it. But what you're doing in a way is like making it visible in the room. With the placeholder or with that little piece of paper, you're making that presence of the past into the present, visible in the room.*

AP: That's right and their 'Pilot' is now looking at it. Instead of them automatically reacting to the boss without even thinking that it's the father, with all his different kinds of behavioral history tied up in there. There's no thinking (about this linkage), it just **happens**. But now they're looking at that piece (of paper) but we can't move it until they ultimately have the belief and experience with that ideal father. Because you have to change the history before you can move that little piece.

*SP: Right. So there's the possibility that in a way the past makes it impossible or very hard for this person to believe it would ever be possible that such a thing as the good father would exist or an ideal father would exist.*

AP: You got it. Now some people accept the ideal father. And then we have a new ending, you can move this principle.... But a lot of other people then, resist....and this is the latest stuff. Seven years ago this started. : 'What makes resistance?' And that was fascinating. And that's still what I want to talk about now, because at some point clients may say, 'What do you mean ideal father? What kind of jigsaw junk are you giving me?' And you get WHAM, negative transference and they're gonna knock you right off. And they say, 'What? Are you kidding? Are you fantasizing?' One part of them may be longing for such a father, and you talk about the possibility and they'll tell you, 'There's no such thing' blah, blah, blah.. But now, when they have that resistance, we know that resistance can come from a *third* kind of memory. There's three kinds of memory, there's genetic storage, that's not a conscious memory bank, that's a memory of everything that was useful and living-ful from the beginning of time that is imprinted in our genes. And we are following the impulses that arise from

that. Then there's our personal or autobiographical history. which is either a satisfaction of those things (our genetic needs and anticipations) or frustration of those needs. And we're seeing the world through that lens. But there's another kind of memory. Memory of stories of injustice. When there's a story of injustice, one part of our brain, without us knowing it, jumps through time and space and heals the injustice with a piece of our own self. (You could call that a stem self, as in a stem cell, which can become any cell.)

*SP: So it's really thinking of injustice again as something that is not completed, that calls for completion.*

AP: You're beautiful. You've got it. Thank you Serge, I wish everybody would get it so fast. Yeah, exactly, because it's still part of making things whole. There's an innate connection: Healing is Whole-ing. We've got to make things whole. And when we hear of holes in networks of our families, holes in our culture or holes in our religious groups or holes in the cosmos even, one part of us simply **has** to make it whole.

*SP: Uh. Huh.*

AP: However, we don't do it consciously, it's automatic. Some part of our brain makes a movie that we are the star of. But we don't see it, we're not in the audience. But our bodies are tremendously affected by starring in that movie which we don't know our brain made. Isn't that crazy?

*SP: Yeah, Yeah.*

AP: And now we're talking about how the body is affected by such stories of injustice. Before, I spoke about how it's affected by deficits. Now we're gonna see how the body is affected by stories of injustice. So how careful we have to be -- what stories of injustice do we tell children about. Because they're gonna be over-stimulated..... I call that the Messiah gene. There's one part of us that is like the Messiah, we think the Messiah is the one and only. But each one of us tries to be the one and only (unconsciously). That's why we like the Lone Ranger, that's why we like Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman. They're gonna go out and heal everything. Flying through time and space. So one part of our psyche (without our awareness) flies through time and space and heals it. If there is a hole, let's say, three generations back great-great grandma lost a husband in the Civil War, or something like that. And then she had to raise kids by herself. Everybody knows such a story. So what we do is, we say, 'Let's make a 'movie' of great-great-grandma and we'll put her on another spot on the floor -- not where we have the placeholders, but in another arena. And we say this is your great-great grandmother as a young woman, and we're gonna give her an ideal husband. And he's gonna say, 'If I was your ideal husband there would be no war and I would be your loving husband your whole life.' (The therapist carefully moves the objects to highlight the scene) And they go, 'Wow, you know our whole family would be so different if she had that.' Because we experience the present through the lens of the past and you change history, by God, you have a *cascade* effect.

*SP: Yes, you know, I think when you're telling this, I'm also aware it's interesting, it's good when you place it in the context of ritual, which is that, by that point, by the time you make it I assume that that's what is implicit is the relationship, the room, what's happening in the room. There's a degree of a presence that allows for the person to see it and feel it and resonate with it in a way that in ordinary consciousness they wouldn't.*

AP: We call that providing the possibility sphere. That's the function of the therapist to make the kind of space of possibility around them, where these things could believably happen. And **there** it's possible that our genetic needs are going to be responded to. And the therapist does do that (create that possibility sphere), and you have to know ritual. And you have to know clarity of relationship in order to do that. Because otherwise the therapist would end up being the ideal great grandfather and end up being everybody. You know in transference you're everybody. But here we're *building* all that stuff and they're feeling the safety that gets built up between the therapist and the client. So you're highlighting that I think, very nicely, very clearly. So, but little by little....let me tell you.... when people make this movie, that they are the healer, they don't know they had (unconsciously) become the great grandmother's husband. (That fantasy) releases those nuclear energies that were limited and should have been limited in maturational time. The nuclear energies of aggression and sexuality, the Freudian Id, it pops loose in them. But they don't know they're feeling sexuality. They don't know they're feeling aggression. They're just in turmoil inside. And then they talk about anxiety, blah, blah, blah.. One of the things that happens, in all of us it happens too, we fill holes in roles, that stuff gets loose, and then makes an unexpected shrinkage (of receptivity).... those movies that we made, shrink our receptors and make it impossible to **take in** what we long for. So when we put out (through those healing impulses) unwittingly like that in a movie, it shrinks our capacity to take in, i.e. to receive and they won't believe what they're longing to get. So we found, when we make these movies.... or we might make a movie that their mother had parents, or make whatever movies that should have been done and they say 'Oh My God I feel as if a burden came off my shoulders and I can take a deep breath.' And so I say, 'Why don't we have an ideal father for you?'. And the client would say 'Well if I had an ideal father then I could've ended up feeling that comfortable. Yeah.' Now they can take in what they couldn't take in before, (because of) seeing those movies. Now they are less resistant. So that's the other part of this work.

*SP: It feels very beautiful when you describe the resistance. It has almost a negative quality, but you describe also the movie and how it happens to do that. It feels very clear, and the mechanism of that movie is the traumatic, something that's too overwhelming and hijacks the present by bringing you to that past. And you're replacing that movie with another experience.*

AP: We make new movies, for where there is justice, there is completion, they don't have to be the completer. Then they can just be themselves instead of being the one who puts out and can't take in.

*SP: Right, and again, very powerful, very moving. And to say they have to be the completer is putting something somebody in a role that is impossible and traumatizing because it's overwhelming and impossible.*

AP: You've got it.

*SP: Instead of in a way being supported in larger environment where the completion flows.*

AP: Absolutely. And everybody who has heard these unjust stories early on has a difficulty having their basic needs met, because their bodies are still loaded with everything that they filled up (and their resistance is high). So we have to make movies like crazy of all the different things and little by little they take in and then when they finally take in that good father that we started with and they can feel comfortable with him, then they can look over at the boss placeholder. Because they start scanning, they come back to look at the floor with its placeholders as they scan and they say, 'You

know what, the boss doesn't look so bad anymore.' So I say 'Let's take the principle of the real father off the boss.' And we make a ritual. I can pluck it off. Sometimes they choose to do it. And in a group the client can choose someone to role-play a symbol mover -- a principle mover. They lift it off, put it all the way across and plant it in the true object and then the present gets cleaned up, a little bit more. And the client sees the present with different eyes, and not through the lens of all that bad history and all that frustration. ....Kind of coming to, huhhh (*mimics exhaustion and laughs*)

*SP: (laughs)*

AP: We started with so much expression and now we're ending up doing things so much more subtly. I guess that's what I'm trying to highlight, that we don't have to do all that big motoric screaming and yelling. By God, (in the past) we had to have people screaming and yelling, 'Why did you do that to me I hate you?' It felt good. But the real good that we did all those years was the new memory, and we thought all that dramatic other stuff was part and parcel of it, and had to be there. And now we hardly touch it. But boy did change come so much faster, and resistance is lowered so much faster. That's where we are now.

*SP: So that feels very beautiful. I really appreciate you sharing this. (laughs)*

*AP: (laughs)*

 *This conversation was transcribed by Alex Curtis.*

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