

Body and Creativity Disciplines Dance Movement Therapy, Creative Movement, Authentic Movement territories, borders and crossroads

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In the past 25 years we have witnessed the development of different disciplines focused on the body and the creative potential of its expressive movement. In one way or another they all aim at the recovery of mind/body integration while others go further, towards the healing of this ancient division, restoring the continuity among body, mind and spirit. Although Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), Creative Movement (CM) and Authentic Movement (AM) are not the only disciplines of this school of thought, they are raising significant interest and curiosity. Different schools and training courses contributed to the creation of professionals who are applying these disciplines to several fields.

Eventually - as interest was growing - some confusion among these three disciplines emerged; it may happen that people want to attend CM classes but what they are looking for or need is DMT; or sometimes people are searching for a safe and protected environment, where it is possible to rediscover freedom of movement and recover faith in the ability to create and decide to approach DMT, without understanding that CM would be more suitable for their needs. And last, often people who are interested in AM would first need DMT. Confusion is not only spread among users but also among working professionals who are interested in them for several reasons; people who work as caregivers in different situations such as community educator, psychiatrist, psychotherapist and others. Often these disciplines are seen as something undifferentiated, names are interchangeable and spotting slight but important differences is difficult.

Being aware of this situation, we felt it was important to clarify similarities and difference among DMT, CM and AM. The task was not easy since - beyond the differences - sometimes one discipline borders on the other, having a net of interconnections among different theoretical approaches and also similarities concerning interventions. But there are some places in each of these disciplines where borders are clear and fixed and refer to a specific approach.

Our long-lasting love story with dance and movement took – during our lives - different shapes and led us to assume different professional roles. Dancers and choreographers at the beginning, we used movement as the favored language of our creativity. In the field of contemporary dance – during the '60 and '70 – personal research had a prominent role, we were pushed to experiment different forms of the movement creative process. This experience allowed us to try on our own bodies the therapeutic value of an expression that restores the unity between mind and body and led us to understand the important role that such re-connection could play in the personal growth of those who live in this society. Later we became dance therapists (university degree, dance and personal psychotherapy are the basic requisites); we experienced the work in hospitals with patients with severe illnesses/pathologies, such as psychoses, autism, drug addiction. Being aware that the need for reintegration is something that concerns everybody we were persuaded not to abandon our role of teachers during the CM classes and in groups of AM practice.

Thanks to this experience we acquired - we will try to shed light on the connections and differences existing between Dance/Movement Therapy, Creative Movement and Authentic Movement.

Two fundamental premises need to be made:

- The first is that the unity body/mind is a primary source of knowledge. It is recognized, also by neuroscience, that the sense of self has a biologic precursor in the mental representation of the organism/body. Although, as A. Damasio in his recent book “Emozione e Coscienza” states – a certain blindness towards the body’s internal conditions could have played an adaptive role in the complexity of the cultural and technological development of the environment, such blindness has a price, “it tends to prevent us from grasping the origin or the nature of what we call self” (Damasio 1999, pg. 45). According to us, this division is no longer adaptive – at least – the price we pay is too high in terms health care. Our premises presume a possible recovery of unity through the development of a certain kind of attention/awareness. We believe that – without losing the capacity of maintaining a positive relationship with the environment, it is possible to recover the ability of “feeling” that “under our image of the world there’s the image of our own body pulsating life” (Damasio, pg.46).
- The second premise is that each discipline that we are analyzing helps the development of a different level of consciousness of the relation body/mind/spirit. Consciousness, as C. Tart states, is “that ability of knowing or feeling or understanding or recognizing that something is happening” and this ability can be developed but also oriented by directing attention from one thing to another”. (1977 pg. 25).

We will analyze the differences between CM, DMT and AM through four main areas:

- Objectives
- The setting and the relationship between client/patient/student
- The mental presence/and attitude of the educator/therapist toward the single user/client or group
- The population for whom the intervention is suggested

CREATIVE MOVEMENT

Creative Movement is a general term used in the wide field of those disciplines connected to the relationship between body/mind/spirit. For us, it has become a specific approach that requires a three-year training. All the information that follows refers to CM as it is intended in this training. It was named “Garcia-Plevin Method”® to define its particular approach

Creative Movement (CM) is a discipline which aims to revitalize an individual's ability to deeply perceive and listen to the body and develop expressive and creative potential. The body, source and medium of our emotional life is considered the central axis of a creative process, despite the artistic language in which it may be realized.

CM objectives are:

- to refine the ability of perceiving the sensorial s flow that has the foundation of our feelings of mind and to acknowledge spontaneous movements, the breathing rhythm and voice modulation from which expressions arise.
- to recover the natural attitude toward play, precursor of every creative ability and possibility of composing (giving form) that is not divided from the inner world.

CM not only refers to research on creativity based on dance and movement but also from other

artistic fields. It does not propose exercises or techniques to imitate but draws from emotional life, the interior self, using improvisational and composition tools that aim at revealing the self with increased freedom and harmony.

CM takes place in a group, the collective process supports the single individual.

The CM group is guided by a welcoming and receptive “teacher”, this is the basic condition in order to create an environment where every person can easily go through the exploration and discovery process. It is important to understand that this is both fundamental and at the same time difficult to offer. It implies that the teacher does not impose or influence the student’s research, it implies tolerance for a different sense of esthetic and the ability to give time and support without judging. At the same time the teacher must play an active role proposing themes, materials, use music to orient discovery and to guarantee that what has been discovered concerning our experience will nourish the creative act.

The phenomenological aspects of Labananalysis (a system of movement analysis and observation) offers a valid framework for the method’s development and programming.

The CM teacher’s behavior is similar to what Winnicott calls “a good enough mother” who favors the child’s playing by creating containment, offering different options and then pulling back without impeding exploration, discovery, and not intruding on what is happening.

CM is clearly oriented to the development of well-being, though it is not a therapy its results may be therapeutic. A different body/mind awareness develops reinforcing the self to be more mentally and physically open to change and transformation. It is important to emphasize that this kind of approach is for those people who have a solid egoic structure. The main benefits are generally obtained by those people whose creative process was stuck due to a lack of stimuli from the environment, which frequently happens today. A person with other kinds of needs will require a different “attention” and “holding” which DMT can offer.

The CM training we offer - not only includes extended knowledge of movement and practical experience of creativity - but it also teaches the basics of the psychology of perception, creative processing and initial group dynamics. Our theoretical background has its roots in the contributions of C.G. Jung, D.W. Winnicot, M. Milner, S. Arieti, D. Stern and in the works of dance therapists such as M. Whitehouse, J. Adler, J. Chodorow which are fundamental to understand the relationship between body/mind and spirit.

CM training is attended by different kinds of professionals: psychologists, social assistants, rehabilitation experts, educators, artists, etc. Some of them may want to become CM teachers, others may want to extend their abilities and others simply may want to be involved in the training for personal growth.

DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY

In DMT it is also crucial to promote, support and strengthen the creative elements necessary to the human being. The creative process is seen as the medium through which it is possible to therapeutically stimulate a healthy regression in service to ego development.

DMT favors nonverbal communication fundamental to unblock the individual and create the therapeutic relationship providing a safe place wherein to build a new awareness.

The presence and attitude of the therapist is crucial, not only the way he/she acts but also his/her way of being in the relationship is essential; the ability of keeping a constant dialogue with his/her interior world and with the other, the ability of recognizing the creative forms that a transference

may assume and handling its consequences, as well as his/her own countertransference. Every creative proposal, every experience of movement offered by the therapist originates from the patient's needs and from the ongoing therapeutic process .

The dance/movement therapist has to be able to accompany the patient while moving and playing, and to let the symbolic association from words to movement or from movement to words to flow. The therapist must bear in mind - at the same time - the psychological structures that are revealed in the movement's creative process. Such structures can be analyzed and understood according to different psychoanalytical theories; such as object relations theory, psychology of the self theory, through relational dynamics and from a psychopathological point of view. These theoretical references coincide with the approach of Art Therapy Italiana, our training association; the other schools existing in Italy share some of these references but also refer to other psychology theories.

Because of the format above we come to the essential characteristics in DMT which clearly distinguishes it from CM, that is:

- between the patient and/or group and the therapist – there is an agreement (contract) to enter into therapy,
- the clinical setting be it with an individual or group respects traditional criteria in the fixed terms of the time and setting of the therapy,
- the setting is defined by the psychotherapeutic use of movement to integrate the individual's body/mind/spirit,
- It is the establishment of the therapeutic relationship that is a primary key to the treatment.

Dance/movement therapy is used as a primary therapy or integrated within a team of professional interventions in order to treat different needs and pathologies. At different ages in life which we may find: anxiety pathologies, depression, drug addiction, physical or mental abuse, eating disorders, intimate relationship problems, lack of self esteem, autism, schizophrenia, mental retardation, problems connected with age of development and individual maturity.

As we have already written, there exists in Italy several training schools of Dance/movement Therapy, each with its own theoretical framework and a specific model for understanding and observing movement. The Italian Professional Association of Dance Movement Therapy, APID, ensures that the training standards are met and has also created a register of Dance Movement Therapists and supervisors.

Both Creative Movement and Dance Movement Therapy aim at harmonizing the individual, the first can be used as a technique of the second, while in DMT the therapeutic relationship remains the basis of every treatment. There is also another territory with unfixed borders, which concerns DMTs who work only in the socio-educational environment. Being aware that we left some distinctions unexplained we would like to clarify that – in our opinion – the term “Dance Movement Therapy” should only refer to strictly clinical interventions reducing the degree of confusion. We know that the disciplines' territories are developed and defined along with their history and according to the professional's reality, for now, it is useful to try to simply describe the situation.

AUTHENTIC MOVEMENT

Authentic Movement is a path to consciousness, a discipline and a practice with specific parameters which can be used, according to moment you are living in your present life for your own psychological, creative and/or spiritual growth .

AM has its roots in the method of “Active Imagination” by C. G. Jung that developed in the first part of the Sixties in the U.S. from the encounter of dance-movement therapy and the theory of

“in-depth psychology” in the person of Mary Stark Whitehouse, one of the pioneer of DMT. From her teaching two branches of research emerged: one refers to the work of Joan Chodorow, Jungian analyst and DM Therapist and the one proposed by Janet Adler, DMT and Ph.D. in mystical practices. In Italy, today, there is a group of teachers who guide Authentic Movement groups. They are DM Therapists who belong to Art Therapy Italiana. Some of them started their training in the first class held by Chodorow in 1990 in Switzerland. Others joined in 1991 the training group headed by Janet Adler. This group, made of DM Therapists and psychotherapists coming from different European countries met for eight years in Tuscany and for two more years in Greece. They organize practice and training groups but also use AM in groups made of professionals, in order to keep alive the ability of self-observation in the therapeutic relationship.

AM, a self-directed practice is done with closed eyes listening and responding to spontaneous in-depth movements. It requires that the practitioner has had a solid psychological analysis and comes to the practice with the ability to explore autonomously the inner aspects of self.

This work can go quite deeply into the unconscious and among the three mentioned is the one which may introduce the most significant changes in the state of consciousness in brief time. The visual channel deprivation allows for the discovery and the development of the internal witness. The internal witness is that part of the self which observes its own experience, the psychic thoughts and movement of the body. The internal witness testifies without conditioning the practitioner’s internal processes; it does not privilege a rational dimension rather it is open to all levels (sensorial, emotional, imaginative and thought levels). The presence of the internal witness testifies to a growth of inner awareness and allows for the opening of a deeper kinesthetic flow of attention where our most profound movements arise. This leads to the discovery of the experience in the practice known as “moving and being moved”, of being guided by the will or by surrendering. One experiences an infinite variety of stimuli that characterize movements, including the possibility of stillness.

The main aspects of the practice are of seeing and being seen but also of the verbal restitution of the lived experience. Sharing, through speech or body/movement language, opens new psychic and poetic spaces in the individual and collective psyche.

The “ground” form of AM consists of the relationship between two individuals or two groups who alternate in the role of who is moving (mover) and who is observing (witness). Developing the internal witness is the objective of the observer too, he/she witnesses her own lived in experience in the presence of who is moving; this enriches his/her intrapsychic experience and favors the gradual acknowledgment of defense mechanisms that obscure perception of the self and of the others.

Learning to witness the self, witness the others and sharing through the word takes place after the movement portion of the practice. These two moments are decided upon by the teacher depending on the learner/s’ progress. Different from therapeutic exchange, this kind of verbal exchange is characterized by the restitution - with its own specific rules - of the experience of the participants here and now.

AM is an autonomous discipline, J. Adler developed particular rituals during the practice as a way of personal growth and consciousness development. AM is also a modality which can be used in the teaching of DMT, it can be applied to individual specific patient or as therapeutic group intervention. In the Plevin-Garcia method of Creative Movement, AM is introduced during the third year with the objective of refining the student’s presence and for deepening his/her ability to communicate to others for future teaching. In the training program for DMT of Art Therapy Italiana, elements of AM are consistently present with the objective of training perception, comprehension or to learn how to elaborate or return the somatic transference or countertransference. Practice groups are created after accurate individual interviews and guided by

an AM teacher who is usually a DM Therapist or has a background in the field of psychology and movement. After learning the discipline, comprised of fundamental passages developed by J. Adler that include rituals, verbalization rules and the need for privacy, peer groups can form and practice without a leader.

Conclusion

CM, DMT and AM are fluid territories in theory and practice. A therapist's theoretical/practical knowledge of these borders and connections allows for - with appropriate adjustments - the use of each practice to serve the other while borders and limits are determined according to the context. Our long experience in the field brought us to a need for clarification. Our objective was to offer a useful contribution to professionals in different fields and those who are thinking about approaching one or another discipline. Due to the evolving nature of these three realities, we are aware that our efforts are incomplete.

What we have been trying to describe and explain is something which can not be grasped completely as a concept: the crucial aspect of the constant evolving or becoming of a movement experience is something that needs to be experienced and lived in personally and it requires time. We would like to close with a quote from Mark Epstein, an American psychiatrist who wrote about connections and boundaries between meditation and psychotherapy. Epstein states: "Winnicott wrote about what he calls the "going on of being" sense in the child, which means the uninterrupted flow of the authentic self. I recovered this flow in several ways thanks to meditation and psychotherapy. In Winnicott's framework there is nothing more precious and sacred than the ability of "keeping on being" of the individual." (Epstein, 2002 p.30).

The gist of "keeping on being" is present in the three territories described above –and is the aspect which can help the individual to find the flow of his/her authentic self.

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