The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can’t heal it

The problem with New Age psychotherapy is, that it often one-sided is focusing on feelings, and thereby is neglecting the importance of thoughts (see my article The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy).

Feelings are the body’s reaction on the mind (the thoughts). Feelings arise where the mind and the body meet. They are reflections of the mind in the body. Feelings can also be a reflection of a whole thoughtpattern. A thoughtpattern can create an enlarged and energycharged reflection of itself in the form of a feeling. This means, that the whole of the thought’s past also can create a reflection of itself in the body. And if this past is filled with pain, then it can show itself as a negative energyfield in the body. Eckhart Tolle calls this the emotional painbody. It contains all the pain you have accumulated in the past. It is the sum of the negative feelings which you have ”saved together” through life and which you carry. And it can nearly be seen as an invisible, independent creature. Therefore we also could, as H.C. Andersen does in his fairy tale, call it the Shadow.

The painbody is the inner demon, or the devil in the heart. Some painbody´s are relatively harmless, some are anxietyfilled, depressive or angry, others are directly malicious and demonical. They can be passive or active. Some are passive 90% of the time, others are active 100% of the time.

The painbody is the expression of suffering itself.

The painbody is activated in the same moment as specific challenges activate the inappropriate basic assumptions, which have been created by bad experiences in the past. And they are being maintained by the vortex of negative automatic thinking, which follows from these basic assumptions. In other words it constitutes a rather particular reaction-pattern, a manuscript, which gets you to play the same role (or the same roles) again and again. That will say, that specific situations will continue to activate it, so that your actions become an eternal repetition of the same. It takes control over you, so to speak.
Therefore you should of course not seek to activate your painbody, as for example cathartic therapies believe you should, because you thereby also activate the negative thoughtpattern behind the painbody, which such therapies don´t work with (cathartic therapies are therapies based on the notion that if you express your feelings you will purge yourself of your troubles).

The painbody lives of, that you are identified with the negative thoughtpattern behind it. In this way the painbody gets your energy. And for that reason you also give energy to your negative feelings, when you activate your thoughtpattern. Negative feelings will in other words increase if you express them. And the painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, connected with the more dangerous depts of the astral plane´s collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego. The energies found here are unfathomable, and when you direct them into your painbody, you are really facing problems. That is what is happening in a spiritual crisis (see my article *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena*).

Instead you should relate completely neutral in relation to your painbody, and through critical thinking seek to change the inappropriate basic assumptions, which are the thoughtpattern behind the painbody. That is how philosophy and true spirituality works (the inappropriate basic assumptions are based on thought-distortions – see my book *A Dictionary of Thought distortions*).

That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can´t heal Man from the ground. In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the astral plane´s collective history. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma. The concepts indicate, that the inertia projects beyond the personal history (growing up conditions, traumatic bindings, painful experiences etc.) and far down into the collective inherit-backgrounds of history (genes, environment, society-ideals, the archetypes and the primordial images of the dreams, fantasies, fairy-tales, myths, and finally: instincts inherited from the animals). It is a factor, which lies in the evolution itself, in the genes, in the collective subconscious, in the collectice history.

When therefore therapy requires a change, then the instinctive survival-preparedness in us reacts and protests. Man has survived on willfulness and a consciousness-structure, which mental and psychic sign is Egocentredness. The bigger Ego, the bigger survival chance.
Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategi (the ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma. You can’t, by therapeutic strategies, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through therapy. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions.

I already now hear advocates of the positive psychology of the New Thought movement claim, that if the painbody is created by a negative thought pattern, then you just have to change this thought pattern into a positive thought pattern (see my article The New Thought movement and the law of attraction). Therefore this distortion of the concepts of negativity and positivity, which this movement has created, must be clarified.

**Problems of positive psychology**

In accordance with the authentic spiritual traditions the movement of time is a power, an expression of energy, which follows some laws. These laws are also called compensatory karma. I use this concept because the concept of negative karma, also has been distorted by the positive psychology movement (into what they call the law of attraction).

The energy-laws function in all cycles of life. On the plane of the outer forms there are birth and death, creation and destruction, growth and dissolution of apparently separated outer forms. This is reflected everywhere: the life-cycle of a star, a planet, a physical body, a tree or a flower; in the rise and fall of nations, political systems and civilizations; and in the inevitable cycles of gain and loss in the individual person’s life.

A cycle can last from some hours to some years. There are big cycles and small cycles within the big ones. The cyclic nature of the Universe is closely connected with the impermanence of all things and all situations. Buddha made this into a central part of his teaching. It is also a central part of the teachings of the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, which you can read about in my article A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method.

There are cycles with success, where things come to you, and you flourish, and cycles with defeat, where they wither away or wear down, and you become obliged to let go of them, in order to make space so that new things can arise, or so that there can
happen a transformation. If you cling to them and make resistance at that time, this means, that you deny accompanying the stream of life, and then you will suffer.

The problem with the positive psychology of the New Thought movement, and therefore the ideology of success coaching, is that it one-sided is focusing on that the up-cycles are positive, while the down-cycles are negative.

In his book *The Good Life* Mogens Pahuus writes, that if you ask about, what the old Scandinavians saw as the highest and the greatest in life, the ecstasy of life, then the answer would be, that it is self-assertion – the assertion of oneself and the family. He also writes, that you in Christianity find a diametrically opposite view of self-assertion, – both in its Catholic form as in Protestantism. In Saint Gregory and Thomas of Aquinas haughtiness/pride/self-assertion was the first and greatest of the seven so-called deadly sins. And in Luther self-assertion nor was a goodness, but the vice over all vices. It is the seven deadly sins Dante in *The Purgatory* must look in the eyes one after one, in order to be able to progress. He must use the discrimination, which is the purification process, where you look your destiny in the eyes and do penance after having realized how your perspective distorts reality.

So self-assertion is a vice. Self-assertion is a kind of self-interest, where everything turns around the Ego, and therefore makes the mind mediocre. To live in a world, which is controlled by self-assertion, without being self-assertive, means, truly, to love something for its own sake, without seeking a reward, a result; but this is very difficult, because the whole world, all your friends, your relatives, struggle to achieve something, to accomplish something.

Today self-assertion once again is considered as a virtue. The gurus are the many advocates for the market and the economical competition, as for instance several management theorists (management theory, and its use of coaching/psychotherapy, is directly inspired by the positive psychology of the New Thought movement – see my article Management theory and the self-help industry). And the education-instrument is the personal development movement. The disciples are the consumers; that will say, that this outlook of life obviously is shared by most people in our society: that it is about becoming something, to get success, to conquer a place on the top of the mountain, to become a winner. Mogens Pahuus believes that the modern ideal about becoming a success, a winner, is a perverted ideal. The society praises a self-assertion, which has gone over the top, and there dominates a self-assertion, which is a vice, because it both spoils the life of the self-assertive, and the lifes of those, whom the self-assertive measures himself in relation to, and whom he wants to overpass.
Pahuus mentions some of the forms of self-assertion: 1) Vanity, which is a vice, because the vain-full always is bearing in mind, how he or she looks like, or is considered like, in the eyes of others. 2) Ambition, which is a vice, because you here constantly are on the way forward, or upwards. 3) Haughtiness, which is a vice, because you here, in your feeling of own superior value, look down at others, are letting others feel their inferiority; that is: because haughtiness is unethical. But also in the arrogant himself, haughtiness is destructive: it isolates. 4) Joy of power. The ethical seen most violating form of self-assertion is the joy of having power over others, of controlling others, or oppressing them.

The most extreme expression of the seven deadly sins, is ego-inflation.

Ego-inflation happens when the ego has embezzled itself energy, which rightly belongs to the collective time. The collective time manifests itself in a widely and indefinite area, for example could a broad spectrum of common human activities and organizations be called manifestations of the collective time: parties, state formations, wars, work communities, concerts, clans, tribes and sects, mass psychological phenomena, religious parishioners, fashion streams, group souls, etc.

When the ego is getting inflated there comes a feeling of, that the “old” ego has been altered, even disappeared. This feeling is sensed a being good, positive, yes it can even be a peak experience. The illusion is that the ego hasn’t disappeared, but instead has been inflated. Therefore the dark side of the ego, the whole complex of thought distortions, also has been inflated.

Ego-inflation is the cause of the sense of improvement, healing, or religious experiences people can have, when for example working with therapy, coaching, healing, clairvoyance, or when they have discovered a new ideology, religious or political. It is closely related to thought distortions such as Communal reinforcement, Groupthink, Illusion of control, Classical conditioning and placebo effects.

There are three main forms of ego-inflation: intellectual, identifical and euphorical inflation.

1) Intellectual ego-inflation

Intellectual ego-inflation is extremely widely spread, especially today where so much knowledge is made common, and where practically everybody goes through one or the other form of theoretical education, or at least get knowledge of it through the medias. Intellectual ego-inflation is in fact one of the fundamental hindrances for the opening in towards the source, a malfunction in the mind, which is the crucial cause
of the ignorance, conflict and sufferings of Mans (see my article The four philosophical hindrances and openings).

Intellectual ego-inflation has to do with lack of rationality. You take your assumptions, conceptions and values as absolute truths (hereunder subjejectivism and relativism), whereby you end up in a contradiction between your thoughts and lived life. It is actually a lack of ground connection.

In general, in intellectual circles, in cultural connections, and in the political life, they have always accepted intellectual ego-inflation – but as mentioned: it is one of the most crucial causes of all the conflict, war and violence, which the world is characterized by. People and their opinions and –isms, political directions etc., all of it is, as a rule, mainly an intellectual play characterized by a contradiction between thoughts and lived life. One is idealist, another realist, one is Marxist, atheist, another Christian, charitable, but if you look these people after in their existence – in their lived life – then you soon discover the contradictions.

Kierkegaard called it “the litany madness”; people can repeat the right doctrines and principles by rote, but when it comes to reality, to their way of living, then you discover all the contradictions.

Within the alternative environment of New Age and the self-help industry, intellectual ego-inflation is also extremely widely spread, and when the game, as here, is about the development of Man, about the depths of the mind, about archetypical powers, about the source of life, then intellectual ego-inflation can be a hazardous play. When the intellectual knowledge begins to approach religious areas, wisdom of life, therapy, meditation, spirit, then the ego can misjudge itself by being intoxicated by its intellectual understanding of deep phenomena. It is easy to understand the profound in an intellectual way. Everybody can say: “meditation is to become silent, without thoughts, without words, images”, but try to be silent, try to be awake without thoughts.

Intellectual the whole thing with development, with dream-understanding, with therapy and chakras, is very easy to understand. And very easy to tell others about – and get success on. There is incredible many in the world today, who speaks and talks about energy and chakras without ever really having had experiences with chakras and energy. This is intellectual theft. It is self-deception, it is ego-inflation – and it will unavoidably lead to misguiding of others. Add to this the weird phenomena within New Age and the self-help industry, where most of the followers take an education as therapist, coach, clairvoyant, even spiritual teacher, without having any experiences (there are not many people in New Age, which you could characterize as disciples, students). Furthermore the many New Age speculators, that constantly are
speculating in creating new forms of therapies, techniques and systems, which are deeply filled with scientifical, philosophical and spiritual distortions – precisely because of the lack of training (see my articles Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology and Six common traits of New Age which distort spirituality).

Futhermore: a special danger in relation to the self-help industry is, that secularization here apparently has been removed. Personal development (self-improvement) has directly been introduced on EU´s project on lifelong learning and education. You therefore meet it everywhere in society: in schools, education, workplaces, etc. I seriously think this is a sign of the rising of a very dangerous ideology, which I have called The Matrix Conspiracy.

The tool to be used against intellectual ego-inflation is in other words rationality and critical thinking, therefore philosophical training, where you investigate the validity of your assumptions, conceptions and values, and seek after coherence between your thoughts and lived life.

2) Identifical ego-inflation

Identifical ego-inflation is of two kinds: 1) Identification with an outer power, which not belongs to the ego (an institution, a teacher, others´ techniques, meditations-centres, one´s role, etc.). 2) Identification with an inner power, which nor belongs to the ego (God, master, healing energy, the collective time, collective images, etc.).

The tool to be used against this form of ego-inflation is authentic spiritual practice; that is to say: where you understand the difference between the content of consciousness and the form of consciousness – that in neutrality to separate yourself from the content of consciousness, for thereby to direct yourself towards the form of consciousness; discrimination, which again is a central part of critical thinking (see my article Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice).

3) Euphorical ego-inflation

The euphorical ego-inflation is mainly due to up-streaming energy. There are then real transformation-processes in the chakra-system, and the transformed, or released, energy is rising upwards – it feels and is described this way, for then, in the consciousness, to bring about states of ecstasy, spiritual intoxication, exaltation, blissfulness. Oneness-consciousness as a spiritual crisis belongs to euphorical ego-inflation. Mystics in the West have called this euphorical ego-inflation “jubilatio”. It can escalate and completely take the ground connection away from a human being, so
that you think, that you can fly, that you will be carried by angels. You fly in Sukavati, in Firdaus, in Paradise, in Elysium, as a balloon in the blue air.

The mystics (for example Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Seuse) discriminated between “jubilatio” and “inflammatio”, the ecstasy and the inflammation. And the euphorical inflammation is dangerous, very dangerous (see my articles The awakening of kundalini, Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena, and A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching).

The tools to be used against this ego-inflation is partially ground connection (Hara, earth bound work, preferably with other people, for example as a social- and healthcare worker), partially again realization work, discrimination, humble separation of the ego and the spirit, between the ego and the rising, bubbleling, jubilant delight. Moreover ethical practice, training of compassion, for example Tonglen practice (in my book Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader, I have described both the Hara practice and the Tonglen practice in the supporting exercises The Hara-meditation and the Heart-meditation – you can also find them on this blog in the above pages section).

One of the deep reasons why they in monasteries anywhere in the world are letting the monks and nuns work with dirt, cleaning, cooking, taking care of sick people and dying, was in order to, that they never should loose reality and the ground connection of sight.

People who are being catched by ego-inflation, begin, as a rule, to act like kings and queens, they shall not anything practical do, they shall not be adjusted, they fly.

If a person really succeeds in adopting the advices of the self-help books she really gets a problem. Not only does she have to fight with the never-ending development, and the egoism. She is also becoming a serious problem for her surroundings. Because she is now, as the Danish psychologist, Nina Østerby Sæther, says, a potential psychopath.

On a course about psychopaths Nina Østerby Sæther realized, that there was many similarities between psychopathic traits, and the advices, which are given in self-help books. It made her point out some frightening resemblances (see my article Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology).

Though some of the self-help books’ advices might sound similar to true spirituality (most often they directly quote and use spiritual texts), taken out of context, then you
have to remember how the wholeness and otherness have been removed. Religion and philosophy have been reduced to psychology and psychotherapy. And when this happens it takes a totally wrong course.

The vice in the different forms of self-assertion is that it leads to an unreal life, where you are yourself absent in a state of becoming, and not yourself present in a state of being. You are suffering, it is therefore not at all positive (see my article Suffering as an entrance to the Source).

In this way positive psychology induces in people the thought distortion called False dichotomy. False dichotomy is a misleading conception of possible alternatives. A dichotomy is a division in two alternatives. Often seen in the expressions Either/or – If/then, as for example: ”Either you are with us, or you are against us” – ”if I´m not always a success, then I´m a fiasco”. Similarly, someone who says that you must either believe that God exists or else that God doesn´t exist is setting up a false dichotomy since there is the well-known third option of the agnostic.

A false dichotomy appears when somebody sets up a dichotomy in such a way, that it looks like, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. False dichotomy is thinking in extremes, and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life. In connection with inappropriate basic assumptions such as "If I am not always a success, then I am a fiasco", the false dichotomy is closely related to the development of guilt, shame and depression.

Note, that you can´t think in extremes such as I am a success, I am perfect, I am beautiful, without the opposite extreme. That is: if you for example follow the teaching of positive psychology, which excludes all negativity, then you induce in yourself a false dichotomy, because an exclusion of the opposite extreme not is possible.

This is related to the thought distortion called Conversion to the opposite. You can for example convert your insecurity and anxiety for not being good enough to exaggerated self-confidence. Such a conversion is of course a kind of compensation, escape, self-deceit, and will lead to a false and imbalanced way of life.

Sadly enough, it seems like the movement of positive psychology directly is using Conversion to the opposite as a central part of its training. Positive psychology is marked by its attempts, through thinking, to eliminate all negativity by converting it into something positive, or simply by ignoring it, or saying it doesn´t exists. But a thought is always defined by its negation; that is: what the thought not is. This means
that a thought always contains a pair of opposites. So, you can’t by the force of thinking (and therefore not by force of will, wishes, feelings or choices) convert negativity to positivity. If you nonetheless try to do this you will end up in focusing on the one extreme of a pair of opposites, which is an unbalance. The energy-laws within the wholeness will therefore seek to bring the thoughts back to the balance of middle. They do this through a contra-balancing movement; that is: a swing over in the opposite extreme. That is what is meant with compensatory karma (see my article What is karma?). Existentially seen Conversion to the opposite causes a conflict between what you are and what you want to become, or between being and becoming.

Conversion to the opposite, and the above-mentioned problems, also seems to characterize Byron Katie´s method The Work, in her so-called Turnaround technique, where you always have to look at your thoughts as false (see my article A critique of Byron Katie and her therapeutic method The Work).

The movement of positive psychology is especially caught by the thought distortion called Illusion of control.

Control makes us feel powerful, which is a good feeling. And feeling that there is a right order in the universe – a law of attraction - and that some kind of “positive” thought technique can control everything that happens - is comforting to many people today.

Is there any harm in this? What´s the harm in obliterating truth and reality in favor of what you want to be true? A great deal of harm can come from deluding yourself that you can control your health, spiritual development and your wealth, or somebody else´s health, spiritual development amd wealth, by your thoughts and prayers or other superstitious actions.

As mentioned: the painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane´s collective history; you might call it original sin or negative karma. This you can’t control.

And as mentioned: only an intervention from the source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to be able to receive this help you must do your part of the work: the spiritual practice. Many years. And this means that you need to restructure the ego´s ownership to things, food, personal power, sexuality and emotions. Spiritual practice is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness´ automatical identification with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. First thereafter the mystical process can begin.
The magnet of attraction, which the ego is controlled by – (the ego’s identity with the material world: instincts, sexuality, emotions, desires, collective ideals, ownership, personal power) – will in a true spiritual practice lose its attraction. Investments in the material world’s ups and downs, its demands, temptations and dramas, become undramatized, uninteresting, even meaningless, in relation to the consciousness’ opening direction in towards its spiritual essence: the now, the wholeness, life itself, and finally: the eternal otherness, from where the good, the true and the beautiful are streaming as grace and forgiveness.

In this movement in towards the source you begin to ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way: Who am I? Where do the thoughts come from? What is consciousness and where does it come from? Is there a meaning of life? How does man preserve peace of mind and balance in all the relationships of life? How do we learn to appreciate the true goods and flout all transient and vain goals? Is the destiny of Man part of a larger plan? In this way the grab, which the material world has in your mind, is automatically reduced (I have explained this in my book Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader).

Very few people will be willing to do this work. On the contrary many people have today done an illusory work of trying to re-define this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction directly is becoming the object of worship. That’s what positive psychology and the law of attraction movement are about (again: see my article The New Thought movement and the law of attraction).

Another aspect of the true spiritual practice is that you break the automatic process of compensatory karma, which is closely related to the material world, laws of nature, cycles of life, yes actually pure causal regularity of mechanical kind. It would be an illusion to connect such things with a superior intentional divine order.

Furthermore you have your free will either to continue to be identified with the area of compensatory karma, or break with it, and move in towards the source, which is the area of progressive karma (where the mystical process begins) – about karma see my articles What is karma?, and A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork.

I have in my book A Portrait of a Lifeartist set up six steps in such a spiritual practice:

1) The separation of the observer and the observed
2) Religion and supporting exercises
3) Passive listening presence
4) Discrimination
5) Creative emptiness
6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

The first step, the separation of the observer and the observed, is the step where you are completely ignorant about your painbody; that is: completely identified with it, and therefore in its control. The next step is religion and supporting exercises. Religion and supporting exercises are a valuable early stage in a spiritual practice. Religion and supporting exercises cleanses and prepares transformation on a collective, unconscious-instinctive, level.

The two main reasons why religion and supporting exercises is a necessity is partly, that the ongoing self-confirmation of the ego and its negative automatic thoughts (which, as explained, also can be illusions of positivity), is replaced by a spiritual remembrance, partly that the collective inertia is purificated and prepared, so that the Ego is made transparent along with that original sin and negative karma are transformed and transfigured in the contact with the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness, the saints etc.) And these two processes mutually fertilize each other (also negative automatic thoughts are based on thought distortions – again: see my book A dictionary of thought distortions).

Religion has to do with the pious attitude and way of thinking, which stands for the observance of religious virtues, duties and rituals. In this way you can bring a unity and direction into the mind, an order and tranquillity in the thinking, a consistency between thought and conduct of life, an awareness of your relationship with persons, things and ideas, which no therapy is able to. In a spiritual practice it serves as a frame of reference.

The supporting exercises are the beginning of the spiritual practice, where you begin to activate the higher functions of the mind. In order to discover and break the identification with the samsarical producer of the mind, the subject must discover the hidden source in the awareness or in the innermost of consciousness. It happens by neutralizing the Ego´s, or the thinking´s, functions. This happens through meditation.

The Ego´s functions constitute what you could call the ordinary consciousness. You can talk about four such, lower, functions of the ordinary mind:

1. Evaluation (accept/denial, yes/no)
2. Focus
3. Activity
4. Language (words, images)
The source of awareness, the naked consciousness, is hidden because it has melted together with these four functions. They have become a kind of veils, or layers, which are maintained by what you could call the ego-religion and the ego-exercises. The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego’s incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: “it is no use with me!”; or: “wonderful me!”.

Both, either the denial or confirmation (which is what positive psychology is focusing on) of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity and the ego-centralization. The ego’s religion and exercises are the ego’s needs and longings and will: I want to, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, I hope, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, or, in its most common core: I, I, I,….

In my articles The New Thought movement and the law of attraction, and A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching, I have described how the worship of the ego can lead to black magic.

Meditation is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness’ automatical identification with these functions. Then you can talk about four higher functions of the consciousness, which are becoming activated through meditation:

1. Neutral observation
2. Passive listening presence (or wordless prayer) (defocus)
3. Non-activity (non-action)
4. Non-language (wordless)

The whole proces is like a flower opening itself.

All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com

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