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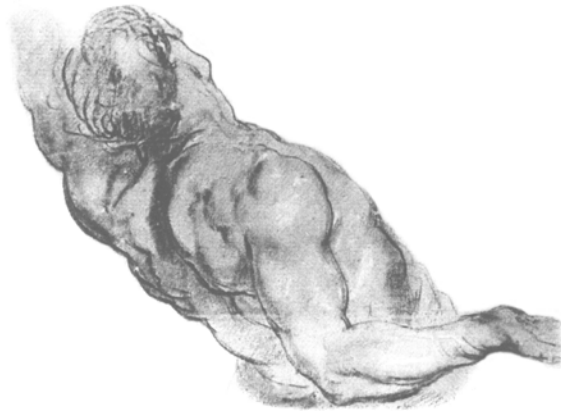


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A Tribute to David Boadella and  
*Energy & Character*



Silvia Specht Boadella



David Boadella

# The Tree of Man: Fundamental Dimensions of Biosynthesis

David Boadella, D.Sc.hon, M.Ed., B.A.

## Abstract

This article is the text of a speech first presented at the First Congress of Biosynthesis at Palma de Mallorca, Spain, in 1998. It seeks to give a metaphorical presentation, using the image of the different parts of a tree, of the Biosynthesis concept of "life fields." The seven life fields are on the one hand areas of experience and expression in daily life; secondly they are possible modalities of therapeutic approach; thirdly they have a connection, in the body, to the seven segments described by Wilhelm Reich, and in the subtle energy field to the energy centres (known as "chakras").

## Keywords

Energy center - Energy field - Tree of man

## Introduction

The symbol of the Tree of life, which stood at the centre of the world, is as old as mythology.

The Tree of life, which stretched between heaven and earth became transformed into the tree of mankind, the body of the human being, placed between the ground under his feet and the sky over his head.

In my presentation of the fundamental dimensions of Biosynthesis I will use this metaphor of the tree as an integrating framework for understanding the relationship between the different parts of our common work.

## Lifestreams: Roots of Embodiment

A tree has roots which anchor it to the earth, and provide essential nourishment.

In Nordic mythology the sacred world tree had three roots which were well springs of life, allowing a flow of energy into the body of the world.

In Biosynthesis, the three tree roots correspond to what I have called the three lifestreams. I think everyone in Biosynthesis is familiar with this foundational concept from functional embryology: the three tubes of our somatic formation, building inner, outer, and in between tissues. The three associated affect- streams, the stream of feeling associated with being well nourished physically and emotionally, the stream of feeling associated with free and graceful movements, and the stream of affect associated with pleasurable contact to the skin and the sense organs. All three affect streams can of course be negatively loaded: this is what the somatic ground floor of neurosis is all about: the contractions, and stresses within and between the organ systems, as the integration among the three streams becomes split and dysfunctional.

The three streams are grounded in our morphology and physiology, expressed in our energetic metabolism: in the psychological realm they become the three great arenas of concern: what is happening in the emotional system, what is happening in our behaviour, posture and action patterns, and what is happening in how we sense and make sense of the world. We call this the ABC of Biosynthesis: affect, behaviour, cognition.

The roots of the tree suck up nourishment, which travels in conduits through the tree nourishing the whole organism at many vertical levels of being. Similarly, the three lifestreams are associated with resonant levels of information at all levels of our being: we can distinguish three forms of language: language describing events, what happened; language describing feelings; and language describing beliefs and attitudes. This is the life stream principle mapped onto language. In spiritual traditions we find a basic teaching of the tripartite nature of man. This has relationships to the trinity teachings within Christianity which go back to the Egyptian myth of Osiris, Horus and Isis. Osiris, the dying king, was symbolised in the body by the backbone, the axis of movement. His symbol was a tree. We remember that Jesus was crucified on a tree, but the same tree became a symbol for resurrection, as it had earlier done for Osiris. Isis, his partner, was symbolised by waves, and by wings, connected to breathing and the lungs. Horus their child was symbolised by an eye, the eye of clarity. When clarity was obscured, one spoke of the mask of Horus, the false face hiding the true self. In the Buddhist tradition we remember that Buddha received enlightenment under a tree. The Tibetans have brought us the concept of three conductors, channels of inspiration, which can be seen as the highest level of expression of the three life streams. They are compassion, the feeling for the other; compassionate action, good handling in relation to the other; and wisdom, insight into one self, others and the world.

## Life Fields: Levels of Expression

Out of the roots of the tree grows the trunk, the vertical stem, the main body of the tree.

The trunk rises out of the ground and stretches towards the light. In the human body we also speak of the trunk, and the base of the trunk is spoken of as the root centre of the body. The trunk in the body is held together by the spine, the axis of the motor system, and the channel for the motor nerves, the sensory nerves, and the associated vegetative system.

The spine has seven natural nodes where it curves and bends, and on these nodes are situated the centres of our subtle energy system, linked to the major glands of the body. The trunk of the spine is the main integrating axis of the body, stretching from pelvis to brain, passing through the nerve centres regulating digestion and sexuality, to those keeping the heart in balance, to the throat and language, the eyes and vision, the ears and hearing, and finally the brain itself, the most complex piece of matter in nature.

In Biosynthesis we speak of the levels of expression associated with the vertical segments of the spine as "life fields". Sexuality is a life field. Language is a life field.

The client who comes to us in therapy presents his problems in one or more of these life fields. The life fields give us different ways of accessing his problem: we can choose whether to work with the life field of movement (the so called motoric fields), or with the life field of belief systems, or with the complications of the transference. Therapeutic work seeks to move up and down between the life fields, helping the person to gain more integration with himself helping inner communication and transfer of information, as a basis for resolving problems, tensions, and knots of personal relationship. The life fields correspond to the points on what we call the hexagram of Biosynthesis, which is different routes of therapeutic access: for example working with dreams to reach the breathing; or working through emotional clearance, to free a deeper sense of spirituality.

### Life-lines: Networks of Connectedness

The tree does not stand alone: it is an organism in a forest of other organisms.

The tree puts out flowers and attracts insects. It sends out spores in the four directions of the winds. It can fertilise and be fertilised. Its leaves form part of the bed of the forest and form nourishment for other trees. The tree is part of an ecosystem.

The human being also does not stand alone. He has lifelines of relationship stretching before him in time back through parents and grandparents. Twenty generations of influence, and we are back in the middle of the middle ages. The number of people each lifeline, if each one stood for a generation, takes us back before the pyramids were built in Egypt, to the dawn of civilisation and culture. We have life lines stretching after us: our children, and grandchildren; not only the ones we generate physically, but the ones we generate professionally: the lineages of therapeutic movements, of cultural transmission.

Then we have the lifelines with our contemporaries, sexual relationships with partners, the whole immense process of forming a co-territory with another human being, the compromise between autonomy and dependency, separation and merging.

A former student and colleague of mine from England outlined a rich model of the therapeutic relationship with five key aspects, each of which has two polar distortions: I can't go into the model in detail, but will just outline the five kinds of relationship she describes, each of which is important in therapy, and also in normal human relationships.

First she describes the working alliance, the contractual frame in therapy. Contracts can be written, or verbal, but they are agreements within which responsibility is exercised. Broken agreements are wounds to the frame. The frame is a container for the other four kinds of relationship.

Secondly, there is our old friend the transference relationship. What is transferred is old attitudes, feelings, and expectations, from the past to the present: it is a form of conditioning which limits opportunities in the present. Transference work is work to make the conditioning conscious and help a person to move beyond it. But, not all relationship is transference. Thirdly, there is what my colleague calls the real relationship. This is the human equality of two people beyond their roles. There is room for real anger from therapist to client and vice versa, which does not have to be conditioned by childhood. There is room for real sense of loss when a client leaves after five years of therapy. We must be careful not to interpret every real feeling as a reductive effect of a childhood cause. Fourthly, there is the developmental relationship, which is a key factor in Biosynthesis, which works with developmental patterns of growth. This relationship helps the other to evolve new skills. It is future building, not past-searching. Finally, there is the spiritual level in a relationship, the meeting between two human beings as a unique encounter and opportunity, which has never occurred before in that way, and will never occur again in quite the same way. The mystery and magic of presence, the numinal awareness of a deeper ground that sustains a relationship that is able to contact it.

The tree has rings. Every year the trunk expands and lays down a new ring. The gigantic sequoia in California, wide enough to drive a car through, has 4000 rings. Each ring lays down a new layer of history. The lifetime of the tree is coded in its rings.

The human being, in this lifetime, incarnates into a fertilised cell, which doubles and doubles, around 32 times, until there are thousands and millions of cells. From prenatal life the human emerges through the birth canal into postnatal existence: everything that happened from birth until the present. But we have fantasies, dreams, longings, and plans for what is to come: we are building what Stanley Keleman calls the long body of time, evolving towards some future point, consciously or blindly driven: this is our premarital time: all that remains waiting for us in this life. Finally, there is the post mortal segment of experience, which we access in dreams, in archetypal visions, in so called past life memories, or reincarnation scripts: our images around death and what might lie beyond it.

History, and the history which will come, which we call the future, is mingled with images, colourings from the perceptions of others. Memory is a mixture of fact and fiction, experience means what we have lived through, it is a mixture of the objective and the subjective and the intersubjective. This is what I call lifescapes, the stories we tell ourselves about where we have come from and where we are going, our dreams, visions of the pasts, visions of the future, and the tapestry we are weaving of our lives, the pageant of our embodiments.

Working with memory, in the middle of the false memory debate, with its polarisation between fact and fiction, we are trying to tease out the meanings of experience, and to help a client to reframe those meanings so he becomes a conscious agent in his own drama, and not just a victim of other people, or a victim of blind forces that threw him into existence. Lifescapes means the shapes of a person's life story, including his dreams, his paintings, his poems, and his songs of triumph and despair. This is the region where poetry and therapy, music and therapy, drama and therapy, overlap and cross fertilise each other.

#### Life Forms: Structures of Integration

The tree has branches. Wilhelm Reich wrote: a crooked tree never grows straight.

Trees can be deformed, or well formed. They can be blasted or withered by harsh conditions, or they can be objects of beauty that take our breath away. The form of the tree is to do with how it is structured, the proportion of its branches, and the balance of its being.

In psychotherapy we have the concept of structure, and deficiencies of structure. When there is too little structure in a person we have a lack of coherence, a tendency to disintegrate. Structure is missing. The extreme form of this is a psychotic state, full of incoherence. Intense energies are moving, or congealed, but the person is unable to structure them, or to integrate the pains in his life. A borderline state is a state without boundaries.

A person without boundaries feels he has no skin: he is like a tree whose bark has been ripped off, overly vulnerable, easily becoming emotionally sick. Psychotherapy only deals with levels of structure up to the so called normal person, who has normal structure, what Reich called *homo normalis*. Is that all psychotherapy is, a technology to make us normal? Hopefully not, and we have terms like "individuation" which mean to become undivided. When Alexander Lowen wanted to find a metaphor for the splits in the human being, he took a tree stump split in half with an axe. Individuation is healing the splits, bridging the gaps in our integration, becoming more whole. The tree of man in the Kabala, with its upper and lower, right and left modalities, is a symbol of the wholeness of man. In Biosynthesis we work a great deal with the concept of polarities, the extremes of fixations at one pole or the other, and the pulsation between poles. Higher levels of structure exist than being normal, but they are not gross structures, made of mass, or ego concepts, they are fine structures in the subtle energy system.

Meditation is a way of fine tuning, and thus restructuring the energy field. So life forms relate to the different stages of coherence a person is going through in his life development, and is related to his personal and spiritual growth, not to his aging on the time axis.

When working with life forms we are concerned with helping a person to progress in his life, to evolve on his path, to become more sensitive to new possibilities and directions, and less satisfied with previous levels of adaptation or adjustment.

#### Life Grounds: Foundations of Support

The tree's roots are deeply embedded in the soil. They stretch as far underground as the branches spread above the ground. The tree is anchored in earth, and sucks up the moisture from the rain, drinking thousands of litres a day.

In Biosynthesis we are concerned with many forms of ground. The first of these is of course the physical ground, our stability on the earth, our sense to be rooted on the planet or not.

But, this physical grounding is only the first kind of grounding. There is sexual grounding with the body of the other. There is the home ground of nature, and associations with a particular place. There is the human ground of a family or a community.

There is the conceptual ground of a language system or a belief structure. There is the inner ground of faith in the meaning of one's life.

These various grounds, actual or remembered or imagined, are part of a person's resources. They are sources of strength to support him in crises, they are wellsprings of healing to nourish him in times of stress. In neurosis we remember the traumas and forget the lifegrounds.

The most important aspect of working with trauma is to reanimate the life grounds. A woman deprived of her father at the age of one remembers the earthy comfort and support of his hand in the first year of life. A woman doing a guided fantasy into the volcanic hole in the centre of her heart discovers at the bottom of the hole a bottle containing the message at the bottom of every black hole: there is milk and honey. A man has a dream in which his dead father expresses forgiveness for his punishments in childhood. A woman dying of cancer puts a bird's nest on her table. A person who suffered traumatic abuse remembers and rediscovers, a dog that can help her run to a safe place where she can for the first time feel secure.

The most touching example comes not from a therapy session, but from a newspaper cutting from the Second World War. A ten-year-old girl, imprisoned in Auschwitz, kept a diary, which was discovered after she had died during the Holocaust, in which she had written the following, "Every day I look through the barbed wire and I see a tree. This tree helps to remind me of the beauty and power of life."

### Life Rays: Qualities of Inspiration and Incarnation

The top of the tree is called the crown, as the top of the head of the human being is called the crown. The crown of the tree consists of leaves sucking in air, and bathing in light.

The photosynthesis of the tree provides the energy for the Biosynthesis of its body. In our form of Biosynthesis, we are dealing with our access to spirit, which means breath, and to light, which is a symbol for our qualities.

Modern psychotherapy tends to distrust and fear spirituality, as something esoteric and cultic. But, I have shown in a recent article that all forms of psychotherapy have from the beginning been inspired by spiritual sources, as well as by their psychodynamic or behavioural or body psychotherapeutic concepts. In Biosynthesis the spiritual nourishment of the human being is given a central place, in contrast to the spiritual homelessness which characterises all forms of existential despair.

In some forms of esoteric teaching the qualities are symbolised or understood as rays of light descending on us from a spiritual dimension of being. In an earlier article I referred to these as light streams, in contrast to the life streams at our roots.

Wilhelm Reich wrote that at the bottom of every neurosis, under every painful state and tortured condition, there lies a simple, decent, clear state of being human. He called it the core. We call it the essence. Christians call it the soul. Spirituality is in essence very simple: the Danish spiritual teacher Bob Moore calls it the feeling for what you are doing. It is the mystery behind the problem, the healing behind the wound, the true face behind the mask of Horus, the qualities which are needing to manifest if the life stresses are to be dealt with in clear ways.

In Buddhism, the quality dimension of being is symbolised by the open or clear sky. Clouds can obscure it, but it is always there. Sometimes we glimpse it, and forget it again.

Sometimes, like people who live in a city and have never seen the night sky, we have no sense of it, but it works invisibly over us. Sometimes, this clear sky becomes a resource we can contact daily: at such times we feel "enlightened." However, it is not a permanent state, but a reminder of the unclouded nature of our basic being. From this unclouded nature come out basic qualities: the capacity for love, for insight, for courage in the face of demons, for faith in spite of the tortures of war, for trust in the force of life.

The quality dimension of being, as understood in Biosynthesis, is transsomatic but embodied, transpersonal but personally incarnated, indestructible, yet capable of being forgotten, overlaid, and clouded. We can forget our qualities, but they do not forget us.

The tree is constantly gaining the benefit of the sun's rays from the clear sky, even when no sun is visible. From the depths of schizophrenia comes the image of the black sun, and the healing of schizophrenia involves transforming this image of the black sun into the sense of human warmth unfreezing the qualities of a person out of their state of hibernation.

A woman, with a schizophrenic background, noticed an apple, the fruit of a tree, on the table of her therapist. The therapist noticed the longing in her eyes, and offered her the apple to eat.

The woman at first declined, but the longing remained, and in the next session she bit into the apple. It is a moment she remembers when she became more real, grounding herself on the flesh of the world. It was the beginning of turning the corner in relation to transforming her problems.

## Conclusion

I have tried to give an outline of fundamental dimensions of Biosynthesis, using the tree metaphor. It is my vision of the work we are involved with. I have not spoken of methods, techniques, therapeutic principles: these come afterwards. The dimensions I have spoken of are not only therapeutic, but pre-therapeutic and transtherapeutic. They underlie the work in hundreds of fields of application.

We wish you a creative, productive and rewarding congress, both personally and professionally. Thank you for listening.

## Biography

**David Boadella** (born 1931), B.A., M.Ed., D.Sc.hon, Psychotherapist SPV, UKCP and ECP. Studied education, literature and psychology. Trained in character-analytic vegetotherapy. Founder of Biosynthesis. He has spent many years in psychotherapeutic practice. He holds lectures worldwide, and is the author of numerous books and articles. He has been publishing the journal "Energy & Character" since 1970. In 1995 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the "Open International University of Complementary Medicine". A selection of David Boadella's books: "Befreite Lebensenergie / Lifestreams" (Kösel / Routledge), "Wilhelm Reich: The evolution of his work" (Arkana).

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