



Bioenergy Economy: A Biosemiotic Model of Care

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Editorial

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Today's trend of medicine promises going beyond traditional limits of reductionist explanation and pathological approach. It may be the time to integrate the knowledge and practice of heterogeneous specialties in health field. Our major resources to actualize health in all its aspects are a systemic and evolutionary clinical approach, a common language, and a feasible model to integrate body-mind, self-other, human-nature, and treatment-life.

To gain this purpose, health discourse firstly needs to take steps to the back -aligning with evolutionary vector of life- and then to take steps to the fore -to the phenomenological worlds of human kind-. In this way, human life is not narrowed to continuity of individuals along time rather is its evolutionary inclination to self, others, family, community, and the whole life itself. To actualize evolutionary role of medicine, we need something more than an idealistic icon of health and a list of diseases. To establish an individualized evolutionary medicine, we should realize one's specific responses to stressors and illnesses and how we can help a human system to find a new way of coping and healing. To have medical knowledge sensitive to one's conditions,

it is insufficient to merely know one's structure, genome, and microbiome, rather there is a need to decode and find the way to one's lifeworld and epigenetic modulations. Studying one's nature, temperament, individual's belief network, metaphors, and determining lived experiences and one's expectancies from himself/life/treatment help us to understand and alter one's biopsychosocial responses.

Function of medicine is something more than fighting with death or compensating for one's disabilities. It may be to release one's unique evolutionary desire which is prisoned inside him in his mind. Such evolution can happen in anybody's unique integrated context of body, narrative, relation, and intention. Authentic coherent responses which are formed in here and now can drive one to sustainable development of salutogenesis and even, newly emerged traits and functions. Through this function, domain of medicine transcends limits of treatment and causes elimination to salutogenesis and consciousness evolution; and caring for the lifetime transforms to midwifery the life.

Some biologists may disapprove such an attitude and state that evolution happens in a species, not in an individual. If we regard evolution happens not only genetically but epigenetically, systematic changes in one's

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experience and behavior may lead to changes in brain's performance and genes expression. These epigenetic moderations lead to emergence of new traits in an individual and, possibly, in family and society. These facts can be considered as individual or even sometimes intentional representations of evolution. This is the forgotten pedagogic aspect of biomedicine that training and mindfulness can change body responses. These epigenetic changes, of course, may directly or indirectly have a role in one's spouse selection, in the process of genes expression and dominating of one allele to another. Such processes are indeed confusing for a mind trained to believe in body-mind duality.

Now the question is: Does a common language exist which can explain the effect of such physical and symbolic factors on each other and their transformation to each other? My response to this question is yes!

Biosemiotics is a growing field of biology, semiotics, and a common language that links third-person (experimental) and first-person (phenomenological) experiences. This model can interweave generalizable medical science and ungeneralizable lived experiences, and create a clinical live knowledge. From this perspective, life is a recurrent flexible pattern which traps energy, maintains and expands its own order, and finds a kind of sustainability different from thermodynamics; namely dynamic-kinetic sustainability.

Human organism is indeed a pattern or a complex meaning system which continuously needs to receive and distribute energy economically for reproduction of its organization. So, its various intertwined subsystems can maintain their functional loop. To ensure economy of complicated difficult process of swimming against cosmic stream of entropy, we have to reach the more accessible resources to and the more coherent resources with our body, release their energy to the most optimal degree and distribute it in the whole system in a manner not to interfere with functions of parts by more or less cathexis.

To form such an order, it is essential that the signs which flow basically in material forms or vibrational pulsations be received and interpreted correctly by their related receptors. Any error in interpretation leads to a deviation in meaning and -to say it more specifically- a dis-order in function. As an instance, an electromagnetic wave in an intensity-frequency window specialized for osteoid cells (~7Hz) has the function/meaning of an increase in the rate of cell division. Or a "self" cell may be interpreted as "foreigner" by an immune cell. This chaotic meaning is quickly transferred to other cells through inflammatory molecules, or messengers the first cell has released. What happens is that misinterpretation of a cell and sequential interpretation of other cells simply creates an inconsistent meaning subsystem (disease) in the whole body meaning system and consequently illness is developed. Formation of a headstrong order which is incoherent with life order imprisons energy and uses it in the direction of non-life; that is, against the direction of evolution vector.

Now suppose that an immunosuppressant drug is given to a patient suffering from an immunological disease. That is, molecules that their meaning in system is the decrease and slowing down of inflammatory responses are entered into the system. It is obvious that the intensity of tissue destruction decreases but we cannot enter this function exclusively in the same incoherent meaning system. Therefore, this meaning is transferred to the whole immune system.

The story becomes more interesting when you find out that placebo has had the same effect in many cases. The matter is that human's complex nervous system has the ability to conceptualize and save energy in the form of symbols, arbitrary signs, and stimuli which are associated with neural functions. Symbols like material forms and vibrational pulsations can be interpreted and create meaning/function by the organism. In the case of placebo, the difference is that it is decoded and interpreted in brain not in cells. Due to

interactive context, attachment pattern, prior learning, healing expectancy, and drug as healing symbol, placebo creates a specific functional pattern in brain. By sequential recurrent translation of this meaning to electrical pulsations and molecular forms, it reaches the immune cells and organs and changes their functions.

In the moment of evolution, language has much extended and formed our body that it is impossible to unknit nodes of symbols from warps and woofs of matter and energy. It cannot be said sharply whether a certain change in function occurs because of a certain physical or chemical factor or that the interpretation of these factors in brain has caused a change in our illness.

In human condition, in which self-reflection has emerged, sometimes merely being aware of ourselves and the way of our being breaks the determined and conditioned energy-information chain and opens up a functional loop to the whole system organization. In these moments, healing response takes place. Therefore, upward-down organization makes incoherent subsystems coherent.

In the book "Biosemiotic Medicine: Healing in the World of Meaning", my expert colleagues and I explained in details the importance of this model for today's medicine. Therefore, here I narrow down the discussion and refer you to that book for further study.

Now we can say that body is a material-energetic-symbolic-reflective self-organizing meaning system. Matter is replaceable. Both matter and energy have dual role, mechanical and semantic. Energy has a structural role in this system and is used to overcome entropy. Furthermore, the intensity-frequency signs are interpreted in the system and create specific meaning/functions. Symbols are conditioned energy-information pathways but reflections work like some pauses or suspensions in this conditioned systems and make some new spatiotemporal self-organizing systems. To form a healing response, we can enter from each one of these gates: material, energetic, symbolic, and/or self-reflective.

In any case, meaning could be decoded and translated to other forms. A chemical, physical, cognitive, behavioral, or mindful intervention can change the whole organism response to a stress or illness.

Let me tell a short clinical case story to make the discussion more tangible. Sorraya, a 32-year-old woman suffering from pemphigus for five years, was referred to me for her depression and anxiety. Due to disease symptoms and high doses of corticosteroid and immunosuppressant drugs and their side effects like obesity, she had no participation in family and social interactions and was more or less bed rested for 3 years. Despite of intensive medication, she had been still developing blisters and ulcers in her vagina, mouth, and on her skin. She had three daughters of 9, 14, and 16 years old and her husband was a shepherd. Her dermatologist, having gone through the same process that almost every other physicians does in the same situation, followed her clinical and laboratory symptoms to diagnose her disease. Afterwards the treatment strategy was obvious, inhibiting autoimmune inflammatory processes.

Like any other skilled physician, her therapist knew psychological factors might be responsible for formation and aggravation of autoimmune diseases and decreases patient's life quality to a great extent. But as an unwritten tradition, only when physicians become desperate of treating patients suffering from chronic and incurable diseases refer them for psychosomatic care to be soothed or to receive some kind of priestly relief there. Due to biomedical presupposition, signs are followed to diagnose a disease in order to go beyond symptoms therapy. In the same way, to realize illness pattern, diagnosing disease is insufficient.

In an integrative practice, disease-oriented approach is comparable to symptom therapy for biomedical physician. Disease is an adaptive incoherent process in a complex biopsychosocial context. This context allows formation and reproduction of the disorder and determines the extent of patient's psychoneuroimmunological

response to disease and treatment and illness behavior. The physical, symbolic, and reflective resources that one potentially or actually has and his/her resilience and salutogenesis in response to the stressful conditions are in this healing context. Do not these functions act out of the body? Do not they change process of the disease? Are not they medical issues?

Anyway, I investigated her healing context and from the very onset, I found out that although the woman of our story was from a distant village and completely illiterate, she was very clever and had strong imagination and deep affections. She was the first daughter and the third offspring of a poor village family with 11 kids. Due to her life condition that she was to take care of her younger sister and brother, she could not to go to school. She married when she was 13 and gave birth to her first child in 15. The time I visited her, she talked a lot about her childhood, watching stars, her family's garden, and her willingness to learn as she was a little girl. She talked about her many attempts to provide a condition in which her children become educated. Although she was regretful of her early marriage; but knew having a very kind and diligent husband, as the most important chance of her life.

Her lost childhood, suppressed creativity, and tiredness due to years of hard work on the one hand and her high energy and creative mind on the other hand had caused severe conflicts for her in years. When she could calm down and integrate her body in the process of mind-body coordination, she lifted up and began to do some light activities in home. She found her lost fantasy world in self-hypnosis exercises, she remembered bodily memory of health, found that she can always have this inner secret place which gave her the sense of freedom and safety. Having practiced guided visualization technique and the imaginary bathe in healing spring, her bodily responses changed. All the blisters disappeared. She lost weight and as her husband said, "Finally her sleeping mattress from the middle of the home was folded after three years". When she

found beautiful meanings for tragic difficulties of her life, she felt sense of coherence in herself. She loved the metaphor of being a "little angel" had come to the earth to take care of children. She was still full of maternal energy. She only needed to include herself in her own circle of care.

She found a more intimate dynamic relationship with her husband and children because she could find no contradiction between caring of herself and that of themselves and she knew saying no to them is not against loving them. After four months from the treatment onset, she used no medication, much of her overweight was lost (35 kg), and she returned to her normal life.

I should apologize for such a fable-like happy end of the story; but at least in this case and in this life span of hers –of course in three years after the treatment, I had news from her–, she had no disease relapse and she was very content of her life than before.

Information, rapport, altered states of consciousness, and metaphors were medications which rendered a more specific and more sustainable change in meaning, caused absorption of Sorraya's wandering self-destructive bioenergy to be employed for reaching her goals and guiding her body orientation toward life.

My approach in her treatment was based on bioenergy economy. That is, how to make one's body, narrative, relation, and intention coherent. First of all, energy expenditure in her body became more economic. Then, she got rid of the force of repetition and self-destruction. Afterwards, she could find tangible images of health which formed in her somatic memory. She learnt how to align interests of hers with those of others. Her sense of loneliness and rejection transformed to a union deeper than ever with the whole, universe, and the god. Before logotherapy, she was angry from god since like a cruel father had sold him to slavery; but simultaneously, she could not have any hatred to him. All of these changes embedded in the context of the link between treatment and life.

It is worth noting that, although one's clinical state and performance are not so interfered, sometimes it is more intricate problem-organizing systems have been formed which need more time and energy consumption for salutogenesis to open up these system's loops unto the whole body in order to prevent further disease.

Bioenergy economy (BEE) is an integrative, evolutionary, body-centered approach to care. Releasing blockages, reprocessing energy-information flows, resonating biofield and opening the whole body to being are the main strategies of this metadiagnostic approach. The main goal of the BEE is sustainable development of happiness. This care system tries to integrate matter-energy-information-consciousness process through four levels; body economy, narrative economy, relation economy, and intention economy. BEE works on the embodied aspect of experience among intrapersonal (physical, and energetic), intercorporeal, and transpersonal bodies. For this purpose, bodywork, energy work, mindful and psychodynamic techniques are employed in an integrative manner. Body economy, the first level, focuses on mindful recathexis of physical body and harmonization of tones of tactile, proprioceptive, vestibular, and visceral perceptions. Body economy leads to development of grounding and "tensegrity" state. Development of body awareness promotes self-awareness and security. The sense of tensegrity is not only our state of mechanistic tuning but a reference point which can be returned to when any chaos occurs in thinking and emotions. By re-establishing tensegrity and whole-body experience, without dealing with mind content, we can regulate our emotions. Having the body tuned, when we come back to the same thoughts and feelings, we often find out there exists no such problem to be solved, the problem changes, or becomes clearer with sharp confines and illustrations.

The second level is narrative economy. Through deepening our understanding of physical body, we can percept subtler body

sensations; energetic body. Our touchstone of being in this level is being in our "fluent-centered state"; that is, the feeling of being fluent while concentrated in the center of gravity of the body. In the last few decades, instruments to measure electromagnetic fields and streams in body have been developed and diagnostic and therapeutic methods based on them are employed to a great extent. Electromagnetic streams not only spread all over the body through veins and nerves, but also through the more extensive connective tissue system called the living matrix. Physical and emotional traumas and chronic stressors can cause blockages in this network leading to biological and psychological dysfunctions.

Today, talking about bioenergy is less metaphorical than when Freud and Jung talked about psychodynamics in terms of the concept of energy. Energy-information flow in body is explainable and measurable both empirically and phenomenologically. From this perspective, affects are patterns of energy distribution in body and a kind of intentional preparation for one's behavior. These patterns are named, interpreted, and valued by symbolic mind. Symbolic locus of awareness is in our head as if we experienced, narrated, and intervened in the world and, to say it briefly, ride the chariot of our body from there. In our heads, we seldom notice first-order bodily experiences and changes in state and traits of bioenergy distribution in body. Our attention is focused on objects, mainly on objects of desire and objects of fear. Therefore, consciousness usually floats in cognitions and metacognitions and symbolic brain is busy with mostly inefficient interpretations and associations while matter-energy-information-consciousness streams through the whole body and is altered in the horoscope of present moment.

Body awareness opens up the body field (phenomenal field) to the now and here. Focusing awareness in the center of the body increases the sense of balance and self-control. On the other hand, biofield attunement and hands-on exercises not only lead to higher bioenergy resonance, but more homogeneous distribution. Free flow of

bioenergy in body and optimal cathexis equal to cognitive and behavioral flexibility and bioenergy centering equals to cognitive and behavioral autonomy. Whole-body attunement and bioenergy centering in embodied mind are equivalents of coherence in narrative and sense of self in symbolic mind. To deconstruct efficiently our more incoherent narratives of life, we need to change our body tune, to release energy blockages and rigidities, and of course to distance “self” from its problems. This is more accessible through doing bioenergetic exercises and distancing consciousness from mind content.

The relation economy, the third level, is based on integrating interpersonal cathexis. From energy economy perspective, relationship is symbolic and/or spatiotemporal extensions of the body and interaction of our phenomenal field with other fields. Through sharing its resources and boundaries, our biofield can reach higher dynamic-kinetic sustainability. Relationship is not mere interaction but is participation in more complex systems. For more sustainable connection between self and other, we have to go beyond imaginary and rigid limits of mental self and understand self not as an object with a name but as a reflective communicative action in space-time.

In this level, consciousness transcends familiar boundaries of the skin to the communicative proxemics of ours and our body becomes a mindful biofield. Whether we are aware of current communicative bodies or not, our body parts participate in larger intercorporeal systems; although we conceptualize all those complex multidimensional experiences simply in the frame of egoistic narratives.

The fourth level, intention economy, is related to nonlocal body and transpersonal experiences. Consciousness emerged from matter but it is non-local in nature. Although consciousness can simply be identified with anywhere and anything, it cannot be known where in place it really is located.

The organism which is aware of its own existence or, in Heidegger’s words, Dasein, cares

for being and makes “beings” express “the being”. Body extends not only in domains of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, but into the domain of transpersonal relationships. Transpersonal realm includes relationship of body with the whole. Conscious body simultaneously is in relation with self, other, and the whole although in any time inclines to concentrate on one of these dimensions. Transpersonal experience is to derive security of boundarylessness and, in Ungaretti words, *m’illumino d’immenso*. This is not a regressive metamorphosis which wipes out individuality; but is the experience of *unos-ambo* or dual unity. It is the individuality which is rooted in the existence, not out of it. The individuality beyond the origin of paranoiac ego is not a mental experience, but body awareness.

As we have seen, fostering a secure attachment and integrating the streams of material, energetic, symbolic, and reflective signs can be actualized by developing tensegrity in physical body, fluent-centeredness in energetic body, being in-field in communicative body, and non-locality in transpersonal body. As mentioned before, this coherence development in all aspects of body mostly happens through application of known body-centered, bioenergetic, mindful, behavioral, cognitive, psychodynamic, and systemic methods in bioenergy economy.

Many facts and reasons indicate thoughts and emotions are not authentic phenomena to a great extent, but rather are epiphenomena. It is the main reason that in BEE, we try to establish more direct relationship between consciousness and body states towards sustainable/evolutionary cathexis. To effectively open up the loop of problem-organizing systems, the most effective way is to enter from all the paths of body. To prompt healing response, we need to employ all physical signs (e.g. food, medication, bodywork, and surgery), energetic (e.g. bioenergy, alteration of and movement in electromagnetic environment), symbolic (e.g. social behaviors, beliefs, schemata, images, and metaphors) and reflective signs (e.g. mindful exercises); so that

there would be less chance for an incoherent subsystem to rearrange itself.

Development of symbolic world and consciousness caused beliefs and proactive responses, as well as embodied self-organizing mind or -as humanistic psychologists say- organismic sense effect on economic function of body.

In the process of evolution, having belief and being proactive are newly emerged qualities; so that their being in harmony with ancient wisdom of organismic sense faced with many challenges. Prophets, philosophers, scientists, and therapists all tried to find out how to arrange language and self-reflection and how to organize behaviors; so that they become aligned with human nature from the one hand and were able to develop the ability to satisfy the desire on the other. This is the way to expand happiness in space and time.

Happiness is a spectrum of emotional states from tranquil contentment to vibrant joy, from transient pleasure to bliss which is the state of being self-containedness. Anyway, happiness is meant feelings of well-being and comfort in the whole body, either transient or persistent.

Happiness includes state of harmonious flow of bioenergy in the whole body and the balance between will, desire, and resources. Obviously human kind always attempted to extend this state in mind-time-space to reconstruct a sustainable happiness.

Impulsive and unrestrained behaviors or compulsive and ascetic behaviors are various approaches to happiness. All the people, either those who believe or do not believe in authenticity of happiness or those who do not believe in happiness in this world and think it

belongs to the other world, are in pursuit of happiness -more immediate (impulsive stage), cumulative (conditioned stage), sustainable (proactive stage), or global (agapistic stage) joy-.

The more we rely on economic patterns which are in more harmony with life, the more we reach higher health or -to say- more development of happiness in all inter/intra/transpersonal fields of communication. More coherent biopsychosocial meaning systems lead to more evolutionary and more harmonious matter-energy-information-reflection.

Bioenergy economy as a contextual body-centered approach tries to make our happiness, salutogenesis, and evolution more unconditional and self-organizing through mindful telenomic cathexis.

Emerging discipline of biosemiotics is able to cast a new light on the meaning and life and properly translate the mind-matter and treatment-life interactions. This evolutionary semiotic development shifts the focus of medicine from treatment to salutogenesis and healing. From this viewpoint, healing procedures are indeed integrated reorganizing responses. BEE program is a care model which can bring about such upward-down processing leading to that "the whole heals the whole".

In this issue, in addition to an interview with professor Peter Whorewell and other worthy articles on different psychosomatic subjects, a clinical trial -"The effect of a bioenergy economy program on pain control, depression, and anxiety in patients with migraine headaches"- and a case study in editorial -titled "Bioenergy economy: A biosemiotic model of care" as instances of clinical effectiveness of BEE approach - are presented.