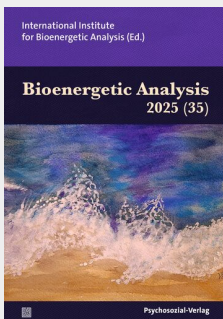


*Josette van Luytelaar, Homayoun Shahri*

Book Review of: C. Holle & J. Tasche  
(Eds.). (2024). *Psychodynamische  
Grundlagen der Bioenergetischen  
Analyse*



**Bioenergetic Analysis**

35. Volume, No. 1, 2025, Page 202–206

Psychosozial-Verlag

DOI: [10.30820/0743-4804-2025-35-202](https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2025-35-202)



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Submissions for consideration for the next volume of *Bioenergetic Analysis* must be sent to Rosaria Filoni (mariarosaria.filoni@fastwebnet.it) between June 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

Bibliographic information of Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (The German Library)  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

2025 Psychosozial-Verlag GmbH & Co. KG

Gesetzlich vertreten durch die persönlich haftende Wirth GmbH,

Geschäftsführer: Johann Wirth

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Cover image: © Vincenia Schroeter

Cover design & layout based on drafts by Hanspeter Ludwig, Wetzlar

Typesetting: metiTec-Software, [www.me-ti.de](http://www.me-ti.de)

Printing and Binding: Majuskel Medienproduktion GmbH

Elsa-Brandström-Str. 18, 35578 Wetzlar, Germany

Printed in Germany

<https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2025-35>

ISBN (Print) 978-3-8379-8510-8

ISSN (Online) 2747-8882 · ISSN (Print) 0743-4804

Robert Lewis, that brilliant man, will undoubtedly leave an essential mark on the IIBA and beyond in the world of bioenergetic analysis. “Cephalic Shock”, his fundamental contribution, is already part of the training content taught to bioenergetic trainees. It is now up to us to keep his work alive and to promote this book in the various regions of the world where bioenergetic analysis is developing today.

Guy Tonella PhD  
November 2024

**C. Holle & J. Tasche (Eds.). (2024). *Psychodynamische Grundlagen der Bioenergetischen Analyse*. Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 536 pages, Softcover, ISBN 978-3-8379-3318-5**

Bioenergetic Analysis • The Clinical Journal of the IIBA, 2025 (35), 202–206

<https://doi.org/10.30820/0743-4804-2025-35-202>

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*Psychodynamische Grundlagen der Bioenergetischen Analyse* [*Psychodynamic Foundations of Bioenergetic Analysis*] is a valuable resource, written by thirteen practitioners, that offers an almost comprehensive guide for both students and professionals. Drawing on a wealth of expertise, the book is deeply rooted in Austria – the birthplace of Freud, Reich, their followers, and other pioneers of psychodynamic psychotherapy. It embodies a rich legacy, interweaving psychoanalysis, psychodynamics, philosophy, bioenergetics, and even literature and theology, particularly from the German-speaking world. This multifaceted approach underscores its value as a good reference in our field.

The book is organized as follows:

*Part 1: Paths into Psychodynamic Bioenergetics* – This section explores Bioenergetic Analysis (BA), a therapeutic approach that merges body and mind within a psychodynamic framework. BA views mental and physical suffering as intertwined, emphasizing body-focused interventions alongside reflective processes. Unlike Psychoanalysis, which engages the body indirectly, BA combines experiential and analytical techniques to foster affect regulation, self-awareness, and emotional stability.

The connection between neurobiological foundations and psychoanalytic theory is explored, highlighting how neuropsychanalysis revitalizes the mind-body connection scientifically. The therapeutic applications of body-focused interventions within psychodynamic and bioenergetic contexts are examined, with a new framework for classical concepts like grounding and catharsis, especially in relation to trauma and conflict patterns.

Further discussion emphasizes bioenergetic methods for mature clients, advocating for personal responsibility in therapy. Drawing on a character model, the therapeutic journey is likened to a medieval quest, with an emphasis on the role of serendipity in personal growth and awareness. Group dynamics in bioenergetic therapy are also explored, with a model where energetic resonance and interpersonal dynamics like power and intimacy facilitate both individual and collective growth. These contributions deepen the understanding of bioenergetic methods for therapy with individuals and groups alike.

*Part 2: Core Elements of Psychodynamic Bioenergetics* – This section integrates developmental psychology, psychopathology, and treatment theory into Bioenergetic Analysis (BA), aiming to address gaps in available resources for practitioners. It explores both historical and contemporary intersections of psychodynamic, structural, interpersonal, and humanistic theories essential for a fuller understanding of BA.

The discussion begins with an exploration of psychodynamic understanding in BA, advocating for a balanced yet adaptable approach that bridges psychodynamic theory and bioenergetic practice. The evolution of character structure concepts is examined, illustrating their relevance when integrated with psychodynamic perspectives, which enhance BA's theoretical foundations.

Attachment theory is connected to bioenergetic character typology, highlighting its applicability in both therapeutic and organizational contexts. Relational psychoanalysis is explored, with a focus on the intersubjective understanding necessary for effective therapeutic practice. Finally, the intersection of psychodynamic and humanistic psychology within BA is reflected upon, situating BA in the broader context of cultural and therapeutic movements, emphasizing personal growth and experiential practices. This section offers a multidimensional framework that bridges theory and practice in BA.

*Part 3: Selected Application Areas of Psychodynamic Bioenergetics* – This section examines the adaptability of BA in addressing a range of psychological disorders, settings, and cultural contexts. It underscores the need for tailored methodologies to treat conditions such as depression, PTSD, and psychosomatic disorders, while also considering cultural and institutional factors. This

complexity highlights the relevance of BA but also calls for interdisciplinary collaboration.

A comparative framework is provided, integrating bioenergetic, psychiatric, and psychodynamic diagnostics to facilitate effective interdisciplinary communication. Body-focused approaches are explored for complex PTSD clients, with an emphasis on empathy and the resilience of these individuals.

Psychodynamic-bioenergetic therapy is advocated for use with children and adolescents in clinical settings, addressing their unique psychological needs. Transcultural challenges are discussed, drawing on experiences in non-Western contexts, where integrating sociocultural dynamics with theoretical and experiential teachings becomes paramount. Collectively, these essays highlight BA's evolution into a cross-cultural, inclusive practice, expanding its application to diverse global contexts.

*Part 4: Bioenergetic-Psychodynamic Work in the Postmodern Era* – This section examines the intersection of BA, Psychoanalysis, and the postmodern world, where cultural, philosophical, and technological changes present new challenges to traditional therapeutic frameworks. The pluralistic, context-dependent views of postmodern society have reshaped societal norms, creating opportunities for growth but also introducing new psychological challenges, particularly among younger generations.

The evolution of self-actualization from enlightenment ideals to modern concepts of authenticity and corporeality is explored, with a focus on the challenges these ideas pose for BA. The transformative effects of digitalization on relationships, experiences, and therapeutic practices are discussed, urging BA to adapt to the “fourth technical revolution” in therapy.

Gender identity is examined through a body-therapeutic lens, offering insights into the formation of gendered and sexual identities. Contemporary mental health issues are contrasted with mid-20th-century disorders, proposing psychodynamic-bioenergetic strategies to address new forms of suffering. Finally, the connection between BA and spirituality is explored, offering contemplative exercises that reconnect readers with the foundational vision of grounded spirituality, emphasizing love and joy in an accelerating world. These essays situate BA within the complex realities of the postmodern era, offering a comprehensive view of its evolving role in therapy.

A central theme of the book is the integration of psychodynamics as a reference framework for modernizing bioenergetic analysis. By presenting this approach to a wider audience, the authors aim to spark a dialogue on the contemporary relevance of bioenergetics.

The authors critique bioenergetic analysis for remaining rooted in Lowen's character model, which emerged over 70 years ago, and argue that it has not sufficiently adapted to the social and cultural changes of the modern world. While this critique may seem overly harsh, it is important to note that many bioenergetic therapists and researchers have indeed embraced advances in related fields. These include attachment theory, intersubjectivity, object-relations theory, neuroscience, polyvagal theory, gender theory and spirituality, which are increasingly integrated into bioenergetic practice.

The book seeks to bridge the humanistic foundations of bioenergetics with an intersubjective understanding of therapy. It highlights how bioenergetic practice can align with the principles of relational psychoanalysis to remain relevant in today's therapeutic landscape.

One of the book's key contributions is its expansion of bioenergetics to include a psychodynamic and psychopathological perspective. This shift provides a more comprehensive understanding of the spectrum of psychological disorders observed today. The book uses work with children and adolescents, clients with complex PTSD and with gender issues as illustrative examples. While these approaches are already quite common in bioenergetics, the book underscores their significance in a modern therapeutic context.

The authors also bring innovations in teaching tools, such as the use of ChatGPT to create fictitious prefaces by Freud, Reich, and Lowen. While this experiment is presented as a playful addition and lacks the depth of authentic writings, it hints at the evolving nature of educational methods. Additionally, QR codes embedded after chapters, linking to interactive multiple-choice and open-ended questions, provide practical engagement for diligent students.

Overall, this book aspires to revitalize bioenergetics by linking its rich humanistic roots with contemporary psychodynamic insights and modern pedagogical tools, paving the way for an evolved and inclusive therapeutic approach.

The final section of the book delves into the evolution of bioenergetics in the context of postmodernism and post-postmodernism, drawing on frameworks such as performatism, based on the work of Raoul Eshelman, and digimodernism, as articulated by Alan Kirby. Whether we embrace these perspectives or not, the reality is that we live in an era shaped by postmodern and post-postmodern multimedia influences, and our theoretical frameworks and therapeutic approaches must adapt accordingly.

While the book does not offer an exhaustive exploration of this complex subject, it successfully initiates a critical discussion. It raises essential questions about how bioenergetics can and should evolve to remain relevant in the rapidly

changing cultural and societal landscapes of our time. The authors highlight the urgency of aligning bioenergetic practices with the paradigms of the current era, paving the way for further exploration and dialogue in this vital area of study.

*Josette van Luytelaar & Hodayoun Shabri*