

Identity in Times of Continuous Change

Construction, Deconstruction and Reconstruction of the Organismicity

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I am a Bulgarian, and from that perspective of my identity, I will speak today about our national identity. And I am a NeoReichian Analytical Body Psychotherapist, and from that perspective of my identity, I will also talk about individual identity through the lens of our modality.

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We Bulgarians are one of the oldest nations on our continent, and our entire history is a string of events that have made us live and develop in a context of constant change. And despite the crises and challenges we have gone through as a people, we have managed to preserve our identity as Bulgarians with own language and writing, rituals and customs preserved and alive today, a distinctive traditional culture and spirituality, a broad knowledge of the world and a belief in the unseen.

Identity is not only a psychological phenomenon but also a complex bodily experience – sensations, emotions, images, and behaviours united in meaning and significance. That is why, throughout this presentation, you are kindly invited to touch on the Bulgarian identity as a bodily experience. Let's start with this...

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What does it mean to be a Bulgarian, what constitutes our identity?

Originating from the harsh lands of central Asia almost 14 centuries ago, our ancestors with a heterogeneous ethnogenesis travelled a long and rough road to the

Balkan Peninsula, where they merged with the also quite heterogeneous tribal groups living there. This diversity of origins, experiences, lifestyles and traditions became the fabric on which our identity was constructed.

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Moreover, we settled in territories where we encountered all the natural abundance. We have four seasons, practically all kinds of geographical forms and natural resources, and rich fauna and flora.

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We are **colourful** – in appearance, behaviour, language, interests, rituals, food, emotional expressiveness, beliefs and values.

We love the land and are deeply connected to it. But we also love movement and the freedom it brings – after all, our ancestors were an equestrian people.

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In our historical development, great highs and terrible and profound lows have alternated, becoming sources of both shared group pride and shared group trauma – markers of our national identity. And these dynamics are also seen in our attitudes toward ourselves and others. We are proud of our greatness, but we also underestimate ourselves, showing a tendency to abase ourselves to others when we consider them as bigger, stronger, or greater than us and when we idealise their role and contribution to our condition.

The content of our shared group pride and trauma are so powerful that they are embedded in the cellular memory of each of us.

We draw our **shared group pride** from several significant historical periods and events:

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- The First Bulgarian Empire – significant territory, successful military-political alliances, significant military victories, and building of a comprehensive administrative-territorial system. What more occurred during that period:

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- The adoption of Orthodox Christianity and the establishment of an independent Bulgarian Church, thus consolidating the international authority of the state and strengthening it internally and externally as a compelling factor in Europe. The conversion of the population united the disparate tribal groups into one nation with a common religion and faith;

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- The introduction of the Glagolitic alphabet created by the brothers Cyril and Methodius as the official alphabet and the establishment of the first Bulgarian literary school thanks to the efforts of their disciples Naum and Clement of Ohrid;

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- During Tsar Simeon's reign, Bulgaria spread over territory between the Aegean, the Adriatic and the Black Sea, which was the greatest territorial expansion of Bulgaria ever, making it the most powerful state in Eastern and Southeast Europe at the time;

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- The Golden Age of Bulgarian culture, when literary activity flourished with its extraordinary wealth of ideas, genre diversity and stylistic sophistication. Thanks to the work of the disciples of Cyril and Methodius, the graphic system was reformed, gradually replacing the Glagolitic alphabet with the more practical Cyrillic alphabet. Bulgaria overtook many European countries in the education of its own spoken language and became a distributor of rich and varied literature among other Orthodox nations.

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- Then – the beginning of the Second Bulgarian Empire – new territorial expansion, economic and cultural development and the reestablishment of the Bulgarian Patriarchate;

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- And then we succeeded in preserving literary heritage, church organization, faith and religious communities after the conquest of Bulgaria by the Ottoman Empire:
 - Bulgarian scholars of the time succeeded in spite of the persecutions to preserve the written memory of the Bulgarians and the tradition of the Tarnovo Literary School by taking the rescued manuscripts and entire monastic libraries to Mount Athos, Serbia, Wallachia, Moldova and Ukraine;
 - Bulgarian peasants and their spiritual leaders pay a lot of money every year to preserve the monasteries and churches, the worship and the Christian faith in the Bulgarian lands, despite their poverty;
 - The monasteries, though repeatedly plundered, destroyed and burned, were rebuilt by the Bulgarian volunteers and donations – thus preserving the faith among the population and the enlightenment, albeit among a few.

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- While we were still under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, we had our Early National Awakening:
 - The number of scholars and copyists increased, and the role of monasteries grew. There was an upsurge in arts and crafts. The printed book appeared.

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- And the monk Paisii Hilendarski wrote probably the most important for the Bulgarian identity book: “Istoriya slavyanoblgarska” (Slav-Bulgarian History). It had a decisive role in the spiritual emancipation of the Bulgarians, lighting the spark of Bulgarian self-confidence, inspiring faith and awakening hope for freedom. Written in the spoken language, this work established itself as the basis of the New Bulgarian literacy and helped tremendously to restore the historical memory of the Bulgarians. Paisii described the heroic past of Bulgaria. He often used the words “reason”, “knowledge”, “truth”, “wisdom”, and “learning,” explaining the rise and success of the medieval Bulgarian state with them. He noted that the downfalls came when “unreasonable”, “presumptuous,” and

“unprincipled” rulers governed the state. Back then and now, Paisii awakens those layers in Bulgarians’ minds that remind us of our uniqueness, of our belonging to a linguistic and tribal community with its history, culture, and place among the peoples of the world.

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- Then we had our Later National Awakening marked by:
 - prosperity in the development of crafts and trade thanks to initiative, hard work and quality craftsmanship – the bourgeoisie was formed, which accumulated capital, real estate and influence, including in municipal leadership, school and church boards;

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- strengthening of the national consciousness of the Bulgarians due to the development of enlightenment and spiritual awakening, allowing the intelligentsia to occupy a tangible place in public life;
- restoration of the independent Bulgarian Church;

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- active involvement of all social groups in the liberation movement against Ottoman rule. Significant and decisive was the work of the Apostle of Bulgarian freedom, Vassil Levsky, and the internal revolutionary network organized by him. He chose the unequal battle with the imperial power and the disbelief and fear of the enslaved, chose not to have a home and family, and chose the gallows for the sake of something greater than himself – the good of the nation and fatherland. His every act allowed us to regain the right to be free and dignified Bulgarians in a “pure and upright republic” equal to other European nations. In his tours around the country, Levsky unerringly and consistently inspired and united the Bulgarians, awakening faith, strength, courage and relentlessness in the face of injustice. His determination was infectious to all those around him, and he inspired people with his ability to stand up after any difficulty, his indomitability, but above all – with his deep faith in Bulgarians, God, the right to be free, and life. I get excited

whenever I talk about him. I am blessed to have his blood flowing in my veins as his great-great-niece on his sister's side;

- Then happened the April Uprising;

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- And the Battle of Shipka Pass and the Liberation from Ottoman rule;

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- Followed by the unification of part of the Bulgarian territories divided by the Great Powers after the Liberation and the restoration of the independence of the Bulgarian sovereign state.

We succeed and are on the rise, strong and prosperous, when we are united, well-educated, inspired and inquisitive, tolerant of difference but nurturing and preserving our identity and uniqueness.

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And we find the roots of **shared group trauma** in the following:

- The conquest of the First Bulgarian Empire by the Byzantine Empire that lasted two centuries;
- The conquest of the Second Bulgarian Empire by the Ottoman Empire that lasted five centuries, marked by the Bulgarians' lawless position, low social status, frequent arbitrary actions (robberies, rapes, murders), heavy monetary and subsistence taxes and obligations, including a blood tax (periodic collection of healthy, intelligent, skilful and handsome Christian boys between the ages of 7 and 10-12, who were circumcised and Islamised, trained and used in the Ottoman army and other state services);

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- Another downfall was the fragmentation and falling under various interests and influences of Post Liberation Bulgaria and the involvement in the Balkan Wars, World Wars I and II;

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- The totalitarian communist regime in the second half of the twentieth century, marked by waves of violence against opponents, public figures and intellectuals, initially chaotic, then institutionalized through the People's Court and labour camps. Morality was gradually destroyed, mainly through deliberate actions against the church – there can only be one “god,” and that is the Party. The overt and covert atheization of the people aimed to diminish God, thus removing sin. The political regime could exterminate, impinge on people's property and businesses, destroy economic initiative, and take all measures to subjugate man without it being a sin. Next comes the change of surnames to destroy the memory of the old Bulgarian families. Later, the names of the Bulgarian Turks, Pomaks, Romani and other ethnic groups were forcibly changed. Many values were replaced in those years, among them tolerance for other people and the different;
- And then, the transition to democracy that has not occurred in its fullness and integrity for more than 30 years now.

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When we are in a downfall, we manifest at least three of the following symptoms: low levels of social trust and high levels of social anxiety, rejection of the institutionalised order, denial to recognize any benefit or achievement, disunion among people, and others.

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Despite the severity of these periods, we survived as a people, which developed in us Bulgarians a special resilience. And it seems to feed from several sources. Before our conversion to Christianity, we viewed the world as full of demons that constantly needed to be appeased. And we have propitiated them through rituals and sacrifices, many of them still alive today:

- Nestinari – barefoot men and women who perform fire-walking rituals with ecstatic dance;
- Kukeri – elaborately costumed and masked men who perform traditional rituals intended to scare away evil spirits;

- Wearing Martenitsi to welcome spring, the new life and nature cycle, and others.

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By embracing Orthodox Christianity, we continue to see and read the world through the prism of suffering – deprivation and bodily suffering are a path to spiritual exaltation, following the example of Jesus Christ, who suffered man's sins on the cross. To this day, we have a particular attitude toward suffering – for example, we kind of boast when we complain, as if we seek meaning and purpose in it to find strength and resources to survive and cope, especially in times of severe challenge. It is significant in this regard, for example, that we mark with more solemnity and emphasis the death of our national heroes rather than their birth.

We are heterogeneous in ethnogenesis and have lived long periods in multinational empires, which makes us extremely tolerant. Our history lacks serious clashes over differences, whether ethnic, religious or otherwise. We are famous for saving our Jews in the Second World War, for example. Even today, two hundred metres apart in the centre of our capital city, there are temples of the Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish and Armenian churches. But even though we have lived close to and interacted and traded with each other, we have been very encapsulated – in our neighbourhoods and communities. On the one hand, this insulation delayed our historical development (the late Bulgarian National Awakening is an example). Still, it also contributed to preserving our language, traditions, customs, and identity.

What negatively affects our identity are the instances in which we forget or allow to erase the knowledge and memory of our uniqueness, potential and achievements. When unenlightenment, unreason, and presumptuousness take over the organization of our lives. When we allow ourselves to live in pettiness and spiritual narrowness; when fear begins to consume discontent and paralyze us, when our minds grow numb and get crushed. Then we stop trusting each other, we belittle ourselves as a people, including by devaluing the accomplishments of our countrymen, we endure someone else's domination, we divide.

Constant change is not an obstacle but a necessary condition for development. It creates preconditions and resources for deconstructing the limiting aspects of our identity as Bulgarians and reconstructing it so that we can be whole healthily and sustainably, which will mean being autonomous, distinct and connected to other nations.

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Individual Identity Through the Lens of Therapy of the Five Movements

Constant change marks the life of each of us. Therefore, individual identity is dynamic and reflects how we know and perceive ourselves in the context of what is happening to us and our interaction with others and the world under constant change over time. **And it finds its roots in the personal sources of pride and trauma.**

We are **not** born with knowledge and understanding of ourselves – we construct, deconstruct and reconstruct this throughout our lives, most intensely, often most definitively, in the stages of our evolutionary development from conception to age 7-8. In this sense, we have reason to regard our **psyche as a *tabula rasa*** at the beginning of life, on which experiences and relationships leave their mark.

We are born, however, with a **somatic organization** that requires bonding with others for survival and security. That opens the way and is a biological imperative for full psychophysiological and social development.

The psychic and the somatic are interconnected and mutually influencing – a starting point in the **Therapy of the Five Movements**, created in the 1980s by Prof. Waldo Bernasconi, who theoretically and practically continued, developed and enriched ideas and concepts of Reich and Lowen. In this second part of my presentation, I review **how character formation influences at least the initial construction of individual identity and a tangible therapeutic approach to work** when identity causes difficulties and problems in relationships, challenges to personal fulfilment, and diminished quality of life.

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Survival, development and well-being directly depend on satisfying the body's emerging **needs**. They cause a temporary disturbance of internal equilibrium. The natural drive to restore balance mobilizes vital energy into **movement as a pattern of behaviour**. So, movement is the living organism's response to the emergence of some need to return to organismicity. Its biomechanics or the **cycle of experience** includes:

- Sensing the need arising in the body;
- Preparation to perform an appropriate movement to satisfy it;

- Mobilization of the muscle groups necessary to perform the selected movement;
- Performing the movement itself and thus satisfying the need;
- Relaxation of the mobilised muscle groups.

The completion of the whole cycle restores the internal equilibrium, energy flows freely from the centre to the periphery, and a person experiences pleasure.

The movement has two alternating phases, natural to all living matter. In the contraction phase, energy spreads from core to periphery, allowing connection with the outside world. In the phase of relaxation, energy is held in the core, and the periphery wraps around it. When the movement is appropriate to the demands of the organism in a given situation, it activates functional blockages necessary to carry it out and is bioeconomic. There is no overspending of energy or other resources.

Not satisfying a need leads to fixation in the contraction phase and an unconscious search for a workaround, which is an energetically inefficient way to satisfy it. No full discharge of energy potential happens. It accumulates in muscular blockages. From a certain age, the cognitive filter of all internalized parental patterns, social norms and moral prescriptions also becomes a factor. Each muscle blockage creates a whole chain of subsequent ones. The fixation of a blockage is a detachment from or interruption of experience and leads to contracted movements as a defence.

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According to the Therapy of the Five Movements, we have five generalised ways to use our life energy and meet our needs, in interpersonal communication and to manage life. The movement “**planning**” is becoming aware of inner reality, sensing the need here and now, and mentally imagining or visualising an appropriate movement to satisfy it. It requires isolation from the surrounding world and closure to the stimuli of the external environment. Planning is also the search for an adequate response to a fundamentally new situation and the creation of alternative scenarios to meet situations already experienced as unsatisfactory, dangerous or even threatening. Its defensive function is an escape from unambiguous physical and emotional reality and an immersion in the fantasy world where anything is possible. The movement “**acceptance**” means acknowledging one’s needs and body’s demands, reconciling to them as an expression of self-respect and trust in oneself and the other that they will satisfy them. It is a person’s ability to accept weaknesses, ask for help, be humble, and indulge. Its bioeconomic function is primary trust, and its protective function is clinging to an idealised other or idea, leading to an intellectual attitude devoid of physical contact

with the external world and an escape from emotional reality through intellectual defences. The movement “**aggression**” is a drive toward or away from the world. It is self-assertion, self-advocacy, and the ability to reject unacceptable behaviour and preserve personal boundaries. In healthy aggression, the stimulus and response are proportionate; it occurs in the here and now, and meanness is absent. The bioeconomic function of this movement is an appropriate and relevant response to overcome obstacles to satisfying a need in a particular situation and context. Otherwise, chronic tension and energy build up into unhealthy forms of aggression. One of them is the time-delayed aggressive act in which the response is disproportionate to the stimulus, generalised and malicious. Often it is preceded by auto aggression when the aggressive energy is turned inward and gives rise to pathological bodily and mental symptoms. The movement “**attraction**” is a search for validation and belonging, without which no need can be satisfied. At the heart of its dynamics is the person’s attempt to satisfy another’s need to open up space for the other to meet theirs reciprocally. Attraction makes alliances, friendships and love possible. It strengthens relationships because it is based on empathy, respect, and acceptance of the other’s distinctness and needs. But when fixed in this movement, it becomes defensive, covering weakness and fear of loneliness. It manifests itself in various manipulative forms to control the other. A “**reality check**” is a short-term suspension of action to analyse the situation and the participants in it. The most adequate movement of all variables is selected by comparing subjective and objective reality. Fixation in reality-checking leads to rigid behaviour, denial of feelings and emotions, inability to relax and overcontrol. Wholesome relationships, successful fulfilment and well-being in life presuppose unhindered mastery of all five movements.

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Each person’s experience during evolutionary development conditions their adult life and influences the quality of their relationships. According to the Therapy of the Five Movements, **the harmony and organismicity inherent in the living organism are sooner or later disrupted** either by a significant other, by the norms of the group of affiliation or by the social environment. These disturbances leave a significant imprint on **the formation of a person’s character** and alter their perception of reality, relations, and existential planning.

Each character is an unconscious interruption of the bio- and socio-economic movements aimed at satisfying needs and represents a distorted way to do so. It is a function of energy blockages activated as defences when character-forming trauma occurs. Character is reflected in somatic morphology, reinforces predisposition to certain bodily and psycho-pathologies, imposes a specific thought matrix, and is

noticeable in the fixation in or the absence of specific behavioural patterns. It limits plasticity and flexibility in the choice of movement to satisfy needs and achieve pleasure.

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We can consider character as a foundation that significantly influences the construction of a person's identity. Therefore, one way to work with identity is through **psycho-bodily character analysis**, which involves tracking and becoming aware of:

- bodily experiences with their muscular and energetic blockages;
- the interruptions in the cycle of experience on the way to needs' satisfaction;
- repressed or replaced emotions;
- illogical or missing behaviours;
- projections and introjections.

So, character formation is a deconstruction of different aspects of humanity and organismicity. It contributes to the construction of identities that limit the potential to connect with self, others and the world, thus diminishing the quality of life. Therefore, when identity is built on a neurotic, unhealthy base, it should be gradually deconstructed and reconstructed in a new, healthy way in the context of the therapeutic process and therapeutic relationship.

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In the Narcissistic phase, **if** the primary caregiver – for whatever reason – fails to:

- Be emotionally stable,
- Consistently warmly present,
- In sync and resonance with the child's needs,
- Responsive and providing security, stability and a sense of connectedness,
- Affirm the child's essence,

Then, the following implicit beliefs are embedded in the child's psyche:

- They do not deserve to be and exist, to be accepted and validated as what they are,

- They are not entitled to have needs and the right these needs to be met and satisfied,
- The world and the others are rejecting, threatening, and causing intensely unbearable pain.

The child's whole body organizes to protect itself from the pain and all the emotions that arise from such dynamics. Such a terrain implies constructing an identity based on negative perceptions of the self as undeserving, possibly defective, mistaken, empty, and containing no valid reason to be and belong.

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Deconstructing this identity in the therapeutic process begins by forming a secure, caring, and emotionally stable therapeutic relationship. It helps when the therapist allows themselves to enter the person's fantasy world – there, the client can trust. There are also the resources they should gradually be taught to transfer and use in reality. Through tiny and delicate personal experiences that unfold the capacity for affective regulation and resilience, the client gradually learns to recognize and discriminate the signals from others and the environment. Non-invasively and slowly over time, they also re-establish a connection with their body. Each step in the process comes with a lot of validation from the therapist, and the goal is for the client to become capable of validating their qualities, skills, knowledge and accomplishments as well.

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In the sensory phase, **if** the primary caregiver – for whatever reason – deprives their child:

- of secure, affectionate and attuned touching, caressing, and cuddling,
- of attention and warmth in attitude and behaviour,
- of validation of their authenticity,
- of sensory and emotional nourishment,

Then, the child perceives that they do not deserve validation and assertion for what they are and learns to:

- Cling to things that are always available,
- Idealise the significant figure's image,

- Use compensative behaviours,
- Support a distorted self-perception,
- Have excessive expectations and demand for others to be a constant and never-ending source of support, security and care.

The body organises to protect itself from feeling lonely and empty inside.

Oral character dynamics is suitable for constructing identity around intellectual or material superiority. A person often doesn't have the awareness or the idea of personal value for their own sake, which shifts to how they look, how smart they are, and what they possess, and these aspects become essential to their identity. In the background of their identity is the belief of how much love and care they give to others who cannot appreciate this, thus leaving them feeling misunderstood and unappreciated despite all their efforts. Because of the strong dependence on others they might manifest, we often also observe the tendency to identify with those they idealise.

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A prerequisite for effective identity deconstruction, organised around oral character dynamics, is the quality of the therapeutic relationship – warm, nourishing, and enabling the client to explore, accept, and unfold their self-worth. The work is organised around connecting with the body and physical, emotional, and social boundaries, as well as around knowing and accepting the totality of qualities and flaws, skills and ineptitudes, strengths and weaknesses. Essential aspects are reestablishing skills to bond and allowing self- and emotional expression beyond the fear of abandonment.

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In the phase of the Self, **if** the parents – for whatever reason – prevent their child from freely:

- Exploring and making sense of the world and their place in it,
- Expressing preferences, interests, needs, and desires,
- Asserting their newly found autonomy,
- Standing up on their own when falling,

- Orienting in relational communication, including what might lead to ruptures and their corrections,
- Regulating emotional experiences and expression,

Then, the child cannot integrate healthy perceptions of autonomy, connection, power, respect for boundaries, and tolerance and starts to:

- Avoid self-assertation,
- Hold back their emotional expression,
- Obey and seek approval (outwardly), but experience negative feelings and distrust (inwardly),
- Behave as a victim or explode out of proportion.

The body organises to protect itself from feeling humiliated or rejected, powerless and uncertain.

The identity of the sadomasochistic character can be organised around a self-concept of moral superiority, often the result of turning submissiveness, patience, and inability to confront into values, as well as an unrealistic sense of power resulting from the ability to endure no matter what. Often, this identity type feeds from the cult of the victim mentality. And it is a sublimation of one's inability to connect with and experience one's power as a resource rather than as a risk of rejection and humiliation. Social norms, which often do not tolerate assertion and self-advocacy, equating them with badness, disregard for the other, and hostility, contribute significantly to the construction of this type of identity.

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A primary therapeutic goal in deconstructing an identity built on sadomasochistic dynamics is gradually getting the client to reject things and behaviours that they do not want, do not like, are uncomfortable with, or are otherwise frustrated by. Then they will be able to tolerate receiving rejections without experiencing them as humiliation, betrayal, or rejection. The therapeutic relationship is warm, but an unambiguous assertiveness also emerges as a tool for adequate and meaningful relationship regulation. The client should connect to their authentic power as a resource. Through various bodily and experiential practices, they work toward developing the capacity to mobilize this power when needed and to release it when relationships are harmonized. Any expression of healthy aggressiveness, no matter how small, should receive

validation – initially from the therapist, eventually from the client. Later, they will also learn to ask for confirmation from significant figures.

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In the phase of rivalry, **if** the parents – for whatever reason – do not support their child to establish their significance, influence and position in the family and among peers and do not show interest and respect for their needs but instead:

- Tend to manipulate them,
- Maintain an emotionally unstable environment and inequality or misuse of power distribution in the family system,
- Project onto the child the realisation of their illusions, trying to construct in them their model of the ideal man or woman,

Then, the child learns to:

- Suppress their needs to make room for those of the parents,
- Control feelings and emotions,
- Be overvigilant,
- Mimics the model of behaviour of the stronger figure,
- Plays roles to receive approval and keep their status,
- Compensate for their low self-esteem with high self-confidence.

The body organises to protect itself from feeling vulnerable, powerless and insecure. An identity is constructed around the significance and the superiority one has over the others. They are open to the world, self-confident, energetic, active and engaged, and always ready to satisfy others' needs. They identify with their status and the roles they play. The macho man or temptress, the grey cardinal, the brains in the big deal or game, and the company's soul are examples of roles that often make up the fabric of the identity of a person with psychopathic character dynamics. They are strong, impervious to fears and emotions, invulnerable – there is no room for weakness. Thus, they perceive themselves. And integrate similar messages from others into their identity, which is essentially an altered authenticity.

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The therapeutic process when working with such character dynamics and this type of identity requires interventions to recover authenticity, which means becoming congruent with ongoing emotions and experiences unaffected by stigmatizing ideas and distorted convictions. The client's identity as the strong and the invulnerable, not subject to petty human hardships and challenges, is a defensive strategy. The therapist's respect for this defensive strategy and understanding its significance for the person is a prerequisite for establishing a stable therapeutic relationship in which the client can trust and allow themselves to meet their vulnerability later without fear of losing approval and belonging. The client should gradually connect with their needs and reclaim the right to have them met and fulfilled by changing their understanding that needing is not synonymous with weakness. The goal is to regain the flexibility to open and close off from the world without fear of losing status. Regaining spontaneity, accepting the self as a set of strengths and limits, making friends with weakness, and prioritizing the self when it is bio- and socioeconomic are key factors in reconstructing a rich, colourful, and healthy identity that is not constrained by fears and pseudo-manifestations.

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In the sexual phase, if the parents – for whatever reason – reject and sanction their child's natural curiosity about the body and the search for pleasure or are too oppressive and intolerant to mistakes, then the child gets stuck in a mighty internal conflict – pleasure is something terrible, dirty and unacceptable. They cannot integrate healthy perceptions of pleasure or learn how to make decisions and cope with mistakes, thus, eventually, start to:

- Experience constant self-doubt and distrust of self and others,
- Have an ambivalent attitude about pleasure, love and sexuality,
- Constantly repress actions towards pleasure and relaxation and stay in control and activity,
- Have difficulties to make decisions and tend to hesitate,
- Behave and think rigidly.

The body organises to protect itself from feeling vulnerable, out of control, betrayed or rejected.

The identity that can be constructed by a person with a predominantly rigid character is based on their notion of being invaluable because they are organised,

precise, attentive to the smallest detail, strictly observant of rules and norms, and dedicated to a cause, a job, or a family. They are exalted above pleasurable experiences perceived as wasteful, undeserving of their energy, or unnecessary. They are constantly tight, mobilised, ready for action, and proud of not allowing themselves to relax. Place tremendous importance on and determine themselves according to how they appear to others and present themselves, being excessively careful not to evoke any negative impression. It is also possible to develop an identity based on the belief of an inability to make decisions due to constant hesitation and the fear of making mistakes that are equal to failure and exposure.

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When the therapeutic process aims to deconstruct an identity organised on the terrain of the rigid character, it works in **several main directions**:

- Relaxation,
- Reconnection with one's sexuality,
- Experience of pleasure,
- Building skills to check the unambiguous inner and outer reality,
- Changing the meaning given to mistakes, rules, norms and the opinions of others,
- Exploring the impact of character-defining fears of relaxation, pleasure or punishment to open up possibilities for overcoming them.

As with all characters, here again, the analysis of the typical movement leads to recognising the accompanying blockages, thus opening space and conditions for their softening and overcoming of their effects. The decoding of repressed intentions, denied needs, and hidden emotions allow their dissolution and transformation into vital movements that are relevant and satisfying.

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At the end of this presentation and as a conclusion, I can summarize: **both nationally and individually, identity is dynamic**. It reflects how we know and perceive ourselves in the context of what is happening to us and our interactions. Challenges, stress, trauma, and uncertainty, all an inevitable part of life, require us to adapt constantly. These adaptive strategies often deconstruct our humanity's aspects

and traits. We, humans, are distinguished from other living beings by our ability to connect through love.

And some in the deconstruction phase go against life:

- When they disrespect, hurt, abuse, and kill;
- When they become an armoured version of themselves;
- When they get stuck in their rigid boundaries or give up having any at all;
- When they narrow themselves to their thoughts and strip themselves of their bodies;
- When the power neurosis possesses them;
- When the norm is to be somewhere on the spectrum between *homo neuroticus* and *homo traumaticus*.

Reconstruction of human identity is possible through the discovery and expansion of humanity towards oneself, others, and the environment, e.g., becoming *homo humanicus*.

- Deconstructing muscular armour,
- Recovering the plasticity of boundaries,
- Connecting with needs,
- Rediscovering the pleasure of satisfying them through healthy movements,
- Connecting with our emotional world,
- Expressing ourselves,
- Accepting one's own and other's uniqueness,

are all steps in reconstructing organismicity (life energy) and our mature human identity as a universe of traits, qualities, skills, knowledge, understandings and experiences possible when in harmonious connection with self, others and the world.

Slide 45, during the song (appr. 2:30 minutes)

And for a closure to this presentation, let's hear how the organismicity of the Bulgarians might sound – vibrant, playful and, hopefully, inspiring. And again, I will rely on the marvellous voices and presence of Vocal Formation Voices of Tradition with conductor Milen Ivanov to immerse us in this experience.

I would like to thank the singers in the Voices of Tradition – the first mixed folklore vocal formation with conductor Milen Ivanov. They perform Orthodox singing and old folklore music interpreted through their modern worldview. The group includes soloists of the world-famous vocal ensemble “The Mystery of Bulgarian Voices”, National Folk Ensemble “Filip Kutev”, and young Bulgarian talents.