

150 Years On: The history, significance and scope of Body-Psychotherapy today

Abstract

From Janet to Reich to the present day, and in many different fields, body-psychotherapy involves a rich and different explicit theory, study and practice of the human body--mind. This relationship is not hierarchical, nor something that suggests the unification of an age-old split, but it represents a unitive functioning with indivisible interactive aspects of the whole human being. This concept is quite revolutionary for some, liberating for others, and it can also be quite threatening as well. It can act as a baseline and a resource as other psychotherapies and new sciences explore aspects of body-psychotherapy and their own involvement with the body, and it may help integrate some of the direct technical knowledge of the body therapies. This article is a personal attempt to cover the history and the main lines of approach of body-psychotherapy, and to show how its relationship to the rest of psychotherapy is changing rapidly. This article is an extended version of a talk given to the UKCP Conference, "About A Body" Sept 2004, Cambridge, England; to the EABP Conference "The Body at the Centre of Psychotherapy" Oct. 2004, Marathon, Greece; and a symposium of Group-Analysts, "Mind/Body", Jan. 2005, Budapest, Hungary. It is the first of three articles on the history, present and future development of Body-Psychotherapy.

History:

Freud is supposed to have founded psychotherapy and psychoanalysis over 100 years ago (supposedly in 1892). However it has been largely forgotten that the work of Dr Pierre Janet preceded him by at least seven years, and Janet can also be considered as the first proper Body-Psychotherapist. David Boadella, wrote very elegantly about this early work of Janet's¹, where he makes it clear that the body-psychotherapy connection with Pierre Janet goes back to at least 1885 (so that gives about 120 years of recorded history). "William James, writing in 1894, in a review of Janet's work commented that two Viennese physicians, Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, were in the process of confirming many of Janet's findings."

Freud's version of psychoanalysis, which grew out of this 'body-oriented' work, ended up as a verbal specialization, a "talking cure". Even though he used body-psychotherapy techniques and physical contact initially, he dropped all of this in his later work.² This tended to ignore Janet's "integrative approach which gave equal value to the body, into an approach tending to neglect the body and the importance of non-verbal communications as studied by Janet, and to concentrate on primarily verbal communication."¹

Janet reported on his own theory of hysteria in 1907, (at a conference in Amsterdam) and Jung reported (at the same conference) that: "the theoretical presuppositions for the thinking work of the Freudian investigation reside, above all, in the findings of Janet's experiments."¹ However Freud, in a letter at the end of his life, denied having ever met Janet or having been influenced by him.

He also refused to meet Janet at that time, as he still felt aggrieved that Janet had 'claimed' many years earlier that Freud had stolen some of his ideas. David Boadella went on to describe how Janet's work included significant findings about:

- the diaphragmatic block;
- the connection between emotional tensions and constrictions in the flow of fluids in the body;
- massage work;
- the formative process of the embryological stages of development;
- visceral consciousness;
- channels of contact;
- the kinaesthetic sense;
- movement and intentionality;
- the importance of working with the body with traumatized patients; and
- the significance of a change in (or lack of change in) the patient's own body image.

So the concept that nowadays there are "new" forms of psychotherapy; or "more relevant" forms of psychotherapy that now include the concept of the body; or that acknowledge that the patient has an embodied mind; or the concept that "since neuroscience came to support the psycho-analytic view of human beings, we have a new an enlarged way of understanding ourselves";³ or that the new 'science' of "energy psychology" has the techniques, if not the answers; or even the perspective that the body that is now considered significantly at the centre of psychotherapy;⁴ are all actually something of an anachronism.

The body was at the centre of psychotherapy when it first started, and then Freud and his followers left the body out of psychotherapy (possibly unconsciously, later deliberately). It has been subsequently ignored for a considerable period of time, but is recently coming into prominence again. It is some of the forces behind this movement that I wish to explore.

Janet's concept of *rapport* was possibly the foundation of Freud's concept of transference, though it has much more of an empathic and body-oriented sense. Janet is also believed to have influenced Jung and there is some evidence that Jung went to study with him in 1902 in Paris - though this was not 'admitted to' in Jung's autobiography. Jung's concept of psychological complexes is certainly derived from Janet, as is his concept of the introverted and extroverted personality types (an adaptation of Janet's concepts of *hypotonia* and *asthenia*).

Adler acknowledges that his *inferiority complex* constituted a development of Janet's observations on *le sentiment d'incomplétude*" and he linked this to organ inferiority and organ neuroses in a similar way to Janet's work in somatic psychology.

Piaget was also a student of Janet, influenced by Janet's concept of integration and synthesis especially in the development of cognitive functions out of sensory, motoric and emotional experiences. But perhaps we should leave

Janet, for the moment, despite Freud having originally described the ego as “*first and foremost a body ego,*” (in *The Ego and the Id*), and the emerging practice of psychotherapy (or “psychoanalysis”) “*chose to remain within the confines of the psyche to affect the body, and not the reverse, by pursuing the ‘talking cure’.*” This trend then began to ignore the body and the analysts deliberately began to seat themselves in such a position that there was no proper view of the client’s body, which also effectively removed the possibility of most non-verbal communication.

However body-psychotherapy did receive some benefit from psychoanalysis and eventually developed a significant level of integration of the concept of the therapeutic relationship within body-oriented approaches. Reich’s own approach to the therapeutic relationship was quite confrontational and this was carried further by some of the later neo-Reichian developments, so the proper use of transference and counter-transference is a significantly later development.⁵ Nowadays the concept of “somatic resonance”, an important tool for many body-psychotherapists, is becoming increasingly popular in many fields of psychotherapy as an essential aspect of the therapeutic relationship: a form of ‘somatic transference’. The therapist’s body is, at least, being recognized as relevant as well.⁶

Elsewhere in the pages of the history of body-psychotherapy, we find another significant figure, also long forgotten. Albert Abrams, based in San Francisco between 1891-1910, produced an impressive volume of works entitled: *Spondylotherapy; Physiotherapy and Pharmaco-therapy, and Diagnostic Methods based on a study of Clinical Psychology.*⁷ Whilst these were actually published slightly later than Janet’s first works, they still predate much of Freud’s work. Adams was coming from a very different stream, basing some of his theories on the work of Franz Anton Mesmer,⁸ who had preceded him by 130 years or so, and these earlier works form some of the research and theoretical bases for another (also somewhat disowned) branch of psychotherapy, Hypno-psychotherapy.

The influence of Mesmer, who published in 1779, led to significant work by Armand-Marie-Jacques de Chastenet and Marquis de Puységur, who published *Mémoires pour servir a l’histoire et a l’établissement du magnétisme animal* in 1784. These ideas about defined links between the mind and body, eventually spread to America and influenced William James and the *New Thought* movement, as well as Abrams and others. In Europe, there was a steady and continual development of these concepts, despite considerable medical criticism and disownment, throughout the 18th century and well into the 19th, with the work of Noizet, Cuvillers, and Bertrand.

Another early (negative) influence on psychotherapy came from Germany, in the 1840’s, when the renowned physiologist, Johannes Mueller (1801-1858), at the University of Berlin, advocated a doctrine of ‘vitalism,’ which attempted to explain the (then) inexplicable somatic aspects. He assumed that non-physical forces within the individual direct and guide our behaviour in some purposeful way. Mueller believed that the human organism was greater than

the sum of the physiological parts and there must be some vital force that coordinates and harmonizes human behaviour.

However some of his students contradicted him and wanted to ensure that such introspections about physiology clearly stayed as a natural science, like physics and chemistry. These students, including von Helmholtz, von Brücke, duBois-Reymond, and Karl Ludwig, formed the 'Helmholtz School', as it became known, and this group had a tremendous impact on the subsequently emerging field of psychology by almost forcing it to explain all mental and psychological phenomena in strict physiological terms. This trend became very influential, if not paramount, to the direction that psychology later took.

“Wilhelm Wundt , the father of experimental psychology, was influenced by duBois-Reymond and had worked as an assistant for Helmholtz. Ivan Pavlov, who laid the groundwork for behaviourism ... was a student of Ludwig. Freud studied under Brücke and worked in his lab. ... Freud borrowed heavily from Helmholtz’s principle of the conversion of energy. ... Helmholtz’s doctrine led to the popularization of such concepts as force, energy, power, action, impulse, impetus, and stress. All of these concepts emerged in one form or another as parts of major psychological theories, including psychoanalytical psychology.”⁹

These theories, based more on classical mechanics, set the young science of psychology on its mentalist and separatist path. However, being basically reductionist, psychoanalysis and early psychotherapy faced similar criticisms to the Helmholtz school; that of being too mechanistic, too materialist; and too facile. Janet’s ideas, with their more organic basis, were anything but this. However I would like to explore a little more history first before I expound upon the main theme.

There were, at the turn of the 19th and the start of the 20th century, several other philosophical, natural medical and cultural perspectives that conflicted with the narrow deterministic path that psychology seemed to be being directed down. The counter-culture that existed at that same time emphasized free sexuality, vegetarianism, non-religious spirituality, the body, and basic feminist principles. It was perhaps most widely expressed in the *Wandervögel*, a movement that then was the equivalent of the later Hippie trends in the 1960s and 70s.

There was also a very strong health movement interested in natural healing. Artists and writers like Herman Hesse and D.H. Lawrence, and dancers like Rudolph Laban, all expressed a widely embracing philosophy with a strong bodily connection. Additionally there was a strong and surprisingly influential spiritual movement that resulted in the school of Theosophy, founded by Madame Blavatsky in 1875, and later popularized by Annie Besant and others, gaining wide approval. These were all very body-oriented with Theosophy advocating that the path to wisdom (self-knowledge) was best conducted through the practice of Yoga.

Finally another trend has started back in 1843, in the field of medicine, James Braid, a Scot, had published *Neurypnology: The rationale of nervous sleep*, which linked observed phenomena to brain physiology and helped prepare the way for the eventual use of hypnosis in research on psycho-pathology. Charles Richet wrote *Du somnambulisme provoqué* in 1875 and this significantly influenced Jean-Martin Charcot. The connection between Charcot and Freud is very well known. Charcot himself published significantly in 1872-3, following Briquet, whose *Traité clinique de thérapeutique de l'hystérie* (1859) is considered to be the first systematic and objective study of hysteria. Charcot grouped together hypnotic, hysterical, and post-traumatic phenomena to distinguish these dynamic phenomena from those organic symptoms that arise from lesions in the nervous system, and suggested the existence of unconscious "idée fixes" at the core of certain neuroses, a notion that exerted a considerable influence on both Pierre Janet, and later on Freud.¹⁰ Given all these influences, it is even more surprising then that Freud chose to reject the body, and we would have to consider his history, influences, and even internal pathologies a little bit deeper to understand this more fully. But that is a different paper.

My main contention here is that body-psychotherapy can easily be dated back at least 120 years through the legacy of Pierre Janet. Other influences go back considerably further. So maybe I am being very slightly presumptuous by claiming "150 Years of Body-Psychotherapy" but I do not feel that I am not very far out. In this history we can see two main opposing factors: a growing trend of disownment of the body, paralleling the growth of understanding about the mind. It is almost as if one is necessary for the other to exist and develop. Body-psychotherapy is thus not a new phenomenon within psychotherapy, but much more of a disavowed aspect of it. What I want to suggest now is that psychotherapy without reference to the body is a somewhat lesser study, a specialization that (perhaps) misses out on something quite fundamental to human existence; a jigsaw with several quite significant sections missing.

At some point in time, in about 1929-30, and for a variety of complex reasons (some possibly connected with Freud's then current fascination with 'thanatos', and some possibly as a reaction to Reich's interest in Marxism, socio-political theory and sexuality – a combination that the Freudians could not tolerate), the study of the body in psychotherapy became formally disowned, and then with Reich's expulsion from the International Society, definitively split-off from psychoanalysis and the main trend of developing psychodynamic psychotherapies. In retrospect, this was perhaps a tragedy for both psychotherapy and for body-psychotherapy.¹¹

Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy shifted also exclusively from the more instinctual, organic, and drive-based models of understanding to a more object-relational understanding, and a focus on transference and counter-transference and psychodynamic history (without any reference to or appreciation of the body. This, we, as body-psychotherapists, would tend to see as a severe limitation.

It took another 70 years (1934-2004) before psychotherapy, the therapy of the psyche, the mind or the spirit, officially began to reclaim its body.¹² So the mind-body split identified by Descartes is possibly just beginning to heal, at least within psychology. The 'respectability' of neuroscience is helping to re-establish something of a more unified field approach to the human and his/her body: the recent discoveries in psycho-neuro-immunology further assist this trend. Perhaps body-psychotherapy may also be in the process of reclaiming something more than just the study of the body in psychotherapy: and this is where my interest really lies.

Disownment of the Body:

When we 'disavow' something, or disown it, or repress it, or cut it off from something else, we are acknowledging the significance of that 'other' (in a negative form), and perhaps also our own inability to deal with that negative aspect at that time. The 'disavowed' is not something insignificant that we overlook, forget, or misplace. It is an active process of enforced separation; and we will inevitably eventually pay a price for that denial. We often react 'despite' or 'against' the denied part of our self. R.D. Laing writes:

*"THE UNEMBODIED SELF: In this position the individual experiences his self as being more or less divorced or detached from his body. The body is felt mores as one object among other objects in the world than as the core of the individual's own being. Instead of being the core of his true self, the body is felt as the core of a false self, which a detached, disembodied, 'inner', 'true' self looks on at with tenderness, amusement, or hatred as the case may be."*¹³

I feel that the body has been significantly disavowed in many different aspects of society, and not just by psychotherapy. There are many possible reasons for this type of denial of, or resistance to, include the body within psychotherapy and within mainstream society, and it is not a particularly new phenomenon, it may even date back 6000 years. Reich wrote about some of these aspects in *Character Analysis*, and later, very graphically illustrated in *Listen, Little Man!* He felt that that the sacrifice made was because of a fear of, or an aversion against, free movement and the libido.¹⁴ We are perhaps still struggling with some of these particular legacies even today.

The rigidities of the body that Reich spoke about (often experienced as a 'social norm' for so many years)¹⁵ have caused a basic rejection of and a phenomenological resistance to the open acceptance of the body in society. This open acceptance can, as we know, feel "natural" and wonderful, to the point of being quietly ecstatic. However, instead of these feelings permeating 'normally' through all aspects of society, we are dealing with several 'normal' or 'common' distortions in relation to the body. The body has been seen over recent years as:

- As a repository of sin by various religious groups
- As holding 'baser' impulses to be sublimated by Freudian analysis
- As a disgusting sexual object by the Victorians
- As a disposable asset to the military, especially in World War I
- As something to be treated, medicated or 'fixed' by the medical profession
- As something to be perfected and controlled through diet and exercise

- As a dysfunctional object incapable of bearing a child unassisted (with the increasing 'medicalization' of childbirth),
- As something exploited by multinationals selling medicines, alcohol & cigarettes
- As something to be transcended by belief, prayer, drugs, free love, or meditation
- Increasingly, as an object of scientific research by biology & neuroscience
- And recently, as something to be used politically by suicide bombers.

These are all phenomena of separation, and they are not new to the human experience. A lot of the intellectual "disowning" of the body can be traced to the "mind-body split" that is ascribed to Descartes. In the 17th century, the philosopher Descartes, verbalized the existential mind-body separation and in so doing, became, as Damasio says: "... *an emblem for a collection of ideas on body, brain, and mind that in one way or another remain influential in Western sciences and humanities.*" ¹⁶

However this possibly separation started happening a long time before that and can probably be traced back something more than 6000 years to the Bronze Age--Iron Age change-over where the incoming ascendancy of more nomadic tribes worshipping "Sky Gods" overran the more agrarian locally-based tribes worshipping the "Earth Mother". This catastrophic, and largely unrecorded, era coincided with the increasing ascendancy of patrilineal (father-to-son) lines of inheritance over the earlier matrilineal traditions (male-to-sister's son & mother-daughter). Progeny, power, possessions and politics fuel this split. Features of this take-over are wonderfully described in the Welsh *Mabinogion*,¹⁷ and in many of the Greek myths & legends (especially that of Theseus). Aristotle and Plato also dealt with this topic – but very differently from each other.

One of the other predominant features of this new ascendancy was a primacy of the mind, the intellect, and the (so-called) reason, over an intimate, indissoluble connection with the body, the instincts and emotions. We still all, the whole world over, suffer from this (very artificial) differentiation, hierarchy and split. It possibly enables us to kill innocents, and especially those important in bringing on the next generation, women and children; to lay waste to basic sources of life in the fields and forests; to pollute the planet with concrete, toxins and rubbish; and to exterminate whole numbers of other species: acts of total insanity as seen by 'earthier' and more grounded tribes and societies¹⁸: there seems little other explanation possible.

How can these things possibly happen? The separation is Intensely painful and so we have anaesthetized ourselves, generation after generation, to our own numbness, stiffness, lack of aliveness, and our society's 'cut-off-ness". R.D. Laing writes:

"When I look at my body from the outside, it is still there, but it may have disappeared years ago as a real alive experience /from within. As we become numb, we are numbed to our own numbness. The less we care, the less we

care about caring less. We stiffen^ harden, shrivel, become bent, but can't bend, twist, run, hop, dance and sing, walk, sleep, even. We (apse painlessly into me complacent ease of bodily vacuity. We may have to think about it before we realize how unfamiliar this most intimate of all our feelings may be."¹⁹

I am deliberately stepping outside the remit of 'professional presentation' and upping the stakes a bit here, but I feel that unless we can put the study of the mind, emotions and human behaviour "back on to track" and in a slightly more complete form, we may be not only missing something quite crucial and fundamental, but we may also be losing out on an opportunity to redeem ourselves, as a profession, as a race, and even as a species. Whilst this abyssal separation between mind and body is slowly being overcome, perhaps in psychology, the mind is still commonly seen as the 'software program' run in the 'hardware' of the brain, or that the brain and body are related, but only in a survival sense, as one can't really function without the other. These views still retain these separations, so 'thinking' becomes the substrate of 'being' and our thinking is still separated from our emotions. Only now is the body just beginning to come back into the picture. Damasio writes:

*"(1) The human brain and the rest of the body constitute an indissociable organism, integrated by means of mutually interactive biochemical and neural regulatory circuits (including endocrine, immune, and autonomic neural components); (2) The organism interacts with the environment as an ensemble: the interaction is neither of the body alone nor of the brain alone; (3) The physiological operations that we call mind are derived from the structural and functional ensemble rather than from the brain alone: mental phenomena can be fully understood airily in the context of an organism's interacting in an environment."*²⁰

At several significant points in history (like during the Renaissance), there has been an understanding of the significance of the body, a sense of the fundamentals of our being, and then what happens, for some almost inexplicable reason, is that a sudden veering away from this realisation occurs, or an aversion to grasping and utilizing some of these fundamental body-oriented perspectives, and we are left with a few straws or a limited understanding to carry forward until the next time.

In likening the growth of psychology and psychotherapy to the development of a child, we can see moments of insight being repressed, or being prevented by circumstance or dictate against going further down that path, or an avoidance to opening that particular (forbidden) door. Maybe, in this context, the path of discovering the complexities of being human through an understanding of the body is the original "road less travelled".

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becomes the substrate of 'being' and our thinking is still separated from our emotions. Our heads are separate from our bodies and we are almost totally anaesthetized to this phenomenon. There is a wonderful cartoon that illustrates this.²¹

Body-Psychotherapy today still tries to attain Janet's, Reich's (and Freud's original) goal of a true understanding of the whole person, believing that this is only possible unless the person's capacity for full intellectual freedom, emotional expression, free movement, and social connection is regained. Reich held that this was synonymous with, and dependent on, the release of the chronic bodily tensions that make up and 'hold' (or maintain) the person's essential defences, their character-armour. This neurotic holding-pattern is what we all long to depart from, from an innate desire for freedom, and, at the same time, we also desperately hold on to these restrictions out of a sense of fear or a need for safety. The way in which we survived emotionally has now become the basic pattern or format for our lives, and this can, not only affect our whole lives, but even our shape.²² □

There is a Japanese saying: "A true man thinks with his belly." And the Chinese discipline of Tai Chi has the belly as the 'Dan'tien', the centre of the body, the source of all action. Boadella writes in his book "*Lifestreams*"²³ of the three main centres of the body: the Head, the Heart, and the Hara, the dynamic morphology of the body, and relates these to the three main embryological layers: ecto-, meso- and endo-derm. Much has been written about the 'armouring' of the ecto-derm (which includes the skin and the brain) in cognitive psychotherapy, and its examination of distortions in our patterns of thinking. Much has also been written by Reich, Lowen and others about muscular armouring (mesoderm). Little has been written about the armouring of the endoderm.

The work of Stanley Keleman, particularly his wonderful book *Emotional Anatomy*²⁴ illustrates this excellently. Keleman studies people's morphology and calls these various 'shapes' or distortions, "insults to form" and examines the various types very graphically and dynamically, looking at the internal forces which constrict and warp the complex tubes and spaces of soft tissue. This is not armour in the sense of muscular tensions that Reich worked with; it is a set of tensions that are softer, deeper and more difficult to work with. We have been told that Reich's 'character armour' was fuelled by our emotions, and the visceral armouring or re-shaping is similar. Keleman explores this graphically.

Of course, our bodies carry the scars of our historical traumas and neuroses, not just physically, but also in behavioural holding patterns, in deep muscle structures, in visceral tensions, in patterns of psychodynamic transference, and in distortions of perception. Our bodies have become our psychic dustbins, and we need to find ways of working with all of these aspects constructively.

Body-psychotherapy today:

Some of the changes in body-psychotherapy have been those influenced considerably by the Human Potential Movement or Humanistic Psychology, developed in the 1960s and 1970s particularly from the work of Maslow.²⁵ This

incorporates a hierarchy of human needs and an acknowledgement of the body, the mind and the human spirit.

Goodridge-Dunn & Greene²⁶ make the point that *“body psychotherapy is unusual in that it embraces 2 of the 3 core ideas in psychology – perception, motivation and learning – while most areas encompass one.”* They feel that academically oriented learning theory, (rather than education, or experiential learning) *“ ... was primarily associated ... with behaviorism and experimental psychology ... and more recently with cognitive theory, (and.) historically has not had as much affinity for body-psychotherapy.”* Whereas; *“Perception, which is linked to body-psychotherapy via humanistic psychology, which in turn is linked to phenomenological and existential psychology, and the Gestalt philosophers and psychologists, is one.”²⁷ Motivation, which is linked to body psychotherapy via psychoanalytic psychology, is the other.”²⁸* They suggest that there are theory and body-psychotherapy: but more about this in the third article in the series.

In body-psychotherapy we have our own specific views of the body, and these may extend down to each modality in body-psychotherapy whose views are often distinct and unique. Nowadays, in body-psychotherapy, the client's body is generally seen as:

- A source of information about the client's state of being, not just in visible body language, but also more subtly in creating an emotional atmosphere
- An entry point for change, by-passing potential intellectual resistance to change, avoiding transference projections, and softening the character armour
- Significant as (though no different from) the 'mind': more perhaps of another view into the client's whole body--mind experience
- The repository of emotions and memories: there is a significant body of research to indicate that memories are also 'held' in the body, i.e. somatically²⁹
- A vehicle for psychological intervention, whereby attention paid to body awareness can benefit the client considerably

And ... the therapist's body is very important too:

- As a source of somatic counter-transference.³⁰

Many of us happen to know from our professional experience that we nearly often seem to know almost exactly what someone is feeling when they are speaking with their “body language”. These positions affect us through what are being called “mirror neurones” that cause us to try to ‘mimic’ another person's positions or movement, especially if we are familiar with that movement.³¹ We also know that about 90% of all human communication is non-verbal; and we are only just realizing, as a society, how powerful some of this non-verbal communication really is. There are now TV programs showing how to read politicians' and celebrities' body language – if anyone wants to!

As body--mind psychotherapists, we work very hard with our clients with various aspects of all of the above, with disownment, or dissociation; with Descartes body--mind duality; with the schizoid split; with psychosomatic

phenomena; with sexual abuse, self-abuse, addictions, or even with the ultimate sacrifice of the body (suicide).

Society is also slowly being persuaded that the mainstream medical allopathic approach (to the body), also adopted in psychology, is often considerably less effective than a more cooperative, inclusive and holistic approach. There is a long history of considering the implications of the body--mind connection in the field of psychosomatics, where this discipline considers diseases and ailments in which psychological factors play an important causative role. However this very respectable medical discipline has still maintained an essential mind-body dualism, until very recently.

*“Nowadays it is much more acceptable to say that psyche and soma are aspects of a unitary process and that mind and body refer to frameworks that we impose on that process.”*³²

We have also been told consistently, by people like Janet and Reich, by Keleman, by Body-Psychotherapists like Boyesen, and Boadella, and more recently by people like Bessel van der Kolk, and Babette Rothschild, that we cannot – we *absolutely* can not – do effective work in psychotherapy, (especially with people with trauma or PTSD) without significantly using body-psychotherapy techniques, awareness and training. This message is also now becoming more of a mainstream one with such articles appearing in significant psychotherapy magazines.³³ Psychotherapy is (only just now) addressing the issue of the body in psychotherapy, almost as if it is the latest news. Well, hopefully we can also liberate ourselves³⁴ from these perspectives and “free our minds” so that we can start to see, our clients (and ourselves), not just a functioning body--mind unity, but also as an entity that is continually interacting with its environment.

I would like to examine for a moment what has changed, what is changing at the core of all this – what is happening to create a new climate where the body is now being seen as central in psychotherapy again? This is the essential question. I believe that what is changing is that something is happening on a much deeper level: this is a realization that is being found fairly simultaneously in science, philosophy, metaphysics, biology, ecology, and also now in psychotherapy. The scientific expression of that realization is that there is no subject or object; observer and observed; that objectivity doesn't exist and that any such dualism is a totally false perspective. There are an increasing number of very respectable books that are promoting this holistic message. These trace the genuine and metaphysical connections between the various different sciences, previously distinct and disjoint. Various respected scientists are even putting forward theories that the whole universe is a 'holographic', and that elements of all the distant galaxies can be found in every microscopic particle.³⁵

We, human beings, are ourselves being seen as an increasingly less significant factor in ecology, (there is little chance of us “saving the planet”, unless we can also fundamentally change the number of people on it, the demands that we make on its finite resources, and also our own ways of irrational exploitative

behaviour): the new realization is that the planet, or “Gaia”, is perfectly capable of saving herself, either with us, or without us.

Neuroscience is (just now) telling us that our emotions exist, not in the forefront of our mind where we might happen to register them, but in the somewhat more primitive mind that is intimately connected with all the other systems of our bodies, where we really feel these emotions; and also in the subconscious neural systems, in the neurotransmitters, and in the peptides (the molecules of emotion) that circulate throughout our body. Candace Pert’s research on neuro-peptides ³⁶ indicates that there may just be a complete chemical basis for emotion with perhaps even one peptide relating to each emotion. This would mean that emotions are literally flowing through the whole of our body, with chemical receptors for these scattered throughout all parts of the body, which would revolutionize thinking on emotions. Her research indicates that: the limbic system contains 40 x more receptors than other parts of brain and that receptors are found in blood, bones muscles, immune system and richly in the cells of the digestive tract. This could explain the common experience of touch eliciting an affective response and could also indicate how emotion influences the immune system. If I wish to speculate a little, the peptide receptors in the digestive tract could give us another form of physiological basis for Gerda Boyesen’s theory of emotional digestion: “psycho-peristalsis”. The “belief systems” of spiritual healing, Christian Science, and New Age Holistic Health practices, might have a similar physiological basis, indicated by these receptors. Other implications that can be drawn from research on the neurobiology of trauma indicate many body-oriented linkages and connections; physiological balances, antagonists and compensations:

- ANS shock (Fight/flight or freeze)
- Freezing (or inability to act) tends to lead to greater incidence of PTSD
- Experience is dissociative in nature
- There is a need to regain internal self regulation lost through ANS hyperarousal
- Porges-Ventral vagal nerve theory, which postulates that there is an aspect of PNS that connects viscera to face via the brain stem. So we need use of the face and voice to make contact with others.
- Möberg’s “Oxytocin theory”: Oxytocin seems to be an antagonist of adrenaline.
- Babette Rothschild: “*The Body Remembers*” posits the theory that trauma is stored in the body and cannot be worked with effectively except by body-oriented techniques. Bessel van der Kolk also supports this view.
- Effective work means the prevention of re-traumatisation by the client staying ‘present’ in any somatic experience
- Implicit vs explicit memory: as stress hormones suppress the activity in the hippocampus. This leads to the theory that ‘body memory’ is being stored in the ‘body map’ of the hippocampus.
- Peter Levine’s work on movement interruption and completion being important aspects for trauma work.
- Bodydynamic running: imaginal movement stimulates the same nerve pathways as actual movement. This can lead towards a ‘cure’ for PTSD.

- Beneficial touch therapies indicated through research by Tiffany Field, Eva Reich, and others working (particularly) with de-traumatizing newborn infants.³⁷

In Body-Psychotherapy, we have developed a number of techniques that can help in such situations. However these techniques can be very subtle, more like a craft or an art, than a science or a discipline. They have to be experienced and learnt; they cannot be just taught. These techniques include:

- ❖ **Body awareness:** As an access to emotional state: gestures, facial expressions, posture: attention to subtle changes in clients' respiration, eye contact, dampness, colouring, energy level, etc.
- ❖ **Movement techniques:** Micro-movements: Re-imaging movement for trauma: Developmental movement patterns: Authentic Movement
- ❖ **Methods of touch:** As boundary creation: As facilitating energy flow: As remover of armouring: As facilitating relaxation: As facilitating awareness and sense of self: As balancer of ANS: As antidote to dissociation
- ❖ **Mindfulness:** (all kinds): Physical & dietary health, anti-stress techniques, body-mass ratios, relaxation techniques, environmental factors, etc.
- ❖ **Body as metaphor:** Many emotional words relate to 'the body' – heart-felt, belly laugh, handy, armful, stiff-necked, etc.
- ❖ **Looking after our own bodies:** Is very important and re-empowering as well.³⁸

There are a number of books coming out now that deal with different aspects of Body-Psychotherapy, and there are the activities of about 30 or so training courses in body-psychotherapy throughout Europe, and a similar number, or more, in the USA, with probably another 10-15 others world-wide. Also in the USA, there are 4 Masters degree programs and 1 Doctoral program in Body Psychotherapy or 'Somatic Psychology' as it is called in that context: these are recognized university psychology trainings that specialize in this field. These are building up a significant 'body' of experience, clinical practice and research, even though a lot more needs to be done.

In traditional psychology, we are beginning to realize that the function of the mind is perhaps something more like the cockpit of the supersonic aeroplane, Concorde: with lots of dials, registers, gauges, checks and feedbacks plus one or two relatively simple controls. The cockpit really just tells us what is happening in the body of the plane. The cockpit doesn't fly the plane. It is the body of the plane, the whole plane that flies. The passengers, from the body of the plane, may have just an occasional glimpse of the (very impressive) cockpit: but they are the ones who actually experience the flight, from the body of the plane, and the difference between the start (in London or Paris) and the finish in New York. They are also the *raison d'être* for the plane.

For me, these different perspectives point in the same direction: that when we drop the dualistic approach and adopt a much more inclusive one, we start to see a very different, bigger picture, with all those subtle forces that are really quite significant and maybe even primary. What does this tell any of us about

the role of the body in psychotherapy?

Let me offer you another quotation³⁹ from a very well respected Body-Psychotherapist, a pupil of Wilhelm Reich and one of the founders of 'Bioenergetic Analysis'. He is the author of 12 books, and has been working as a psychotherapist for about 50 years. He is now a very alive 94-year old man: Alexander Lowen. Here he is writing in his recently published autobiography: this is the epilogue.

"In therapy, I do not favor verbal analysis now; I favor working energy. To do good therapy, you must understand human nature. Human nature is a combination of an individual's intricate aspects - ego, sexuality, understanding of his life and how nature is expressed in an individual.

However, the body itself is the most important aspect. ... Going deep into the (body's) energy concept is working energy, not exercising. Doing good therapy is understanding that human nature is the body itself.

Reich said that no one cheats nature, and I believe this fully. Because we are part of nature, if we cheat on nature, we are only cheating ourselves. The danger in the modern world is the megalomania that tells us we can do whatever we dream. This ungrounded statement verges on insanity.

The fulfilment that life and therapy offer is the ability to be fully true to one's self. That self for me is the bodily self, the only self we will ever know.

Trust it, love it and be true to yourself."

So we might ask, why have we even hesitated as a profession to include our bodies in the healing and curative processes that we describe as psychotherapy? Our bodies, in themselves, don't provide many of the answers. Neither do our minds. Separated, they are considerably less than one half of that which makes us human. Only when the circuit is fully complete, can we begin – just begin – to find some really significant answers. Only when we fully include the mind and the body as an inter-functioning whole, as a unity, do we begin to get a sense of something much larger than ourselves: we get a sense of the "circle" in which we sit; or the medium, or the environment in which we operate: the multi-dimensional hologram or the "field" of our existence.

In Body-Psychotherapy, we don't all necessarily touch or manipulate the body. Equally we don't all work with subtle energy fields, or bio-electrical forces. What we, as Body-Psychotherapists, do carry – collectively – is something much more significant, much more fundamental: we are all very aware that the body is mostly just a physical manifestation of something much larger, something almost indefinable; a multi-layered collection of different systems and energetic exchanges. These are all inter-connected in ways that we are not yet fully competent to even name, let alone describe or even correct therapeutically if they go wrong. The synthesis of these connections is also much greater than the sum, and carries many mysteries: the greater 'something' that perhaps allows us to carry a human potential: a spirit or soul. And there is still another layer: the "field" in which all of these systems operate.

Our minds are another, different manifestation of this 'something'. Maybe our human spirit is also another manifestation of this 'other thing'. But we are not limiting ourselves to the care of the mind or the spirit. When we start to look at the bigger picture, and include the "field" in which we operate, I think that we start to find connections to, and a common language with, many other disciplines in science, in therapy, in the arts, and in philosophy. Yet, I believe, the experience of the body is the key connecting factor. With this sort of deep awareness of the body, of our bodies, we can begin to work very effectively, in whatever field we are working in: without it, I believe that we are fundamentally limiting ourselves.

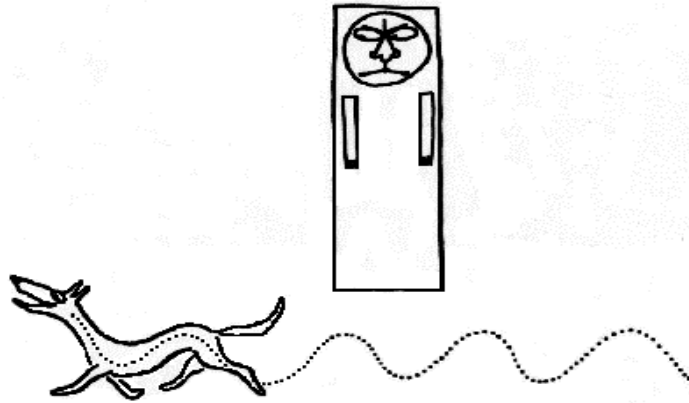
I think this is the change that is happening gradually in all of these professions mentioned: a greater awareness of our unities, and also a greater awareness of the "field" that surrounds us. The field that causes those ripples and resonances in our bodies that we can use as somatic counter-transference, and the "field" that affects our thoughts in a way that we can use as insights. Maybe even many of our illnesses and ailments are even manifestations of disturbances in the field and that we are all "field" therapists at heart (another body metaphor).

So, if something of this perspective or awareness can be used, even in little ways, as a method of helping steer back, or to expand, psychology and psychotherapy towards a more meaningful and exciting profession, science, discipline or craft, then we may really be able to help people, where they are at, with what concerns them, and in ways which really address their concerns: maybe we can also really help change the world a little bit as well. I hope that my exploration of the history and the main dynamics within body-psychotherapy have helped outline some of the connections and possibilities that exist with psychology and other psychotherapies, and 'set the scene' for further explorations and developments.

Courtenay Young is currently President of EABP and a founder member of USABP. He is the author of several articles and chapters about body-psychotherapy, and compiles the EABP Bibliography of Body-Psychotherapy (on CD-ROM). He was a main contributor to the EAP's requirement for the Scientific Validation of body-psychotherapy (accessible on the EABP website: www.eabp.org) He works as a psychotherapist and counsellor in Edinburgh, Scotland. Many of his articles are available on his website: www.courtenay-young.com

Illustrations:

1.



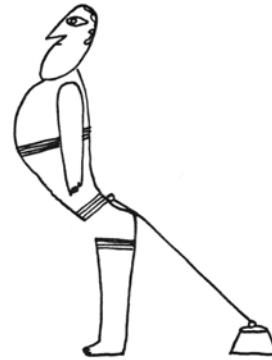
You cannot tolerate any alive expression, any free, natural movement

2.



*Your biological aberration, in the form of rigidity,
has only lasted only six thousand years*

3.



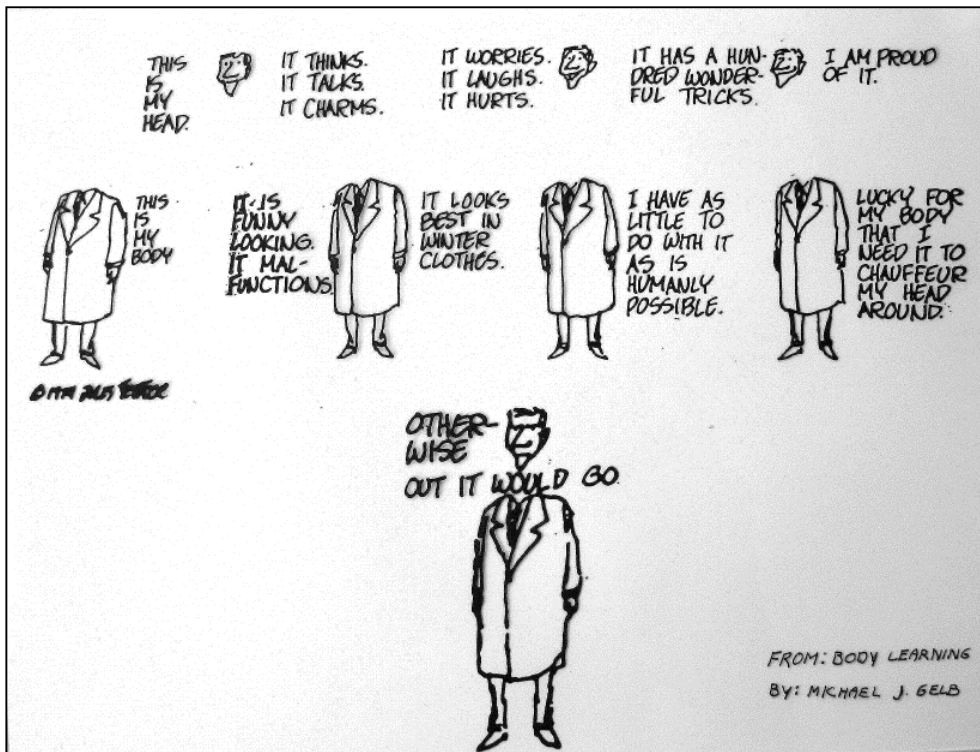
"Homo normalis"

4.

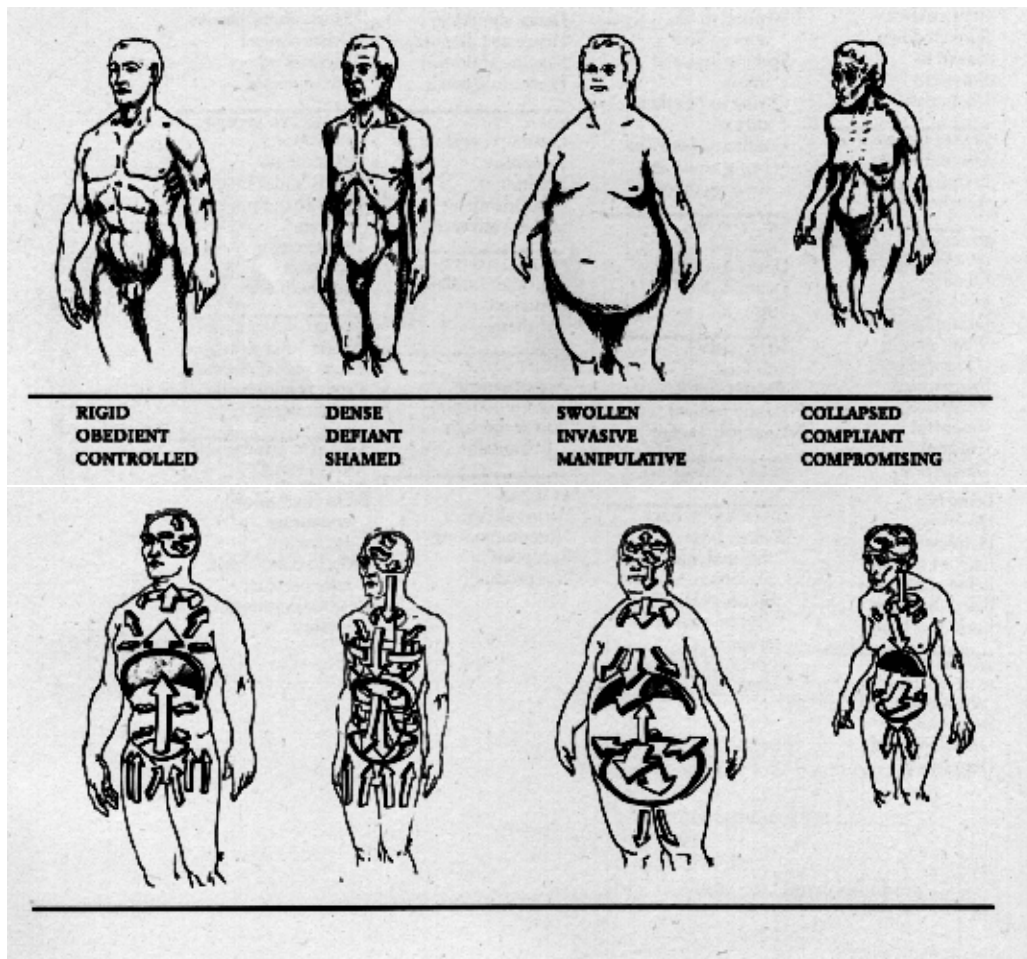


Only you yourself can be your liberator!

5.



6.



Notes & References:

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- ² Totton, Nick: Foreign Bodies: Recovering the history of body-psychotherapy: In Staunton, T. (ed): *Body Psychotherapy*: Hove, East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2002
- ³ A quote from the publicity of the 33rd Winter Workshop of the Group-Analytic Society, Budapest, Jan 2005
- ⁴ The sub-title of a recent UKCP Conference: Cambridge, Sept 2004
- ⁵ Boadella, David: Transference, Resonance and Interference: in *J. of Biodynamic Psychology*, Vol. 3, 1982 (Biodynamic Psychology Publications)
- ⁶ Shaw, Robert: *The Embodied Psychotherapist: The therapist's body story*. Hove, East Sussex: Brunner Routledge, 2003
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- ¹⁰ Adapted from <http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/Mind/Trance/>
- ¹¹ Anna Freud described it as such, even at the time.
- ¹² UKCP Professional Conference: *About A Body: Working with the embodied mind in psychotherapy*, Sept. 2004, Robinson College, Cambridge
- ¹³ Laing, R.D.: *The Divided Self*: London, Penguin, 1969: p.69
- ¹⁴ Illustration 1
- ¹⁵ Illustration 2
- ¹⁶ Damasio, Antonio: "*Descartes'Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*": New York: Avon, 1994: p. 247
- ¹⁷ Iones, G. & T.: *The Mabinogion*: London: Everyman, 1984 and also in Evangeline Walton's four books on the Mabinogion: *The Prince of Annwn*, *The Children of Llyr*; *The Island of the Mighty*; *The Birds of Rhiannon*.
- ¹⁸ McLuhan, T.C.: *Touch the Earth: A self-portrait of Indian existence*: London: Sphere, Abacus, 1972
- ¹⁹ In an introduction to: Balaskas, Arthur: *BodyLife*: London, Book Club Associates, 1977
- ²⁰ Damasio, Antonio: "*Descartes'Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*": NY: Avon, 1994: p. xviii
- ²¹ Illustration 5
- ²² Illustration 6
- ²³ Boadella, David: *Lifestreams: An introduction to Biosynthesis*: London: Routledge, 1987
- ²⁴ Keleman, Stanley: *Emotional Anatomy*: Berkeley: Center Press, 1986
- ²⁵ Maslow, Abraham H.: *Towards a Psychology of Being*: New York: Van Nostrand, 1968
- ²⁶ Goodridge-Dunn & Greene: op. cit.
- ²⁷ Ibid: [Their endnotes) Examples of the perception lineage are James' belief that feelings, desires, and cognitions were essentially perceptions of oneself, Dewey's belief that self awareness is a perception of one's own consciousness, and the Gestaltists' emphasis on the

perceptual field of the individual. Body psychotherapy connects with this line through humanistic, phenomenological, existential, and Gestalt ideas and methods.

²⁸ Ibid: [Their endnotes] Examples of the motivation lineage are psychoanalytic and social theorists emphasizing internal and mental impellers of action, encompassing conative or emotional factors. Body psychotherapy connects with this line through psychoanalysis, along with neo-Freudian and neo-Reichian ideas and methods.

²⁹ Holman, Paul: *Introduction to Psychosomatics*: London: Biodynamic Psychology Publications, 1979

³⁰ Adapted from a PowerPoint presentation on Body-Psychotherapy by Laura Steckler.

³¹ www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/3204/01.html and <http://www.mterdisciplines.org/mirror/paper5>

³² Holman: op. cit.

³³ *Psychotherapy Networker*. Jan/Feb & July/Aug 2004

³⁴ Illustration 4

³⁵ Books like: Talbot, Michael: *The Holographic Universe*; and Wilbur, Ken: *The Holographic Paradigm*; others like: Peat, F. David: *Synchronicity: The bridge between mind and matter*; Siegel, Bernie: *Love, Medicine and Miracles*; Brown, Barbara A.: *Supermind: The ultimate energy*; and Watson, Lyall: *Beyond Supernature: A new natural history of the supernatural*.

³⁶ Pert, Candace: *The Molecules of Emotion*, New York: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster, 1999

³⁷ These ‘conclusions’ are more directions for further body-psychotherapy research indicated by research being done in other areas. They do not “prove” these theories.

³⁸ Adapted from a Powerpoint presentation on Body-Psychotherapy by Laura Steckler.

³⁹ Lowen, Alexander: *Honoring the Body: One’s Home is One’s Body*, Alachua, Florida: Bioenergetics Press, 2004: epilogue, p.243