

1. Historical Origins of Embodied Approaches to Psychotherapy

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The origins of most of the embodied approaches to psychotherapy reside mainly in specific developments at the end of the 19 century with the work of Dr. Pierre Janet (see Boadella, 1997), who was a pupil of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, when Freud was studying there in 1885. Janet later became one of the pre-eminent neurologists of the period. Contrary to common belief, Freud's early therapy took up Janet's embodied focus: for example, Freud would sometimes lie on the floor with his clients, or massage them, and also apply physical pressure (Totton, 2003) – an approach which he of course wholly abandoned in his later work.

There were several other notable attempts to explore the potential of psycho-physical aspects of healing, for instance by Hippolyte Bernheim (1890), William James (1980) and Carl Lange in the 1890s. Michael Heller's (2012) comprehensive book on Body Psychotherapy details such mind-body explorations. However, it was not until the 1920s, in Vienna, that the specific somatic (embodied) aspects in psychotherapy were developed through the work of an unorthodox pupil of Freud's, Wilhelm Reich.

While Freud's own theories moved away from his original concept of libido as a quantitative, body-based sexual energy, Reich maintained this position and made it even more concrete. Reich also emphasised Freud's original view that no neurosis was possible in the presence of a normal healthy sexual life. By 1927, Reich believed he had plainly demonstrated this, and accumulated these theories and findings into his first major book, later entitled *'The Function of the Orgasm'*.

Reich now examined the resistances to analysis that led to frequent 'failures' in therapy. Basing his work on clinical examples, he argued that patients generally defended themselves against the interpretation and exploration of their deeper feelings in a characteristic style, which was identical with the style in which they defended themselves in life. He began to consider these patterns of resistance, thus developing an analysis of character. This he later expounded in his classic (1933) work, *Character Analysis*, but while the first half of this book was and still is widely respected within psychoanalysis, the move in the second half towards body psychotherapy and energy work took him even further away from Freud.

Reich suggested that the analysis needed to: (a) be systematic; (b) have a clear goal; and (c) work directly with the patient's defence mechanisms, usually 'embodied' in the form of 'character-armour' – often muscular rigidities restricting the person to certain (often neurotic) patterns of behaviour and ways of being. These patterns of armouring were based on the frustrated natural impulses of the child at certain key points in their psychosocial development: they embodied both the impulse and its repression. This led Reich to become increasingly interested in how the wider society (and not just the parents) seemed to function to repress the child's instincts. He speculated that neuroses could even be preventable with better informed parenting.

At that time in Vienna there was a lot of social unrest and socialist and communist ideas were very popular. Reich embraced many of these perspectives enthusiastically, even being invited to visit Russia briefly, and he attempted to combine Marxist socio-economic views with psychoanalytic theories. This led to the establishment of free 'sex hygiene' clinics giving help, support and information, which included support for contraception and even appropriate terminations. He

was, in fact, decades ahead of his time. However only a few other analysts embraced these views and Reich found himself being increasingly marginalised. The increasing differences with Freud and developments in psychoanalysis in Germany eventually led Reich to move to Berlin in 1930. Initially, he made good contacts with other German analysts, including Otto Fenichel, who had preceded him from Vienna. Much of his day-to-day work was with the communist-backed Sexpol movement, an extension of his earlier health clinics, paralleled with seeing clients, writing and teaching.

Reich then became involved with a dancer, Elsa Lindenberg, and this relationship eventually broke up his marriage. However, those frenetic three years (1930-33) ended abruptly with the National Socialist 'putsch' and he had to flee Germany, especially having just published, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, another book that was far ahead of its time. Else Lindenberg had trained with Elsa Gindler and was very aware of how emotions are held and liberated vegetatively in the body. It was at least partly through the contact with her way of working (as well as a result of their relationship) that Reich actually started working directly with people's bodies - the real start of Body Psychotherapy (Young, 2010). Based in various temporary residences in Denmark and Sweden from 1933-1934, he started to train people in what he later called, 'Character-Analytic Vegetotherapy', and he eventually settled in Oslo, Norway, from 1934 to 1949, leaving just ahead of the Second World War and the immanent Nazi invasion of Norway. In America, Reich had to start all over again. He supported himself through his therapy work and training, but a lot of his work went into developing his theories about universal 'life energy', which he called 'Orgone'. In 1942, he founded the Orgone Institute and the Orgone Institute Press. Reich's presence as a radical, sex-affirming figure in the conservative 1950's USA led to his persecution and eventual imprisonment. After his death in 1957, several of his trainees, under the leadership of Ellsworth Baker kept quite strictly to his methods within the College of Orgonomy.

Two of Reich's trainees, Alexander Lowen and John Pierrakos, developed a set of therapeutic practices based on his work that they called 'Bioenergetic Analysis'. This form of embodied psychotherapy was popularised by Alexander Lowen's series of very readable books: *The Language of the Body* (1958); *Love and Orgasm* (1965); *The Betrayal of the Body* (1967); *Pleasure* (1970); *Depression and the Body* (1972); *Bioenergetics* (1975); *The Way to Vibrant Health* (1977); *Fear of Life* (1980); etc. Other forms of embodied psychotherapy followed - many acknowledging connections with Reich's work.

The growth of Humanistic Psychology (particularly in America in the 1960s) was responsible for a resurgence of interest in a variety of embodied forms of psychotherapy, known variously as 'Body Psychotherapy' or 'Body-Oriented Psychotherapy' or 'Somatic Psychology' - though these terminologies were not fully adopted until later in the 1990s. The way that Reich's ideas were taken up in this new theoretical context meant that his work became seen as a humanistic approach, rather than the psychoanalytic method on which he himself would have insisted.

Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy, had had analysis with Reich in Berlin in the 1930s, but never really acknowledged Reich's influence on his recognition that the body played a very important and significant role in the development of the whole human psyche.

Charles (Chuck) Kelley (1982), an ophthalmologist, inspired by Reich's work on energy blocks (especially in the Ocular segment), developed a therapy he called 'Radix'. Eva Reich, his daughter, research colleague and a qualified paediatrician, developed a special baby ("butterfly-touch") massage for babies in incubators that she later called "Gentle Bioenergetics".

Stanley Keleman (1986) took up Reich's work on "character armour" and explored this in his seminal book, *Emotional Anatomy*, how the 'armouring' was also present in the soft tissues, like the tubes and spaces of the viscera. He developed what he calls "Formative Psychotherapy", with branches in Solingen, Germany and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Jack Lee Rosenberg took some of his earlier Gestalt training (from Esalen), picked up on Reich's orgasm theories (1973), and integrated them with a number of body therapies (like yoga) and other psychotherapies and developed his "Integrative Body Psychotherapy" (1989), writing books like *Total Orgasm* and *Body, Self and Soul: Sustaining Integration*.

Ron Kurtz (1990), developed what he called, "Hakomi Therapy", which combined body-oriented psychotherapy with a (Buddhist-Native American form of) 'mindfulness practice' that has grown and developed further in the USA and Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Ilana Rubinfeld (1998) later combined Gestalt Therapy with the Feldenkrais Method and the Alexander Technique (both different forms of 'body therapy') into what she called "Rubinfeld Synergy", writing a book called *The Listening Hand*.

And there were several other developments in the field of embodied psychotherapy in the USA: Christine Caldwell, the director of the Somatic Psychology program at Naropa University in Boulder Colorado, and author of *Getting Our Bodies Back* (1996), developed an integration of Body Psychotherapy (Somatic Psychology) and Dance Movement Psychotherapy into what she called, "The Moving Circle" (2002).

Another director at Naropa, Susan Aposhyan, combined Bonny Bainbridge Cohen's "Body-Mind" therapy work into a development that she called *Natural Intelligence* (1998) that later developed into a full-blown *Body-Mind Psychotherapy* (2007).

"Lomi Psychotherapy", developed by Thomas Pope in Santa Rosa, CA, uses another form of mindfulness practice to help ordinary people access various mental health support facilities and resources; whereas other body-oriented techniques (like Postural Integration) edged towards the format of a 'proper' psychotherapy.

In Europe, there were some significantly different developments: the pupils that Reich left behind in Norway resumed their work after the war. Ola Raknes (1971, 2015) was pre-eminent, continuing his work in Character-Analytic Vegetotherapy. He was also the therapist for David Boadella, Gerda Boyesen, and several others. Nic Waal, renowned as a child psychotherapist, had also known Reich in Berlin and then trained with him in Norway.

David Boadella (1973) founded the journal "Energy & Character", which ran for about 40 years and was the only international journal devoted to body-oriented psychotherapy in Europe at that time. In it, people shared their theories, case histories and writings. David Boadella went on to develop his own form of embodied psychotherapy, "Biosynthesis", writing his (1986) book, *Lifestreams* about his work.

Gerda Boyesen had trained with Aadel Bülow-Hansen, a well-known physiotherapist, who had worked with psychiatrist, Trygve Braatøy (another pupil of Reich's), to develop her 'Psychomotoric Psychotherapy', which – in many ways – paralleled Reich's vegetotherapy. Gerda Boyesen went on to develop her own form of neo-Reichian psychotherapy, which she called "Biodynamic Psychotherapy", publishing a lot of her work originally in *Energy & Character* (Boyesen & Boyesen,

1980). When in London, pupils of hers founded the Chiron School of Body Psychotherapy, where a more contemporary form of Body Psychotherapy grew up (Hartley, 2008) and later cross-fertilised with other UK practitioners and with American relational psychoanalysis into a form of “Relational Body Psychotherapy” (Young, 2012b). Another colleague of Boyesen, Jacob Stattman, had developed “Unitive Body- Psychotherapy”, which has become popular in Holland and Germany (Marlock, 1989 & 1991).

Lisbeth Marcher, a Danish physiologist, influenced by Trygve Braatøy and Lillemor Johnsen, developed “Bodynamic Analysis” and her book “*Body Encyclopedia*” (Marcher & Fich, 2010) traces the developmental sequence in which psychological and emotional elements are linked to specific muscles.

In the 1990s, all these disparate elements started to come together under the aegis of the European Association of Body Psychotherapy (EABP) that, with its sister organisation the United States Association of Body Psychotherapy (USABP), now lead developments in this field, publishing jointly the “*International Body Psychotherapy Journal*”. There is also another peer-reviewed journal, “*Body, Dance & Movement in Psychotherapy*”, published by Taylor & Francis.

Today Body Psychotherapy and/or Somatic Psychology are increasingly being accepted as representing a definite mainstream within psychotherapy, parallel to psychodynamic psychotherapy, humanistic & integrative psychotherapy, and cognitive-behavioural therapy. The recent publication (Marlock, *et al.*, 2015) of “*The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology*” also helps to establish these forms of embodied psychotherapy, once considered as quite radical, but today regarded as also coherent, professional, ethical and effective.

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