

5. **The contributions of the embodied psychotherapy movement to developments in the wider field of psychotherapy.**

There was an essential “split” between mind and body that had occurred in psychotherapy, essentially within psychoanalysis (described in previous papers) and especially with the Freud-Reich split in the early 1930s, and then subsequently with the development of several other psychotherapies (e.g. Skinner and behaviourism).

The role of the ‘body’ in psychotherapy became a taboo issue – an “elephant in the room” – for many years until the 1960s. It was not really until the Humanistic Psychology movement arose as a “third force”ⁱ that the ‘body’ was once again included (along with the spirit) in the general field of psychology and psychotherapy.

This is not to say that the founders of Humanistic Psychology (e.g. Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and others) related directly to, or worked with, their patients’ (client’s) bodies, nor used any specific embodied approaches: they just noted that, given the five basic principles of humanistic psychology,ⁱⁱ the body had – up to then – essentially been left out of psychology and psychotherapy. This later inclusion (or recognition) was the start of a ‘subtle’ revolution. It is interesting to note that attention to embodiment developed more quickly and consistently than attention to spiritual aspects: and, whilst we have also seen the development of several transpersonal psychotherapies, they have not carried as much weight as body-oriented aspects.

Fritz Perls, one of the founders of Gestalt therapy (a development of Gestalt psychology), who had also been a patient of Wilhelm Reich in Berlin in the early 1930s, started to work more directly with the body in his therapy work, especially at the Esalen Institute in the 1960s and 1970s. Beside hosting the development of the Esalen Massage & Bodywork Association (EMBA), Esalen also hosted a large number of significant people who later became quite influential in the whole field of embodied psychotherapy, dance movement therapy, and embodied transformational work.

These included, among others: Ilana Rubenfeld, who founded Rubenfeld Synergy (a synthesis of Gestalt psychotherapy, Feldenkrais work, and the Alexander Technique) that has been accepted in the USA as a Body Psychotherapy; Will Schultz (author of *Joy: Expanding Human Awareness* – and a ‘promoter’ of Encounter Groups); Diana Whitmore (who went on to develop Assagioli’s ‘Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy’ in the UK); Stanislav Grof, who developed a transpersonal technique that he calls Holotropic Breathwork; Don Hanlon Johnson, one of the founders of the field of Somatics, author of *Bone, Breath & Gesture*, and *Practices of Embodiment*; Virginia Satir (Esalen’s training director from 1964) developed Family Therapy and the Human Potential Development Program. Charlotte Selver’s Sensory Awareness; Ida Rolf’s Structural Integration; Emilie Conrad, founder of Continuum Movement; and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, founder of Body-Mind Centering; and many others.

Esalen – and similar other ‘New Age’ centresⁱⁱⁱ – became a major force for the new humanistic, transpersonal and body-oriented psychotherapies, which in the 1970s helped to facilitate, first in America and then in Europe, a gradual greater acceptance of the significance of these widely differing embodied approaches, emphasising not only the body in psychotherapy, but also the development of various body-oriented (and psychotherapeutic) approaches that

started to develop more widely. The whole 'New Age' movement – now referred to (by Esalen) to as 'Pioneering Cultural Initiatives' - has grown significantly since then and has eased the wider acceptance of these embodied therapies.

More specifically, in the USA, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, two of Reich's pupils, Alexander Lowen and John Pierrakos, developed another form of embodied psychotherapy, that was later popularised in a number of best-selling books by Lowen. They called this Bioenergetic Analysis, which became much more widely known than the more purist Reichian tradition, which still used Reich's term 'Orgonomy'. A great number of people were influenced by Lowen's books, written over a 40-year period, and have thus come to appreciate the importance of the body in psychotherapy.

In Europe, David Boadella had in 1970 founded the journal Energy & Character, which became a pre-internet conduit for those interested in body-oriented approaches. He subsequently developed his own form of Body-Oriented Psychotherapy, that he calls "Biosynthesis" and published the definitive (1987) book of his work, Lifestreams. Also in the 1970s, Gerda Boyesen (a psychology patient of Ola Raknes and a physiotherapy pupil of Aadel Bülow-Hansen) began to teach her own form of body-oriented psychotherapy in London, Biodynamic Psychotherapy. People influenced by these two, and by other groupwork initiatives, started Quaesitor in London in the 1970s, which helped to develop into the Human Potential Movement.

There had been a very strong Norwegian tradition of body-oriented techniques and their influence into psychiatry, physiotherapy, child psychiatry and psychotherapy, dating back to Reich's pre-WW2 work (1934-1939) that is still alive and strong today. It developed primarily from the post-WW2 work of Ola Raknes, Nic Waal, and Reich's 'second wife' Elsa Lindenberg. Trygve Braatøy was another eminent Norwegian psychiatrist, who had been strongly influenced by Reich and who also collaborated with Aadel Bülow-Hansen. Lillemor Johnsen (1970), another physiotherapist with an interest in Reich's work, subsequently influenced Lisbeth Marcher and her body-oriented psychotherapy, 'Bodydynamics'. Bjørn Blumenthal (and others) have carried forward this reasonably well established tradition of integration and collaboration with Reich's Character Analytic Vegetotherapy, work.

Michael Heller has written about "The Golden Age of Psychotherapy in Norway" (2007a, 2007b) and he describes how a large number of psychoanalysts and psychotherapists have since picked up on the body-oriented themes (inherent in Reich's work) of somatic countertransference (Lewis, 1984; Samuels, 1985; Ross, 2000; Stone, 2006; Pallaro, 2007; Orbach, 2009; Carroll, 2010; Gubb, 2014) and "embodied empathy" (Scheflen, 1964; Gendlin, 1981; Cox & Theilgaard, 1987; Erskine *et al.*, 1999; Pearmain, 1999; Sletvold, 2015).

There were also several other neo-Reichian 'spin-offs', especially in America: Charles Kelley had developed his own form of an embodied approach, Radix; and Ron Kurtz developed his embodied (and somewhat transpersonal) approach, which he called Hakomi. All of these had an increasing impact throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s in the field of psychotherapy, in general.

Many other people in America, not connected to Body Psychotherapy, had also been strongly influenced by Reich's work: these included Frank Zappa, John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Itzak Perlman, Fritjov Capra, Saul Bellow, Alan Ginsberg, Norman Mailer and William Burroughs (Mannion, 2002), as well as the *New Yorker* artist, William Steig, who married Reich's

daughter; the actor Orson Bean, who wrote *Me and the Orgone*; and the singer Kate Bush. Many of these people helped to popularise Reich's work after his death.

Another concept – that of “embodied cognition” (Wilson, 2002) – which is a belief that many features of human cognition are shaped by aspects of the body outside of the brain – is increasingly being accepted. These features of cognition include: high-level mental constructs (such as concepts and categories) as well as aspects of the motor system, the sensory systems (perceptions), interactions with the environment (situatedness), and built-in ontological assumptions. All this fundamentally challenges cognitivism, computationalism and Cartesian dualities and depends on insights drawn from recent research in psychology, linguistics, cognitive sciences, artificial intelligence, dynamic systems, robotics, and neuro-psychobiology. The (re-)establishment of the ‘authenticity’ of the whole range of such bodily experiences – combined with the recent development of neuroscience – has given a considerable boost to these embodied aspects of psychotherapy.

We have already seen in previous papers how bodily-oriented techniques can be integrated or synthesised with a psychotherapy method or modality to form a body-oriented psychotherapy: for example, Postural Integrative Psychotherapy, or Rubenfeld Synergy. Other ways in which the influence of the embodied psychotherapies has contributed to other forms of psychotherapy include:

- (a) A group of French (Geneva-based) psychoanalysts (Guimón, 1997), many of whom were influenced by De Ajuriaguerra, who developed a particular form of relaxation psychotherapy, used in psychoanalysis and later extended into ‘psychomotor therapy’. A similar development was the Jacobsen Relaxation method, also used by psychoanalysts to amplify body awareness (Fortini & Tissot, 1997).
- (b) The Autogenic Training technique, developed originally by Schultz for people with hypertension, has since evolved into a recognised form of psychotherapy, prominent in Austria, Germany and Spain, and this has also developed a bodily awareness technique they call the ‘autogenic state’ (de Rivera, 1997);
- (c) Sophrology, a study of harmony between body and mind, similar in some respects to phenomenology, developed originally by Alfonso Cadcedo, a Columbian neuro-psychiatrist in the 1960s, and then furthered by Abrezol in the late-1960's to enhance the performance of sports-persons, with remarkable success.

One of the major contributions to the field of embodied Gestalt psychotherapy (post Fritz Perls) has been the work of Jim Kepner with his book, *Gestalt Body Process Psychotherapy* (1993), and also with the significance of body-oriented work in the healing of trauma (1995). Ruella Frank, another Gestalt psychotherapist, endorsed and extended this movement, especially in her 2001 book, *Body of Awareness*, which looks especially at developmental models. William Cornell (2015) has also extended his body-oriented form of Transactional Analysis into psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, contributing to those mentioned in the final paragraph.

In addition, the aspect of work with trauma has also been paralleled more generally: by Babette Rothschild (2000), with what she calls Somatic Trauma Therapy; by Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing work in understanding and healing trauma (1997, 2010, 2015); by Pat Ogden's Sensorimotor Psychotherapy and her books (2006, 2014); and by Bessel van der Kolk's (1999, 2015) ground-breaking work, linking brain research and body-oriented

psychotherapy.

Finally, it is clear that a significant branch of psychoanalytical psychotherapy, called 'Relational Psychoanalysis', has whole-heartedly taken up body-oriented work, as Anderson's (2010) compilation indicates. Work by Cornell (2010), Bucci (2010); Eldredge & Cole (2010); Pacifici (2010); Gerbarg (2010); Bass (2010); and Newman (2010) all show how psychoanalysts have brought bodily experience back into their practice. In addition, other analysts who have utilised bodily experience in their treatment relationship are: Knoblauch (2010), and Nebbiosi & Federici-Nebbiosi (2010); and analysts who use their body as both subject and object are, Petrucelli (2010) and Harris & Sinsheimer (2010). There are further examples in Aron & Anderson's (1998) collection, particularly in the contributions by Hopenwasser, Looker and Balamuth that extend and enhance the theme of the importance of both the analyst's and the analysand's somatic experiences in the relational matrix. These two edited books, which have come out of the 'postdoc' community of New York University's Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis program, at last bridge the 100-year gap between psychoanalysis and the body.

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ⁱ "Third Force" - <http://www.simplypsychology.org/humanistic.html>

ⁱⁱ **The five basic principles of Humanistic Psychology:**

- Human beings, as human, supersede the sum of their parts. They cannot be reduced to components.
- Human beings have their existence in a uniquely human context, as well as in a cosmic ecology.
- Human beings are aware, and are aware of being aware - i.e., they are conscious. Human consciousness always includes an awareness of oneself in the context of other people.
- Human beings have the ability to make choices and therefore have responsibility.

Human beings are intentional, aim at goals, are aware that they cause future events, and seek meaning, value, and creativity.

ⁱⁱⁱ **New Age Centers:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Age_communities

