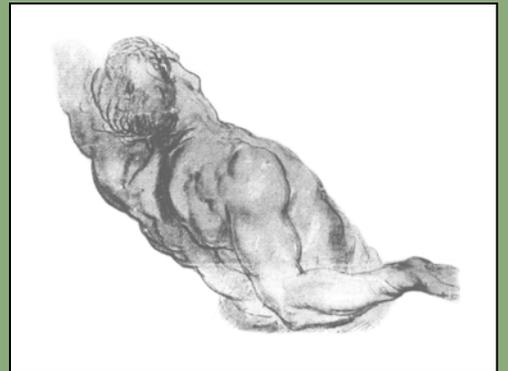


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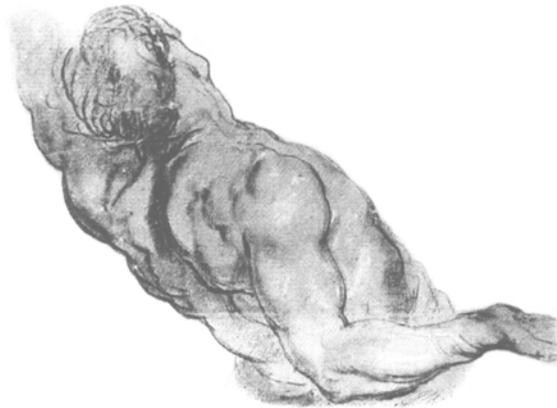


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A Tribute to David Boadella and  
*Energy & Character*



Silvia Specht Boadella



David Boadella

# The Historical Development of the Concept of Motoric Fields

David Boadella, D.Sc.hon, M.Ed., B.A.

## Keywords

Hypnotherapeutic tradition - Ideodynamic hypothesis - Imagery - Movement - Historical development

The emphasis on the body and its movements can be traced back to Mesmer. One hundred years later, in the hypnotherapeutic tradition which followed in his wake, Hippolyte Bernheim developed his "ideodynamic hypothesis" of the link between internal imagery and movement. In this tradition William James developed in 1890 his "ideomotor" hypothesis, linking the voluntary actions of the muscles with kinaesthetic imagery of the movement intentions. James was one of the founders of the affect-psychology.

The body schema was studied in the same period as James, at the end of the last century by Bonnier, in France, and Wernicke, in Germany. These psychophysicists were strong influences on Pierre Janet, who put a very strong emphasis in his work on movement and on kinaesthetic sense, basing his work on a century of earlier studies of proprioception and muscle tone. Janet worked directly with muscle tone, and with re-educating the movements of his patients. In 1928 he distinguished sensori-motoric processes as being governed by centripetal and centrifugal movements, and also linked the whole basis of personality to the sensorimotor developments in the womb. Janet had an indirect influence on Paul Schilder, who studied the body image and published his classic book on this theme in 1923. Schilder was in the same tradition from Wernicke, through Liepmann's concept of the "movement plan", and through the work of Henry Head and Holmes, in England, who first used the term body schema". The terms "motor field" and "motor image" were used by the Russian psychophysicist Bernstein, who also used the term "muscle schemata" in 1967.

Paul Schilder was the teacher of Wilhelm Reich, who developed in 1935 his concepts of the expressive language of the living on the basis of vegetotherapy, influenced by his second wife, Elsa Lindenberg, who was a pupil of the movement therapists Elsa Gindler, and Rudolf Laban. Reich's concept of "muscular armouring" showed that when chronic muscular defences were dissolved, spontaneous affective movements occurred.

In 1932, at the same time that Reich was developing his characteranalytic studies of the body and its movements, Bartlett, following Head's work on the body schema, developed his theory of organismic functioning, in which "postural schemata" were fundamental organizers of human behaviour.

Influenced by Janet, Piaget developed in 1952 his sensorimotor theory of intelligence, in which cognition develops in intimate association with movement patterns. Although in his genetic epistemology Piaget did not lay much stress on the emotional components in movement, in 1953-4, at the Sorbonne, Piaget developed the concept of "affective schemata" linked to the sensorimotor patterns. Ulric Neisser, in 1976 influenced by Bartlett and Piaget studied "action patterns" of anticipation, showing how the past is carried forward into the future through motoric schemas that direct movements and exploratory activities.

Concepts of body schema, and motoric schema, passed from Bartlett and James into Gestalt psychology, in the work of Koffka, and Goldstein these together with the work of Schilder, were strong influences on the "sensory-tonic" theory of perception developed by Werner and Wapner, in 1949, when they described the dynamic properties of the "sensoric-tonic field" of the body. In this gestalt tradition, Arthur Koestler developed in 1967 his theory of "motor hierarchies" of influence on behaviour. These various traditions have been very thoroughly documented by the Dutch psychologist Tiemersma, in his classic work on the Body Schema and the Body Image, and he most up to date summary of this work in relation to motility, is given by Gallacher.

In 1970, when *Energy & Character* was founded, I described the work of Neville Coghill with the kinaesthetic rhythms of the fetus in the womb as one of the primary lifestreams governing all human experience and expression. The importance of prenatal life on movement patterns had been emphasised by Pierre Janet, in 1928. In 1977 I published -, article on gravity muscles and heart feelings, in which basic flexor and extensor movement patterns were described in relation to the organization and expression of emotionality and their fundamental importance all therapeutic work with the body was demonstrated. In 1976 Erich Blechschmidt published his book on the origins of life in the womb, and described primary embryodynamic fields of influence on the tissues, which became a prototype for the description of the motoric fields which I developed together with Silvia Boadella more specifically from 1986 onwards for all our Biosynthesis Training Programmes.

In 1981 Rupert Sheldrake published the first version of his theory of morphic resonance, and influenced by Koestler related this to motor hierarchies, in his second book, published in 1987.

During 1986, Margaret Mahler published her discovery in her studies of infants of "schemas of a practical, preverbal, sensomotoric and senso- affective nature". Mahler's description of the psychological birth of the self is closely supported by detailed observations of the somatic developmental processes of infant development.

Following the work of Piaget and Neisser and Koffka, Greenberg, Rice and Elliott, in 1993, developed their theory of emotional schemas as "action structures" governing behavior. The Swiss psychologist, Klaus Grawe, basing himself in this tradition, and very solidly on Greenberg, Rice and Elliott, developed a comprehensive theory of emotional, and motivational schemata, in which the integration of cognition, perception, and emotion were emphasised, but in which the motoric components fell rather into the background.

Building on Piaget's (1953-4) connection of affect with sensorimotor schemas, Daniel Stern, in 1979, reinforces the fact that the three aspects always occur together: the human being is governed by affecto-sensory-motoric schemas. Stern introduced also the concept of "motoric memory" and of the "motor self". Building on the work of Stern, and Mahler, and from original work with infants at the Salpetriere clinic, where Piere Janet had worked a century earlier George Downing has shown in 1996 the importance of "affecto motoric schemas" in body psychotherapy. He has confirmed to me that he sees his concept as closely parallel to my concept of motoric fields.

#### Glossary of 40 terms related to Motoric Fields

Action patterns, Neiser, 1976.  
 Action structures, Greenberg, Rice & Elliot, 1993.  
 Affectomotoric schemas, Stern, 1979, Downing, 1996.  
 Affective schemata, Piaget, 1954  
 Affective-cognitive schemas, Ciompi, 1982.  
 Body image, Schilder, 1923.  
 Bodyego, Freud 1923, Federn 1926.  
 Body percept, Wapner and Werner, 1965.  
 Body schema, Bonnier, 1905, Head and Holmes, 1911.  
 Body subject, Merleau Ponty, 1945.  
 Embryodynamic fields, Blechschmidt, 1976.  
 Emotional schemes, Greenberg, Rice & Elliot, 1993.  
 Ideodynamic principle, Bernstein, 1886.  
 Ideomotor principle, James, 1890.  
 Kinaesthetic sense, Bastian, 1866.  
 Kinogram, Downing, 1998.  
 Morphic resonance, Sheldrake, 1981.  
 Moverrient plan, Liepmann, 1900.  
 Movement images, Munk, 1890.  
 Movement attitude, Janet, 1929.  
 Motor field, Bernstein, 1967.  
 Motoric field, Boadella, 1987.  
 Motor image, Bernstein, 1967.  
 Motor hierarchy, Koestler, 1967  
 Motoric memory, Stern, 1985.  
 Motoric self, Stern, 1985.  
 Motor scheme, Tiemersma, 1981.  
 Motivational schemata, Grawe, 1998.  
 Muscle schemata, Bernstein, 1967.  
 Muscle sense, Bell, 1826.  
 Muscular armouring, Reich, 1933.  
 Proprioceptive field, Sherrington, 1906.  
 Proprioceptive person, Wallon, 1954.  
 Postural images, Bonnier, 1893.  
 Postural model, Head and Holmes, 1911.  
 Postural schemata, Bartlett, 1932.  
 Sensori-motoric schemas, Piaget, 1952.  
 Sensori-affective schemas, Mahler, 1986.  
 Sensori-tonic field, Wapner and Werner, 1949.  
 Somatopsyché, Wernicke, 1893.  
 Somatic memory, Heimann, 1989.  
 Somatopsychosocial fields, Swiss Charta, 1999.  
 Tonic-emotional process, Wallon, 1954.

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#### Biography

**David Boadella** (born 1931), B.A., M.Ed., D.Sc.hon, Psychotherapist SPV, UKCP and ECP. Studied education, literature and psychology. Trained in character-analytic vegetotherapy. Founder of Biosynthesis. He has spent many years in psychotherapeutic practice. He holds lectures worldwide, and is the author of numerous books and articles. He has been publishing the journal "Energy & Character" since 1970. In 1995 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the "Open International University of Complementary Medicine". A selection of David Boadella's books: "Befreite Lebensenergie / Lifestreams" (Kösel / Routledge), "Wilhelm Reich: The evolution of his work" (Arkana).

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