

## BOOK REVIEWS

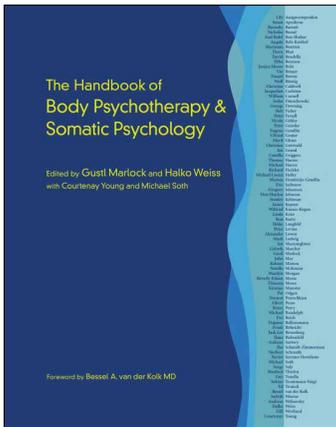
### The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology

Edited by Gustl Marlock and Halko Weiss

Additional editors for the English version Courtenay Young and Michael Soth

North Atlantic Books, 2015

#### Reviews by Christopher Walling and Katrin Stauffer



#### Review by Christopher Walling

*“To see a world in a grain of sand.  
And a heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand.  
And eternity in an hour.”*  
- William Blake

It was over a decade ago, during a plenary address at the American Psychological Association (APA) annual congress, that the American psychologist and developmental neuroscience researcher Dr. Allan Schore posited that contemporary psychology was undergoing a paradigm shift from the explicit, analytical, conscious, verbal, rational left hemisphere, to the implicit, synthetic, integrative, unconscious, nonverbal, bodily-based right hemisphere (Schore, 2009). Only three years prior to that speech, the bodily-based psychotherapy text *Handbuch der Körperpsychotherapie* was published by Schattauer in 2006, and nearly half a dozen of those chapters would later comprise the *Handbook of Body Psychotherapy & Somatic Psychology* published by North Atlantic books in late 2015 (Marlock & Weiss, 2015). The handbook is edited by Gustl Marlock & Halko Weiss, with Courtenay Young & Michael Soth, and is a virtual magnum opus that seeks to explore the historical and contemporary themes within neuroscience, relationality, mindfulness, and globalization as they intersect body-centered psychotherapies. With 950 pages, roughly half a million words spread over 94 chapters and 60 authors, these

editors and their respective authors have accomplished a historical feat. The text is now reportedly being translated back into German, and I hope to see future editions of this tome in years to come.

Over the last couple of years since its release, I have managed to flag, highlight, pinch, cite, explore, ruminate, and celebrate much of the handbook's contents with great delight. It is divided into twelve sections that range from the genealogical, the ontological, and the methodological to the phenomenological. It bravely explores the historical roots of the body psychotherapy traditions, in which the editors valiantly trace the lineages of the field in a maze of strips, lines, and lineage that will almost certainly invite many a late-night discourse among historians and practitioners. I could only imagine the types of discussions, controversies, and diplomacies required to even attempt to draw these trees, which ultimately look more like an embodied periodic table of the elements than a historical genealogy. Both the European and American body psychotherapy congresses in 2018 sought the handbook editors' permissions to display these charts, and often the respective congress attendees beheld them in awe, as if they were viewing a Jackson Pollock painting.

There are three primary sections that, in my review of the textbook, make truly remarkable contributions to the literature in body psychotherapy: Methodological Foundations (Section V), Clinical Aspects of the Therapeutic Process (VII), and Functional Perspectives in Body Psychotherapy (VIII). These sections are at the center of the handbook and comprise the heart of the material, with contributions from previous United States Association for Body Psychotherapy (USABP) Lifetime Achievement Award recipients including Albert Pesso, Peter Levine, and Stanley Keleman. Marlock and Weiss (2015) acknowledged in their introductions to these sections their limitations in the endeavor, while at the same time laying down solid expositions into the common characteristics of body psychotherapy as "experience-oriented, experience-activating and experience-intensifying." They go on to point out: "the efficacy of body psychotherapy is due precisely to the fact that great attention is paid to the multitude of inputs, the different levels of awareness, and the fine interactions of these different components." (p. 390) The editors go on to exhibit great finesse when they defer to the authors' voices to help illustrate the methods, praxis, and functional perspectives when they state, "It is quite difficult to organize this methodological material in a sensible manner due to the enormous diversity in theory and practice, along with the divergences among different approaches and schools." (p. 530) One particular chapter that captured both my affection and my imagination was from Dawn Bhat and founding editor of the *International Body Psychotherapy Journal*, Jacqueline A. Carleton, where they explored the role of the autonomic nervous system in body psychotherapy. As they note in their chapter: "The convergence of phenomenological experience with empirical verification is a developing interest within the field of body psychotherapy," and go on to say, "Ongoing collaborative efforts of the European Association for Body Psychotherapy and the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy that include the development of research initiatives to provide greater evidence for some of the theories and clinical techniques of the various institutes..." (p. 628) Indeed, as Bhat & Carleton have pointed out, the current Board of the USABP in particular has committed its resources and energy towards this very aim with the appointment of one of the world's preeminent pioneers in psychophysiology, 2018 USABP Pioneer Award recipient Dr. Stephen Porges, as the new USABP Director of Research. Dr. Porges was cited several times throughout the entire text, and certainly in

Bhat & Carleton's chapter. He is the first scientist in history to use heart rate variability as both a response and individual difference variable in psychophysiological research. He is the creator of polyvagal theory, which has informed multiple body psychotherapies.

The editors chose to aptly end the handbook with a section on the existential and spiritual dimensions of body psychotherapy, which landed their rich explorations with authors such as Linda Krier and Jessica Britt from the Diamond Approach (A.H. Almaas), sections from Halko Weiss on mindfulness, and a chapter by Daniel Brown (Harvard Medical School) on Tibetan Buddhist and Bön traditions' use of the body. These chapters were best suited for a nice sunny Sunday afternoon in my garden, allowing the authors' concepts of embodied imagination and transformation to help connect me (the reader) into perhaps the one thing that attracts most to body psychotherapies – its inherent loving kindness. One such chapter discussed similarly the emergence of “the highest levels of realization.” It was Daniel Brown who noted that in early Mahayana Buddhism, “serious discussion was given to changes in the very structure of the body as a consequence of enlightenment.” (p. 926) Brown discussed how the emptiness of the body ultimately becomes “lively awareness” manifesting as “body,” insubstantial yet occurring as the pure energy of manifestation.” (p. 923) These chapters evoked the kind of stillness and potency that many body psychotherapists can feel at the end of some of our most transformative sessions. Pointers to the very embodied medicine that we are all students of, and humbled soma-nautical explorers within.

*The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy & Somatic Psychology* is a handbook indeed, and will undoubtedly become a treasured contribution to the libraries of somatic psychology departments, body psychotherapy institutes, and the majority of somatic practitioners. On behalf of the board of the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy, our staff, and the hundreds of clinicians and practitioners who comprise our membership, I wish to both thank and congratulate the authors on their contributions to this invaluable work. Your scholarship and commitment to the field of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology are forever captured in this remarkable achievement within the history of the field.



**Chris Walling, PsyD, MBA, SEP** is a licensed clinical psychologist, and an active leader in the biobehavioral sciences. His work integrates the developmental, neurobiological, and somatic aspects of the lifespan. Dr. Walling is President of the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy, the hub of somatic psychology, and Associate Deputy Editor for the *International Body Psychotherapy Journal*. His clinical focus in the behavioral sciences examines the intersections of neuro-psychoanalysis, affect regulation, and body psychotherapy. Dr. Walling is a Clinical Associate at the New Center for Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles, California. He currently serves on the Scientific Advisory Board for the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University, and as Chairman of Education for the Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation. Dr. Walling maintains a private practice in Los Angeles, California.

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*Book Reviews continued . . .*

## **The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology**

**Review by Kathrin Stauffer**

I cannot express enough how impressed I am with this book. Nearly 100 chapters, and 1000 pages, covering every possible aspect of body psychotherapy. So many excellent authors, theories of the person, of therapeutic change, and of the mind-body relationship. So many different approaches to therapeutic work. And all this, gathered together to represent the state of a profession that is, by now, firmly established in the landscape of mental health treatment options on both sides of the Atlantic. I feel like a second-year trainee who suddenly realizes the magnitude of the world she has sleepwalked into, and is completely wowed.

It seems to me that the book offers a well-measured amount of structure, so that readers can easily orient to the quantity of material, while still allowing the sheer exuberant abundance and diversity of the field to remain palpable. If the book were to emphasize too much diversity, we might look like a hodgepodge profession that doesn't know what it is doing. If it were to attempt some sort of unification, we would probably all feel misrepresented. What a challenging undertaking this must have been! And when so much is continually changing, what a challenge to present our profession at one point in time.

Although the Handbook was originally published in German in 2003, it is clear that the editors of the current English edition loved revisiting it. This English version appears a decade and a half later, when body psychotherapy has become more sophisticated, more self-confident, and bolder at linking to concepts from other modalities. The increased maturity and pride of our profession is visible throughout. The new edition gives more space to the supportive plausible narrative provided by advances in neuroscience, and to the fantastic quality of the diverse North American approaches. The result inevitably positions body psychotherapy further in the mainstream of psychotherapy.

Section III, which addresses the relationship between body and mind, was my favourite. In their introduction, Gustl Marlock and Halko Weiss write that, given that we live in a culture that traditionally privileges the mind over the body, and that people still feel that what is 'just' in the mind is somehow not real, the body-mind issue must be considered and addressed by every body psychotherapist. This section opens with a chapter by David Boadella who presents the body-mind relationship as a developmental process, and differentiates the material we can access through the body from the material we can access cognitively. I hugely enjoyed his case vignette, which really brought the chapter to life.

Next came a chapter by Alexander Lowen, who maps the body-mind relationship firmly onto Reich's classical internal conflict model, and hence frames it as a neurotic primary construct. This was followed by two chapters that engage the body as unconscious mind and as an access route to the unconscious mind. The first of these, by Ian Grand, explores the processes of the physical body that are by definition unconscious, and traces a path through the also largely unconscious mental processes recognizably derived from the body but increasingly recognized as mental structures. The second, by Marilyn Morgan, pulls together an array of theories and perspectives, weaving them together into a coherent whole with an elegance that is a joy to read. I greatly appreciated the value of these two chapters that address the implicit assumptions made about by the psychotherapy profession as a whole.

In the next chapter, Stanley Keleman wonderfully describes the porous, soft, receptive slowness, and deep resonances that is an ageing body at its best. It is easily the most moving account I have read on the mature body. The following chapter, by Frank Röhrich, is a radical change of gear in its rather objectifying technical language about body schemata and body image in the context of a psychiatric view of mental illness. Next comes a chapter by Eugene Gendlin and Marion Hendricks-Gendlin on the bodily felt sense as a central concept in their approach. It was lovely to read about the emphasis Gendlin places on the felt sense as the edge of our awareness where change can happen. The penultimate chapter, by Halko Weiss and Michael Harrer, engages with the often-heard notion that somehow the body tells 'the truth' – in contrast to the mind, which can lie. This is beautifully explored, with compassion and sensitivity, and feels almost like a therapy session.

Finally there is a chapter, again by Ian Grand, on the cultural context in which the body is seen and experienced. It left me with the impression that this particular field is still in its infancy and that we have much to learn.

Throughout, the first rate quality of the writing stands out. I am left with the clear take-home message that the *Handbook* represents the best that body psychotherapy currently has to offer.




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