

Identity in Transformative Times



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Before 1989, the word *psychotherapy* was dangerous in then communist Bulgaria, and psychotherapy didn't exist; it was perceived as a capricious and detrimental idea, and one of the many shortcomings of the Western bourgeois world. Thirty-five years later, Sofia, the capital of now democratic Bulgaria, welcomed more than 450 psychotherapists and specialists in the field of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology from five continents to the **18th International Congress of the European Association for Body Psychotherapy**.

The Congress was dedicated to exploring what happens to identity in transformative times, looking closely at its construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction.

We are living at an increasingly fast pace. The avalanche of changes around us can be overwhelming as well as inspiring. New technologies, pandemics, virtual reality, globalization, multiculturalism, wars, crises, innovation, new connections, and spiritual revolution provide challenges and opportunities. Today, it is probably harder than ever to answer the basic human existential question: Who am I?

Change has become a constant, and the Congress gave presenters an opportunity to answer critical questions.

How successful are we in keeping up with changing times? How does this racing sense of time influence us? Are we changing? How do we change? Are we able to change at all?

Are we becoming better or worse as humans? Are we more enlightened, or narrowed in perspective, attitude, movement, and experience?

What happens to our identity? What does it mean to be human today? Who do we aspire to be, and what will we choose for our future human direction?

The 2023 Congress in Sofia was an immense success. It was the first EABP live event at that scale since 2018. And it fulfilled its mission to create a warmhearted, inspiring, meaningful, and joyful environment where community members had the opportunity to share knowledge and techniques with members and professionals from allied health professions.

Preparing for the Congress was nothing short of an extraordinary journey, marked by 16 months of relentless hard work, more than 3,000 emails, countless calls and messages, and many sleepless nights spent by the Congress Planning Committee. For the event to happen the way it did, tremendously appreciated by everyone present, the involvement of more than 50 volunteers – all of them former or current trainees at the Bulgarian Institute of Neo-Reichian Analytical Psychotherapy – was invaluable.

Every ounce of effort was undoubtedly worth it, and allowed participants to experience more than 150 hours of General Assembly meetings, pre-Congress workshops, keynote speeches, workshops, discussion panels, the Science and Research Symposium, and recreational activities. All this was intertwined with typical Bulgarian hospitality and unique Bulgarian folk music, dance, culture, and food, reflecting the special warmth and richness of southeast Europe. Both organizers and participants left the 18th Congress satisfied that the high quality content contributed to the development of our profession in terms of theory, practice, and clinical tools.

In This Issue...

We open with four pioneering, dynamic keynote presentations from the EABP 2023 SO-FIA CONGRESS. Looking at the transitional nature of our times through the eyes a futurologist *Mariana Todorova*, *Madlen Algafari* asks the prominent question that is on most of our minds: How will we humans adapt to the technologies we are creating? In their conversation on **Technology and Transhumanism: Can We Humans Adapt to the Exponentially Advancing Technologies?** the issue that repeatedly surfaced revolves around whether, as biological organisms who develop in a linear mode, we will be able to integrate technologies that develop in an exponential mode ... and what the fate of body psychotherapy may be in such a landscape.

In **Unraveling the Tapestry of Well-Being: The Intricate Dance of Mental Health and Epigenetics**, *Bela Vasileva*, *George Miloshev*, and *Milena Georgieva* examine the central role of epigenetics in the development, progression, and treatment of mental health disorders. The emergent insights propose that epigenetic modifications function as a pivotal bridge that highlights the central role of the body in mental health, and emphasizes the relevance of body psychotherapy and bottom-up modalities.

In the first experiment of its kind to be performed in psychology, and one of the first with humans, *Ilina Iordanova*, *Roumiana Tsenkova*, *Kolio Iordanov*, *Daniel Todorov*, *Alexander Stoilov*, *Shogo Shigeoka*, and *Madlen Algafari* introduce us to the new discipline of NIR (Near Infrared Spectroscopy) and aquaphotomics. In **The Effects of Body Psychotherapy on the Body's Water Matrix as seen by NIR Spectroscopy and Aquaphotomics**, they

show how the use of spectroscopy to examine changes in our water molecules offers a new, non-invasive method of deciphering the structural changes in our clients' water matrices. This approach gives us a new assessment tool to measure before-and-after changes in our clients.

Elya Steinberg's article, **The Music of Attuned Touch and Epigenetics from a Body Psychotherapy Perspective**, explores the potential of attuned touch to induce epigenetic modifications in the context of body psychotherapy. She shows how touch is an important approach in working with regressive experiences and clarifies the powerful impact of its corrective emotional potential from the micro level of epigenetic changes to the macro level of the holistic organismic perspectives of bodily systems, such as muscular, digestive, respiratory, nervous, endocrine, and immune systems.

The **Research** base for somatic psychological interventions that effectively treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been limited. **Brainspotting: A Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder** by *LeeAnn M. Horton, Cynthia Schwartzberg, Cheryl D. Goldberg, Frederick G. Grieve, and Lauren E. Brdecka*, introduces Brainspotting as an effective treatment for PTSD, as well as for anxiety and depression symptom reduction.

The conventional Dohsa-hou clinical method involves face-to-face support of client movement using direct body contact. Due to COVID-19, online interactive and non-interactive approaches were developed. **Health Dohsa-hou: Mind-Body Health Enhancement Effects of Interactive and Non-interactive Video Viewing** by *Yasuyo Kamikura, Ichiro Okawa, and Hirohito Mashiko*, compares the psychological effects of online interactive work and non-interactive video-viewing, giving interesting insights to those of us who, since COVID, have increased our online work.

Our **Clinical Practice** section turns to depth psychology. **Archetypes, Ego States, and Subpersonalities: An Exploration of Diverse Expression Within Somatic Awareness** by *Sharon G. Mijares*, supports the hypothesis that since ego states, subpersonalities, and archetypal influences manifest somatically, a combination of somatic and psychodynamic approaches can deepen the reach of body-mind integrative communication. Continuing this theme of depth integration, **Transformation in Body Psychotherapy: Conscious States and the Future** by *Luisa Barbato*, reminds us that the key concepts of a body psychotherapy therapeutic path must incorporate all personal planes – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

In **Interdisciplinary Approach**, *Chloe Barrett-Page's* **Belonging to Earth: Body Psychotherapy, the Seasonal Attunement Model, and Reclaiming Our Wild** explores how body psychotherapists can support clients' sense of belonging to the natural world. Considering what multidisciplinary fields are saying about the importance of the relationship between humans and Earth, she presents her Seasonal Attunement Model and discusses its possible implications, including why supporting client relationship to the natural world is imperative for well-being.

Courtenay Young is an active member of the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) and was a lead writer in their *Project to Establish the Professional Competences of a European Psychotherapist*. In **Body/Somatic Psychotherapy Competences. What are they?**, he invites and challenges all Body and Somatic Psychotherapists to identify and differentiate those professional competences that are special, specific, and even unique to Body/Somatic Psychotherapy.

Getting to Know Reich, our collaboration with the Wilhelm Reich Museum in Rangeley, Maine, offers us **Wilhelm Reich and A. S. Neill: Insight Into an Extraordinary Friendship**. James E. Strick, author of *Wilhelm Reich, Biologist* (Harvard, 2015) opens a window into the personalities of two giants in their fields – Wilhelm Reich and A. S. Neill, founder and head of England’s famous Summerhill School. In an era when relationships were sustained by typewritten letters crossing the ocean, their lively exchange on everything from education, healthy childhood, marriage and sex, and politics gives us an insight into the personal process of these two fascinating men.

In Memoriam pays tribute to two committed, dedicated, vibrant teachers and innovators in our field: *Laura Hope Steckler* in **Ilana Rubinfeld: Conductor of the Bodymind**, and students, colleagues, and friends in **Ina Savova: A Luminous Presence** gather their heartfelt, life-changing testimonials of these great women who devoted their lives to infuse our field with the empowering depth of their love and devotion.

In this issue, our **Book Reviews** section is unusually rich. *Ros Carroll* reviews Nick Totton’s latest contribution, **Different Bodies: Deconstructing Normality**; *Chris Walling*, from his perspective as Faculty at the California Institute for Integral Studies (CIIS), reviews **Body Psychotherapy: A Theoretical Foundation for Clinical Practice** by Ulfried Geuter; and *Kate White* brings her deep knowledge of pre- and perinatal psychology to her review of *Helena Vissing’s Somatic Maternal Healing: Psychodynamic and Somatic Trauma Treatment for Perinatal Mental Health*. Additionally, *Beverley De Witt-Moylan* offers a view into *Bret Lyon and Sheila Rubin’s* long-awaited **Embracing Shame: How to Stop Resisting Shame & Turn It Into A Powerful Ally**; and *Irena T. Anastasova* announces the English translation of Italian master teacher *Genovino Ferri’s Body Time: Bodily Activations in Psychotherapy*.

Our Editorial Team continues to be in awe of the deepening maturation reflected in the articles we receive. We invite our readers to dialogue with us. Let us know if you are inspired by your colleagues’ creative efforts to expand the healing reach of Body/ Somatic Psychology and Psychotherapy. We would love to hear from you.

 