

# Embracing Our Times



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**I**n the past few months, we have repeatedly heard a disturbing point of view that merits close attention. It is echoed in Kathrin Stauffer’s observation about being a body psychotherapist in Britain: “...it may be that Body Psychotherapy is “mined” for tricks that create quick and effective change in traumatized individuals, and that as a result, body psychotherapy does not continue as a whole and inviolate Gestalt, but is dismembered into fragments...”

Although being mined can be seen as a form of acknowledgment, Kathrin’s speculation carries a warning sign. Echoed by others, the concern being voiced is that the practice of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology, which is the result of a long and established tradition, is being appropriated by other disciplines without true understanding or acknowledgement.

Great artists and designers know it is inevitable that their creations will turn up as knockoffs. Appropriation is expected, which is why ongoing innovation is critical to the growth and vitality of a profession, and essential to its sustainability. As a profession, we are now challenged on many fronts to embrace our fast-moving, turbulent time and meet it with creative engagement.

Every day – surrounded as we are by ongoing war and gun violence – there is opportunity to witness trauma in the making. These are times when empathy is stretched to its limit, and over-exposure to real and vicarious trauma is at our fingertips with a simple click. Confronted with heartbreaking tragedies, we are challenged to bring embodiment to those who may not see the value of living in bodies, to those who are on the frontline of personal, cultural, political, and national injustice. We champion the body in a world where the ability to say yes to life is fraught with complexity.

Trauma and chaos are not new to body psychotherapy and somatic psychology. In his autobiography, Wilhelm Reich describes how he spent four years – between the ages of 18 to 21 – in the trenches, enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army fighting the Russian invasion of his homeland. When Reich arrived in Vienna and met Freud, he was already intimately familiar with the effects of trauma and war, knowing the craving for life as one is “inwardly laid waste, no longer capable of taking anything in<sup>1</sup>.”

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1. Wilhelm Reich (Higgins, M.B. and Raphael, C.M. eds). (1988). *Passion of youth*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux: New York. p. 65

Reich's personal traumatic experiences surely guided him toward the development of body psychotherapy. Given contemporary research advances, it is our challenge to update this longstanding tradition to meet today's unsettled times, as well as protect and keep our legacy current.

It is our goal, in upcoming issues, to bring you articles that support embodiment in turbulent times. We hope to continue putting together special sections, and are open to suggestions as to topics that may best serve the needs of our community. We have identified several directions we feel are important: war and social justice (upcoming), prolonged exposure to loss and grief, and how to tend to our children in times of chaos.

We hope you will send us your research, and share your professional wisdom and clinical cases, so that we can remain vital in this time when our bodies, which are built for connection and cooperation, feel assaulted by experiencing or witnessing bewildering violations.

Human beings are evolutionary survivors. We invite you to draw on your resiliency, on your adaptive creativity, and call in your biological intelligence to bring forth growth solutions that reflect our unique somatic perspective.

Let us know how you are working to keep body psychotherapy and somatic psychology relevant to the needs of our changing times.

*The Editorial Team*

