WEBINAR REVIEWS

The Body Psychotherapy Knowledge Sharing Space[1]
IBPJ is coming alive!

by Meglena Beneva

The vision of using webinars to create community and share the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was sparked last summer during a discussion at the Bulgarian Institute of Neoreichian Analytical Psychotherapy (http://binap.eu/). We envisioned creating a community platform where we could talk with professionals and experts in our field. This platform would be a safe and creative space for us to discuss our experiences, collaborate, interact, and grow.

Thus, the idea for *The Body Psychotherapy Knowledge Sharing Space* was born. Although it is an online environment, and will not give us the opportunity for "body" experience, it can nonetheless stimulate our development, open our awareness to new and unknown subjects, help us meet colleagues and teachers, learn, and be inspired to keep developing. It can help us create a strong community where we support and challenge each other.

We inaugurated the platform in December 2018 with a trial webinar with body psychotherapist Vladimir Pozharashki, MD, followed in January and March, by the first two webinars featuring Mariana Todorova and Maurizio Stupiggia

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Are We Ready for the Future of *Homo Neuroticus* and How Will It Change Psychotherapy?

Webinar given by Mariana Todorova on January 29, 2019

Mariana Todorova, *PhD is a philosopher and president of the Bulgarian Chapter of Millennium Projects. She specialized in leadership with the US State Department, at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and at the Chinese Academy of Governance. Dr. Todorova is an experienced futurist, analyst, and institutional strategist. She has managed the office of a Member of the European Parliament in the Presidency of the Republic of Bulgaria. A former member of parliament, and deputy chair of her parliamentary group, she is passionate about future studies – evaluating future expectations in political, social, and economic areas, trend tracking, and mini-trends designing.*

ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI), people as biological algorithms, virtual reality, more than two parents, holograms, extended lifespans ... How will these trends, which are already here, shape people's emotions and lives, their reality, and our profession as psychotherapists?

Keywords: earning, community, sharing, technology, digitalization, body psychotherapy, virtual and mixed reality, AI

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[1] https://www.bodytherapylearn.family/

The webinar focused on how technology will change people and their relationships, and how it will affect psychotherapy. Psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy already use technology to diagnose and treat patients, and this trend will continue to increase. Data mining – or machine and deep learning – share common models of data classification, systems selection, and diagnostics. These models are even capable of diagnosing skin cancer. Technology can already create organs, as well as repair and treat them. Google can already diagnose bi-polar disorder and ADHD based on how people use its platform and the information they search for. When we read a book on Kindle, *it reads us as well* with programs that scan how we read, where we pause, where we read longer or faster. These programs are sophisticated enough to catch our emotional reactions.

The aim of mobile tools is to observe and analyze us. When the Internet of Things becomes real, it will be possible for our screens to send us dopamine without our knowing it!

Already Existing Trends

- **Transformation**. Everything we know will be different. For example, in the next ten years, robots or machines will replace a large portion of the services we use. It could be days before we meet an actual person in public services. Machines will run the call centers, and follow algorithms to resolve complicated issues. Because these machines will act only from what they are programed for, they will show little empathy.
- **Longevity**. We will live longer thanks to the medical advances that can already grow organs and are now using robots to develop treatments for Alzheimer and Parkinson.
- **Singularity**. AI development now surpasses human intelligence, and is expected to trigger profound changes in human civilization.
- **Digitalizing psychotherapy**. 'Dr Watson'[2] is already in use in the US, and will soon have the tools to diagnose and conduct psychotherapy. It is predicted that future patients will be depressed individuals who have lost their jobs because they have been replaced by systems or robots. These patients will need to adapt to the new reality and some of these patients will respond to being "improved" by the new technology.

Trend tracking predicts that machines or AI will replace people and that many professions will become de-humanized. We will be transformed by the disappearance of emotion: algorithms, not journalists, already write the news; AI will often replace actors and speakers as has already happened in China where the first replacement has been announced.

Education will take place through distance learning, generated by algorithms that analyze our ability to learn, digest information, and decide if we understand or not. At the same time, learning will be personalized, and there will be a need for empathy and emotion. The therapist as a *real person* will be in demand. People are currently adapting, but the speed of change is so fast that soon, people may not be able to adapt as rapidly. This capacity for adaptation will become an important topic in therapy. It may prompt a new way of differentiating people based on their capacity for and level of adaptation to new technologies, rather than as we do currently, differentiating by age between youth, adults, and old people.

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[2] Dr Watson, IBM's language-fluent computer, is being turned into a tool for medical diagnosis. Its ability to absorb and analyze vast quantities of data is, IBM claims, better than that of human doctors, and its deployment through the cloud could also reduce healthcare costs. https://www.wired.co.uk/article/ibm-watson-medical-doctor

Exposure and Privacy

There will be no way to hide or lie. It is probable that companies – employers, insurance companies, government, and others – will have access to all our personal data; data that is now private. It is even possible that AI could decide whether somebody is allowed to have children, and if their DNA is good enough or should be improved. The AI in cars will be programed to protect the driver, but in the event of a car accident, the AI would receive information about who is in the other vehicle, and based on that information, the two AI systems would synchronize and make the decision about who is more 'deserving' to live.

Virtual Reality

Virtual reality is already used and successful in the treatment of some phobias and fears, and is being developed to teach autistic children to identify emotions. Virtual reality has proved helpful but also confusing: why would you want to go back to normal reality if you can have everything in virtual reality? It will be possible to have sex with another person's virtual avatar even if this person has not given consent. Although virtual, the avatar will connect with some part of the person, and this will affect his or her energy.

Mixed Reality

Mixed reality is the term used to indicate holograms inserted into existing reality. While we can recognize virtual reality, we will not be able to tell the difference between a hologram and reality. It will be possible to manipulate a person's psyche by inserting holograms of people into their reality. This will cause permanent stress and neurosis – people will have the feeling of being constantly observed.

The Alternatives

Alternatively, the positive side is that this trend in the direction of digitalization and lack of body sensation will bring a *strong counter-tendency* towards the collective and social experience – towards anti-consumerism, plant-based diets, meditation, restoring body sensation, new theories, and towards personal development, archetypes, the collective unconscious, intracultural research, myths, epigenetics, and tabula rasa.

The alternative is an *interdisciplinary approach*. Single specializations will be a thing of the past and collaboration among the different psychotherapy modalities will be of great importance.

Our future will depend on it.

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