THE SPEAKING BODY
(Or Why did Wilhelm Reich Go Crazy?)

Michael Vincent Miller

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Part 1: Historical and Philosophical Background

What can we say at this point in our history about the role of the human body in Gestalt therapy? How one treats the body in psychotherapy raises all the traditional philosophical questions about the nature of bodily existence. What is a human body anyway? Is it, as in some idealistic philosophies, merely congealed mind? Is it a complex organization of matter shaped by evolutionary adaptation, as in biological theory? Is the body the shabby outer garment of the soul, as some religions would have it? Is it a shell of nerve endings around a vacancy, as the work of certain behaviorists implies? Is it an elaborate plumbing system for transporting desire, which is pretty much how early psychoanalysis thought about it?

There are schools of psychotherapy aligned with just about every one of these views. At the extremes, some therapies have treated people as though they are at bottom nothing but bodies; others as though they are finally nothing but mind. Strangely enough, this sort of polarization is turning up more these days than it did in the past. But the tendency toward a split has always been around. Freud had hoped, when he first began working at unlocking the secrets of human behavior, to dissolve all mental life into the body, that is, into biology and neurology. He gave up on this first "scientific" project rather quickly, however. His subsequent invention of the "talking cure" concerned itself mainly with exposing and then interpreting the hidden twists and turns of the mind. A multi-layered view of mental life has been the dominant legacy of psychoanalysis ever since. I remember a science fiction story I read when I was around twelve, in which the inhabitants of a future society had developed to the point that they were spheres filled with brain or mind. Legs, arms, torsos had evolved out of existence because they had become unnecessary appendages. I wonder now if they had all been through too much traditional psychoanalysis. Maybe not only id, but everything else as well, had been turned into ego.

With the discovery of powerful pharmacological medications, much of modern psychiatry seems to have found its way back to Freud's abandoned project. It reduces not only psychosis but also depression and anxiety to abnormalities in the central nervous system. In the current situation, psychoanalysts and psychopharmacologists have each tended to choose one side of the Cartesian mind-body dualism. Thus drawing the line and arraying themselves on either side of it, they now fight over market share.

The actual history is not quite so simple as the above discussion suggests. The tendency in psychodynamic therapies, in general, has not been to eliminate the body, but to treat it as a collection of symptoms deposited by the unconscious. The psychoanalytic body tends to be a site of inhibition and suffering when it's not flowing with desire. Freud remarked that a neurotic feels his body, a healthy person his feelings. Wilhelm Reich took up this idea and expanded it. He passed it through the ego psychology of Anna Freud in order to

elaborate it into a view of the body as a patchwork of resistances and mechanisms of defense. If the body had become a rather abstract mosaic made up of excitable neighborhoods — oral, anal, phallic — in Freud, Reich made it physically concrete again. Reich's revision directly influenced the beginnings of Gestalt therapy. He had been one of Frederick Perls's therapists, and Paul Goodman was much enamored of his work. In practice, the Reichian influence led to a new emphasis: When the patient produced stories and dreams, complaints and associations, the Gestalt therapist not only listened and reacted, but also paid the closest attention to the patient's bodily presence.

This method became a valuable and familiar part of Gestalt therapy. It involved shifting the foreground frequently from the patient's discourse to a clenched fist, a fixed smile or grimace, a lack of breathing, and other indications of the fixed gestalts we call retroflections. Some Gestalt therapists became so captivated with this change of figure that they subordinated the "talking cure" and focused on something that became widely known as "body work." When Gestalt therapy positioned itself among the so-called humanistic therapies during the 1960s and 70s, its receptiveness to Reich also opened it to influences from bioenergetics, Rolfing, the Alexander method, Feldenkreis, as well as approaches to the body derived from eastern spiritual practices, such as yoga and Sufi, along with many other methods that were in the air.

So where does this history leave the already poor battered human body in Gestalt therapy? From its beginnings, Gestalt therapy has always repudiated the Cartesian mind-body dualism in favor of a holistic approach. In theory, at least, Gestalt therapists ought to be able to move smoothly without disjunction from mind to body and back again. Nevertheless in actual practice the question of how to introduce the body into therapy has spawned a good deal of confusion, becoming a pole around which controversy has swirled and "truths" have become fixated. The Reichian emphasis, along with other residues of ego psychology in Gestalt therapy, has made it difficult to maintain a consistent psychosomatic unity. As a result, new splits have penetrated Gestalt therapy itself.

For all the holistic thinking that Frederick Perls introduced into Gestalt therapy from his work with Goldstein and his reading of Smuts, his own re-working of Reich did not altogether fit well with holism. Perhaps unwittingly, Perls's approach helped foster a new mind-body split. This tendency became clear in the 1960s *Verbatim* period. Sounding like the Beatles or Timothy Leary, Perls came up with one of his numerous slogans: "Lose your mind and come to your senses!" (as though the senses were not already saturated with mind). Still, one can interpret this notion in Perls's late work as a way to change figure/ground in the hope of restoring more balanced functioning among the people he was teaching. His trainees were primarily over-socialized middle-class professionals (called psychiatrists, psychologists, and the like) who tended to be alienated from their bodies and their feelings. They were likely to respond to their abstract concepts and stereotypes with more enthusiasm than to their clients or their lovers. A dose of 1960s Reichianism might have seemed like the ideal prescription for them.

The trouble was that Perls, for all the startling brilliance of his demonstrations, settled too readily for transcripts of the demonstrations peppered with diagnostic or prescriptive slogans in place of comprehensive theory in those warm touchy-feely bell-bottomed California days. Many of his followers treated his catchy aphorisms and dramatic techniques as though they, in fact, comprised the theory of Gestalt therapy. One result was an anti-intellectualism that re-introduced the Cartesian split by coming in through the back door, or perhaps I should say, through the rear end. Words were denigrated as though they were dead abstractions that served to evade authentic feelings. The body was more palpably present and therefore more likely to reveal the truth, although as Reich had made clear, the body could lie, too. Indeed, much of so-called body work could be described as techniques to transform a body in hiding or playing possum — evident, for example, in the mask-like poker face that betrays no shred of emotion, the polite shrug and upright posture of the good student (or good patient), the slump-shouldered shuffle of the passive-aggressive character–into a more authentic instrument for expression of feelings.

One can view a body as recalcitrant material, like a statue, or as a vibrating instrument for emotional expression, like a guitar. On the one hand, the body performs as an obstinate limit, restricting a self that strains against it to reach the world. On the other, the body is a malleable instrument for transmission and reception that partially takes its form from changing circumstances. It is like the difference between the Newtonian particle and the quantum wave in physics. From a Reichian perspective, the fixed particle is the neurotic body; the wave-like experience the healthy body. This has been a rich vision for psychotherapy in many respects. But does it go far enough? There are many other ways of thinking about the body that psychological theory needs to take into account. We can consider the body as an object, as an organism, as a metaphor, as a construction, as a fiction or narrative, as a locus in the field of experience. Which of these various points of view are therapeutically useful? All of them? What does it mean to do "body work," if there are so many different keyholes through which to peer at the human body, which only yields up portions of its mysteries to the assorted peepers?

Such questions remind us that there is another conception of the body that entered Gestalt therapy during its early formulation. This alternative view derives from existential phenomenology, and it gives rises to a quite different idea of the body's place in therapy. From combining such thinkers as Husserl, Tillich, and Buber with the principles of Gestalt formation, Gestalt therapy developed a method of concentrating on how experience, including experience of one's bodily existence, is continually shaped and re-shaped through one's present meetings with nature and a world of others. As Merleau-Ponty summarized the phenomenological outlook with its emphasis on the creative contribution the perceiver makes to all lived experience, "perception is already expression" (Merleau-Ponty,1970, p.6) The phenomenological body, sometimes called the "lived body," is more like a process or flux than a thing, a fluctuating subjective landscape, like a painting that the artist keeps revising from one moment to the next.

To focus on a subject engaged in creating experience sits uneasily with the Reichian approach, with its focus on

animal energies and muscular tensions. It sits uneasily, but that does not mean that these are mutually exclusive outlooks. The contraction and loosening of muscles, as well as the spread or containment of sensations, are among the raw materials that go into the conversion of the human body from animal organism into the lived (and partially constructed), experiential body. One encounters this phenomenological view immediately in the opening pages of Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, where Goodman describes seeing, not in terms of retinas and optic nerves, but as the "oval of vision" close up against one's eyes. The point is that these two divergent formulations of the therapeutic body, both of which wend their way through Gestalt therapy theory, have never been sufficiently reconciled with one another.

The question of reconciling them bears importantly on how one might answer another important question: Is there really a difference, from the standpoint of Gestalt therapy, between the "talking cure" and "body work"? In my opinion, there is ultimately no difference in principle, even though the particular style and preferences of a given therapist may look very different in practice. The body, as a foundation in the construction of human experience, is never reducible only to the animal organism. It is eloquent with expressive languages and signifiers — gestures that reach or demonstrate, telling postures, idiosyncratic movements and positions that reveal meanings and values. And language, considered not just as formal structure (grammar, syntax, semantics) but as the expressive and receptive activities of speaking and listening (phonology and intentionality), belongs to the body as much as to the mind. French psychoanalysis, especially in the form it took under the baton of Jacques Lacan, considers the distinction between *langue*, which is the abstract structure of language, and *parole*, which is the actual spoken word (a distinction Lacan borrowed from the linguist Ferdinand Saussure) to be of central theoretical importance. There is no language without a body. The issue is whether the language is dead and desensitized just as the body can be dead and desensitized.

In the Cartesian view the mind is a mysterious spiritual substance, an invisible vapor that reasons, feels, and wills. It

has the body at its disposal, so that it can drive it the way a pilot flies a plane. If I decide to pick up a glass on the table, I begin transmitting thought-like impulses, as if I had pressed the correct combination of buttons on a mental keyboard. These willful mental activities are received by my hand and arm which then get busy making the correct maneuvers to achieve the goal. Can you imagine Michael Jordan heading for the basket and sinking a shot in a series of steps like this? If this is how humans function, then the body exists pretty much in the same sense that a table or an automobile can be said to exist. The body is an elaborate external machine, and my consciousness sits at the controls. The Cartesian picture of human nature has often been aptly described as "the ghost in the machine."

The Cartesian division, which locates bodily existence in one realm of being and mental reality in another, led to all sorts of philosophical conundrums and contradictions. Philosophers tried every contortion, but there was no satisfactory way to bridge the two realms by logically connecting them to each other. Husserl came at it from a completely different angle: His phenomenology made the logical bridge unnecessary through eliminating the gap that required bridging in the first place. By bracketing off everything except the experiencing subject, he was able to join thinking and sensing together as aspects of one another in the same realm — namely, the realm of "experience." It follows that all of our sensations of our world are already permeated with mind, and vice versa. Separating mind and body then is a post-experiential act of abstraction.

From the phenomenological standpoint, it cannot be that my mind forms the idea of picking up the glass, and then sends a message to my arm and hand to carry out the order. A phenomenological account would proceed more like this: I become curious (Is this an antique glass?) or feel a need (I'm thirsty!) or encounter a problem (Does this glass go in the cabinet on the left or the right?). My reaching for the glass is from the start informed by and infused with my desire-filled attention. Such attention is not just sitting up here in my head and being directed from there. The attending is an essential part of the movement of reaching itself. Everything I do that

involves the glass contains thoughts, sensations, feelings, interpretations and value judgments, as well as actions, in a simultaneous, closely knit web. I don't go through a linear sequence of steps to get from the idea to the activity. I simply pick up the glass in a single, unified sweep.

But even to point at unification or integration isn't quite accurate, because to say something is unified or integrated presupposes that there are separate parts that you are bringing together into an integration or a unity. This is not what is going on, except in the models we construct after the fact. To be sure, the models are useful for explaining things in retrospect, but they are only metaphorical ways of thinking about these matters late in the game. They are reflective afterthoughts. Phenomenology tries to get at something it calls pre-reflective experience.

I pick up the glass, and my mind is involved, my senses are involved, my will is involved, my interest is involved — activity and experience are taking shape at the same time. So what is a talking cure or what is body work in relation to this portrait of human conduct? When you use the phenomenological method, speaking is not just mind, and picking up a glass is not just body. They are both expressive, need-governed actions one can perform in responding to one's continually changing meetings with one's world. In other words, they are both what Gestalt therapy calls contact.

How do we know we have a body? If this seems obvious, it's not. Do we know it from more from the inside through sensations or the outside from our senses? I can't say whether animals "know" they have bodies — perhaps they just *are* bodies. We are different, because as humans, we rely so much on self-reflective knowledge. We require an epistemology in order to develop and get on. The other animals don't, so far as we know. What we can see of our bodies is distorted and limited. For instance, we can never directly see the back of our heads or our nostrils or teeth or our eyes themselves. Our visual knowledge of these parts of the body comes only through reflected images, such as through mirrors and photographs, reports from others, and inferences from touch. Such knowledge belongs to the register that Lacan calls "the imaginary," which is basic to his theory of how human identity

develops. The ways in which we come to "see" ourselves, for instance with distorted body images, help make clear the extent to which knowledge of our bodies employs constructions that are not given by the animal organism. My sense of my body is "fleshed out" by impressions others have of me, so that my knowledge of my body always depends on the way it is embedded in the world and includes the world's responses to it (as though it were not only *my* body). In a somewhat analogous way, Winnicott said that the baby's first self is in the mother's eyes. But the world's involvement in our body knowledge extends beyond how others regard us; it is true also of our contact with inanimate objects. When I pick up the glass, I am touching it, but, in a sense, it touches me back as well, such that I feel this as a pressure that flows back through me and becomes part of the whole experience. One's body, as one comes to know it, is never an encapsulated entity but is always located in the field that it plays a crucial part in unfolding between oneself and one's world.

Emmanuel Levinas, the splendid French philosopher who died recently, takes the between-ness even further into the world than Winnicott or Lacan. He says that philosophy needs to begin, not with interrogating the composition of the world or the self, but with the face of the other. This seems plausible developmentally. When a baby opens it eyes and becomes conscious, one of its first experiences is the mother's face. This point of departure, it seems to me, leads Levinas to a richer understanding of the relationship between oneself and others than Martin Buber's analysis of it. Buber calls his beautiful conception of the I-Thou a "word," but Levinas begins with the wrinkled skin of the face of the other whose eyes are looking at you even as you look at them. You cannot look at the other's living face, he says, without it calling forth from you an awareness of ethical responsibility for the other. Only in what is evoked by such awareness does one discovers oneself, according to Levinas. And only in these moments of realization do both language and philosophy arise and take form. Therefore, Levinas claims, ethics precedes modes of philosophical thinking, such as metaphysics. For him, contact, human experience, and human relatedness all begin with expressive bodily presence, not of ourselves but of the other,

and not in something so verbal as the I-Thou. The word is not first. The face and gaze of the other comes earlier. Such knowledge, for Levinas, is neither specifically scientific knowledge nor the kind of knowledge associated with the arts, though it may partake of both. It is, above all and first of all, ethical knowledge. Among the things Levinas has taught me is that the interminable debate about whether psychotherapy is a science or an art pales before the fact that it is an ethical position one takes in the presence of another human being.

So by now we can speak of the mind as existing throughout all experience with some depth of understanding about what this might imply for knowledge of the body. It's not just a question of whether the brain is the seat of the mind nor a question of the unity of mind and body. Maybe it would be most accurate to say that mind is to be found at work especially at the point where I touch and feel touched. When I speak to you, if I'm speaking without too much self-consciousness, you could say my mind is at my lips. (This would be the phenomenological description.) I am not thinking deliberately, which would be like talking to myself, but I am talking to you, just as I am looking at you and you at me. Yet certainly there is thought in my speaking to you. Again, this is exactly what Gestalt therapy means by contact. When the contact is talk, one's mind is not a separate executive dictating words to the mouth. If, on the other hand, we observe someone who is talking to us appearing to continually consult their brain as they speak (frowning, pausing, looking up), we might regard this as mildly obsessional retroflected activity, probably the consequence of having taken in too earnestly the command, "Think before you speak."

I once visited a master class given by an extraordinary piano teacher named Adele Marcus, who had been an associate of such pianists as Arthur Schnabel and Vladimir Horowitz. She had also been the mentor to some of the best concert artists currently performing. At the beginning of the class, she made a few brief but extremely telling comments. She said that when you play the piano, you will experience the feeling that you want to express in your abdomen. The only other thing that you should be aware of is the sensation of your fingertips touching the keys. Anything that enters your

awareness in between these two points, she continued, is a resistance. Obviously this includes the head. You could say that when a pianist has something to express, the mind and the heart join together, and in the actual expression the mind is not lurking in the head; it resides at the fingertips.

Part 2. Clinical Issues

To what extent are Reich's concepts still useful in Gestalt therapy? The answer is that within limits they continue to inspire important work in Gestalt theory and practice. Reich's early thought contained valuable new insights into how the developing child's responses to anxiety and trauma can harden over time into character. His most significant discovery was that these lasting formations, which he called "character armor," appear not only in the patient's reports but in the speaking voice, not only in dreams, memories, and associations, but in physical inhibitions, tensed or flaccid muscles, anaesthetized portions of skin, incoherent actions, or inappropriate gestures of expression. Gestalt therapy calls these retroflections. Isadore From made their value for clinical practice particularly clear. He consistently taught that psychotherapy usually needs to start out with attention to the retroflections, precisely because they show up in the body (which includes the voice), so that we can see and hear them. Gestalt therapy also developed (partly from Reich's influence, partly on its own) techniques or experiments for undoing retroflections. But since retroflections bind the anxiety of blocked feelings which a person cannot yet, as a rule, support sufficiently to experience other than as anxiety, one needs to go about undoing retroflections with great delicacy and sensitivity to what the undoing may produce.

Which brings me to the limitations in the Reichian approach. I want to suggest to you that these are related to another issue, which is, "Why did Wilhelm Reich's theories go crazy?" It is likely that Reich himself went crazy while he was evolving his late cosmic theories. However it is also true that he was horribly and scandalously persecuted by the U.S. government, although that ugly episode in the long history of American witch hunts is not what I intend to discuss in detail

here. Instead, I'm going to speculate about why Wilhelm Reich's theories eventually skidded out of control and finally off the track of usefulness. I hope that this will shed some light on why the Reichian perspective is finally inadequate and needs to be integrated with a phenomenological view of the body.

In teaching how to diagnose and work with the body, Reich's early work enabled Gestalt therapy to understand concretely how people's physical tensions and numbed-out body parts cripple their capacities for meeting needs, doing satisfying work, and forming successful relationships. His emphasis on paying attention to the body also brought an observable immediacy to psychotherapy, and thus taught Gestalt therapists a good deal about making use of the present situation in the therapy session. But what comes next? For Reich, the next step was strenuous intervention to release the pent-up energy that now remained frozen in characterological body configurations.

His approach led directly to bioenergetics and influenced the other kinds of body work which many Gestalt therapists have added to their repertoires. Almost all body work centers around undoing of retroflections in order to release blocked energy and feeling. There is no question that working on retroflections in therapy can free storms of activity and emotion. But toward what end? What is to be made from the storms? In the case of Reich himself, the release and the goal eventually merged, because his aim was to restore something he called orgastic potency. Reich felt that the chief neurosis in the modern soul sprang from a physical deprivation, a congealing of life force such that people could no longer surrender fully to any experience, especially to the experience of orgasm.

Even if you read Reich's exaltation of surrender to orgasm as his stand-in for all spontaneous, full living — and I do think this is what Reich had in mind — his vision still leaves unanswered what is supposed to happen after the therapeutic liberation of energy. Something essential is left incomplete, which makes the experience at once not enough and too much to handle. It's a little like those people who after making love immediately leap out of bed, get dressed, and call a cab.

Given the tenor of Reich's later work, I think that his theories, and maybe Reich himself, became overwhelmed with the flood of liberated impulses, desires, passions, and instincts. Humans, unlike other animals, cannot rely on instincts alone in riding the waves of energized sensations and impulses. That is never the whole story for the human. Paul Ricoeur puts it this way:

> Because we have no genetic system of information for human behavior, we need a cultural system. No culture exists without such a system. The hypothesis, therefore, is that where human beings exist, a nonsymbolic mode of existence, and even less, a nonsymbolic kind of action, can no longer obtain. Action is immediately ruled by cultural patterns which provide templates or blueprints for the organization of social and psychological processes, perhaps just as genetic codes — I am not certain — provide such templates for the organization of organic processes. In the same way that our experience of the natural world requires a mapping, a mapping is also necessary for our experience of social reality. (Ricoeur, 1986, pp. 11-12)

What drove Reich's psychology, and perhaps Reich, into craziness is that he did not differentiate between the animal organism, which has certain built-in maps, and the human subject, which always needs to construct maps of the body beyond what is given by the organism.

Reich had no theory of the body as lived experience, the body as continually re-imagined or symbolically reconstructed through the human capacity to give form to experience. Perhaps the other animals can depend on the hard-wired programming built into their instincts to limit, contain, and guide their energies toward completing their purposes. But the human cannot depend on animal instincts. We need to make and give form to experience. This is the basis of social order, culture, and art. Reich, however, envisioned the pure release of biological and instinctual energy, and then there was no place to go from there except directly to the universe.

Which is exactly where Reich went next. His early work on character armor was followed by writings in which he concluded that therapy reawakened the same energy in the individual that moves the stars and the planets. In honor of the organism, or perhaps the orgasm, he named this cosmic fluid or ether "orgone." He came to believe that it controlled not only all living activity but also the weather and the tides. Driven by this mystical vision and a sense of urgency about the doom mankind was fashioning for itself through repression of instinctual life, Reich turned increasingly messianic and megalomaniacal. Some would say he became psychotic. He preached that the salvation of mankind depended on tuning in to the cosmic currents of orgone. And he invented a new body therapy to outdo all body therapies. He oversaw the building of special orgone boxes, somewhat resembling outhouses, designed to collect cosmic ray-like currents of orgone. By sitting in them people could absorb these currents in order to restore their sex lives, increase their *elan vital*, prevent cancer, and so on. A puritanical and perhaps equally megalomaniacal United States government got after him and indicted him for transporting orgone boxes across state lines. Reich died in jail.

Whether our life force comes from the cosmos or human nature, our situation demands that we make something with meaningful structure and form from it. The mere release of urges, appetites, interests, and longings can become a boundless ocean that drowns one's sense of oneself. What is required is an aesthetic principle in psychotherapy that enables patients to become creative agents capable of traveling on their own beyond the Reichian manipulating and opening of sensation and feeling toward their own discoveries of how to shape their lives. Our theories and practices of psychotherapy must correspond to this need. I think that the phenomenological foundation in Gestalt therapy, especially as it underwrites the conceptions of the contact boundary and gestalt formation, provides such a theory and implies such a practice. The Reichian influence still has its place in this scheme of things; what phenomenology adds is an embracing concern with the form-making creation of experience. As in art, form matters in therapy as much as content, and good

form provides fluent possibilities yet limits and restrains at the same time.

When a work of art moves us profoundly, it is not just because of orgasmic excitement, even in cases where that is what the work is about. There is always a restraining element that creates a boundary (which is an important part of what we mean by form in art). It is exactly the same thing with love. Love is not only surrender to orgasmic fusion, although, heaven knows, one wants to count this among the moments of love. But when you make the flood of sexual excitement into the goal, you get the crazed romantic myth of love as fusion, which has very little to do with relating to another person. There is no relationship in this kind of fusion. Love requires restraint in order to make a limiting resistance, such that one still finds one's edge. Without awareness of an edge, we can't meet. We simply end up awash in a big puddle or soup of energy.

Of course, in a society where there is so much chronic tension and emotional isolation, it is not surprising that a renegade like Reich landed on the side of letting go and giving in. You can't love if you can't let go and feel your feelings. But that's only one side of the story of love. The other is that love calls for cautious respect for the one's own separateness and that of the other. That is what I mean by restraint. Reich had a wonderful understanding of the animal body and the damage that repression could do to it. But he had no theory of eros as form-giving imagination. There is plenty of sex and energy in Reich but very little love.

Wittgenstein says that the body is the best picture of the soul. That is not a definition of a body that is only an animal body. When you are doing body work, you're massaging the psyche and the soul as well as the body, and you had better be careful about the massage. Another important drawback handed down from Reich's legacy is that the liberation of energy tends to remain under the control of the therapist who makes strong, hands-on interventions, even though it is the patient who experiences it as liberating. The consequence is the exchange of an old dependence, the dependence of the child on parents, for a new dependency on the therapist. Granted that the tensions and other bodily mechanisms of

defense that Reich pointed to were formed in the field of that old dependency. So it may seem like a good bargain to trade it in for a new dependency on the therapist as liberator, the therapist as cheerleader of emotional release. So long as even the most benevolent dependency remains, however, psychotherapy is essentially a sado-masochistic structure, no matter how mild in appearance. It's as if the patient says, "Do it to me!" and the therapist obliges. It may be nice to have a cheerleader on your side for a while, but then it is crucial that the cheerleader step out of the way so that the patient can take possession his or her own experience, including the aesthetic form he or she gives to both body and soul. Getting out of the way is not enough respected in much of body work that derives from Reich. It then brings about invasive colonization of the patient.

Obviously invasive practice is not only an issue for body work. The sado-masochistic colonization occurs as much in talk therapies, even if the massage is more subtle and internal. This is the case in those kinds of psychoanalytic therapy where the analyst makes it clear to the patient that the only growth comes through accepting the therapist's interpretations. From the therapist's position of authority it is not difficult to force ideas on a person through talk, just as it is possible to force the arousal of feelings in a person through manipulating the body. You simply use different orifices. But the outcome — an infantilized patient, whether happy about it or not — amounts to the same thing. Equally invasive, if not worse, is too much therapeutic empathy. An overdose of empathy too closely resembles fusion for my taste. I am not against empathy if it operates from a respectful distance, like Buddhist compassion, such that it leaves the patient's otherness intact even as it pays careful attention to it.

By way of concluding, let me illustrate how integrating the Reichian view and the phenomenological view of the body might be put to use diagnostically. Consider, for example, how psychosomatic unity, which is part animal, part imaginative construction, might become distorted in the perversions and the personality disorders. I submit that both kinds of disorders are made through using the capacity to create form for an attack on a central facet of the human condition—that bodily

existence in relation to the world is risky and uncertain. For both perversions and personality disorders, the uncertainty is too much to bear. My point is that both do it through an imaginary constriction of physical existence — to put it this way borrows from both Reich and phenomenology — with the aim of establishing an illusion of certitude and control against the uncertainty of life and love. There is nothing perverse about the so-called perversions except insofar as a person gets stuck in being able to express his or her sexuality in only one way. Why should anything in the spectrum of sexual possibilities be denigrated unless it is harmful to oneself or others? But when the result is an unnecessarily severe restriction of being limited to traveling for pleasure down only one road, you could call it perverse if you want to.

In the case of the perversions, feeling desire for or making love to the entire being, including the whole body, of another person seems to hot to handle. Unable to support so much excitement (one's own or the other's) because it shakes the foundation of the lover's sense of control, he or she limits the movement or the expressiveness of the other's body or reduces it to a part. For instance, if looking intimately into the face of a beloved is too anxious-making, maybe the lover can look intimately at a foot. If one cannot make love to the body of the other, maybe one can still manage to get gratification by making love to a part. The foot contains something of the person — as Rilke says in a poem, even the feet can weep — but it's personal on a small enough scale so that one can still feel in control. If it turns out that a foot is still too much, since it is composed of the other's living flesh, then one can fasten on a symbolic representation, such as underpants or some other article of clothing, and allow desire to flow out to this thing that is close to the person but inanimate. The perversions attempt to reduce the being of the other to a silhouette or a fragment or a substitute. But these reductions are nevertheless achieved through acts of creativity, although what is made is less, whereas we usually think of creativity as making something that is more. The narrowing is in the name of security and certitude.

The personality disorders, to a large extent, work in the opposite way (I don't pretend to account here for all the

personality disorders, anymore than the preceding accounts for every perversion). Whereas the imagination lessens the being of the other in perversions, in the personality disorders one turns this capacity to reduce experience toward oneself. The goal is similar — to diminish the anxiety of uncertainty by making one's response to life more manageable and predictable. The personality disorders attempt to maintain control and certitude in all contacting the world, in intimacy and social relations, by constricting the sense of self. Then the spreading physical sensation of excitement aroused in moving toward the world is channeled into a narrow pipe or a rigid structure. (There is another kind of personality disorder that has too little structure, but I am not going to deal with it here.) With such limited equipment, a person can neither tolerate his or her own excitement nor take in much of anything from another. It would be too overwhelming. In many types of personality disorder there is little evidence of anxiety because that is what has been eliminated by filtering out unpredictability. But if you dig deeper you will likely find anguish, that thin burning thread of sensation, when too much is compressed into too little.

The perversions and the personality disorders demonstrate in dramatic ways the need we all have to invent a stay against the flood tide of life's uncertainties. Robert Frost alluded to this when he defined poetry as "a momentary stay against confusion." Since we are constituted by both our animal nature and our symbol-making, form-giving imaginations, we try to invent ways of living with uncertainty. Why? Partly because we live in time, conscious of the continual change that carries us toward death. Perhaps it is our peculiar existence as the creature who is aware of dying that makes our living only as an animal organisms not only inadequate but intolerable. Writing poems, philosophizing, doing scientific research are among the ways in which we reach beyond the organism and perhaps accept our dying. This must be what Socrates meant in Plato's *Apology* when he rebuffed his friends who wanted to rescue him from execution by telling them that the purpose of philosophy is to teach us how to die.

We may or may not long for immortality, but we don't want to live surrounded by infinity, like little boats buffeted by

an endless sea. I remember seeing on an antique shop wall an eighteenth-century Armenian cherub carved of bronze. Its chin was tucked into wings folded across its chest, its eyes were closed, and it looked a little sad. Even angels, the sculpture suggested, grow weary of infinity. Given such consciousness we need to make sense of life, and we get some help from our ability to create those patterned finite structures that we call gestalt formations.

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