

*book review article*

by Greg Johanson, Ph. D.

*The Emergence of Somatic Psychology  
and Bodymind Therapy*

by **Barnaby B. Barratt**

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Barnaby Barratt, Ph.D., DHS has written an overview of somatic psychotherapy that is extraordinary in its mature scholarly depth and breadth of presentation. It is thoroughly post-modern in that what he terms somatic psychology and bodymind therapy can only be considered in a highly contextualized way in relation to history, philosophy, cultural values, social structures, science, spirituality, and more. Thus, the reader is confronted with not simple the emerging field of somatic psychotherapy, but the entire field of psychology in relation to Western globalized life. It is radical or prophetic in its implications for somatic ways of cultivating awareness. It encounters the reader with the need to work through weighty issues, whether one agrees completely with Barratt's conclusions and directions or not.

Barratt brings to this work the kind of lifetime practice and reflection that would be necessary for such a challenging undertaking. He has two doctorates, one from Harvard in Psychology and Social Relations, and one from the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality. He is an elected Fellow of the American Psychological Association and of the American Academy for Psychoanalysis in Psychology, as well as a diplomat of the American Board of Professional Psychology. He is the author of eight books and over seventy professional and scientific articles, reviews and book chapters who has taught at many universities including somatic ones, and has training in a number of bodymind modalities.

This review will offer a highly distilled overview of Barratt's arguments as they progress through the book, and conclude with some critical dialogue in relation to the issues raised.

**Section I Introducing a New Discipline**

In Barratt's Section I introduction to a new discipline he explains that he wants to deal with what it means to be human, in particular the human experience of embodiment, and how it can be a "harbinger of a radically different future" (p. 2) that includes altering our present understanding of the nature of knowing and of science.

He sets the following challenge: "This book invites you to entertain the question: *Just how radical are the implications of the emerging discipline of somatic psychology and the accompanying healing practices of bodymind therapy?*" (p. 4). *Perhaps the emergence of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy portends a profoundly different and potentially revolutionary way of appreciating the human condition.* (p. 5)

**1. Psychology at the Crossroads**

In considering the crossroads of psychology today Barratt offers a learned history of pre-twentieth century psychology moving from spiritual to philosophical to scientific psychology. He sees the twentieth century dominated by two paradigms, cognitive behaviorism and psychoanalysis, both of which "endorsed and entrenched the alienation of mind and body," (p. 20) and were "hostile or neglectful toward the lived experience of our embodiment" (p. 10).

In terms of the cultural-social factors Barratt is highly attuned to, he argues that the science of behaviorism is "advanced by the ideological exclusion of major segments of the experience world" (p. 11). "This ideology upholds a vision of mental health as the behavioral conformity of individuals to prevailing social conditions, and keeps the discipline of psychology very much 'in the head'" (p. 13). It

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operates "powerfully in the service of the dominant sociopolitical order" (p. 14), as "'mental health' requires the individual to fit well into the organization of the dominant culture and the ruling social order" (p. 15).

"It might be claimed that the lineage of psychoanalytic exploration . . . has upheld a vision of human liberation from the structures of oppression and repression" (p. 14). However, through the post-Freudian progression through ego psychology, Kleinian psychoanalysis, object-relations, Lacan, and Self-psychology the emphasis gradually focused on mental representations. The tradition was eventually bankrupted through an "abandonment of a vision of human liberation in favor of clinical ideologies of cultural adaptation and socially conformist 'maturation'" (p. 15).

Though this progression could be said to start with Freud himself, Barratt argues that Freud was first and foremost a somatic psychologist,

. . . at least from the time he abandoned his neurological ambitions in the very last years of the nineteenth century, until the beginning of the 1914-1918 World War. After World War I, his theorizing became more systematic, downplayed the fundamental role of the libidinal body, and became more focused on the structures and functions of representations that are "in the head" (p. 15).

The history of twentieth century psychoanalytic psychology has largely been "a retreat away from Freud's seminal insights about the grounding of the psyche in the energetic experiences of our embodiment" (p. 19). Overall, "in Freedheim's . . . *History of Psychology* (1992) . . . the terms *body*, *sexuality* or *sex*, and *somatic* are nowhere to be found" (p. 20).

Because of these and other limitations at our psychological crossroads today, Barratt prophesizes that "by the middle to the end of the twenty-first century . . . psychology will become somatic psychology and psychotherapy will be bodymind therapy" (p. 21).

In terms of definitions:

"*Somatic psychology* is the psychology of the body, the discipline that focuses on our living experience of embodiment as human beings and that recognizes this experience as the foundation and origination of all our experiential potential . . . [And] *Bodymind therapy* is healing practice that is grounded on the wisdom of the body and guided by the knowledge and vision of somatic psychology" (p. 21).

## 2. *Epistemic Shifting*

Barratt moves next to outlining the parallel epistemic shift happening between the modern meme that has been controlling the possibilities of thought and action for centuries, but is now breaking up and moving toward a postmodern episteme.

In general, and in brief:

The new sciences are proving to us that the modern era's values of scientific distance and detachment, of depth and essentialism, of the technocratic imperative, and the masculinist notion of truth as mastery by domination, are all crumbling. A universe of interdependence — foretold in Vedic, Buddhist, Taoist, and many indigenous teachings — is now being demonstrated scientifically. The dominative separation of subject and object, and along with it the dichotomies of man's mind over nature, mind over body, and so forth, are proving illusory as the necessity of thinking in terms of nonlinear and dynamically complex systems is pressing itself upon us. (p. 31)

What used to be regarded as facts in the modern era are now seen as "always already mediated, and thus are always 'deeply theory laden'" (p. 29). "Philosophy and the social sciences all undertook what has been called the 'turn to language'" (p. 29) A critique developed of mainstream psychology's collusion with "western imperialism, with the wealthy, the male, the white, and dominant order" (p.33). Ethics came to "take priority over epistemology. . . . Ways of living ethically must be engaged, and . . . this task is far more important than the accumulation of further knowledge on the level of factuality and technology" (p. 36).

## 3. *Illustrations of Bodymind Therapy*

Next, four clinical vignettes are offered that illustrate bodymind therapy and how characterological issues and change "involves the somatic expression of a person's internal conflicts as much as it can be described in terms of mental representations" (p. 45). Overall, the shift Barratt is outlining is from being "*about the body* or *at the body* to *of the body* [that] heralds a difference in the spatiotemporal or ontological relations, as well as the ethical underpinnings, that are engaged with the discipline of psychology" (p. 37).

In terms of offering admittedly inadequate portrayals of bodymind healing processes that he can then refer back to later, Barratt notes the following:

In the outdated climate of a science that values only "evidence-based" findings that are externally observable, measurable, and appear to be the result of unilateral manipulation, the practice of illustrating

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truthfulness by anecdote perhaps needs to be briefly defended. Although vignettes may not meet these narrow standards of evidence, they are necessary in order to offer interested parties some sense of what is involved in processes that are neither public nor readily measurable. For better or for worse, almost the entire history of contemporary psychotherapy . . . has run on the practice of responsible anecdote. (p. 37)

### 4. *Healing Matters*

The quality of the healing that follows from bodymind therapy contrasts for Barratt with the modern paradigm of healing as avoidance of pain, avoidance of death, or the procedures of "political or sociocultural adaptation" (p. 49). "Rather, healing is inherently a celebration of the liveliness of life itself" (p. 47) where bodily signals are given a voice that leads into deeper awareness, meaning, connections and free flow of energies.

"Healing involves a process of personal and ecological growth, balance or harmony . . . not the machinations of a coercive sociocultural order attempting to regulate its citizenry" (p. 51). Thus, the genuine healing of carpal tunnel syndrome might not be returning someone to "a work life that requires an entirely unnatural usage of the body . . . [but] more plausibly involve a change in the social order such that every worker's daily routines could be varied in a manner that honors the versatility of each individual's embodiment" (p. 50).

In summary, healing "is the mobilization of the life-force and a presencing of our awareness of this natural power" (p. 52).

Freedom and healing into health cannot be attained by coercion, cajolement or compulsion. Healing processes address the ailment, inviting its meanings to shift their mode of expression, inviting blockages to dissipate into the natural flow our beingness. In this way, healing transmutes the adversity intimated by the ailment into alignment or attunement with the natural flow of spiritual-psychic-somatic energy. This is why insightfully wise practitioners have always taught that healing is a the action of *ahimsa* — the presencing of Love. (p. 53)

Barratt adds that traditionally "there is a profound sense in which healing, as a process of being and becoming, is an inherently spiritual — even mystical — process" (pp. 47-48).

### 5. *The State of Emergence*

Complex living systems display the capacity for the emergence of new creative developments not predictable from previous knowledge. In his next chapter Barratt reflects on the historical roots of the emergence of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy in this newly forming period.

He discusses the dispositions forming the new somatic discipline stemming from early leaders such as Reich, Raknes, Boyeson, Brown, Boadella, Gindler, Jacoby, Selver, Summers, Feldenkrais, Rosen, and many more. Then he traces the developments stemming from Lowen, Pierrakos, Keleman, Kelly, Perls and the third force psychologies. He acknowledges the contributions of Naranjo, the human potential movement, Rosenberg and Rand, Bandler and Grinder, and the general interest in "the holistic interconnectedness of body and mind" (p. 60), and the "call to return to *experience* as the focus of psychology inquiry" (p. 62). He credits the developments of sub-disciplines such as ecopsychology and energy psychology as well as the scholarly efforts of Wilber, Csikszentmihalyi, Almaas, Davidson, and many more.

In viewing the current state of somatic psychology he credits Thomas Hanna for the term "somatics." He notes "the impact of the sensory awareness movement on today's influential practitioners of somatic psychology, such as Ron Kurtz, Peter Levine, Pat Ogden, Susan Aposhyan, and Christine Caldwell, cannot be overestimated" (p. 64). There continues a long list of people, influences, educational institutions, key books, and professional organizations such as the EABP and USABP there is no room to name here. It is a superb overview of the intersection of many converging influences.

## Section II Sources: Ancient and Contemporary

In the introduction to his next section on ancient and contemporary sources, Barratt states that somatic psychology is

. . . not yet a cohesive or well-integrated discipline . . . [but] a syncretic momentum that is now undermining the modern era's ways of thinking about the human condition. A syncretic development is defined as one that brings together diverse themes and threads to blend them into the warp and woof of a new fabric. (p. 71)

### 6. *Psychoanalytic Discoveries*

In his section on psychoanalytic discoveries Barratt enters a nuanced discussion of how Freud's pre-1914 concept of libidinality became incomprehensible within "the epistemic coordinates of the modern era" (p. 77). Once again he cautions that it cannot be adequately represented through talk *about* it.

Libidinality is not only the unpredictable and uncontrollable spontaneity of the life force, it is also a mode of meaningfulness that struggles for expression, yet is ineluctably otherwise than the modality of mental representation. The libidinal life force is always, so to speak, "in" but not "of" the representation of meaningfulness. Therefore, it is "betwixt and between" — a liminal notion. (p. 76-77)

The pre-1914 Freud did make the psychodynamic point for somatic psychotherapy "that a method for listening to the voice of the repressed necessarily and foundationally entails a process of listening to the voice of our embodiment" (p. 75).

### 7. *Somatic Psychodynamics*

It is paradoxical for Barratt that while psychoanalytic work was criticized for its overemphasis on sex it was actually a "a series of 'body phobic' reactions to Freud's original discoveries" (p. 79) that ended up conceptualizing "Freud's discoveries in terms of a theory of 'sex acts' (and hence avoiding almost entirely the practice of listening to bodily experience)" (p.79). In his next section Barratt weaves an extended discussion of psychodynamics in relation to somatics that incorporates Freud, Jung, Woodman, Rank, Ferenczi, Reich, Gross, Groddeck, Balint, Goodman, Perls, and Grof, including an emphasis on the loss of libidinality on the one hand, and the emphases on here and now embodied experience, character armoring, energy flow, and other influences on the other.

In summarizing what psychodynamics mean, Barratt underlines that it is concerned with meaningfulness, that "the meaning of things is always multiple, *interdependent*, and *nonlinear*," and "consciousness perpetually reveals and conceals meaningfulness that is otherwise than that which it takes itself to mean" (p. 86).

### 8. *Philosophical and Cultural Studies*

In his chapter that reviews over a hundred years of philosophical and cultural studies Barratt makes clear that "every endeavor of human inquiry has a subject matter, a *method* for studying that subject matter, and an *ethical-political context* of forces that create an interest in the subject matter and method to be pursued" (p. 88).

Habermas pointed out that the notion of "interests" is the "ideological dimension of any investigation" (p. 88).

Barratt begins his historic overview of ideological interests outlining the post-Hegelian problematic of the existing subject and how post-Hegelians such as Kierkegaard and Marx critiqued Hegel's generalities and abstractions in favor of the concrete and passionate. Husserl countered pseudo-rationality in favor of the intentionality of consciousness. Ricoeur argued for the historical character of existence and Maurice Merleau-Ponty for a phenomenological approach to ontological questions.

Merleau-Ponty also "argued for the primacy of perception in how we experience and engage in the world, and thus for the incarnate nature of subjectivity" (p. 90). This underlines the importance of descriptive qualitative methods in psychology fostered in the work of Giorgi.

"Poststructuralist theorists, such as Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes, focused more on the body, in an effort to counteract the somewhat abstract or disembodied structuralist thinking that so greatly influence the social sciences following the 1916 publication of Ferdinand de Saussure's lectures in linguistics" (p. 92). Much interest in the body in social and cultural studies, psychosomatic medicine, sports psychology, rehabilitation medicine were more *about* the body or directed *at* the body as opposed to somatic psychology's work that is *of* the body.

Some critical points of this philosophical-historical review for Barratt include:

Embodied experience is an experience of presence . . . that is anterior to, and foundation of, the subject-object dualism, and our ability to represent things as self and other. . . . Our fleshly incarnate subjectivity comprise a pre-predicative "prehension" or "grasping" toward itself and its world that is prior to the constitution of self and world (that is, prior to the representational formation of subject and object). This is parallel to what Freud was struggling to articulate when he argued that we experience the qualities of things — libidinally — before we judge whether they exist or not. . . . Mental events are always intentional in that they are directed towards, or strive towards, something even before the subject-object framework is established. If consciousness is indeed intentional, then it must be added that the entire body is a mode of consciousness. . . . This is the consciousness of libidinality, or fleshly energy that is "in" but not "of" our mental constructs (pp. 93-94).

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While "secondary consciousness of our representations: alienate us" from the consciousness of our corporeality," we can also "listen to the presentations or presencing of our carnal subjectivity" and engage "what might be called an *evocative-integrative treatment of our embodied being-becoming* that is profoundly different from . . . an instrumental treatment of the body. Here our alienation from our embodied experience is overcome" (p. 94).

The significance of the emergence of somatic psychology is that it establishes, or re-establishes, human experience as the primary subject matter of any inquiry into the psyche and that it acknowledges the primacy of embodied experience. Unlike much twentieth century psychology, the subject matter determines the method of inquiry, and not vice versa. And unlike most of the proceedings of this discipline through the twentieth century, somatic psychology follows ethical and political principles that might be called emancipative. . . . The increased attention that is being paid to the body in the objectivistic researchers of anthropology, sociology, medicine and other disciplines is not congruent with the characteristics of somatic psychology, but has certainly provided a scholarly context within which somatic psychology has begun to make its mark. (p. 96)

### 9. *Western Traditions of Bodywork*

When Barratt uses the term "bodywork" he is referring to "any physical manipulation intended to facilitate healing" (p. 97). This is different from bodymind therapy, of course, but a variety of methods including osteopathy, chiropractic, message, modern dance, eurhythmics, dance movement therapy, aikido and much more emphasized important principles of somatic psychology such as holism, the wisdom of the body, the body's inherent capacity for self-expression, and methods of "focusing on the cultivation of proprioceptive and kinesthetic *awareness* and bodily *appreciation*" (p. 102).

In particular, Barratt notes that dance movement therapy that "aims to restore to individuals a holistic sense of themselves" (p. 101) is organized around six principles:

- (1) body and mind interact, so that a change in movement will affect total functioning;
- (2) movement reflects personality;
- (3) the therapeutic relationship is mediated at least to some extent nonverbally . . .
- (4) movement contains a symbolic function and as such can be evidence of unconscious

- process;
- (5) movement improvisation allows the patient to experiment with new ways of being;
- (6) dance movement therapy allows for the recapitulation of early "object relationships." (p. 101)

While these points may seem unremarkable to some, they are indeed radical "in the context of European and North American cultures that not only have ignored the wisdom of the body, and not been responsive to the voicing of our embodiment, but also have forcefully promoted our alienation from the experience of our embodiment" (p. 102).

In addition, Barratt argues that the western tradition of bodywork lacked "a language for understanding that the body is not only system of structures and functions, as described by allopathic medicine, but is also the conduit for subtle energies" (p. 102), something that was made available through Asian traditions.

### 10. *The Influx of Asian Wisdom*

In general, Barratt notes that Asian philosophies "tend to offer a more holistic view of the body and of the universe, focusing on health and spiritual growth as a process of deautomatization involving the cultivation of awareness — a holistic reawakening of the senses, as well as a confrontation with whatever obstructs the free flow of spiritual and emotional energies" (p. 105). Many practices help "stop mental chaos, or flow, thus quieting the entire bodymind, in order to experience" (p. 106) the Seer, Compassionate Witness, or the Beloved (Sufi) that can also be used for fine-tuned listening and following of embodied energies. Plus, they offer theories, languages, and technologies related to subtle energies of the body that inform various healing modalities.

### 11. *Shamanic Practices and Transpersonal Psychologies*

Barratt underlines the paradox that "just when so many indigenous cultures all over the world are under attack and their way of life threatened with extinction by the socioeconomic forces of globalization, the peoples of Europe and North America finally seem more ready to learn from their wisdom" (p. 113). This wisdom includes the notions that "the entire universe exists within the energetic composition of every human body" and that "the subtle energies of our embodiment impact the entire universe" (p. 113). And since the way we perceive is already organized before we go to look, altered states of consciousness can be useful for healing and spiritual-emotional growth. Here the boundaries between inner and outer are challenged along with individualistic models of human-beingness suggesting instead "a universe of complex interdependence" (p. 117).

## 12. *The Advances of Neuroscience*

While the recent advances in neuroscientific disciplines delivers "powerful support for the agenda of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy" (p. 118), Barratt points out that "*lived experience* must be acknowledged as more complex and of a different order, than its neurophysiological substrate" (p. 119).

Further,

the advances of neuroscience, along with the displacement of the agential "I" and the dispersal of what might be called "consciousness" through the entirety of the bodymind, compel a reconsideration of the way in which the term "consciousness" is used. . . . Some neuroscientists distinguish primary and secondary consciousness. The latter is what we have been calling reflective consciousness. . . . Primary consciousness is often called *awareness* in somatic psychology, and refers to a level of sensitivity and responsiveness . . . that cannot necessarily be translated into words. (p. 123)

Since, "consciousness is an emergent property, more complex than the sum of its parts, and able to affect the systems that support it" (p. 124), there is both upward and downward causation in the system as well as the neuroplasticity to support growth and change. "The vindication of ancient doctrines of subtle energy, such as prana and chi may indeed be imminent" (p. 125).

"The future will involve further understanding of the bodymind as a holistic system with the awareness of its energies — which is itself the energy of awareness — pervading the entire system" (p. 126).

### Section III Current Challenges: Possible Futures

For Barratt, it would be a major impediment to the development of somatic psychology if it were not understood as the "psychology of our experience of embodiment" (p. 127), as opposed to the radically different stance of a discipline *about* the body such as sports psychology, rehabilitation medicine, or forms of mind-body medicine.

Likewise, he cautions against foregoing qualitative and phenomenological research that takes into account inner experience to embrace a narrow mainstream slice of

evidence-based research methods that limit and distort humanness, and that measure effectiveness only in terms of "adaptation or adjustment to the prevailing social order" (p. 129).

His major "impediment to the emergence of somatic psychology and the rise of bodymind therapies is . . . the failure on the part of the advocates of this discipline to recognize and embrace its inherent radicalism" (p. 129).

## 13. *Bodies and Boundaries*

Despite New Age rhetoric "suggesting that boundaries are inherently the problem in human relations" (p. 135) and they should be let down, Barratt maintains the need for boundaries. Some boundaries are appropriately or inappropriately rigid, overly pliant, or semi-permeable. Some are obvious and functional, others "conspicuously matters of social convention" (p. 131).

Even in an ambiguous world where there are death sentences for female but not male adulterers, family honor killings, killing to gain entrance to a gang, ritual genital mutilation, women not allowed to wear pants or vote, blacks who can't drink or eat in a diner, premarital sex allowed or not allowed, women allowed or disallowed to be educated, driving mandated on the right side or left side of the road, work that encourages naps or not, Barratt notes, "rare is the therapist who will explore open-mindedly with patients the effect of the cultural mores and beliefs that have been impressed upon them" (p. 133). This becomes immediately relevant when a practitioner is asked to wield clinical authority in relation to the social order by defining appropriateness, what is normal or abnormal, simply weird or pathological.

"Since the universe actually is — as the new sciences keep telling us — an intricate and fluid concoction of vibrationalities, how we draw boundaries between one thing and another is the foundational question of psychology. Expressed differently, this is the question of *identity*, including the identity of the psyche, in a universe of nonlinear dynamic interdependence." (p. 135)

"As psychoanalytic wisdom has well informed us, the boundary between what is 'me' and what is 'not-me' is complex, always fragile, and somewhat fluid" (p. 136). "Where our embodiment begins and ends is far more challenging than might be supposed" (p. 138). We recognize our skin envelope that provides some boundary definition. But, the body as an energy field extends beyond the envelope. We know how the energy and emotional valence of a room changes depending on who comes in it

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with what attitude. We know physically meaningful touch can be healing, while a therapist who never touches can profoundly violate a person with sexually objectifying energy coming through the eyes.

On one level, "*boundaries elude definition except in relation to other boundaries*" (p. 139). But functionally, boundaries "create and define actors, rather than actors creating or defining boundaries" (p. 141). Think of the issue of touch in relationship to a medical physician, massage therapist, and psychotherapist. It is not the permissible acts legislated in or out so much as the intention behind the act that is crucial. "Therapy is not only a sacred calling, but a profoundly ethical imperative. The issue of touch — emotional and physical — is not so much a matter of what or where is touched. Rather, it is a matter of why it is touched, and the ethicality with which the touching process is undertaken" (p. 144). Specifically, is it in the interest and furtherance of the client's healing process.

The "incest taboo is the prototype or 'boundaries of boundaries'" (p. 140) that is upheld cross-culturally. Also, therapists abstain "from narcissistic and other gratifications in the relationship, including the gratifications of authority, power, sensual pleasure, admiration, and so forth" (p. 143) so that they can enter into "relationships intended to heal the psyche . . . characterized by . . . *safety, freedom, and intimacy*" (p. 141). Such abstinence is prerequisite to the trust that allows the therapeutic relationship to deepen into profound healing places.

While healing is absolutely an ethical calling, Barratt argues "it is also amoral in the sense that it does not necessarily have regard for the plethora of social codes and boundaries. In this respect, we know that touch facilitates emotional and spiritual healing — not the objectivating touch of the medical practitioner, which has mechanical purposes, but the emotionally, sensually and energetically meaningful touch of the bodymind therapist" (p. 141) that societal organizations sometimes judges prohibitively. The community of bodymind therapists needs "to assert the freedom of touch as essential to the healing process, all the while insisting on standards of training that secure each therapist's ability to create relations that are safely intimate" (p. 144).

In line with this ethical stance is the parallel precept that *to not include* the use of touch and make available bodymind interventions in one's practice is unethical. For instance "a seemingly endless procedure of talk and more talk — the perpetual telling and retelling of the patient's stories, which fails to facilitate the patient's potential to live in the present" (p. 142-43) is unethical. Failure to hug a patient

experiencing grief, for instance, could be therapeutically disastrous in reinforcing a characterological belief that "I can't count on support," or "I must always be self-reliant," or "I must not be worthy of care," or many other unhealthy possibilities.

When the refusal to use clinically skillful touch alienates patients from their embodied experience, and fails to facilitate a healing process, it is unethical. It fails to use boundaries skillfully and therapeutically, and prolongs the therapy, thus increasing the time, energy, and money the patient is ultimately burdened with.

### **14. The Inherent Sexuality of Being Human**

Barratt has a strong background in sexology as a past president of the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists who directed human sexuality programs as Professor of Family Medicine, Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences at Wayne State University. In his 2005 book *Sexual Health and Erotic Freedom* he outlined a theory of the *sexification* of North American culture which embraces the paradox that "contemporary culture has become *simultaneously both compulsively sex-obsessive and compulsively sex phobic*" (p. 146).

There is no end of talk *about sex*, no end of "sexy" images in every form of media. There is the phobic backlash "against the — somewhat mythical — 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s . . . that would compel our children into sexual illiteracy" (p. 146). There is the field of sexology that has an ancient history, but in our time centers research on behavior and demographics, anatomical and physiological mechanisms, the frequency, contexts, attitudes, and mechanics of sex acts that fit the modern objectivist scientific paradigm.

However, "the sexiness of contemporary culture does *not* mean that people are more readily able to listen to the voice of their embodiment" (p. 146). Both sides of the paradox of sexification are "compulsive reactions against the power of our bodymind's inherently erotic potential" (p. 146). There is "almost no research on the inner experience of . . . [sexual participants whose] experience of desire and arousal within the bodymind are exquisitely intricate and varied" (p. 150).

In terms of therapy, "psychoanalysis began its history with an understanding of sexuality as the libidinality of our entire embodiment. As the twentieth century progressed, the notion of libido was retained as a term but emptied of its original energetic meaning" (p. 153). Unfortunately the emerging field of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy, out of its desire to fit into mainline traditions and

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distance itself from any association with illicit sexual massage and such, has avoided "speaking of sexuality, let alone exploring its significance in any detail — thus replicating the history of psychoanalysis by progressively avoiding the topic" (p. 147). What kind of un-holistic, non-integrative message is sent to clients, asks Barratt, when therapists are willing to deal with every aspect of their lives except their sexuality?

Barratt seeks to remedy the situation through proposing a new sub-discipline:

Somatic sexology — the marriage of somatic psychology and sexology — is greatly needed. This would be a human-scientific discipline, as contrasted with an allopathic natural-scientific, or literary-aesthetic one. It would research, in a phenomenological or hermeneutic mode, the experience of our embodiment as a sexual or sensual experience (p. 151).

Somatic sexology would move beyond a limiting focus on genital intercourse to include the totality of the body, its skin, and all its orifices. In terms of Asian perspectives it would help study the integration of pelvic area energies into alignment and balance with head, heart, and spirit energies. Genital intercourse could be explored within the larger context of a sacred exchange of energies. Once again, sexuality as the libidinality of our entire bodymind could embrace the wholeness of life including being released to the energetic-erotic energies of appreciating a sunset, the wind on one's face, soul stirring music, the taste of food, the beauty of a child's smile, the pain of a toothache, the performance of a well engineered car, and the rest of life's manifold offerings.

If sexuality is a circulation of energies within and around the entire bodymind, and a running of energies between two or more entities in any sexual experience, then somatic psychology and bodymind therapy need to embrace it as such, and to acknowledge its healing properties. And if indeed sexuality is optimally understood as a communication — as a movement of sensual information — then this understanding generates clinical and sociopolitical practices by which the mechanisms of reification and alienation will be challenged. . . . We need to develop this understanding of human sexuality as something far more than . . . what are customarily designated as "sex acts." (p. 153)

### **15. *Oppression and the Momentum of Liberation***

In his chapter on oppression and liberation Barratt argues that the field cannot take the "supposedly autonomous individual as its unit of analysis" (p. 159). This is pure fiction as feminists, family therapists, cross-cultural studies, systems theory, post-modernists, and more have demonstrated widely. Still, "Clinicians of every persuasion fail to appreciate the sociocultural and political context of their profession" (p. 159). "The point is not that every act of healing has to be a lesson in sociopolitical consciousness; but that a fully scientific understanding of any ailment of the bodymind needs to include the interpretation of the ailment in its social, cultural, political and economic context" (p. 160).

Repeating a recurrent argument, Barratt maintains that "if psychology is not to operate merely as a functionary of the dominant culture and prevailing social order, then it has to become a critical discipline occupied with these multiple ways in which ideologies condition and constrain human potential" (p. 172).

This danger is all too real for him. "Too many psychoanalysts abandoned the subversive implications of their discipline in exchange for financial privilege, social prestige, and conformity" (p. 161). Likewise, "somatic psychologists . . . have become over-anxious in their pursuit of acceptance within mainstream psychology and the mental health industry" (p. 161), and have not claimed and embraced the critical nature of their work. Generally speaking, the "field of mental health has been captivated by the ideologies of adaptation and maturation" (p. 169).

But indisputably, bodymind therapists know "the human capacity to abuse and exploit others — our proclivity for discrimination, injustice, violence — surely requires our underlying disconnectedness from the awareness of our sensual and sexual bodies.

The process by which we can reconnect with the awareness of our embodied experience have far-reaching implications for cultural, social, political and economic change" (p. 172-73). Certainly we have seen that "traumatization freezes our psychic energy" (p. 165), and can lead to fatalism and anomie, despair and disempowerment. Somatic therapies also know how cultural values and social structures are reflected in the bodymind and why people therefore have "resistance to social and cultural changes" (p. 162).

While this is true for those oppressed, it is also true for those who do the killing and oppressing, those who are bystanders, those who participate in the pathology of normality and the price of privilege that can markedly alienate one "from embodied experience and the wellsprings

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of their desires" (p. 170), those who endure the cost of being a top athlete, or form themselves around the media, medical, and economic ideals of alienated bodies.

Liberation psychologies that correctly make clear the emotional effects of political, economic, and social forces need to align more with bodymind therapies that carry the wisdom and expertise noted above. While it is easy to criticize the shortcomings of capitalism, the values and social structures put in place to foster communism were never effective in changing peoples' heads and hearts to live in happy, productive community. An overall approach to constructive change will have to deal with consciousness of the bodymind expressed in behaviors that are in intimate relationship to cultural values and social structures.

Barratt quotes with approval from Watkins and Shulman 2008 book *Toward Psychologies of Liberation* in terms of summarizing the global situation that is the current context for healing and growth (p.1):

At the beginning of this new millennium, after hundreds of years of colonialism and neocolonialism, we cannot escape the disturbing fact that we live in a world where more than a billion people lack sufficient shelter, food, and clean water, where lakes, rivers, and top soils are dying; where cultures clash, and war, genocide, and acts of terrorism seem ordinary. Transnational corporations with vast reach and power control land, media, economies, and elections. Their policies are decided away from public view, in national and international arenas where the super-rich and super-armed preside. Economic globalization undermines much that is local and personal, affecting possibilities for housing, jobs, cultural expression, and self-governance. Such globalization has created a tidal wave of displacement, undermining families, neighborhoods, and cultures. . . . The psychological effects of deepening divides between the rich and the poor, unprecedented migrations, and worsening environmental degradation make this era as one requiring extraordinary critical and reconstructive approaches. (p. 158)

Barratt also quotes the question driving Watkins and Shulman's book, namely "what kinds of psychological approaches might enhance capacities for critical thinking, collective memory, peacemaking, and the creative transformations of individuals, groups, and neighborhoods" (p. 159) with the hope that somatic psychology could be the source of such an enhancement.

### **16. *Bodily Paths to Spiritual Awakening***

In his next chapter, Barratt returns to expound on his tenet that "cultivating the awareness of our embodied experience is an inherently spiritual practice" (p. 182). He argues forcefully that, "the future of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy depends critically on our readiness to deconstruct the separation of science and spirituality that has characterized the modern western world" (p. 182).

"The processes of returning to the awareness of our experiential embodiment are essentially a spiritual practice" (p. 174) that proceed "against the images and concepts of the body propounded by cultural media, objectivistic medical sciences, and capitalist economies" (p. 174). "It is a refusal to treat the body as a conceptual object or thing" (p. 175). "The body becomes a dialogical partner in the processes that constitute our being-in-the-world" (p. 175), that "liberates us from our own alienation" (p. 175). As such, it is a "restorative spiritual event . . . a revitalizing process of reconnection with the lifeforce within, and in this sense it is holy" (p. 175).

Our body "of subtle energies . . . is the body of the lifeforce, the Bergsonian *elan vital* that is the brio or kinesis of life itself — its energies are life's longing for itself" (p. 176). "The movement of subtle energies . . . connects, and renders interdependent, the individual's embodiment with the entire universe" (pp. 176-77), and is "the foundational process and liveliness of our desire — our spirituality incarnate" (p. 177). Barratt concludes that "it seems unavoidable that we need to embrace fully the notion of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy as *an existential and psychospiritual discipline* . . . embrac[ing] fully the notion that we are *spirited bodies* . . . [which] inspire[s] us to challenge the traditional division between the sacred and the secular" (p. 177). Exploring "liberation in the here-and-now . . . follows closely from *kama* — the notion of *the desire of sensuality as a longing for the divine*" (p. 177).

"Once one accepts the notion of our embodiment as a conduit for the infinite flow of esoteric energies, one begins to appreciate these subtle energies as constituting the divinity of our humanity. The awareness of our experiential embodiment becomes a path of spiritual awakening" (p. 177).

Here love is not a representation, but "something more like a vibration we can be attuned to" (p. 178). "Love is grounded in the experience of embodiment, and . . . a communication or a circulation of energies between two or more persons, or between a person and the universe. It is the energetic power of transcendence" (p. 178).

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Freedom likewise "begins with our experience of embodiment, and our ability . . . to engage in this existential-spiritual process of self-realization" (p. 179). Joy also follows from "living fully within one's embodiment" (p. 179), which is a fruit of the Spirit in many traditions. "Reconnecting with our embodied experience . . . is the pathway for our joyful connection to the universe of the divine, . . . connecting our being-in-the-world with the entirety of the universe" (p. 179).

Finally, "Eros is not only the inherent nature of our sexual and sensual corporality; it is the nature of the universe itself" (p. 181). When erotic couples "no longer experience each other as separate . . . the rush of subtle energies throughout the body is experienced as flowing freely into the energies of the entire cosmos" (p. 181), which is a "central tenet of mystical experience" (p. 181). "Somatic awareness flows into cosmic consciousness" (p. 181).

### 17. *The Future of Human Awareness*

In his last chapter Barratt returns to the key issue of the fundamental relationship between the experiential body, and the linguistic mind. "What sort of language is the 'language' of the bodily awareness, and how is it articulated in relation to representational thinking and reflective consciousness" (p. 184)?

He is highly doubtful and suspicious of everyday language. "Representational language is essentially metaphoric . . . in which the meaning of a sign or symbol is entirely sustained by its relations with other signs and symbols" (p. 184). Something can only be known contextually and Barratt is closely attuned to how social, political, economic contexts alienate and repress. So, he states: "One cannot truly express the voice of embodied experience in language, if the construction of that language is itself the cause of our alienation from that experience" (p. 188).

He then moves to contrast the symbolic language of reflective or secondary consciousness with primary consciousness that "comprises a level of sensitivity and responsiveness to events — including affective dispositions - that may not even be available to conceptual formulation" (p. 185). "The language of the mind . . . is able to trick itself . . . whereas the 'language,' in which the voice of our experiential embodiment expresses itself, perhaps cannot" (p. 184). The body reveals and the body doesn't lie, as others have said.

Since ordinary language fails, Barratt suggests a special domain for bodily expression. "The meaningfulness of bodily awareness occurs in the domain of what might be called *somatic semiotics*. It is the bodymind's consciousness of its own corporeal experience. . . . This system might be described as nonsymbolic, presymbolic, preverbal, or

preconscious. . . . Awareness . . . is attuned to the movement of subtle energies . . . and cannot be adequately captured in the language of representational thinking" (p. 186).

However, the key issue and question remains of what is the connection between the domain of somatic semiotics and reflective consciousness? "Is the praxis of somatic psychology an expansion of ordinary consciousness, or an act of ideology critique . . . and if it is both, then when, where, and how, are these radically different directions operative?" (p. 188)

Eugene Gendlin is one who has put much psychological and philosophical thought into this issue. But Barratt casts doubt on Gendlin's move from awareness of a preverbal felt sense to words with a felt sense of rightness because he maintains that Gendlin's Focusing method shares the assumption of European phenomenology that "representationality is an open system, receptive to voices that come from beyond its own limitations" (p. 186).

Barratt believes there is "an irrevocable divergence between phenomenological philosophy and psychodynamic practice" that participates in the school of suspicion that sees "reflective consciousness and conceptualization as principally an ideological system of 'false consciousness'" (p. 187). "The representational realm is structured in such a way as to suppress or repress our awareness of embodied experience" (p. 187).

For his own solution Barratt goes back to classical psychoanalytic practice and asserts that:

. . . free-associative discourse . . . opens consciousness to the *otherwise* dimensions of our being . . . [and is] inherently healing. . . . Nothing about our experiential embodiment needs be regarded as alien; yet healing requires that its wisdom be listened to as the voice of something strange, miraculous, and essential to our well being and to our life itself. Bodily awareness is the authentic ground of our being-in-the-world. (p. 189)

The last paragraph of the book contains Barratt's summary argument and challenge to the field:

We now need to return to a sense of belonging with our bodies — not to a program of conceptually evaluating them, improving them, or attempting to control their mechanics, but to listening to the wisdom that comes from their somatic semiotics. This is a revival of our knowledge of freedom and presence as the healing processes that honor the life force itself. Once we dissolve its blockages and obstructions, our awareness of the wisdom of our

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embodiment opens us to an otherwise world from that which oppresses us today. It opens us to new possibilities for our human potential — culturally, politically, and spiritually. This then is the mandate of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy, and its potential for the prospective creation of profound change in our human condition cannot be overestimated. (p. 190)

### *Reviewer Reflections*

#### **General**

Overall, Barratt has written a stunning, remarkable contribution to the field of psychology in general and somatic psychotherapy in particular. It is a deep, mature, and thoughtful work that should be given appropriate credit for simply engaging basic questions and assumptions regarding the nature of awareness, language, the body, sexuality, philosophical psychology, and the importance of cultural-social contexts, which many psychological writers gloss over or ignore. Those in the field of bodymind therapy, in particular, are often so entranced by the power of experiential, transformational work, that they leave theorizing about presuppositions and implications to others. In terms of Wilber's Integral Philosophy, Barratt demonstrates more encompassing four-quadrant thinking and writing than many who identify themselves as Integral Psychotherapists.

What happens, of course, when one writes such a brief though dense volume that touches so many fundamental issues, is that questions are evoked that one would like to have the author discuss more.

#### **Ideology**

For instance, Barratt is eloquent about how much the ideology of current social-political-economic structures show up in the bodymind in terms of repression and alienation. I would welcome him commenting more about how *ideology is not optional*.

Every person comes into the world with the basic task of making sense of it, organizing the blooming buzzing confusion, and creating meaning. The title of Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood's chapter on "transference" in their 1987 book on *Psychoanalytic Treatment: An Intersubjective Approach*, is "The Organization of Experience." Daniel Siegel considers the mind that aspect of us that organizes the flow of information and energy in the brain-body.

Obviously, some ideologies organize the various aspects of our lives in more functional and satisfying way than others. Therapy issues usually have to do with what aspects of life a client has organized out, what has been repressed to the shadows. In Hakomi Therapy there is agreement with Bateson that for a living system to be organic, which means self-organizing, self-directing, and self-correcting, all the parts must be communicating within the whole.

The point here is that while psychology needs to be a critical discipline, as liberation psychologies are, it also needs to be constructive. Especially after the massive upheavals, wars, and deaths of the last century, continuing to today, I would like to hear more from Barratt about what economic thinkers he would like to make common, interdisciplinary cause with in terms of proposing healthier, more humane structural systems for creating a common life together.

And, with all his cautions about psychotherapists not simply serving uncritically the powers that be, a constructive vision would have include a way of evaluating people who display notably different behavior than the general population. Is the person simply displaying their own non-harmful uniqueness? Are they are a genius ahead of their time? Are they crazy, chronically or acutely, in a way that could hurt themselves or others? Are they disturbed in the manner of a canary in a mine shaft that should be a signal to us that something is array in the public square? The need to make evaluative judgments always remains.

Since structural systems flow from and are based on cultural values, there must be a necessary and persuasive ideology behind changes or new directions in our political, economic ways. Since, sociologically speaking, core cultural values are rarely invented out of nothing, one would normally have to tie into existing memes to significantly move a population to embrace new ways.

In America, those who want to promote large-scale changes usually attempt to tie into the American Dream meme and argue that their proposals are a way of bringing about a more perfect union. To produce any results of consequence, arguments for listening more closely to our embodied experience would likely have to be framed in terms of a more perfect freedom, integrity, functionality, and authenticity in order to engender the safety of people orienting within recognizable values, and to mobilize the requisite motivation to enter into such processes.

Also, what constructive sociopolitical practices and visions might Barratt suggest would change the culture to allow for greater, appropriate sensual appreciation and expression? Ordinary people are not simply sex-phobic about their

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children, although the sexification of the culture concerns them. Certainly a number of cultures world-wide, as well as in America, do not believe enhancing the sexification of the culture is the answer, though a more relaxed attitude toward sex has been a value in lowering some anxiety among the young. People are seeking and open to a more alluring, positive, and pragmatic vision of a good life that includes its overall erotic quality.

In terms of exploring visions and practices, anyone can easily point to the worst examples of repressive and alienating actions flowing from religious institutions. However, empirically speaking, every major survey confirms that church-going people whose faith affirms the creation as good and sexuality as a good gift of the Creator, consistently have more satisfying sex lives than the general public. The influence of faith traditions on billions of people cannot be minimized or easily replaced with unstructured references to a new secular spirituality, even though there are many who consider themselves spiritual but not religious. Wilber recognizes this with his cogent challenge to the church to be the great conveyor belt that moves people from magical mythical thinking to the rational, and then the mystical, something it has so far dramatically failed to accomplish.

A fundamental aspect of Wilber's point, that Barratt says little about in this essay, is that people develop. There could be a romantic tendency in Barratt's work, that it would be good to hear him say more about, that implies if one were raised with exquisite sensitivity to one's embodied experience, life would automatically be more compassionate, wise, healthy, and altruistic.

Is, as Barratt argues, embodied experience a necessary and perhaps sufficient practice for the individual's authentic realization of his or her connection with the divine? If so, it is not clear why one person with sensitivity such as Thich Nhat Hahn develops to identify not only with the young girl who jumps overboard to her death after being raped by a sea pirate, but also with the pirate whose heart has not yet learned how to love, and another with superb training in sensitivity to subtle energies becomes an accomplished Ninja killer.

Even with high quality dyadic and self regulation happening as a child grows, research shows it will recognize differences between male and female, black and white, and become sexist and racist if caregivers do not specifically model and teach a more encompassing consciousness. Again, Wilber points out that every child must begin from square one and move through developmental stages from a necessarily and appropriately egocentric beginning, and then advance to ethnocentric followed by worldcentric consciousness. Sadly, some 70% of the world's population

never progress beyond tribal identity as is seen in the multitude of wars in the world today, and the polarization of political positions in the United States.

One would like more dialogue with Barratt about inevitable developmental hurdles and conscious ways of working with them. Likewise, how would he suggest somatic psychology engage the present social-cultural structures which influence the consciousness of the vast majority of people so that the implications of bodymind therapy not be doomed to an isle of irrelevance in terms of the small number of people ready to embrace them.

### *Linguisticity*

Being conscious alludes to the crucial issue in Barratt of language and experience. It is not quite clear if Barratt actually affirms that *language is constitutive of experience and therefore also not optional* or, as with many psychologists, he assume there can be an end run around it by contacting a level of experience prior to linguisticity that can be contacted without language.

Actually it is the imagination that is the middle or mediating function that transforms the givens of existence and reality in such a way to make them available to awareness. Reasoning is always a tertiary reflection on the images and symbols that the imagination produces. According to Cassirer humans are fundamentally more *animal symbolicum* than *animal rationale*. Ricoeur argues that it is symbols that give rise to thoughts.

Unlike objective reason's demand for separation between subject and object, the imagination tends to hold them together, and does not usually separate the emotional and passionate 'how' of awareness from the 'what' or object of awareness. The products of imaginative knowledge are more immediate and bodily based. The imagination is the transformer, map-maker, or active, creative filter that both organizes experience and gives it emotional meaning, import, and value through the affections and metaphors, which is why we can refer to core organizing beliefs, or core narrative beliefs.. These imaginative transformations normally operate below consciousness, organizing our thinking, feelings and actions before we think, feel, or move.

So Barratt is quite right in agreeing with Lacan that the unconscious is structured by language. Thus, even a felt sense, body posture, gesture, or pregnant, inarticulate silence is organized or mediated by language broadly conceived, and one can indeed wonder with Barratt how the language that structures, rigidifies, or alienates embodied experience and ordinary consciousness can be used to change it. He seems to be agreeing with Watzlawick and other theorists that linguistically formed consciousness is

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the problem. Therefore, therapeutic techniques must avoid it by using hypnotic, paradoxical, or free associative techniques that sidetrack the reflective consciousness of the client, (but not that of the therapist who is put in an even more powerful position through the employment of these techniques).

However, to say that an experience of Spirit, of a tree, a kiss, a computer, or a sunset is mediated through language, which means its meaning is context-bound and relative, is not grounds for escaping language. It is simply a given that no signifier can express the meaning of anything without remainder, and any signifier of a never completely knowable referent will give rise to multiple, unique significations within multiple individuals.

Certainly ten descriptions of a tree will yield ten different versions, pictures, or images. Notes of lovers to one another often start with, "*Words cannot express* how much I . . ." However, the good news is that there can be enough shared linguistic structures and cultural backgrounds that there can be overlaps or points of shared experience that allows two or more people to call to mind similar-enough significations to be able to communicate.. Knowledge is communicatively mediated, as Habermas suggests.

Language not only represses, it expresses. It is true that the actual referent never absolutely determines the signified. The meaning of the relationship between the signifier and the signified is conferred by their context, which entails an infinite chain of associations that have left their memory traces in the system. This is why it is important to increase one's language and communication skills through a liberal arts education, traveling, meeting with diverse communities, and so forth to enhance the numbers of contexts and connections one brings to a conversation.

This is why people such as C. S. Lewis argue that poetic language is uniquely effective and cannot be reduced to descriptive language. For instance, which type of language usage most effectively conveys and makes present the truth of "coldness?" Scientific language: "It was minus-nine degrees Celsius." Ordinary descriptive language: "It was very cold." Poetic story language: "Ah, bitter chill it was! The owl for all his feathers was a-cold. The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass. And silent was the flock in wholly fold: Numb'd were the Beadsman's fingers." While all language is ultimately metaphorical, poetic-story language obviously uses more signifiers, which call into play more memory traces and contexts, and thus a richer signified connection to the referent reality.

So, while psychoanalysis is a school suspicious of false consciousness that employs tools like free association, it still remains a talking cure. Barratt seems to want to push beyond this to say that being attuned to the movement of subtle energies in embodied experience cannot be captured in the language of representational thinking. The inability to capture without remainder has already been agreed to above.

He also wants to suggest that bodily attunement is an experience of presence that is prior to the organization of the self-system. It is true that a person is a holarchically structured system with large degrees of initial freedom, but human living systems end up reflecting energy that has been progressively organized into sensations, feelings, muscular tensions, dispositions, and integrated into meaning-full overall attitudes and world views.

It is much more questionable to assert that we can become aware in a non-linguistic way of energy as basic building blocks outside of its integration into a unified, organized whole. There might be an *otherwise world* to discover, but can someone move beyond the linguisticity of experience Theodore Jennings outlines and listen to that otherwise world without language? (We are not speaking here of non-dual awareness.)

### **Consciousness**

Barratt seems to keep that question open by asking what is the connection between the domain of somatic semiotics and reflective consciousness? "Is the praxis of somatic psychology an expansion of ordinary consciousness, or an act of ideology critique . . . and if it is both, then when, where, and how, are these radically different directions operative?" The answer would seem to be not in a debate about the nature of language, but about the nature of consciousness that it would be good to hear him address more completely.

Everyone agrees that ordinary consciousness, language, and the body are already organized by unconscious core organizers in implicit memory. Persons can accommodate new information to a certain extent by expanding their structures of their awareness. However, if the new information touches limbic-based fears, people will assimilate it into old structures of understanding, whether it is a good fit or not. This is what concerns Barratt.

Barratt's hope and program is that our alienation from our embodied experience through instrumental treatments can be overcome through listening to our carnal subjectivity with a sensitivity and responsiveness characteristic of what he calls "primary" as opposed to "reflective" consciousness,

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often termed "awareness" in somatic psychology. Instead of arguing that this approach transcends the linguisticity of experience, it is better understood as a shift into different state of consciousness.

Hakomi Therapy understands this as a shift from ordinary consciousness into a mindful or contemplative state of consciousness. As Barratt noted earlier, it is shift that helps "stop mental chaos, or flow, thus quieting the entire bodymind, in order to experience" the otherwise world in a new way that allows new learnings to emerge from the unknown.

Phenomenologically speaking, we are able to switch from an ordinary to a mindful state of consciousness that demonstrably slows down, engages curiosity, suspends theories and agendas, concentrates on here-and-now present experience in a passive or receptive way similar to the releasement consciousness of Heidegger or the bare awareness of Buddhist practice.

Ordinary consciousness is a step removed from experience since it most often seeks to categorize and know, which means it generates theories *about* experience. In contrast, mindfulness attends directly to felt, present experience in a way that allows for immediacy, passion, mystery, not knowing, and more of a state of being than one of doing.

Where ordinary consciousness is unreflective in the sense that experience is on "automatic," habitually governed by implicit core organizers, mindfulness takes the self under observation and enables one to study the organization of his or her experience.

Altered states of consciousness such as this can be useful for healing and spiritual-emotional growth as Barratt suggests in his chapter on Shamanic transpersonal sources. Something similar to this shift in consciousness seems to be in play in Barratt's own clinical examples such as the woman who notices a tightness in her upper chest. Barratt invited her to breathe into that tightness and notice what happened in an open experimental, exploratory way that resulted in a memory arising that had fed into one of her core organizing beliefs. Likewise, Gendlin's Focusing is not simply an exercise in European phenomenology, but also a skillful use of states of consciousness that mitigates the tyranny of language.

In general, the use of contemplative states of consciousness allows for a clinically useful *mind/body interface* where one can study how attitudes are reflected in the body, and how awareness of the subtle energies of the body can reveal what meanings are embodied there.

Part of what is happening here is what Buddhist teachers call mindfulness of the mind. A crucial aspect of taking the body-mind under observation is that there is a distance introduced that allows people to be present to the immediacy of their experience, but one step back, which means not totally at the mercy of automatic rules and structures. What was once subject according to Kegan can become subject.

A crucial point for this discussion is that consciousness is not distracted as in classical hypnosis, since a client is more aware than ever of what is going on, and language is not suspended. The fact that our mind-body is organized and structured remains.

However, being able to stand back in a curious way to simply notice or study how we organize around various life issues such as support, intimacy, competitiveness, freedom or whatever also allows the possibility of reorganizing around new, more healthy beliefs.

Transformation in living, organic systems often has to do with organizing in elements of life (held in the shadows) previously organized out. In a mindful state of consciousness one can also study all the automatic barriers that arise in relation to a new possibility of living being introduced, and also what those barriers need to calm down and allow in new experiences. When experience is listened to in a mindful state of consciousness, there is an assumption that it will reveal organic signals or impulses meant to heal or guide persons in their evolutionary unfolding.

To respond to Barratt's question above, when transformation occurs there is both an expansion of consciousness and an ideological critique happening simultaneously. There is an enhanced wisdom and consciousness gained through the interconnection of more parts within the whole.

Certainly the person's own ideology is critiqued as less inclusive than it needs to be. For instance, perhaps a person's transformation has to do with integrating in the possibility of including anger in present day relationships, something that was not possible in earlier developmental years. Here the context might be fairly personal, perhaps reaching out to the level of the family.

Or, perhaps the source of a woman not living the truth of her anger stems from cultural values and strictures that discourage women from having a voice. Here the healing process would involve a critique of culture. In addition to helping the woman's individual consciousness reorganize around the inclusion of anger without shame, behaviorally speaking, it might be necessary for her to join in women's groups that are advocating for new cultural values and social

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structures that allow and affirm the fullness of a women's participation in society.

In addition to mindfulness allowing for a clinically useful mind/body interface, the combination of passive awareness, and active compassionate wisdom points toward a larger Self that is different from the historically influenced parts that often rule our lives. While there is not a Self-as-a-thing in Buddhist thought, Barratt has already pointed to the reality of the Seer, Compassionate Witness, or the Beloved. People like Almaas, Eisman, Schwartz, and others are likewise talking about the clinical usefulness of resourcing clients through fostering greater access to the client's Self, Essential Self, Organic Self, Heart Self, Ontological Self, Inmost Self, or whatever designation is appropriate.

There are some therapists who ask people to engage in spiritual practices or communities as an adjunct to therapy. It would be good to hear Barratt explore more about how the larger consciousness of a Compassionate Witness could facilitate bodymind therapy. At the same time, he could add more thoughts on how self-realization relates to self-transcendence.

As a final note, it is undoubtedly good for spiritually sensitive therapists to advocate for and be a resource for embodied spirituality, and to help research methods for expanding consciousness and compassion beyond tribal identity. However, to guide people into higher, non-dual states of consciousness is normally best left to a spiritual-religious community with multiple resources. To suggest psychotherapists become the new priests of a secular spirituality would be to accept enormous responsibilities,

and claim huge capabilities and associated personal maturity.

And, it is not clear how new or how secular such a move might be. There are already a vast array of religious communities that cater to vastly different spiritual sensibilities. Since language is essentially metaphorical and inadequate with words only meaningful in relation to other words, to replace personal metaphors of the divine with supposedly more scientific ones such as God as a "force" would simply evoke signifieds such as a powerful wind, or waves breaking against the shore. To speak of God as an all-embracing chaotic Attractor, acting as Whitehead said, throughout the world by gentle persuasion toward love, is fine, but will necessarily return to evoking more personal images of embracing love.

### *fini*

To repeat, Barratt's book calls into question current realities in a deep scholarly way at the same time it proposes a passionate vision for somatic psychology and bodymind therapy. At the same time, it raises questions and hopes for extended comments on the possibility of constructive solutions to the issues raised.

The volume would be appropriate as core reading in classes dealing with somatic psychology, clinical psychology, philosophical psychology, history and systems of psychology, new directions in psychology, and eclectic psychology. However, for this to happen on a widespread basis will require the publisher to issue a paperback edition that is considerably cheaper than the present hardback that costs over \$90.

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