

## Self in Motion

In the early 1950s, the founders of Gestalt therapy posited a radical notion of self. Self, they stated, is a process emergent in the activity of creative adjusting—dynamic, fluid and changing. In the experience of moving through the world, self discovers and invents the world it is moving through. Similar to every revolutionary idea, this radical thinking offers us the rich ground for further expansion and development of its phenomenological stance. It gives us the foundation from which to say what is already there and the foundation to say what is yet to be said.

As a phenomenological methodology, Gestalt therapy is concerned with an understanding of *how* we live the situation we are living: how to analyze, describe and know it. In this chapter, I hope to illuminate more fully the organizing processes of self by presenting a closer investigation or next step into the dynamics of human movement. I advance an analysis of the structure and function of movement progressions and give a phenomenological account of creative adjusting by breaking down movement into its most basic elements and exploring the means by which we make manifest experience before it becomes objectified in reflection. I argue here for the understanding of movement as part of any phenomenological analysis regarding self. Further, I emphasize the significance of fundamental movements emerging in the time frame of the first year of life and their constitutive participation in the moment-to-moment experiences throughout life: a developmental perspective.

In general, the essence of my work has been to recognize and validate the importance of interactive movement in the creating and organizing of experience. I observe and identify movement patterns in relationship dyads: specifically baby-parent and therapist-patient dyads. I explore movement from a structural-functional perspective and consider how each person in the relationship creatively adjusts within their particular situation. That is, I examine the specifics of how each

moves and is being moved in relation to the other. This becomes an important means by which the processes of creative adjusting can be made known. As the authors of Gestalt therapy significantly noted, the process of creative adjusting is the essential function of self (Perls, Hefferline, Goodman 1972/1951: 247). Looking at these overt and subtle movement transactions between baby and parent, therapist and patient, we learn something essential about the processes by which self arises.

Before I continue to discuss the emergence of self as movement, I need to elucidate my understanding of the primary and fundamental position movement holds in the play of human experience.

### **Kinesthesia and the feel of our self-movements**

Although movement is the most basic common denominator to our existence, to many movement is often thought of as no more than a locational shift. Movement is, however, much more than this and needs a greater and more precise description to be more fully comprehended. Movement is the shaping of space by bodies in motion – one with the other – within a variety of contexts from which its qualitative character arises. Movement is dynamic, relational, and situational. As such, it makes sense to begin with movement as the starting place to look at the nature of contacting and the emerging sense-of-self.

Sensitizing ourselves to our own movement experiences is, to me, a primary requirement for the organizing of flexible and creative adjusting. Through kinesthesia, or movement in awareness, we are in direct experience with the situation we are living. The word kinesthesia is derived from the Greek *cinēō*, “to put in motion,” and *aisthēsis*, “sensation” or “impression.” Kinesthesia is the sense or feel of our self-movements.

We become kinesthetically aware as we experience one part of our moving body in relation to the others; sense our body weight and muscular tensions; and feel

various pressures against our body. Through kinesthesia we listen or attend to our self-movements and feel our subtle creative adjusting within the situation. We learn *that we are, how we are and where we are*. Kinesthetic experiences can either be concealed from us or brought to awareness. And when brought foreground, valuable information regarding our condition and the state of our world becomes available. The situation unveils itself to us through a variety of felt qualities and combinations of qualities experienced through moving. Felt qualities are not emotions, but rather particular feeling-tones or affects; i.e. the continuums of bound-free, gradual-abrupt, even-changing, high-low intensity, and many more. Flowing on the stream of movement, these affective happenings are part of the structure/function from which “lived” experience comes into being. Bodies felt in motion are central to the co-creating of one’s experienced world.

*I open the door and see your smile. I sharply inhale and feel the whole of my body rise up and the area of my heart bulge forward. I feel light and I too smile. You laugh, lean towards me and grasp onto my shoulders. Feeling the firmness of your hands around me, I now sense my urge to move closer to you. As the weight of my body shifts from heels to the balls of my toes, I step forward.*

This kind of interactive process is the intersubjective dimension of subjectivity. And it’s based on kinesthetic resonance--*reverberating feeling tones that are generated from one person to another*. It is the phenomenon brought forward most strongly in contacting experience: the sensed, the felt, and the lived. It is how we listen to ourselves with others and feel (then know) we are here. Kinesthetic resonance is the relational feel of our relationality.

Whenever there is some change in situation, however grand or slight, there is some change in the felt quality of movement and a change in the overall muscular tone of the body. Our overall muscular tone forms a postural attitude or the readiness to respond and relate: to do something in relation to our situation. Postural attitude is the felt ground from which actions emerge and feelings arise.

Again, whenever there is a change in situation, there is a change in the quality of movements, which change feelings, and a shift in overall postural tone/attitude, which organizes the next action. And likewise, as feelings and actions surface, postural attitudes shift.

Movement, feeling, and postural tone, then, are inextricably intertwined. They make apparent our experience of the world. Such experiences do not require mediation by thoughts or concepts, but rather are the person's immediate evaluation of the situation. This delicate interweaving, along with feedback from our external sense organs and tactility, forms the basis of awareness. Kinesthetically resonating and informed, we know what we know before we know it. From here, emotions organize, cognition takes shape and we can further appraise the situation.

Kinesthesia is the means by which psychotherapists can more fully understand the dynamics of the unfolding patient-therapist relationship. It is "... the pre-reflective experience of empathy" and "...opens the pathway to intimacy" (Staemmler 2011: 3, 14). Aware and resonating with others, we are more likely to disallow our well-practiced habitual modes of being and behaving. We can modify our mode of contacting by changing the quality of underlying supports as we shift from routinized behaviors to the more spontaneous and novel. In doing so, we have greater access to how another moving body—separate from us, but nonetheless similar—might feel. The kinetics of the other matches our own and we can intuit the feelings are comparable.

### **Kinetics and the perception of moving**

There is another component to our movement – the kinetics or movement itself. As we move in relation to others, we not only *feel* ourselves move but we simultaneously *perceive* our movements and along particular dimensions: horizontal (spreading-enclosing), vertical (ascending-descending), and sagittal (advancing-retreating). Movement forms or shapes space along these three

dimensions. These kinetic pathways that are bounded by spatial dimensions also contribute to the feel of movement. In other words, we feel the qualities of our movement as we move along dimensional space, and we sense dimensional space through the experience of these qualities. According to movement theorist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, “Spatial qualities . . . are fundamental to the three-dimensional experience manifested in self-movement.” (Sheets-Johnstone 2010: 114). At any moment and through any movement, the feeling of “*inner*” and perception of “*outer*” can be directly sensed, and always in relation.

All movements have a spatial dynamic—a force in relation to counter forces or in phenomenological terms, a *pushing against* in relation to a *pushing-back*. We move to complete some task, i.e. satisfy an interest, curiosity or desire called forth from the environment, and in doing so, our kinesthetic self-movements are recognized as spatial movements. This “situational spatiality” (Merleau-Ponty 2012/1945: 102) is founded on our being located in a world that is kinesthetically sensed and felt. As kinesthetic resonance facilitates movement and movement is always orienting: the feel of intentionality is unavoidable.

**Before there is body, before there is world, there is movement**

**Before there is relationship, there is contact**

Through the feel of their movements, babies learn what they can and cannot do with another. They practice their movement patterns repeatedly in order to accomplish a novel task. This process of learning is a total experience: moving, sensing, feeling, perceiving and the kinesthetically arrived meaning made from this. In time, a repertoire of fundamental movement transactions will appear. As these primary patterns form, always in relation to the world, they inform the baby’s growing kinesthetic sense-of-self, which in turn informs the capacity to move. Movement offers the experience of *being a body* and, almost simultaneously, *being a body* offers the experience of *being of the world*. There from the start, movement critically organizes the sense-of-self that we are and will become.

*Imagine that a three month-old baby lies in the arms of her father and looks up at his face. Father, holding the baby with a firm and gentle grasp, gazes down at his child. The baby lightly squirms in response to her father's holding and his gaze. As she moves, she is kinesthetically resonating in relation to her father. The baby's movements are not something separate from the situation in which she is living, but rather express that situation. The baby progressively forms the experience of "I see you see me." "I feel you feel me."*

*Imagine that the baby smiles at her father. The father smiles back and the baby wiggles and laughs. We might infer for the baby, "I saw-felt-found a part of myself in your face, that I did not know was there until this very moment. Not until I experienced a smiling face responding to my smile did I know it was mine and that it mattered."*

*Now the baby softly and gradually reaches her hand towards her father's smiling face and, kinesthetically resonating within the situation, senses and feels how the move will complete itself. Its anticipated achievement is made know through the dynamics of a presiding felt experience.*

Through moving, the baby realizes how her body in-forms the world and how the world in-forms her. Moving is the primary source of the baby's emerging sense of agency at a pre-reflective level, (Stern 1985, Beebe & Lachmann 2002). The kinesthetic-kinetic-affective dynamic of human experience is critical to our feel of agency. "Reliable kinesthetic expectations, like the kinesthetic regularities on which they are based, are the foundation to our sense of agency, to our building a repertoire of 'I cans,' to our ability to move and then move in meaningful ways" (Sheets-Johnstone 1999: 145). Bodily powers, then, arise from our primitive sense of aliveness. In time, "I know what I can do with you because I have done with you," and simultaneously, "I learn what you can do with me." The felt past is ground to the feeling present.

## Six fundamental movements: The motion of self

To understand the experience of kinesthetic resonance in greater depth, we must explore the stream upon which it flows – the six fundamental movements (R. Frank, 2001, R. Frank & F. La Barre, 2010, R. Frank 2013). In the process of finding and making themselves in the world, babies use a nonverbal vocabulary of micro-movements. They experience themselves *yielding with, pushing against, reaching for, grasping onto, pulling toward and releasing from* the other. Co-constructed within the early relational field, these interactions are primitive calls and responses in ongoing rapport. They organize an experience that is spatial as well as social (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010) and give the baby a sense of connecting with while separating from others. Moving through their world, babies develop a pre-reflective kinesthetic orienting that lets them know the existence of that other; one whose space is not mine, but at the same time is forming mine.

Developing in the first year of life, these six fundamental movement patterns continue to be essential to all our interactions throughout life, supporting the most basic elements of animated psychological functioning. Although they are continually perceived, they remain peripheral to perception. They are the “force field” of contacting (Michael Vincent Miller 2015 in conversation) and shape the background from which a kinesthetic resonating sense-of-self emerges.

The later patterns of animated being are founded on the earlier, which in turn are influenced by the next to come, and always expressed and experienced in relation. Although these transactional patterns may appear to be linear and discrete, by nature they are not. One category of movement does not occur in isolation from the others. Rather each movement, along with its ever-changing kinesthetic quality, interpenetrates the others and contributes to a spiral of experience—one that expands and condenses, pulsating with life.

Subjective experience is yoked to these moving patterns with their accompanying kinesthesia; a kinesthesia that is persistently “.... reconstructed after each phase of movement.” (Merleau-Ponty 2012/1945:118). We can push against the other freely or with a greater bound quality, we can reach abruptly or gradually, we can grasp with lower or higher intensity. The task to be accomplished calls forward the movements to be performed. The performance, in response, calls back to the task. Each novel task to be completed—contacting experience to be consummated—offers a potentially different invitation to be accepted (or not), from which the possibility of a diverse sequence of movements and their varied qualities appear; co-created within a motor *arc of intentionality* (Merleau-Ponty 2012/1945: 137).

From the baby’s and then adult’s continued practice of these invariant fundamentals—*yielding with, pushing against, reaching for, grasping onto, pulling toward and releasing from*—variations in pattern spring forth and contacting is modified by a multitude of kinesthetically felt qualities. Although learned in the first year of life, these patterns function here-and-now constituted by and constituting all present experience.

Through bodies in motion, temporal sequences evolve, space takes form and the baby develops a primordial sense of agency. Bodily agency is based on moving experience: “I reach for you there, as I move here.” “I grasp onto you and feel you grasp onto me.” Through the attractive other, movement patterns take shape. Every coordinating pattern supports the sequences of contacting—fore-contacting, contacting, final contacting and post-contacting—from the incipient co-creating of interest, curiosity, and desire until its consummation. The processes of contacting and their primary sensorimotor supports are inextricably linked—one does not exist without the other (Perls 1992: 84.).

I offer the movement vocabulary below as a way of analyzing the structure of contacting and the building of an emergent sense-of-self—kinesthetic, temporal, spatial, and, of course, dynamic. Verbs themselves do not exist without their object



and so I have placed a preposition following each of the six fundamental movements to best describe the relationship that is always already there in the directed act of moving.

Fore-contacting:

As proprioceptive awareness develops, the experience of *yielding with* (*surrendering with* or *allowing to be with*) the other moves to the foreground. At this time in the sequence, boundaries have not been well clarified. The lived body (the body I experience) has a gradually emerging sense of weight and a sense of width and volume. Breathing is deep and wide. A pre-reflective knowing of the situation springs into existence. Many possibilities are available as I gradually orient myself within the environment.

Contacting:

*Yielding with* now becomes the ground, supporting the furtherance of the sequence from which *pushing against* naturally arises. Wherever and whenever I shift my weight in order to move, there is *pushing against* the other—separating from while at the same time including that entity in experience. A *push* from any of my limbs (head, base of pelvis, arms, legs) enhances sensations of my midline as my body coheres. What is sensed at the periphery, the limbs in relation to that which they touch and which touches them, can be felt at the center, forming a unified whole.

Possibilities of the situation now narrow and my intention clarifies – a figure emerges. As I feel the quality of my pushing against the other, I experience an active “*pushing-back*” as the situation reveals itself. There is a marked transition or greater differentiation between what is “me” and what is “other.” The quality of pushing against, or resisting the other as the other pushes back and resists me, generates a thickness of experience. Excitement builds.

In the *pushing* process, desire clarifies as an incipient *reaching* emerges towards its object. Contacting progresses and the unfolding of my *reaching for*, supported by my *pushing against*, brings the other into closer relation and I am better informed as to the developing situation (or the choice may be to push away).

Final contacting

The sequence continues as *reaching for* becomes ground for *grasping onto*. In my *grasp*, what I desire is now sensed, felt and known. From here, an innate *pulling toward* the other to incorporate emerges and the differentiation between “I” and “you” is at its greatest. My intention and yours is understood, sensed and felt by each of us. Excitement peaks.

Post-Contacting:

The *pulling toward* of incorporation is followed by an experience of *releasing from*, which moves foreground as the well differentiated “I” spreads and widens and an experience of relative merging follows. What was formerly other disorganizes as “I” and “You” become “I/You” sometimes known as “We.”

*Releasing from* then moves into the experience of *yielding with* once more. Excitement diminishes and the figure closes and becomes ground. Within the now of this *yielding* experience is the support of what was, the past experience on which it now stands.

Another way to describe this ongoing spatial temporal dynamic: imagine a vast sea when it is calm, mere ripples on its surface. From this background of apparent stillness, a wave collects, pushes upward and inevitably reaches toward the attractive and attracting other, the sandy beach. Once sea meets sand, it grasps onto and pulls this other toward itself. As the wave loses form, the sand is released and gradually sinks downward to become part/whole of the sedimentation from which the next wave arises. Ebbing and flowing, rising and falling, expanding and condensing – such is the primordial rhythm of all life.

The moving processes described above form the ground of a kinetic-kinesthetic resonating sense-of-self. In the act of moving with, against, for, onto, toward and from the other, we find and make ourselves in the process. We are the mover and the move. These underlying currents are the core elements that contribute to figure-ground formation. As we see, sense, feel how these currents flow, we know something important as to how we exist in relation; how we meet at this very moment.

I have given the example of contacting processes in which excitements arise and diminish fluidly. Here these moving patterns form the ground for the next ones to emerge as the next, in turn, feed back to the earlier in a rhythmically moving spiral of experience. Each pattern moves foreground and background naturally in service of the arising organizing figure. But this example of a fluidly moving process is not always the case. When there is fixation, one or two patterns may appear held in foreground while the others remain far background seeming unavailable and almost irretrievable. The sense-of-self hardens and the rhythmic flow necessary for a fluidly building experience is habitually constrained. Repetition replaces spontaneity and creativity is replaced by the all too familiar/habitual.

Previously, we imagined a baby-parent dyad in harmony and reciprocity and exemplifying a fluidly developing sense-of-self. Now we examine a different dyad illustrating the developing of repetitive constraints.

*As the father reaches down to pick up his baby, he narrows the skin along his forehead and pushes his lips together. As he lifts his daughter out of her crib, his movements are bound, high-intensity and abrupt. The baby, especially sensitive to facial expressions, is both visually and bodily resonating with the kinetics of her father and responds kinetically and kinesthetically. In other words, as she feels him advancing toward her and then lifting her up and away from the support of her crib, she pulls her arms and legs together, which narrows the areas of her chest and*

*abdomen and she holds her breath. She kinesthetically registers these feelings as “not good.”*

*While holding onto her with his bound, high intensity grasp, the baby abruptly reaches her head and eyes away from her father and begins to subtly yet firmly push her pelvis and legs against the limiting resistance of her father’s bound embrace. Misinterpreting his daughter’s developing discomfort and desire for distance and imagining that she is calling for a more solid container, the father abruptly pulls his daughter towards his chest. The baby then whimpers, and her father begins quickly bouncing her up-and-down with an unyielding staccato rhythm.*

In this example, both parent and baby bring a kinesthetic-kinetic history to their meeting. Perhaps the father was not well enough supported in his infancy and throughout his childhood. As he reaches down to pick up his child, an enduring relational theme (Jacobs 2009: 69) emerges. The unaware and self-fulfilled expectation of awkwardness: “No one held me and made me feel safe so I don’t know how to do that for you.” Or the unaware expression of resentment: “Why would I make you feel safe if no one made me feel safe?” The father’s dynamical reaching action, bound, abrupt and high-intensity, was at one time well practiced in reaction to the significant figures in his early life. These historic experiences of reaching and being reached are now re-stimulated in the present and create a familiar kinesthetic resonance that is only peripherally sensed and felt. Although the father’s behavior is not yet understood cognitively, it is already grasped in terms of bodily engagement.

Imagine that in the life of the baby, a tenuous holding experience has already become routine. Now, even before she is touched and moved, she will predict what is coming – that the holding situation will not be supportive – and she reacts in anticipation. As she sees her father move toward her, she prepares by binding her muscles, holding her breath, and heightening the intensity of her movements. Kinesthetically resonating and pre-reflectively aware of her circumstance, she feels

the coming “next.” She lives the situation at hand, contacting the full reality of her experience. These kinds of repeated occurrences become etched into the newly forming repertoire of baby-parent transactions and the baby’s patterns of breath, gesture, posture and gait take form. Her ongoing bodily responses to her father confirm how she was received. The parent’s body also is influenced in these ongoing nonverbal conversations.

As exemplified in the baby-parent scenario above, the experienced past kinesthetically resonates in each new moment. The unfolding re-membering is neither in the muscles nor nervous system of the child nor parent, but rather springs forward in the co-created forming of a kinesthetically situated sense-of-self. Patterns of kinesthetic-kinetic remembering are not in the least imprecise or abstract for baby nor for adult. As postural-gestural patterns are co-shaped in this now new moment, the earlier contacting experiences in relation to previous and significant others in our life and their kinesthetic values are enfolded within. The earlier experience is always part/whole of the continuing emerging sense-of-self. At every threshold of experience, we look for the other that is already there.

*Imagine the patient who, during session, slowly reaches his arms towards his therapist as he simultaneously moves his upper body forward and away from the back of his chair. As his reaching pattern unfolds, familiar kinesthetic-kinetic impressions now inform and form his pattern. Feeling himself move beyond the presumed safety of his personal kinesphere and into a space where he may not belong, he suddenly pulls his arms inward and pushes himself back.*

*Enveloped within both his reaching toward and pushing back from the therapist, is the kinesthetic-kinetic familiar and reliable historic expectation of what he imagines he can and cannot do with her. With every kinesthetically felt relational move, the sedimented past flows into the anticipated future.*

*The therapist, sensitizing herself to the dynamics of situation, sees and feels herself moved by her patient's reaching out-pushing back gesture. As she makes herself present to the subtle yet profound transactions of this encounter and attunes to him, she lays the ground from which he can take support. The situation rearranges and a novel co-creating of relationship is made possible.*

The kinetic-kinesthetically felt past is part of pre-reflective consciousness that may never come to full consciousness. And it is not always necessary to make conscious what is in the pre-reflective realm. It is a pre-cognitive kind of understanding, not yet made distinct, and which says far more than when we make it distinct by our interpreting.

The prior parent-baby and adult patient-therapist scenarios illustrate the phenomenal passage of trans-generational trauma—developmentally or otherwise organized—and it begins with kinesthetic-kinetic resonance. In trauma, and for very good reasons, we no longer give in to and take from the world spontaneously or creatively. The embodied and repeating relational themes that accompany our limited movement repertoires are more often unaware but nevertheless felt. Whereas once it was possible to clearly attune to and resonate with the intentions of the other and respond, in a dissociated state of trauma with diminished sense-of-self at the contact boundary, kinesthetic capacity is dulled and the possibilities of the situation close.

**From theory to practice:**

**“As we awaken to the experience of our moving body, we awaken to the experience of the world”**

**Maurice Merleau-Ponty**

As therapists, in our quest to understand the phenomenology of developing human experience, whether in the time-line of the first year of life or the moment-to-moment of the present, we need to know *how* fundamental and spontaneous interactions form a kinetic-kinesthetic resonant background from which creative

ways of being and behaving can emerge or, conversely, *how* such primary interactive patterns become fixed and form distortions in resonance. In so doing, we investigate the forming and functioning of self.

The case vignette below is a kind of microanalysis of the moment-to-moment structure of therapy by looking at the function of movement transactions. The patient's emerging self develops in learning what she can and cannot do within the therapy situation as she discovers herself through movement.

Just as babies learn their bodies and themselves first and foremost through ongoing and co-created kinetic-kinesthetic experiences, so too can the adult patient relearn her capacity to make sense of her subjective self within the patient-therapist field.

*At the time of this session, 42 year-old Sara and I had been working together for several months. Before coming to me, she had been a patient in gestalt therapy for approximately five years.*

*Sara tells me a story about an uncomfortable situation between herself and a boy she dated when she was 17. The boy asked her to do something sexual with him that made Sara feel uncomfortable. But rather than say "no," she complied.*

*As she speaks, Sara slowly hollows and narrows her chest and shortens her spine. Her head now pushes downward and she looks at the floor. Her hands, once resting by her sides, now grasp onto each other. Her feet, which appeared planted on the floor, now subtly push backward leaving Sara precariously balanced on each set of toes. Her thighs rotate and press inward as her knees pull together. Sara appears to be shrinking.*

*Sitting across from and relatively close to her, I feel farther away than I actually am and I notice I am holding my breath. I take a fuller exhale, bring my hands to my lap*

*and enjoy the feel of their weight on my thighs. A memory emerges, something long forgotten, and I find myself identifying with Sara's story.*

*When she finishes, we both pause. I feel a sense of emptiness around me and a sinking feeling of defeat in my chest. I adjust myself finding the back of my chair behind and the seat under me. I take a slow full breath and then wonder aloud what Sara might be feeling after telling me her story*

*Sara raises her head and looks directly at me. "I feel shame." she responds, and then glances downward.*

*I wait several moments and ask, "How might I be part of your shameful experience?"*

*Sara looks directly at me and says, "I always feel shameful when I talk about this or even when I think about what happened."*

*I pause and ask again, "How might I be part of your shameful experience."*

*This time Sara waits and then sighs deeply. "Well, this kind of thing would never happen to you," she says convinced and convincingly.*

*"What makes you think so?" I ask.*

*"You sit up so straight and tall. No, this would never happen to you."*

*Through the clarity of her statement, our next exploration is constructed. At my invitation, Sara and I begin "shrinking" and "growing" very slowly and incrementally in relation to one another. Without words, we explore the feel of our movements and in all dimensions. I shorten, narrow and hollow, while she lengthens, widens and bulges, and so forth as we explore this continuum.*



*After some time passes in mutual fascination, Sara and I come to mirror each other—we both simultaneously grow and expand. Sara looks at me, momentarily pauses, and then suddenly shrinks, “I cannot be as big as you,” she exclaims.*

In the experiment, Sara and I reflected upon ourselves and primarily through movement rather than cognitively. We acted in concert with one another and with no pre-conceived notions of what we were doing or what we were to do. I gave as much attention to my experience of her movements and to my own as I did my visual perception of them. I felt/grasped the subtle movements of her body and evaluated their aesthetic values. By imagining the feel of Sara’s movements, I could enter her world. In the continuing process of therapy, these kinds of ongoing animate experiences became woven into the fabric of the relationship, accumulating insights for both Sara and myself.

No posture-gesture can be completely freed from its socially acquired meaning, but when we attend to arising kinesthetic resonances produced by and producing gestures of one’s own and of the other, we can separate what we assume a movement means and discover the reality of the moving situation itself. Sara’s familiar stunted posture that she perennially labeled as “bad” took on new and different meaning in the moment as its relational significance clarified. My upright posture “said” something important to Sara as her shrinking experience “said” something important to me. In addition, with a heightening of kinesthetic awareness, Sara could expand her posture-gestural repertoire over time and experience the novelty of our building relationship.

As Jean-Marie Robine states, “When a patient sits in front of me and tells me that he is anxious, I can choose to listen to his words not only as words *in* a certain situation, but also as words *of* the situation, *as if* these words were belonging to an undifferentiated field which has to be explored, instead of to an individual, the one who tells them” (Robine 2011: 113). Similarly, rather than the movement of *shrinking* being Sara’s individual symptom, it too belonged to an undifferentiated

field. As we explored, attuning to the emerging kinetic-kinesthetic resonances, Sara and I could spontaneously evaluate our relationship and together validate what was happening between us as real and true. From here, a new narrative could emerge and through movement in awareness, it's meaning come alive.

Experiences of kinesthetic-kinetic resonance ground our social interactions from the very beginning of our lives and are crucial in the making of meaning throughout life. Such body-to-body kinesthetically felt engagements shape the background from which the present experience becomes figural. In our every day therapy experience, this process begins as soon as our patients press our doorbell with a certain rhythm and intensity, say hello and walk into our consulting room and seat themselves on our couch in characteristic ways. These transactions are essential and fundamental to the opening dialogue or “starting situation” of therapy (Perls, Hefferline, Goodman 1972/1951). If we listen to our bodily resonance right from the start, we are open to the possibilities of what is emerging between our patients and ourselves. Staying close to the felt-qualities of a moving dialogue allows the therapist to remain open to whatever unfolds. We wait with utmost availability and listen for the next step rather than making it happen. This is crucial in allowing the relationship to disclose itself rather than closing it off by interpreting the moment too soon or at all.

Working through movement in awareness, we re-find our lived sensuality, the motion of self in process, which sometimes has felt irretrievably lost to both patient and therapist. We are not merely aware of how we sit in the chair or how we breathe, common and useful interventions in gestalt therapy, but further how we negotiate the qualities of our sensed situated spatiality. In other words, all the ways the micro-movements of our existence move through the other as the other moves through us. That is, we focus on the continual dance we call contacting—the dance of the between.

## **In Summary**

The six fundamental movements and the accompanying aesthetic kinesthetic resonances they elicit are the phenomenal experience of an emerging and dynamic function of self and add a more complete aspect to the unfolding processes of contacting. They provide multiple pre-reflective meanings that are part/whole of the arising situation. From here, reflective cognition is made.

Attending to kinetic-kinesthetic resonance within therapy is not merely to attend solely to the physical or solely to the feeling qualities of experience as they are not separate from one another, but rather the process of resonance is a holistic apprehension of the emerging moment. In the process of capturing the other, animated function of self becomes manifest. As we come into this kind of direct and profound contact with the other, we also become part of a greater collective process common to all human experience, that of coming into being.

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