

Workshop: Physical and Spiritual Body Work
Body Awareness and Body Expression in the Fields of Therapy, Play, Religion and
Spirituality. A Training Program
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Introduction

This workshop is a real innovation, since it deals *only* with the first part of processes like Bibliodrama / Psychodrama / Active Imagination (C.G.Jung) and Meditation. According to their own standards, basic training and reflections concerning Body Work are essential for the value and the depth of such programs. And thus it makes sense to establish a special training program in this field of work.

Body Work moves within areas which are situated without, before and beyond language – and that means: beyond ideologies, doctrines and intellectual systems of interpretation and defence mechanisms. Thus by Body Work participants might come closer to vital experiences of “real” reality and might explore specific moods of awareness.

This workshop is designed and may be helpful as a segment amongst different forms of training and formation programs. But even without such contexts and interests it can be used as stimulation for one’s own body exercises and / or spiritual religious practise.

We will work out our workshop together. Every single action and reaction from your side is important! I will require your participation and your readiness to even try out directions of mine that may at times seem strange. Creativity and risk thus belong to both sides: to you, the participant, and to me, the conductor of the seminar.

In any case I will be very grateful for your responses – for your positive echo as well as for critique.

Of course there are very different ideas and concepts, methods and procedures concerning body- and theatre-exercises. You have your experiences and expectations – I have mine. Encounter and exchange are not a question of “right” or “wrong” or “good”, “better” and “worse”, rather, first and for the most part: “this way” and “another way”. If you have realized the characters and distinctions in different approaches, you can compare openly and critically.

A general statement concerning this workshop as well as seminars you might be teaching: it seems to make sense to first confirm participants in the areas they are familiar with and then to advance step by step to the unknown / unfamiliar/ new or different. It is however also possible to challenge the participants at the outset, to provoke them into crossing their borders immediately. This raises a crisis and a certain amount of stress and will certainly not work in the opening session without due reassurance and affirmation. A lack thereof will lead to reactions of defence or even aggression and counter-aggression.

To me it is important to agree on a basic atmosphere and on fundamental presuppositions of Body Work:

- mutual and respectful acceptance
- a positive, friendly and somewhat playful attitude towards life.
- Beside that, this workshop does not aim at therapy. Rather it operates in the fields of pedagogy, aesthetics and religion. "Religion" would mean dealing with first and ultimate questions concerning love, hate, mercy and transcendence / going beyond ...
- No therapy! This also implies that I assume you are in a state of average good health – psychologically as well as physically and that you yourself are aware – according to the instructions of your medical doctor – which movements are detrimental to your health.

Oblivion and loss of the body

Some remarks as to why this type of workshop seems important to me: all over the world one can observe a certain loss – or at the very least an oblivion – of the body. In the everyday routine of life, the body is more often than not treated like a dump. It is unaware of itself and its surroundings. What reasons might there be for this? Critics often blame the rise and dominance of technology in our respective civilisations for the increased alienation from the physicality of our own bodies. Technological development is tending towards one-sided optical or haptic contact with the screen of a TV, e.g., or a PC, to cellphones, navigators and monitors of all sorts. You are advised to merely "touch" a button or the surface. You are no longer required to "press" it. And when you do "touch" the interface of a technical device you usually touch it only with your fingertip or your fingernail. You do not come into

physical contact with other fabrics and different materials and never with the living being in front of you (e.g. when you touch human skin or an animal or when you stroke a tree or piece of moss).

But I am convinced that there are also many other reasons for the oblivion and the loss of the body. Whoever is prepared to remain in touch with his or her corporeality and to physically contact the other) encounters the body's beauty as well as its mortality. Physical contact can be experienced as erotic vitality, a light and delightful dizziness – for you are no longer sure where the boundary between you and the living being opposite to you truly is. In an “I-and-thou” encounter separate “egos” temporarily melt and merge. Simultaneously and for the very same reason the risk of getting hurt, of being threatened and exposed also increases. And even more generally: in experiencing one's body with full awareness, one also knows of the dangerous possibility of hunger, pain, violence and illness of all sorts. Therefore most human beings prefer the security of existing in controlled environments and in spaces that are optimally hygienic. But in this way their corporal, mental and spiritual vitality does not increase – on the contrary.

Many therapeutic concepts and religious programs also lay stress on the body as a location of life and experience, as a space of resonance and of vibrations. Quoting the German yoga teacher Manfred Schnelle (Dresden): “Not all of us own a violin, but all of us are a Stradivari” – a Stradivari here standing for a most valuable instrument able to send and receive vibrations of all sorts. Human bodies are bodies which resonate. They have there very own vibrations, they take over vibrations from outside, they transform them, they hand them down and create new ones. In pedagogical and aesthetical training, in therapeutic and spiritual exercises, bodies are tuned like valuable instruments and activated to tune in, to vibrate, to invent new and own sounds.

Back to the body in Bibliodrama, Psychodrama and other therapeutic and pedagogically creative work

The inclusion of the body aims at integration, at wholeness. “Wholeness” does not mean “perfection”. “Perfection” refers to an idealistical seclusion and completion. It is therefore always already over. Wherever *wholeness* happens however, it will happen in the present – not perfect. Ways of thinking and cognitive understanding should not lose a vivid connection to sensual and bodily experiences. It must much rather

regain it anew. Such ways of thinking with respect to / that is in touch with Body Work are often poorly developed however. They are usually a matter of mere improvisation without much theoretical background, training or experience. Even professional “warm ups”, e.g. in Psychodrama, leave out intensive and active Body Work.

To briefly substantiate this point, one concrete example: one of the basic questions in role playing is: how do I identify with the role I am supposed to play? Once in character, actors are asked a good many times how old they are and what their name is. But this remains basically on the level of language and pure cognition. Body work would start off with the question how this particular human being (male or female, child or adult) with this or that name and with this or that age would *move*, what kind of bodily attitude he or she would have towards the world. And this could occur in connection with a counter-exercise, by trying it out with a different name and different age, with another pattern of movement and with another attitude. “Attitude” here meaning: a basic way of connecting to the floor as well as to the ceiling / to the sky in an upright position.

General goals and basic schedule

One of the general goals of the workshop is to show participants ways in which to attain basic information and gather experiences concerning schools and traditions of Body Work. For some participants this workshop might be a first step. It can also function as a reminder and as reconfirmation. In any case, it does not set off with a specific theory. Rather, it invites participants to make their own experiences and to exchange these experiences during the process. Basic Information will of course also be conveyed by means of short-lectures and there will be ample opportunity to exchange this information and to discuss the impulses and concepts of the program with one-another.

A general schedule

Opening session

Lecture: Body Awareness and Body Expression in the Fields of Therapy, Play, Religion and Spirituality

Workshop I

to go – to stride – to stretch – to jump

Domain: Group dynamics und theater pedagogy

Jerzy Grotowski / Katya Delakova

Katya Delakova: Beweglichkeit. Wie wir durch Arbeit mit Körper und Stimme zu kreativer Gestaltung finden, München 1984
Jerzy Gotowski: Für ein armes Theater, Berlin ³1994

Workshop II

to breathe – to pulsate – to become narrow and wide – to release tension
Domain: Body therapy
Moshe Feldenkrais u.a.
Transfer to Workshop III

Moshé Feldenkrais: Bewusstheit durch Bewegung. Der aufrechte Gang, Frankfurt 1968 (viele weitere Auflagen)

Workshop III

to meditate – to imagine – in sense body gestures
Domain: meditative and religious exercises
(Sebastian Painadath / Beatrice Grimm u.a.)

Sebastian Painadath SJ: Das Sonnengebet, München 1995
W.Jäger / B. Grimm: Der Himmel in dir. Einübung ins Körpergebet, München 2000

Workshop IV

to play – to interact – to express
Domain: Bibliodrama / Psychodrama / active imagination

G. M. Martin: Sachbuch Bibliodrama, Stuttgart ²2001 (Berlin ³2011)
Verena Kast: Imagination als Raum der Freiheit. Dialog zwischen Ich und Unbewußtem, Olten / Freiburg i.Br. ²1988

Workshops I – IV including additional impulses or short lectures / sharing the workshop experiences (feed back / process analysis)

How we will proceed

The basic principle and parole is: slowdown / deceleration. This is essential for all ways of learning.

Certain rituals will reoccur at the beginning of each session. We will for example jump into a new working phase around our own axis / spindle / centreline. Another ritual may be becoming aware of the empty space and listening to the silence around us, even if there is noise from outside. This exercise goes together with the attempt to imagine that there were no “language” – “language” consisting of words and terms, statements and judgements. The primal reality, in which body work “works”, is the pre-, a-, post- and trans-verbal world. This “space” gives intercultural and interreligious encounters a real chance.

Documentation of my impulses and instructions will occur by participants during the process (verbal notes, drawings, lists, schemes etc.). In order to activate the participants and to enable them to implement these exercises and experiences in their own professional and / or personal contexts I will not distribute many hand-outs in this workshop. Participants are thus to be empowered to freely transform given input and design their own conceptual applications already during the course of the workshop's process.

Further theoretical and practical presuppositions of my training program can be found in my "Sachbuch Bibliodrama" (German, Hungarian, Finish and Korean version). Wikipedia also offers an informative overview on the topic, e.g. under "active imagination" / "Feldenkrais" / "Feldenkrais method" / "Grotowski".

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